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## U.S. Army Contributions to American Natural Science 1864-1890

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While on active duty at posts across the nation and in Latin America, the Pacific, and the Near East, a number of late nineteenth-century U.S. Army and Navy officers and enlisted personnel engaged in significant scientific work. Some of them made major contributions to the natural sciences. Even in the pre-Civil War era, the activities of Army personnel helped persuade the federal government to create natural history collections and to display them to the public. This study examines the range of these activities in the natural sciences, focusing on the careers of three men, George Wheeler, Elliott Coues, and Edward Nelson, who served in different branches of the Army during and after the Civil War. (1)

Setting the stage for a century of exploration, Army Captains Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, at the request of President Thomas Jefferson, led the federal government's first (1804-06) scientific expedition to the West. They returned with carefully crafted manuscript maps of their route, together with large quantities of geographical, astronomical, ethnological, and biological data, and they did it all with just \$2,500 of the taxpayers' money. This scientific adventure set a historic precedent. Over the next seventy-five years, other Army officers would be placed in charge of their own expeditions, though never again with such an astonishingly small outlay of federal funds.

Since the federal government had not a single scientist or museum in 1806, Jefferson was obliged to send most of the artifacts and animal specimens brought back by Lewis and Clark to a private museum in Philadelphia. Founded and operated by Charles Willson Peale, a former Revolutionary War officer and

saddlemaker, the museum benefited from his abilities as a self-taught artist, taxidermist, and entrepreneur. Peale's museum accepted as a donation the artifacts and specimens from the Western trip, a modest-size collection. (2)

Over the next sixty-five years, the federal government underwrote a number of other exploratory expeditions, virtually all of them headed by relatively junior Army and Navy officers. These young men, propelled by curiosity and the challenge of the unknown, led civilian volunteers and assigned military personnel to various destinations in the Far West, the Pacific Ocean, the interior of Latin America, and the Middle East. Their efforts resulted in much hard-won but valuable astronomical, meteorological, biological, and ethnographic data. (3)

Jefferson Davis, secretary of war under President Franklin Pierce (1853-1857), initiated the Pacific railway surveys, which sought the most promising routes for railway construction to the West Coast, anticipating the strong population expansion in that region. By this time, the nation had a central scientific agency, the Smithsonian Institution, established in 1846. Four years later, Congress created the United States National Museum, which was housed for many years in the redstone castle building on the Mall in Washington, D.C.

The National Museum was headed by the first professional natural scientist hired by the federal government. Spencer Fullerton Baird was a civilian from Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Named assistant secretary of the Smithsonian in 1850 at the age of twenty-seven, he succeeded to the office of secretary in 1878 and died while still in that position at the age of sixty-four. Baird's own research interests focused on birds and mammals, but he encouraged the collection of all manner of organisms, primarily vertebrates. For reasons of health, Baird himself did not often go into the field, but

he persuaded the young Army topographical engineers leading railway survey parties either to collect natural history specimens for him or to include naturalists with their expeditions.

During and after the Civil War, Baird also encouraged young protégés across the United States and in Canada, both military and civilian, to collect specimens and natural history information. He helped them with careful instructions, government manuals (many of which he wrote), specimen labels, India ink, alcohol for preserving smaller animal specimens, and similar equipment. However, he offered little or no cash, for he was extremely conservative with the government's money. Baird also provided valuable mentoring to those young men (and a handful of young women), making sure their names and accomplishments appeared in his printed reports. (4)

Baird often was able to secure temporary positions for these protégés on various private or government-sponsored expeditions where the services of naturalists could be useful, always with the understanding that some portion of what was collected would come back to the Smithsonian. In this fashion, he began to build up the federal government's collections of vertebrate specimens, which today are among the best in the world.

Many American naturalists and zoologists who came to prominence in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries owed their youthful start to Baird's encouragement of their interests. (5)

On the basis of all the specimens and data that came to him from various sources, Baird contributed substantially to the government's twelve-volume series of Pacific railroad survey reports and was the primary author of classic monographs on North American mammals (1858) and North American birds (1859). He also wrote his *History of North American Birds* (1875–1884) with the aid of two other ornithologists. One of them, Robert Ridgway, was the first full-time bird expert on the government's payroll. These books and rapidly growing collections initiated a new era of scientific study of natural history in the United States. Baird also took time to lead the U.S. Fish Commission (now part of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) beginning in 1871, and in 1875 the internationally known Marine Biological Laboratory at Wood's Hole, Massachusetts. He died, reportedly of exhaustion from overwork, in 1887. (6)

#### George M. Wheeler

Three of Baird's protégés were New Englanders, each interesting in a different way. George Montague



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Wheeler (1842-1905) was born in Massachusetts but appointed from Colorado to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, where he showed early promise by graduating sixth in the class of 1866. Assigned to the Corps of Engineers, Wheeler spent two years building defensive fortifications in San Francisco harbor. In 1868, he persuaded the newly arrived commander of the District of California, Maj. Gen. Edward O. C. Ord, to let him lead several surveys over the next several years in parts of Nevada and Arizona.

