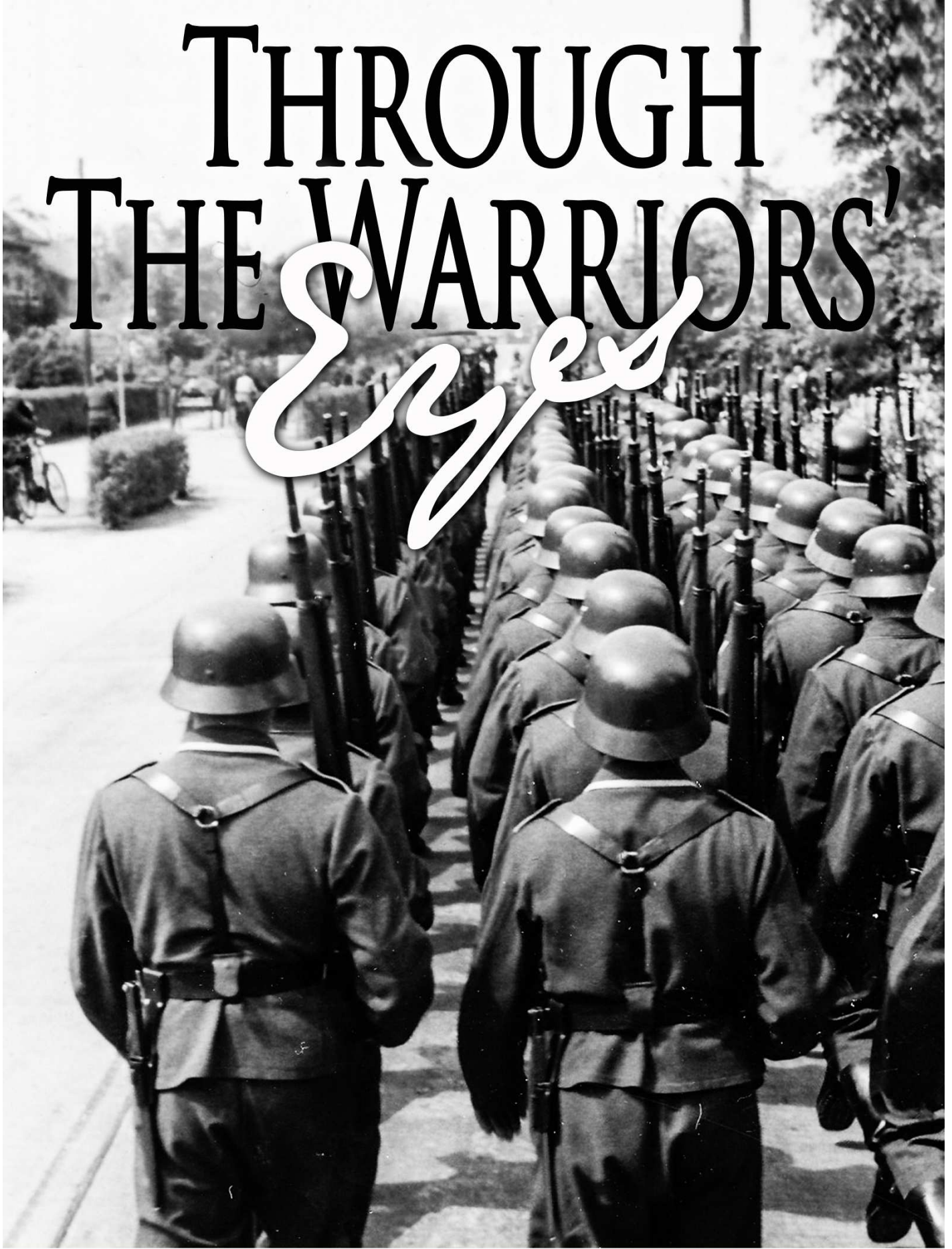


THROUGH THE WARRIORS' *Eyes*



BRUCE LAIDLAW

Through the Warriors' Eyes

WORLD WAR II IN EUROPE AS SEEN
BY THOSE WHO FOUGHT THERE

Bruce Laidlaw

Full sized copies of the images in this book may be seen at:

<http://warriorseyes.net/warrior/gallery/>

TABLE OF CONTENTS

[Introduction](#)

[Chapter 1: The World War Begins](#)

[Chapter 2: The Invasion of Denmark](#)

[Chapter 3: The Invasion of Norway](#)

[Chapter 4: The Invasion of Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands](#)

[Chapter 5: The Fall of France](#)

[Chapter 6: The Battle of Britain](#)

[Chapter 7: Operation Barbarossa, the Invasion of Russia](#)

[Chapter 8: The End Game](#)

[Epilogue](#)

[Acknowledgements](#)

Introduction

The soldiers who fought in Europe in World War II helped illustrate this history of the war with their cameras. The views of the war by German soldiers begin with the start of the war, the invasion of Poland. They follow the route of the war with invasions of Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Belgium, France and Russia. We see the German view of the air assault on Britain. The German views end in France with the capture of the fighters by Captain Andrews Hays. He confiscated the photographs from the prisoners of war. We have no way of knowing the identity of the captured soldiers or whether one or more of them served in all the invasion fronts.

Writing on the backs of many of the German photograph helped identify the scenes. Different handwriting on the backs and different photograph formats indicated that numerous cameras and photographers captured the views. There were also some pre-war shots. One can only guess at why a soldier was carrying this pre 1935 photo of a Cierva 1 gyrocopter.



Captain Andrews Hays also took a camera to war. His views of the recapture of France help illustrate this history. Andrews Hays (Andy) spent his first 21 years in East Lansing Michigan. In June 1941, Andy graduated from Michigan State College (now Michigan State University), and married Jean Widick who had graduated with him. In July, he entered the United States Army as a second lieutenant. The United States was six months away from entering the war, but its entry appeared inevitable. Of the male wedding attendants, those who could, all served in the war. From left to right: Andy's younger brother John lied about his age to enlist in the Army. Charles Leighton joined the Army Air Force and was the navigator of the Memphis Belle, B-17 bomber. Andy's older brother Jim could not serve due to ill health and would die later that year. Andy and friend Chet Kennedy would become tank commanders. Jean's brother, Jack, served in the Navy.



Wedding of Jean and Andy Hays

Chapter 1: The World War Begins

If the Allies had chosen to enforce the Treaty of Versailles, World War II might not have happened. The treaty limited German military forces to 100,000. Naval forces were limited to 10,000. Conscription was prohibited. But those restrictions were ignored by the government of Adolph Hitler. In March 1935, it reinstated compulsory military conscription and began building the armed forces. The rebuilding included a new navy and air force (Luftwaffe). The building of the military machine would be put to use in just three years. But the world just watched the buildup.

Hitler began grabbing up Europe in 1938. Under the treaty of Versailles, Austria was to remain independent of Germany. But on March 12, 1938, German troops marched across the border into Austria. Germany then declared Austria one of its states. Not a shot was fired.

Hitler began claiming that ethnic Germans were being mistreated in areas of Poland and Czechoslovakia. With the threat of military force, Hitler demanded that the areas be ceded to Germany. In August 1938, 750,000 German soldiers staged maneuvers along the border with Czechoslovakia. Czechoslovakia had a modern army and excellent fortifications along the German border. It was prepared to fight, but would do so only with the support of the western powers. It didn't get that support. Instead, an agreement was reached that effectively dissolved Czechoslovakia as a country.

On September 30, 1938, Adolf Hitler, Neville Chamberlain, Benito Mussolini and Édouard Daladier signed the Munich Agreement. The agreement ceded to Germany the so called "Sudetenland." Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain returned to England that day and gave his speech declaring that the agreement assured "peace for our time." The appeasement actually assured the opposite.

Because the "Sudetenland" included Czechoslovakia's northern fortifications, occupation of that area by the German army left the country without defense. Germany took control of most of the country and it became a German satellite. The remainder of Czechoslovakia was distributed to Hungary and Poland. Not a shot was fired.

Poland was Hitler's next target. Considering the weak response from the west regarding Czechoslovakia, Hitler expected the west would not come to the aid of Poland. He was right. On August 31, 1939, German soldiers wearing Polish army uniforms faked several attacks on German facilities. The alleged casualties were really suffered by drugged concentration camp inmates. The fake attacks were the alleged provocation for the attack on Poland the next day. At dawn on September 1, 1939, Germany attacked Poland by land, sea and air. An army that was

supposed to be no larger than 100,000 sent approximately 1.5 million soldiers into Poland. World War II had begun.

Hitler portrayed the attack as defensive. He claimed that Poles had attacked German radio stations. The level of trust in the alliance between Italy and Germany is indicated by the fact that Mussolini believed him. Mussolini urged negotiations to stop the fighting. Negotiations were out of the question. Hitler planned to make Poland a slave state. According to Hitler's plan, the "racially superior" Germans would colonize the territory and the native Slavs would be enslaved.

Poland was taken by surprise. Much of its air force was destroyed while the planes were still on the ground.



Burned Polish Jager



Polish hangar

The Polish army was forced east and was in position to make a stand. But it was unaware of a secret agreement between Germany and the Soviets. The Red Army attacked Poland from the east as part of a Soviet plan to gain territory. The last of the Polish fighters surrendered just 36

days after the start of the World War. The Soviets and Germans mapped out their planned division of Eastern Europe.

And where were the western forces? British and French armies were stationed in France and ready to attack. In accordance with treaties with Poland, Great Britain and France declared war on Germany on September 3, 1939. While Germany was engaged in Poland to the east, its west was highly vulnerable to attack. But the British and French forces sat there while Poland was eliminated as a country. Germany's charge across Poland had been called a *blitzkrieg*. The inaction of Britain and France was described as a *Sitzkrieg*.

Hitler planned a "housecleaning" of Poland. His plan called for the elimination of the Jews, intelligentsia, nobility and clergy. The plan was known to the army generals, but they hoped to distance themselves from it. They requested that the "housecleaning" be deferred until the army had withdrawn and the country had been turned over to the civil administration. On the tenth day of the invasion, German soldiers worked fifty Jews all day on a bridge repair job. Then they herded the men into a synagogue and massacred them. The soldiers were court marshaled for the murders and were given one year prison sentences. The general in charge refused to confirm the sentences because he felt they were too lenient. But then Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler intervened and the sentences were quashed.

After the defeat of the Polish forces, Germany annexed portions of Poland that had previously been German provinces. The remainder of Poland that had not been occupied by the Soviets was decreed to be the General Government of Poland. A Nazi lawyer named Hans Frank was appointed governor.

The "housecleaning" began soon after the Polish surrender. Himmler was in charge of the "Final Solution," the extermination of the Jews. The first step was to herd the Jews into the cities where it would be easy to round them up for extermination.



Jews being rounded up for removal to the cities.

Hans Frank was in charge of dealing with the intelligentsia. By May of 1940, he was bragging about the thousands of intellectuals whom he had summarily executed. His ruthlessness would earn him a trip to the gallows of Nuremberg. Himmler avoided the gallows by popping a cyanide pill into his mouth when he was captured after the war.

The Auschwitz concentration camp complex was opened on June 14, 1941. By 1943 the complex was an extermination center for Hitler's "Final Solution." During the German occupation of Poland, nearly three million Polish Jews were killed in the death camps. The Nazis also severely persecuted the Slavic majority by deporting and executing Poles in an attempt to destroy the intelligentsia and Polish culture.

When Germany invaded the USSR in 1941, all of the former Poland became a slave state of Germany until it was liberated by the Red Army in 1945.



Marching with Luftwaffe flag in Poland. A direction sign behind the bicyclists points to Gruppe, now Grupa in Poland.

Chapter 2: The Invasion of Denmark

Denmark was considered a neutral country. Germany had entered a non-aggression pact with Denmark in 1939. But Hitler never let little things like treaties get in the way. On the morning of April 9, 1940, German forces crossed the border into Denmark. Denmark had little ability to resist the attack. Sixteen Danish soldiers were killed in the two hours before Denmark surrendered. Germany described the action as a peaceful effort to bring Denmark under its protection. It supposedly needed protection against a British invasion. Hitler referred to Denmark as a "model protectorate."

The occupation of Denmark lasted until it was liberated by British forces on May 5, 1945. The occupation was much less severe than it was for other countries occupied by Germany during the war. That was partly because of collaboration and partly because of the illusion that the country was a protectorate. Self-government of internal matters was allowed. Very few Danes believed the German forces were protecting them from anything. There was an active resistance that engaged in sabotage of the occupying Germans. The Danes also resisted German demands for deportation of Jews. Hitler's patience with that resistance came to an end on October 1, 1943. He ordered that all Danish Jews be arrested and deported. But it didn't happen. The Danes managed to evacuate about 8,000 Jews by sea to neutral Sweden. 99% of Danish Jews survived the Holocaust.

After Denmark was liberated, Danes who had collaborated with the Germans were not warmly treated. After the war, 40,000 people were arrested on suspicion of collaboration. Of these, 13,500 were punished in some way. 78 received death sentences, of which 46 were carried out.

Chapter 3: The Invasion of Norway

Norway was of strategic importance to Germany. Its Narvik port provided the only access to Swedish iron ore shipments when the Baltic was frozen in the winter. Also, Norwegian ports could provide routes to the Atlantic to avoid the blockade the British were attempting to enforce.

The German invasion of Norway began on April 3, 1940. German ships steamed toward Norway to launch amphibious landings. The allies responded on land, sea and in the air. Over 80,000 British, French and Polish forces assisted Norwegian troops. The British Navy and the RAF sank numerous German warships. Poland got a little revenge. A Polish submarine that had not been captured when Poland was overrun sank a German troop transport. But the German forces established a strong land presence. Luftwaffe bases were established and were protected by anti-aircraft batteries.



Luftwaffe base in Norway.



German anti-aircraft in Norway

The German forces had the upper hand. And the allies found their forces needed elsewhere after Germany invaded Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg in May. Allied forces were ordered evacuated from Norway. By June 8, 1940, all allied troops had been evacuated. Norwegian forces capitulated to the Germans and fighting ceased on June 9, 1940.

Hitler had added another country to his European collection. But the cost was high. German records indicated there were 5,296 German casualties in the battle of Norway. Of these 1,317 were killed on land, while 2,375 were lost at sea. 1,604 were listed as wounded. The Royal Navy and Royal Air Force sank two heavy cruisers, two light cruisers, 10 destroyers and six submarines. The German surface fleet had only three cruisers and four destroyers in operating condition after the Norwegian campaign. The damage to the German navy may have played a major role in preventing the invasion of Britain.

The evacuation of the allied troops had effectively turned Norway over to Germany. Winston Churchill had opposed that evacuation. The loss of Norway forced the resignation of Neville Chamberlain. Winston Churchill replaced him as prime minister.

Official German sources give the number of German aircraft lost during the Norwegian Campaign as 90, but historians estimate as many as 240 German aircraft were lost.



Result of British night attack on Oslo, May 1, 1940





Chapter 4: The Invasion of Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands

On May 10, 1940, Germany launched a massive aerial and ground attack on the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg. Tiny Luxembourg was the first to fall. It could only offer token resistance. Six soldiers and one police officer were wounded. The swastika would fly in Luxembourg until it was liberated by the Allies in September of 1944.



The Nazis considered the people of Luxembourg as a German ethnic group and treated the country as a German territory. A Germanisation was attempted to do away with everything that didn't have a German source, the wearing of berets for example. Speaking French was banned. French names of towns were changed to German. The goal was the destruction of Luxembourg as a country. At a German military parade on August 1940, some spectators wore pins from a 1939 celebration commemorating the independence of Luxembourg. They were severely beaten.