Wheeler found that the time was ripe for entering the field of surveying. Before 1861, the scientific exploration of the West had been the Army's responsibility exclusively. Now, senior officers such as Brig. Gen. Andrew A. Humphreys, the postwar chief of engineers, wanted to reenter the field. The Army in 1865 had a substantial investment in the West, with 130 of its 169 active posts located west of the Mississippi River. In addition, a number of Western congressmen were interested in mining development. In response to this widespread interest, Wheeler was encouraged to seek out and map some of the most promising sites for this enterprise. A third impetus to exploration was a personal one. Wheeler and some of his military superiors had, themselves, invested in certain mining ventures. By the time Wheeler's survey concluded its work in 1879, he had identified and mapped 219 mining districts in the West. (7)

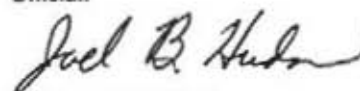
The principal objective of the Wheeler Survey, however, was the preparation of good topographic maps of the West. These had practical value in countering hostile Indian activities and in encouraging settlement and business enterprise. The immediate usefulness of Wheeler's explorations contrasted with the geological focus of the three other postwar surveys. The Army leadership regarded the efforts led by John Wesley Powell, Clarence King, and Ferdinand V. Hayden as more theoretical in nature. By 1872, Wheeler had persuaded Congress to let him map the territories west of a line running south from what is now central North Dakota through central Texas. That same year, his operations became known officially as the United States Geographical Surveys West of the 100th Meridian.

The first person to develop and employ topographic mapping in his work, Wheeler annually ran several survey groups. After 1875, there were separate California and Colorado divisions, each with three to five

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separate parties in the field. His military survey personnel included some of the Military Academy's outstanding graduates, including Rogers Birnie, who stood first in the class of 1872 and would later become acting chief of ordnance, and Willard Young, a son of Mormon leader Brigham Young, who ranked fourth in the class of 1875. Other uniformed personnel included Henry Crecy Yarrow, whose career as an Army surgeon-naturalist extended over thirty years. (8)

Some outstanding civilian scientists also served at various times with Wheeler's survey, including Grove K. Gilbert, a leading American geologist; Edward Drinker Cope, one of America's three outstanding paleontologists of the nineteenth century; and Henry W. Henshaw, a Baird protégé, ornithologist, and later second chief of the U.S. Biological Survey. By 1879, Wheeler's survey parties had mapped nearly half a million square miles of land, and had sorted some 175,000 of these into four categories—agricultural, timberland, pasturage, and arid or barren land—for use by other government agencies. There was, to be sure, much duplication of the work done by the three other active surveys in the field, but Wheeler and his superiors insisted that the Army's particular needs and survey objectives justified his proceeding as planned. (9)

Some of Wheeler's accomplishments were purely serendipitous. One incident involved Lt. William L. Marshall, a member of one of Wheeler's parties in 1873. This young man was working in the San Juan Mountains of southwestern Colorado when he developed an excruciating toothache. The nearest dentist was believed to be in Denver, 300 miles away by the overland route. Marshall, in great pain, insisted there had to be a shorter way. He remembered a possible alternative route in terrain covered earlier that summer. Leaving the survey party, Marshall, with one other man, located and traversed it. The two spent six days on the trail, cutting 125 miles off the distance to Denver. The pass they discovered and used has since been named Marshall Pass. (10)

During his career, Wheeler's survey and his methods of leadership encountered considerable criticism, not all of it warranted. Many scientists who had worked with him argued that the Army's way of doing business and the scientific method of accomplishing field work were, to put it simply, incompatible. In Wheeler's defense, some of his scientists, notably Cope, could be

proud, difficult people to work with, and sometimes egregiously slow in completing their reports. Some of the early maps produced by Wheeler's people were judged slapdash or inadequate, but Wheeler's mapmakers learned as they worked, and later maps proved quite competently done. Wheeler also was dogged by persistent—though unsubstantiated—press accounts of his cruelty to civilian employees and guides while pushing to achieve his objectives. In fact, there remain, without adequate explanation, several instances of civilian guides and others missing in the field.