Before the invasion, 3,800 Jews lived in Luxembourg. But the Nazis made their lives unbearable and many fled to France and Spain. The 693 who were left behind were deported to death camps. Only 43 survived. After the war, 2,000 Luxembourg citizens who collaborated with the Nazis were found guilty of treason. Nine were executed.

The Netherlands were the next to fall. The battle of the Netherlands lasted only 5 days, but the Dutch resistance was fierce. In the five days of fighting, 2,200 German soldiers were killed and 7,000 were wounded. 1,300 were captured and sent to Britain. 225 German planes were downed. But after four days of fighting, the Dutch were attempting to negotiate surrender when Luftwaffe commander Hermann Goering ordered the massive bombing of central Rotterdam. A square mile of the city was leveled. Nearly 1,000 civilians were killed and 85,000 were made homeless. Evidence of the slaughter was introduced when Goering was on trial in Nuremberg.

During the four and a half years of German occupation, the German soldiers were able to see and photograph the tourist sights of the Netherlands



Folkloric outfits in the Village of Vole dam.





Fishermen in Vole dam.



Hitler thought highly of the Dutch people because he felt they shared the ethnic and racial characteristics of the Aryan "master race." But that did not make the years of occupation easy for the Dutch people. Forced labor was imposed. Every man between 18 and 45 was forced to work in German factories which were bombed regularly by the western Allies. Of the 140,000 Jews who had lived in the Netherlands before 1940, only 30,000 survived the war. Despite the risks, many Dutch people helped Jews. One-third of the people who hid Jews did not survive the war.

Southern Holland was liberated by the Allies in the fall of 1944. But those in the northern half had to suffer through the "hunger winter." Angered by the Dutch refusal to cooperate in the war effort, the Germans cut off all food and fuel shipments. 18,000 people starved before the liberation of the rest of Holland in May 1945.

Belgium had strived to stay neutral. It avoided alliances with other countries. Germany recognized Belgium's neutrality with a guarantee issued in 1937. The guarantee stated "The German Government considers that the inviolability and integrity of Belgium are common interests of the Western Powers. It confirms its determination that in no circumstances will it impair this inviolability and integrity and that it will at all times respect Belgian territory." But Hitler wasn't about to let a little pledge get in the way of his effort to get his forces to the English Channel and the ability to attack Britain.

With the help of British and French forces, Belgium resisted mightily for 18 days. But on May 28, 1940 Belgian King Leopold announced Belgium's surrender. That opened the door for the German forces to finish off the French and British troops that had been trying to help the Belgian defense. The German forces broke through to the English Channel and encircled the British and French troops near Dunkirk. What happened next may have been a turning point in the war. The German ground troops halted their advance. They had taken heavy losses and Goering said he could destroy the troops with his Luftwaffe. But bad weather and attacks on the Luftwaffe by the British RAF thwarted that effort. Over a four day period a flotilla of 850 boats ranging from destroyers and cruisers to small sailboats of civilian volunteers converged on Dunkirk. 338,226 British and French soldiers escaped

The evacuation took troops to multiple British ports. There was no organization by divisions. Graham Smith tells of an uncle who decided to return to his home in Scotland. He was fishing in a nearby stream when a relative who was a British officer appeared. He asked the soldier what he thought he was doing. "I'm fishing." A little later, two military police officers appeared and hauled him away. He was sent to fight in Burma.

The British forces could be used for defense and assignments to other war theaters. They would be the nucleus of the British troops returning to France in 1944. After being evacuated to Britain,

the French forces were quickly repatriated and were used in an attempt to defend France. Many faced death or capture by the invading German forces.

The 18 day war in Belgium resulted in heavy losses. 20,000 Germans were killed or missing in action. The Luftwaffe lost 423 aircraft. 6,093 Belgian soldiers were killed in action and 200,000 were captured. 2,000 of the prisoners died in captivity.

Belgium was added to Hitler's quiver of countries. The country was run by a German military government. As with all the European occupied countries, food, fuel and clothing were strictly rationed. About 375,000 Belgians were conscripted to serve in labor programs in Germany. The 200,000 prisoners of war were used as forced labor.

There was significant collaboration with the Germans. 15,000 Belgians were recruited into the SS and fought for Germany on the Eastern Front. After the war, approximately 56,000 Belgians were prosecuted for collaboration. Most received prison sentences, but several hundred were executed.

Before the German invasion, about 56,000 Jews lived in Belgium. Many had fled the persecution in Germany. But the persecution began again during the occupation. Jewish assets were seized. In 1942, the wearing of the yellow "Star of David" arm bands was made compulsory. Between August 1942 and July 1944, about 25,000 Jews were deported to death camps. Only about a thousand survived.

Chapter 5: The Fall of France

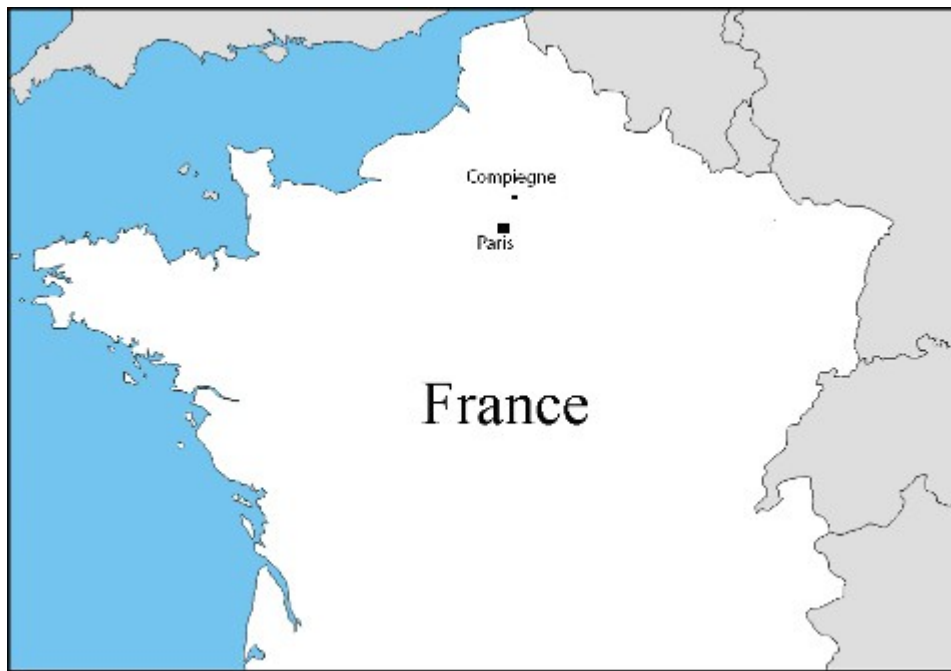
The back of the French forces was broken in Belgium. Although many of the French soldiers were evacuated from Dunkirk, the best and most modern forces were lost when encircled by the Germans and the sea in western Belgium. German forces then moved into France from the north and east. Despite stiff resistance, the Germans moved steadily toward Paris. The Luftwaffe established complete air supremacy. The few surviving French aircraft withdrew to French North Africa. Just to add to the bad situation, Mussolini decided to jump on the bandwagon and sent troops to attack France in the southeast.

Paris fell on June 14, 1940. The government fled to Bordeaux. Prime Minister Paul Reynaud resigned on June 16. He was succeeded by 84 year old Marshal Philippe Pétain. Pétain delivered a radio address to the French people announcing his intention to seek an armistice with Germany.



Sign in German in front of Eiffel Tower points to a hospital.

Hitler carefully orchestrated the French surrender. The Armistice would be signed in Compiègne, the site of the German surrender at the end of World War I. The railroad car used for the World War I armistice was removed from a museum and located exactly where it had been on November 11, 1918. Mussolini wanted to participate in the signing, but Hitler denied the request. He wanted the historic act for himself. Hitler had his revenge for the German humiliation of 1918.



Compiègne, site of French surrender.



*Hitler at the surrender of France
(public domain photograph)*

Mussolini's chance to reach an armistice with France came two days later. He was only able to occupy the few hundred yards of French territory that his troops had conquered. The price was not cheap. 1,247 Italian soldiers were killed or missing and 2,361 were wounded. More than 2,000 Italian soldiers suffered frostbite from fighting in the subzero temperatures of the Alps.

The Armistice with France contained another of Hitler's dubious promises:

The German government solemnly declares to the French Government that it does not intend to use for its own purposes in the war the French fleet which is in ports under German supervision. Furthermore, they solemnly and expressly declare that they have no intention of raising any claim to the French war fleet at the time of the conclusion of peace.

It would prove to hold as much weight as the promise of Belgian neutrality.

The German/French armistice resulted in a French government based in Vichy that theoretically governed all of France. Initially, however, the country was divided into a German occupied zone in the north and a Vichy government occupied zone in the south. German soldiers in Paris were free to tour and photograph the usual tourist sites.



Eiffel Tower during German occupation of France.





Arc de Triomphe during German occupation.



In the French countryside, German soldiers showed off their Marching skills.





Charles de Gaulle assembled his Free French Forces in London (later Algiers). De Gaulle challenged the legitimacy of the Vichy government. He contended that it was an illegal government run by traitors. But the United States, Canada, Australia and the Soviet Union initially recognized Vichy as the government of France.

Many of the French colonies joined the Free French almost immediately. Syria, Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco remained under Vichy control until captured by the allies. The recognition of the Vichy government by the non-Axis governments ended when Germany occupied all of France in 1942.

The Vichy government was an ideal tool for the German plan for a new world order. It repealed laws on anti-Semitism, cooperated in the deportation of Jews and repressed free speech. But it showed a little backbone in 1942 when Germany decided to occupy all of France. One feature of that occupation was the German repudiation of its promise not to take over the French naval fleet.

On November 27, 1942, Germany sent a fighting force to Toulon to take over the French fleet it had promised not to use in the war. Hitler wanted to make a gift of the French ships to his buddy Il Duce (Mussolini). But the French fought off the attempt at the cost of only twelve French lives. The French managed to sink almost all of their ships. Some burned for days. Several submarines managed to defect to North Africa.

Chapter 6: The Battle of Britain

Hitler expected that the British would be so impressed with Germany's speedy conquests that it would be quick to make peace. All Hitler wanted was to be allowed to keep his conquests. Churchill did not sound ready to make peace:

Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties, and so bear ourselves that, if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will say: "This was our finest hour."

But Hitler too was a skilled orator who knew he could not be held to his word. He expected the same of Churchill. Surely the British prime minister had to be impressed by the speed with which Hitler had crushed other opponents. Hitler gave his "peace speech" to the Reichstag on July 19, 1940. He said "I can see no reason why this war must go on." He said the great empire could be destroyed because of Churchill's stubbornness. The British weren't convinced.

So Hitler ordered Operation Sea Lion, the invasion of Britain. The plan was for German forces not to set foot in England until the British defenses had been destroyed by the air and sea forces of Germany. The British navy was superior to the German navy which had endured severe losses in the battle of Norway. Also, the German Navy's ability to operate from across the English Channel was minimized by British bombing and cross channel shelling of the German ships.

The task of crushing British defenses fell to the Luftwaffe. Goering felt the Luftwaffe could put the Royal Air Force out of commission in four days. He underestimated the RAF. The first great air battle was on August 15, 1940. It did not go well for the Luftwaffe. It lost 74 planes while the RAF lost 34. The British made use of more advanced radar that allowed the detection of German planes as they took off. Luftwaffe pilots were surprised to find RAF fighter planes waiting to attack. Fighting over home territory also had advantages. An RAF pilot who had to bail out could land on home soil and live to fly again. German pilots who bailed out would be taken prisoner and could not return to battle.



Herman Goering with Luftwaffe fliers

On August 23, 1940, German bombs missed the targeted aircraft factories and struck homes killing civilians. The British retaliated with night bombing raids over Berlin. The damage and loss of life was small. But Berliners were stunned. They had been assured by Goering that Berlin would never be bombed.

The Luftwaffe made massive nighttime bombing attacks on London beginning September 7, 1940. But when it attempted daytime bombing raids on September 15, the German bombers were mauled by the RAF fighters. The RAF which was to have been eliminated in four days dealt severe losses to the Luftwaffe. Hitler called off operation Sea Lion on September 17, 1940.

The Luftwaffe continued to bomb Britain. Between July and December, 23,002 British civilians were killed and 32,138 were wounded. But the failure to invade Britain was a defeat for Hitler, his first of the war. And he had bigger fish to fry with the Luftwaffe. Russia would be the next target.

It is likely that one of the German fliers who survived the RAF attacks on German bombers is shown in the below photographs. He must have lived long enough to become a prisoner of war in France before the photographs were confiscated.





Chapter 7: Operation Barbarossa, the Invasion of Russia

After the agreement to divide up Eastern Europe, Hitler and Stalin had what outwardly appeared to be a cordial relationship. But neither of the two snakes could be trusted. Hitler was upset because Stalin sent troops into Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia and annexed them to the Soviet Union. When German troops moved into Finland they were supposedly just passing through on their way to supplement the Germans in Norway. But the Soviets were suspicious of German motives. Hitler decided it was time to crush Russia. Napoleon had failed, but he didn't have a Luftwaffe.

The original planned date for the German invasion of Russia was May 15, 1941. But an anti-German coup in Yugoslavia delayed the invasion because an infuriated Hitler wanted to crush Yugoslavia first. It was a quick campaign and Greece was also captured. Hitler then had nine captured countries in his quiver.

The invasion of the USSR began on June 22, 1941. Hitler believed that the Soviets could be brought to their knees in four months. As in earlier invasions, the first step was to order the Luftwaffe to destroy Soviet aircraft.



Identified as Generalmajor Hans-Joachim Rath

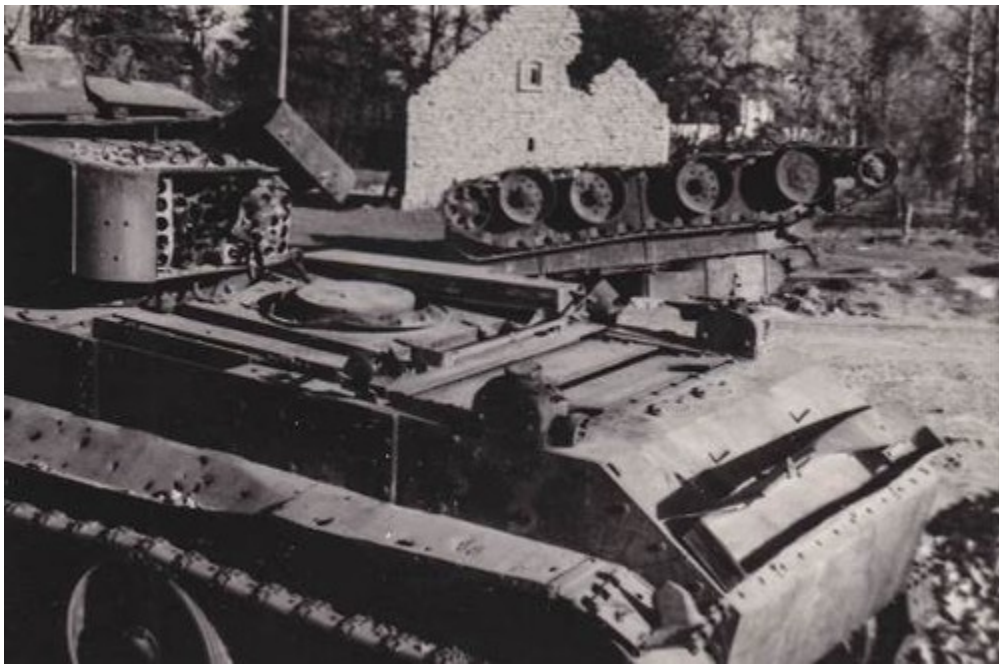




The Soviets were taken by complete surprise. They lost between 1,200 and 2,000 aircraft in the first week, about a quarter of the Soviet air force. Another 2,000 to 3,000 were lost in battle the next week. The German forces moved quickly across the countryside. The Soviets had more tanks, but the German tanks were more modern. The one exception was the Russian T-34 tank which was so heavily armored that the shells from antitank guns bounced harmlessly off it. But the T-34s were in short supply. The older Russian tanks were mauled by the advancing German forces.