Wheeler's judgment came under fire in other ways, as in 1871 when he insisted on exploring by boat 222 miles of the Colorado River upstream from Fort Mojave to Diamond River. Wheeler's objectives were clear. He sought to determine if the head of navigation could be extended further up the Colorado and to assess to what extent the river might be utilized in irrigating and reclaiming the surrounding region. He also hoped to locate possible wagon trails through the area. None of this could be done except by going upstream, but the trip proved so hazardous that very little could be accomplished, and Wheeler's party went far beyond the head of navigation.

The outcome of the trip is well documented. Wheeler's boat, the first of three, overturned in rapids in the Grand Canyon, resulting in the loss of rations, equipment, notebooks, specimens, and painstakingly-prepared drawings. Fortunately, no personnel sustained serious injury, but food was critically short during the last five days that Wheeler and his men were in the boats. Following this misadventure, the twenty-nine-year-old Wheeler stood accused of ordering the trip unnecessarily—as a youthful exploit—especially since a thorough reconnaissance of most of the same territory had been made two years previously by Powell. Gilbert, the geologist on this ill-fated trip, complained that Wheeler insisted on traveling too fast for him to document the spectacular rock formations. Wheeler's later accounts of this incident indicate a somewhat embarrassed obfuscation. Yet, the expedition did arrive at its destination point, and it met the overland parties as scheduled. Wheeler's judgment doubtless improved with maturity. (11)

Rivalry between exploration leaders was unavoidable. Its effects were both good and bad. On the one hand, competition spurred each group to work doggedly and to risk danger to gain a share of history. On the other

hand, unfortunately, the men involved were strong characters with large egos. For example, Hayden, the leader of a rival effort, once said to Yarrow of Wheeler's group, "you can tell Wheeler that if he stirs a finger or attempts to interfere with me or my survey in any way, I will utterly crush him—as I have enough congressional influence to do so and will bring it to bear." Other rival survey leaders were taking potshots at Wheeler at the same time.

Congressional committees in 1874 and 1878 inquired into the accomplishments and leadership of all four surveys, their overlapping field work, and the continuing bickering between survey leaders. This finally led to the appointment by the National Academy of Sciences of a committee that was strongly biased against the concept of Army-led surveys. That committee recommended the creation of a single United States Geological Survey under civilian leadership, and Congress accepted the recommendation. The landmark agency was created in 1879, and King became its first chief, with Powell succeeding to the post two years later. (12)

Despite the physical disability brought on by Wheeler's years in the field, the Army permitted him to remain on active duty until 1888, working when he could to complete his publication program. Never one to be accused of modesty, he later claimed that had he been allowed to complete his original assignment at the initial pace, he would have mapped 1.5 million square miles by 1887. In reality, the U.S. Geological Survey, with its greater resources, was not able to complete the task of mapping the American West until the 1950s. Wheeler did manage to complete about a third of his original assignment, at a cost of about \$496,000. However, many of his maps were later discarded by the Geological Survey without adequate explanation.

Wheeler's annual and special reports, all published by 1889, totaled twenty-five volumes and included outstanding studies of paleontological research by Cope and works on mammals and birds by Elliott Coues, to name just two of the more outstanding. A massive study of vertebrate fossils by Cope remained unfinished, only because the chair of the National Academy of Sciences' committee, Othniel C. Marsh, happened to be Cope's great rival in paleontology, and Marsh effectively blocked its publication. Wheeler was promoted on the retired list to major in 1890 and died fifteen years later, deeply

unhappy because his survey had been prematurely terminated. (13)

### **Elliott Coues**

Elliott Coues (1842–1899), a New Hampshire native, was one of Baird's better-known protégés. He originally came to Washington in the 1850s as the son of a federal employee. Coues completed his undergraduate work and medical school at Columbian (now George Washington) University in 1862, when he was twenty. At twenty-one, he became an Army medical cadet, and, the following year, received his commission as an assistant surgeon. He already was a noted ornithologist, having published an important monograph to critical acclaim when only nineteen years of age. (14)

Coues' first duty station was Fort Whipple, Arizona. His primary responsibility was to suture soldiers wounded in confrontations with the Indians, but otherwise his time was his own. Many Army doctors on the frontier read books, played cards, loafed, or else turned to drink, but Edgar Hume has identified thirty-six Army surgeons who became actively interested in the local bird fauna where they were stationed. Coues was one of those encouraged by Baird to observe and collect vertebrates of all kinds. In this context, "collect" was a euphemism used by zoologists when they shot, trapped, or otherwise dispatched animals needed for study purposes. This activity was far more common in the last century than it is today, when photography and other means of establishing sight records and the geographical distribution of birds are in wide use.