Destroyed Russian tank.



By the first of July, the Germans had advanced 300 miles and had captured major Russian cities. But the Soviet resistance was strong and it received support from the West. Although wary of Communist Russia, the United States and Britain did not want to see it fall to Germany. They supplied intelligence support and military hardware, including tanks.

The Russian weather slowed the approach to Moscow. Rains in October turned the roads to soupy mud and reduced the advance to a crawl. In November, snow covered the ground and the temperatures turned so cold that German soldiers in summer uniforms suffered from frostbite and hypothermia.

By late November, the Germans were close enough to Moscow to see the spires of the Kremlin. But they came to a halt when mired in barbed wire reinforced trenches and ditches that civilians had dug all around the City. Faced with strong Red Army defense and frigid temperatures, 85,000 German soldiers were lost in three weeks. During the first week of December, the Germans slowly began losing ground, and the Soviets managed to push them back several miles.



Winter in Russia.

On December 7, 1941, events on the other side of the world sealed Hitler's fate. The last thing he wanted was the United State to enter the war. But the axis of evil was not a well-coordinated force with close communication. Hitler had not informed the Japanese of his plans to invade the Soviet Union. Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor came as a complete surprise to Hitler. On December 8, 1941, the United States declared war on the Empire of Japan. Hitler responded by declaring war on the United States. The U.S. war machine went into full gear. Andy Hays was already in training to be a tank commander. That training would take him to bases in New York, Tennessee, Texas and California.

After the stalemate by Moscow in the winter of 1941-42, Germany shifted its focus south to Stalingrad. It made its move toward Stalingrad starting in July 1942. On August 23, 1942, German forces reached the Volga River north of Stalingrad. Hundreds of German bombers launched a massive bombing that started a firestorm and killed an estimated 40,000 Stalingrad residents. German commanders believed that Stalingrad would quickly fall.





Instead of a quick victory, Stalingrad was a disaster for German forces. The Red Army was waiting for the Germans in the ruined city. Fighting went from one ruined building to the next.



In November, the Red Army launched offenses that surrounded the entire German Sixth Army. The German commander requested permission to break free and retreat. But Hitler refused and ordered him to fight on. Then another enemy of the Germans arrived, the Russian Winter. The Germans attempted to fly in supplies, but Russian defenses and winter storms prevented supplies from getting through. The German soldiers were starving.





At the end of January 1943, the Sixth Army commander defied Hitler's orders and surrendered. By February 2, all remaining German forces at Stalingrad had given up to the Soviets. Thousands of German prisoners of war were paraded through Moscow. Few would ever see Germany again. Historians estimate that two million people died in the battle of Stalingrad, 800,000 of them German.

Following the Stalingrad defeat, the momentum went to the Soviets. The Red Army moved westward and was on German soil by 1945. Historians estimate that 20 million people died in the Soviet Union as a result of the German invasion. They included the soldiers, the Jews who were murdered and millions of ordinary Russian citizens. The defeat on the eastern front made it hard to believe Germany could defend the western front.





Destroyed German tank



Grave of German soldier in Russia

Chapter 8: The End Game

The allied invasion of France was no surprise. The unknown was when and where. German generals knew the end was near. The Red army was approaching German territory to the east. In the south, the Italians had removed Mussolini and had thrown in the towel. The German army was in retreat as the allies moved up the Italian Boot. In December 1943, Andy Hays and Chet Kennedy were sent to England. Personnel and equipment were being amassed in Britain for an obvious invasion of France. The Luftwaffe was no longer in control of the skies. Many German generals knew that the only way to keep Germany from being overrun and annihilated was to get rid of Hitler and the Nazi regime. They began to conspire to that end.

The person in charge of defending Hitler's "Atlantic Wall" was the revered Field Marshall Erwin Rommel, the "Desert Fox" of the Africa campaign. Rommel believed that successful defense required that the allies be stopped in the water. They had to be made to retreat to Britain as the British had at Dunkirk. He believed that the attack would occur at the Pas de Calais, just twenty one miles from the white cliffs of Dover. Therefore, much of the defense was concentrated there.



In the days before June 6, 1944, nasty weather had prevented German air and sea patrols on the Channel. On the night of June 5, thousands of vessels crossed the Channel to Normandy undetected until 1:30 in the morning of the sixth. Rommel was pleased at initial reports that the allies had been stopped in the water. Many of the British and American soldiers never made it out

of the water. But British and American beachheads were established. And the invading forces began moving inland.



Andrea Laidlaw 2011 photograph of American military cemetery near Omaha Beach.

By June 9, two temporary portable harbors, code named Mulberry were established at the American landing point of Omaha Beach and the British landing point of Gold Beach. The Omaha Beach harbor was destroyed by a storm ten days later. But the other was nicknamed Port Winston and was heavily used to bring men, weapons and supplies ashore until the Antwerp, Belgium harbor was captured and made available six months later. Port Winston was used to land over 2.5 million men and 500,000 vehicles.



*Andrea Laidlaw 2011 photograph of
remains of a Mulberry harbor.*

About the Normandy invasion, on June 10, 1944, Captain Hays wrote home:

Imagine we were more surprised about the invasion than you were -- came as a complete surprise to us -- as it should have of course. The 1st inkling was at the 07:15 newscast when the announcer reported 'Germans report enemy paratroops and allied landing craft at the mouth of the Seine.' -- I was willing to bet anyone it had started then, but it wasn't til 09:00 that we definitely knew. The young lady who made the error wasn't far wrong.

In July, Hays and Kennedy and the tanks under their command landed in Normandy for the March across France. The progress inland in Normandy was slowed by German defenses and the "bocage." Thousands of little pastures were surrounded by ancient manmade hedgerows made of mud, trees and other vegetation. The hedgerows were almost impenetrable and were perfect barriers that defending snipers could use to pick off approaching troops. Thousands of tons of explosives were used to blow holes through the bocage. Blades were mounted on tanks to turn them into bulldozers that could plow through the hedgerows.



Andy Hays photo of tank plowing through bocage

In June, Rommel met with Hitler several times and described the dire situation. The allies were stronger in the air, on land and at sea. The allied progress in Normandy was slow but steady. Rommel suggested trying to make peace or withdrawing to a more defensible position. Hitler rejected the suggestions and asserted there were new secret weapons that could win the war. Production had started on jet planes that would reclaim the skies. V-1 rockets would bring Britain to its knees.

On July 15, Rommel wrote to Hitler saying that the unequal struggle was nearing an end. Rommel would not live to see that end. On July 17, a fighter plane attacked the car in which Rommel was riding. The fleeing car crashed into a ditch. The driver was killed and Rommel was gravely injured. He suffered a fractured skull. For Rommel, the war was over. He was sent home.

On July 18, 1944, the allies broke through German lines and took the city of St. Lo. During the breakthrough, Captain Hays suffered his first wounds and received a bronze star for his efforts.

HEADQUARTERS 4TH ARMORED DIVISION
A.P.O. 254, U.S. ARMY
CITATION

The Bronze Star Medal is awarded to Captain Herbert A, Hays, 0418803, Cavalry, 37th Tank Battalion, U.S. Army for meritorious service in connection with military operations against an armed enemy of the United States from 29 July to 9 August 1944, in the vicinity of L'Orient, France. During the advance from Avranches through to L'Orient, France, Captain HAYS commanded the trains of the 37th Tank Battalion. Captain HAYS moved his trucks

immediately behind the combat elements, fought off enemy resistance with machine guns and under artillery fire supplied his battalion with vital gasoline, ammunition, and rations. Captain HAYS' courage and extreme devotion to duty reflect great credit upon himself and the Armed Forces of the United States.

(Note: Andy Hays never went by "Herbert." He tacked on the name of his favorite uncle when he entered the army and was advised that he should have a third name.)

After the breakthrough, the main thing slowing progress was getting supplies. There was a long supply chain to provide the gasoline needed to move through the French countryside and towns.



Andy Hays photo in French countryside



Andy Hays photo in a French town.



Andy Hays in a French town.

As armies from the east and west moved ever closer, those conspiring to kill Hitler knew it was time to act. Colonel Klaus von Stauffenberg was chosen for the job because he regularly attended meetings with Hitler. The original plan was to kill Hitler, Heinrich Himmler and Hermann Göring when all were attending the same meeting. Stauffenberg took his bomb to a meeting on July 7, but backed off when Himmler didn't appear. He took the bomb to a meeting on July 14, but withdrew at the last minute when Hitler was called out of the room. Then an opportunity came just to get Hitler on July 20, 1944. Stauffenberg was summoned to Hitler's headquarters at Rastenburg in East Prussia. The "Wolf's Lair" was heavily fortified and guarded. Stauffenberg's war wounds left him with one hand and one eye. He used his one hand to bring a brief case containing a bomb. Just outside of the conference room he activated the fuse which was set to ignite the bomb in ten minutes. Then he was seated by the conference table and slipped the brief case under it near Hitler. After five minutes, Stauffenberg slipped away from the meeting unnoticed.

He was outside the building talking to another conspirator, General Fellgiebel. When the bomb went off, he saw bodies fly through the windows. Fellgiebel called other conspirators in Berlin to announce the success while von Stauffenberg made his escape. Despite alarms, he and his aid managed to bluff their way through several check points. They then raced to the airport where a Heinkel plane waited with the engine running to fly Stauffenberg to Berlin.



Heinkel

Stauffenberg arrived in Berlin expecting to find that the coup was in full force and that the plotters had begun to take over Berlin. But nothing had happened. Word of the bombing had reached Berlin, and the plotters awaited word that Hitler was dead. It would never come. Although many of the 20 present in the conference room were dead, dying or severely injured, Hitler emerged alive. He was burned and badly shaken, but not severely injured. Apparently, one of those at the table found Stauffenberg's brief case in his way and pushed it behind a heavy oak table support that saved Hitler's life. Later that afternoon, Hitler managed to have tea with Mussolini who had arrived by train. Mussolini had been imprisoned in Italy. But he was rescued by Nazis and installed as the token leader of northern Italy. He told Hitler that the current situation in Italy was dire.

Persons who had been outside the meeting room recalled seeing the one eyed colonel leaving in a hurry, and the whole plot began to unravel. The war would continue. Stauffenberg was quickly captured and shot. There is speculation that the officer who ordered him killed did not want him questioned about other conspirators.

The response to the coup attempt was severe and swift. 7,000 were arrested. The trials in the "People's Court" were marked by terrified defense attorneys. One even referred to his client as a "murderer." There were 4,800 death sentences. Sentences of some of the principal conspirators were carried out in grisly fashion. Other conspirators chose suicide. They included Erwin Rommel. Under severe torture, one of the conspirators implicated Rommel in the plot. But Hitler did not want to have Germany's most popular general hauled before the People's Court. Two generals were sent to Rommel's home to confront him with the evidence against him. They brought cyanide and offered to let him kill himself. He did, and it was announced that he died of a stroke resulting from his July 17 head fracture. He received a state funeral.

On August 13, 1944, another allied invasion of France was launched in the French Riviera. Winston Churchill had warned Eisenhower, the Allied Supreme Commander, that the invasion would be a disaster and a huge mistake. But there was weak resistance to those going ashore near Toulon. Compared to the June 6 landing, the assault was easy. There were only 400 allied casualties. There had been 10,000 in Normandy on June 6.

On August 16, the troops onshore were supplemented by those of the Free French under De Gaulle. Half the French troops were from northern Africa. A quarter of a million of the French troops joined allies in chasing the German army up the Rhone River valley.

And then Paris fell to the allies. To the joy of French residents, American and Free French forces began fighting their way into the City on August 23, 1944.



Andy Hays photo



Andy Hays photo



Andy Hays photo

On Friday, August 25, 1944, the French colors flew on the Eiffel Tower for the first time since June 1940. On Saturday August 26, de Gaulle appeared at the Arc de Triomphe, laid a wreath and relit the Eternal Flame. Before a cheering crowd of a million, he then walked down the Champs-Élysées behind French tanks. He proceeded to the Notre Dame Cathedral. There was some gunfire inside, but he did not flinch. Paris was liberated largely intact. Hitler's orders to level the city were not carried out. The bridges and monuments survived the occupation and liberation.



Eternal Flame on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier

The road into Germany seemed clear. Some were convinced that the troops would be home by Christmas. But there would be many bumps in the road. Eisenhower had his hands full in dealing with French, British and American generals. The Free French did not want to fight alongside French generals who had been loyal to the Vichy government. They felt the Vichy generals were traitors. British Field Marshal Montgomery was constantly at odds with Eisenhower and once said Ike was "utterly useless." And American generals such as George Patton were not always easy to control.

Montgomery talked Eisenhower into a plan to liberate the Netherlands with an attack led by British airborne troops. If the operation had succeeded, it would have given the allies the opportunity to out flank the Siegfried Line and enter Germany in the manner German troops out flanked the Maginot Line to invade France. But it didn't succeed. The operation began on September 17, 1944 and ultimately was a disaster. The strength of the German forces in the Netherlands was badly underestimated. The allies suffered over 15,000 casualties and thousands of allied troops were taken prisoner. The operation only liberated a fifth of the Netherlands. The rest of the country would suffer through "the Hunger Winter" during which thousands starved.

Secret weapons that Hitler hoped would level the playing field were the V-1 and V-2 rockets. The V-1 was accurately described as a flying bomb. It was powered by a jet engine that gave it a top speed of 400 miles per hour. It carried a payload of 1,900 pounds and had a range of 120 miles. The first was launched at London on June 13, 1944 from the Pas de Calais in France. 9,500 V-1s were launched at south-east England. But many crashed on the way and others would be destroyed by fighter jets and anti-aircraft guns. A total of 22,892 British casualties were reported

to have been caused by V-1s. Their use against Britain decreased as the German launch sites were lost to the allies.

The V-2 was another matter altogether. It was a ballistic missile which reached a speed of 3,500 miles per hour. There was no defense against it other than attacking or capturing the launch sites. Flying beyond the speed of sound, there was no warning before it hit. When V-2s first hit England, the detonations were attributed to exploding gas mains. The V-2 attacks on England were estimated to have caused over 9,000 deaths.

The harbor of Antwerp, Belgium was a vital port for supplying the allied military. German troops were routed from Antwerp in September 1944. But it took almost three months to clear German defenses from the approach to the harbor before the harbor could be safely used. Nineteen cargo ships sailed into the harbor on November 28. The Nazi response to that development was via the V-1 and V-2 rockets. Over a six month period, 1,712 V-2s and 4,248 V-1s were launched at Antwerp destroying thousands of buildings. On December 15, a V-2 rocket went through the roof of a theater full of Belgian civilians and allied soldiers watching a Gary Cooper movie. 567 theatergoers were killed. Belgian theaters were closed for the remainder of the war.

Hitler's secret weapons caused much terror, misery and destruction. But they did little to level the one sided playing field. Despite the massive rocket assaults, the Antwerp harbor remained a functional supply provider for the allied effort. But Hitler was determined to retake the City.

By November, American forces had moved across France and were nearing the German border. Captain Hays was near Haboudange when the tank in which he was riding was struck by heavy weapon fire.



The incident was described in the award of a Silver Star.

HEADQUARTERS 4TH ARMORED DIVISION
A.P.O. 254, U.S. ARMY
CITATION

The Silver Star Medal is awarded to Captain HERBERT A. HAYS, 0418803, Cavalry, 37th Tank Battalion, U. S. Army, for gallantry in action against an enemy of the United States on 11 November 1944, near Haboudange, France. A task force of Combat Command "A" moved out from the vicinity of Obreck with the mission of securing a crossing of the Saar River. The force met heavy enemy direct fire in the vicinity of Haboudange. During this encounter, Captain HAYS' tank was hit, but he continued to fight in his tank until it was hit twice more and it burst into flames. Captain HAYS was painfully wounded in the arm and shoulder, but succeeded in getting his crew out safely and started to the rear. Captain HAYS then contacted the Company Commander of "B" Company and explained to him the situation up ahead. While doing this he was again wounded, this time in the hand by a shell fragment, but he refused to leave until the Company Commander had all the details. From the time his tank was knocked out until he reached the rear, Captain HAYS gathered together some twenty odd prisoners, many of whom were still armed, and escorted them to the rear. Captain HAYS refused to be evacuated and rejoined the battalion the next morning. Captain HAYS' actions, his courage and devotion to duty, reflect great credit upon himself and the Armed Forces of the United States.

Five days after Captain Hays suffered the wounds near Haboudange. He went to see his younger brother who had been fighting nearby. He wanted to wish John a happy birthday. But he was told that John had been killed in the fighting the day before. Chet Kennedy recalled seeing a grief stricken Andy Hays that day.

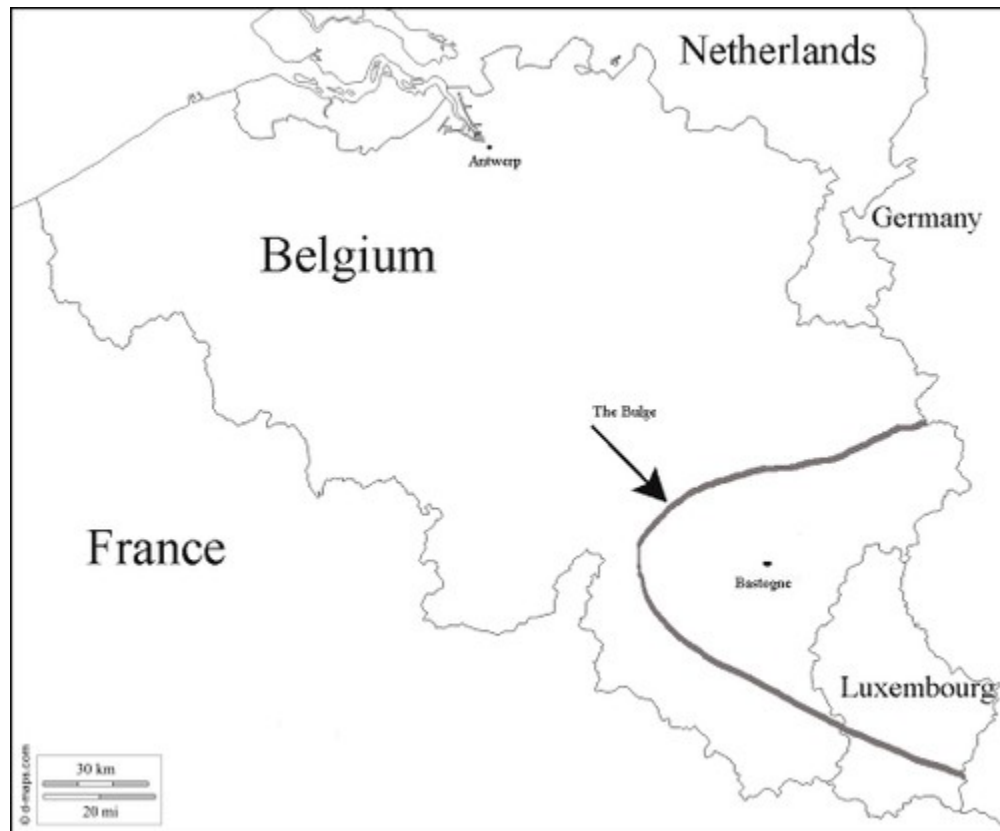


John Patrick Hays (1925-1944)

In December, some of the allies' forward lines were on German soil and the German army seemed unable to hold its ground. But train cars loaded with German troops were secretly moved from the eastern front to prepare for an attack on the allies. The goal was to retake Antwerp. On December 16, 1944, an attack on allied positions was launched along a seventy mile front. The Battle of the Bulge had begun. The allies were completely surprised and forced to retreat. At one point American soldiers who surrendered were lined up and shot. When word of that atrocity got out, some allied regiments decreed that SS troops would no longer be taken prisoner.

The German forces swiftly swept through Luxembourg and moved over twenty miles into territory previously held by the allies. American soldiers stationed in Bastogne, Belgium were surrounded. Allied casualties were high. Many prisoners were taken and sent to Germany. Among those captured and sent to Dresden was private first class Kurt Vonnegut. The famous author based his book, *Slaughter House Five*, on his time imprisoned in Dresden.

Faced with shortages of ammunition and other supplies, the German drive began to stall. The German line bulged about 30 miles, but nowhere near Antwerp. General Patton's armies, including the tanks under the command of Captains Hays and Kennedy moved in from the south to attack the German troops. They rescued the surrounded troops in Bastogne. By Christmas day, things began to turn in favor of the allies. The German troops were forced to retreat. By January 16, 1945 the German forces had moved back to the lines from which they had emerged a month earlier. But it was a much weaker German army. It had lost 100,000 men, 700 tanks and 1,600 planes. The Americans suffered comparable losses, but could recover that strength. The German forces could not and would be unable to stop advances from the east and west.



The Bulge into allied forces that were on the verge of entering German territory

Following the Battle of the Bulge, Captain Hays was sent home for 30 days to recover from his wounds. He was able to spend time with his daughter Andrea who had been born in 1942 when Hays was stationed at a base near Watertown, New York.



Captain Hays in front of his parents' home with daughter Andrea (now Andrea Laidlaw)

Hays fathered son John and gave an interview which resulted in this story in the Lansing Journal.

Tank Commander, Home on Leave, Calls Patton “Tops”

“General Patton is tops!” So declares Capt. Herbert A. Hays, 25, son of Mr. and Mrs. J. G. Hays, 605 Butterfield Drive, East Lansing, who was in the front lines in France with Lieut. Gen George Patton, Jr, as recently as December 10. Commander of a tank in the St. Lo breakthrough in the Coutances-Perriers sector and again in Patton's winter assault in the Haboudange sector, Captain Hays is back home for the first time since December, 1943, renewing acquaintance with his wife, Jean, and two-year-old daughter, Andrea Jean.

Captain Hays expects to rejoin his armored unit in a month or so and be there when the Allies finish the "Hun.!" He has a lot of respect for the German as a soldier and also respects his materiel, emphasizing his regard for the Nazis' S8-mm. gun that he believes knocked a tank out from under him in the Haboudange assaults November 11.

His military record, a remarkable one, is written in the, ribbons worn on his blouse. There is the Purple Heart ribbon with two oak leaf clusters, representing three slight wounds; the European theater ribbon, bearing bronze stars for the battles of Normandy, Brittany and Lorraine, and a third ribbon for meritorious service under fire.

Captain Hays received his original purple heart during the rugged fighting that accompanied the St. Lo breakthrough that was the signal for General Patton's forces to dash across France, stopping near Nancy only because supplies could not keep up with the rapid advance.

While directing his tank during the bitter fighting in the Coutenaces-Perriers sector, a shell fragment tore through Captain Hays' raincoat and jacket collars and "slivered off a piece of my neck." He had the wound dressed and continued in command of his tank. His second and third wounds were suffered on Armistice Day—second day of the winter breakthrough assaults by General Patton's forces. He lost his tank in the rugged fighting and the anti-tank shell that blew his vehicle out of the battle sent a fragment through his left shoulder. He hustled back to the company in the rear to report loss of his tank and, while taking cover in a ditch during heavy fire, he was wounded in the left hand. This time it was a fragment of a shell that had hit a tank about 10 yards from his shelter. All of this action was near Haboudange.

Incapacitated by the wounds in his left shoulder and hand, Captain Hays went to an aid station in the rear of the battle and had the wounds dressed. He remained there that night and rejoined his outfit the next morning, being with the division on the Third army front when a "rotation leave" was granted him. He was among 1,000 recipients of such leaves arriving aboard the Aquitania in New York January 14 who were the first group returning from battle to be given a public reception that recalled the arrival home of the World War I troops.

Like most Americans, Captain Hays was inclined to believe last September that the war could not last much longer and that the Germans must be running short of ammunition and other materiel. He has changed his mind since the winter breakthrough as he reads between the lines of news reports about Von Rundstedt's abortive offensive.

Relative to his statement about his opinion of Patton, Captain Hays said: "He's a fine officer. There is none better. He is extremely capable as he has proved in battle, and has the welfare of his men at heart at all times. We think he is tops."

A graduate of Michigan State College, Captain Hays entered the army in July, 1941, as a second lieutenant and went to Pine Lake, N.Y. to join the division with which he has fought throughout the battle of France. He did not go into Europe on D-Day but followed with his outfit in July. He is to report to Fort Sheridan Ill., February 19 and reassignment to his old unit.

Captain Hays lost a brother, Pfc. John Hays, about the middle of November in the battle of France.

By late March, American and French forces were crossing bridges over the Rhine and heading for Frankfort. British and Canadian forces were moving toward Hamburg in northern Germany.

The Russian army was moving close to Berlin. Hitler had moved his headquarters to the Chancellery in Berlin. From there, he issued a scorched earth decree. Everything of potential use to the advancing allies was to be destroyed. Fortunately for the surviving Germans, the decree was not carried out.

By April 21, Russian troops were in the outskirts of Berlin. On April 30, while Russian shells were striking the walls of the Chancellery, Hitler shot himself in the mouth. By his side was Eva Braun, Hitler's longtime mistress whom he had married forty hours earlier. The 33 year old Braun had killed herself with poison.

On May 2, the German forces in Italy formally surrendered. On May 7, 1945, in front of Eisenhower and a Soviet General, General Alfred Jodl signed a document of unconditional surrender on behalf of Germany. The shooting and bombing stopped. May 8, 1945 became V-E Day, victory in Europe.

Epilogue

The end of the shooting did not mark the end of the misery. The displaced persons included seven million people brought into Germany as slave laborers. Thousands were freed from the death camps and other concentration camps. Many of those freed soon died from malnutrition and disease.

There would be trials and executions of Nazi collaborators in all of the occupied countries. There would be trials and executions of some of those responsible for the Nazi mass murders. People would ask and still ask, "Who knew and when?"

To try to answer those questions, one needs to ponder the scope of the atrocities. The death camps (those with gas chambers and crematoria) were all in Poland and there was an effort to keep them secret. But the approximately three million exterminated in the death camps were just part of the picture. After the invasion of Russia, the people of whole towns were lined up, shot and dumped into burial pits. Over a million Russian Jews were murdered. Russian prisoners of war were also victims of mass murder. An estimated two million Russian soldiers were either executed or intentionally starved to death after they were taken prisoner.

Shortly after the Normandy invasion, on June 10, 1944, Nazi troops murdered everyone they could find in the French village of Oradour-sur-Glane. 642 men, women and children were killed there. After the killings, the German troops partially razed the village. The original Oradour-sur-Glane was not rebuilt and serves as a monument to the atrocity.



2011 Andrea Laidlaw photograph of Oradour-sur-Glane

Atrocities on such a scale required the participation of thousands who had to know of the horrors. As the Red Army advanced toward Germany some of the mass killing burial pits were excavated by German soldiers and the remains destroyed so they wouldn't be discovered. As the Soviet forces moved into Poland, the gassing stopped and an effort was made to conceal the gas chambers and crematoria. But those in charge of the Majdanek death camp in Poland failed to destroy its infrastructure before it was captured by Soviet forces on July 22, 1944. There were camp survivors who could describe the camp horrors. At that point, the outside world and perhaps even German civilians began to learn of the "final solution." In September of 1944, three of those in charge of Majdanek were tried and executed. It was the first of the war crimes trials that would go on for decades.

Technology played a big role in the war. The British advances in radar made it possible to detect Luftwaffe bombers as soon as they took off. Using a precursor of modern computers, the British were able to crack German codes. That code breaking revealed that the allied invasion was expected in the Pas de Calais rather than in Normandy.

Near the end of the war Germany was deploying jet planes which might have helped it regain air superiority if available sooner. But the masterpiece of German technology was the V2 rocket developed under the leadership of Wernher von Braun. After the end of the war, the United States acquired that technology by bringing von Braun to America. He was responsible for developing the Saturn V launch vehicle that propelled the Apollo spacecraft to the moon.

Fortunately for the rest of the world, Nazi Germany had not developed an atomic weapon that could be placed in a V2 warhead. The great nuclear physicist Albert Einstein had been expelled from Germany because of his race. Fear of the German development of an atomic bomb was a motivating factor for the Manhattan Project which led to the American development of the bomb. However, German progress in developing the bomb had not gone far by the end of the war. One can only imagine what the world would look like if such a weapon had been in the hands of a man who would declare a scorched earth policy in his own country.

Only one member of that June 1941 wedding party who went to war failed to survive the conflict. By the war's end, Andy Hays had been promoted to the rank of major. He left the army and returned to East Lansing. He started employment as a teller for a Lansing bank and rose through the ranks to become the president. After he retired from the bank, he and Jean moved to Marco Island Florida. His body still carried much of the shrapnel of his war wounds. He was in his seventies when he concluded that the shrapnel in his thumb and palm of his left hand was getting in the way of his golf game; so he had the shrapnel surgically removed. He died on April 28, 1994

Charles Leighton was the navigator on the Memphis Belle for her 25 bombing missions over Europe. He returned to East Lansing and became a junior high school science teacher. He played himself in the 1944 documentary *The Memphis Belle: A Story of a Flying Fortress*. (The 1990 Hollywood *Memphis Belle* movie was fiction. It was supposedly inspired by the real Memphis Belle saga.)



Captain Leighton is sixth from the left with the rest of the Memphis Belle crew. (public domain photo)

Chet Kennedy was promoted to colonel and stayed in the Army. After he retired from the army, he returned to East Lansing. Andy Hays made him an officer of the bank. In his retirement home in East Lansing, Kennedy gave the author many details regarding his and Hays' war activities. Kennedy died in 2014 at age 98. He was the last surviving member of the Andy and Jean Hays wedding party.

Acknowledgements

Graham Smith, Rob van der Voo, Symon Rankine, Adrian Wylie, John di Falco, Jim Stormonth, Chet Kennedy and Andrea Laidlaw helped identify many of the photos and provided other bits of history. Photos taken by Andy Hays, Andrea Laidlaw, and unnamed German soldiers helped illustrate this abbreviated history of the Second World War in Europe.

More detailed descriptions on World War II in Europe can be found in the following works which the author found helpful:

William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, Simon and Schuster, 1960

Russell F. Weigley, *Eisenhower's Lieutenants*, Indiana University Press, 1980

Stephen E. Ambrose, *D-Day*, Simon and Schuster. 1994

Edward G. Miller, *A Dark and Bloody Ground*, Texas A&M University Press,, 1995

Rick Atkinson, *The Guns at Last Light*, Henry Holt and Co, 2013