Naturalists particularly needed a spirit of adventure on the frontier, because, as one of them later put it, they were collectors in danger of themselves being collected by disaffected Native Americans. As Coues wrote, "practical ornithology in Arizona was a very precarious matter, always liable to sudden interruption, and altogether too spicy for comfort." Statistically, however, naturalists may have been better off than ordinary soldiers or citizens, because Indians often could not fathom why rational men would sit down in the wilderness to carefully skin and stuff small birds and animals. The native peoples tended to treat with great respect those whose mental balance appeared to be lost. They believed such persons to be in close touch with supernatural forces. (15)

Coues was a competent surgeon and an extraordi-

narily proficient naturalist, but his commanding officer had to admonish him about firing his "collecting" rifle without checking to see what hostiles might be provoked into attack by the sound of his weapon. This officer finally detailed several unenthusiastic enlisted men to follow Coues around to prevent him from causing harm. Their duty had its risks. One hot day in the desert, two thirsty privates awaiting Coues' return from a bird hunt broke open a small wooden keg he had left in their care. They took turns drinking the contents, which were satisfyingly alcoholic, until one of them encountered the pickled bird and reptile specimens at the bottom. (16)

Coues spent nearly two decades in the Army, alternating between tours of duty in the field and assignments in Washington, D.C., where he usually wrote his many books and articles. Baird was helpful in facilitating these changes of post, though he tended to keep his protégé at arm's length because of Coues' difficult personality and untidy personal life. The Army also was very cooperative. Coues was stationed at Fort Macon, North Carolina (1869-70), and at Fort Randall, North Dakota (1873). From 1873 to 1876 he was surgeon-naturalist to the Northern Boundary Survey, which was marking the borderline between Canada and the United States westward. From 1876 to 1880, Coues served as secretary-naturalist to the Hayden Survey. From 1877 until 1886, part of this time while on active duty with the Army, he held an appointment as professor of anatomy at Columbian University.

In retrospect, Coues appears a prolific, felicitous, and occasionally contentious author. Thirty-seven volumes on zoology and history, plus nearly 1,000 papers, reviews, and notes accumulated to his credit. His work appeared among the reports of three of the four Western surveys. Coues' *Key to North American Birds* went through five editions and was still in print in the 1920s, a quarter-century after his death. He also wrote several regional accounts of birds and parts of several massive tomes on mammals. Two projects he never completed were intended to be all-inclusive bibliographies of American and British ornithology. (17)

In the early 1880s, the Army changed its long-standing policy of cooperation with the Smithsonian and the Western surveys. The Army's decision occurred in response to the civilianization of the new Geological Survey, which abandoned all natural history work except paleontology. Natural history would later be taken

up by another federal office, the U.S. Biological Survey.

These governmental changes brought Coues' Army career to an end. It must be said that his superiors may also have lost patience with his marital difficulties. He was sent back to Arizona in 1880, after several months of futile efforts to secure an assignment more in line with his interests, and in 1881 resigned his commission as surgeon and brevet captain. Between 1884 and 1891 Coues wrote some 40,000 zoological, biological, and anatomical definitions for the *Century Dictionary*. For a time in the mid-1880s, he was an enthusiastic student of physical research and a practicing theosophist, a phase of his life that ended abruptly following an unsuccessful struggle for leadership of this movement in the United States. During the last decade of his life, he edited fifteen volumes of early accounts of travel in the American West, most of them previously unpublished. The most famous of these was his edited version of an earlier history of the Lewis and Clark Expedition that was published in four volumes in 1893 and was still in print after a century. (18)

#### Edward W. Nelson

A very different character was Edward William Nelson, born in New Hampshire in 1855. His father, a butcher, was killed during the Civil War, and his mother was for a time an Army nurse. She later moved to Chicago with her two sons, where she supported her family as a dressmaker. Edward Nelson developed a strong interest in natural history during boyhood years spent in New Hampshire and New York. He went through Chicago public schools and graduated from the Cook County Normal School in 1875. He spent much of the summer and fall of 1872 observing and collecting birds in the Rocky Mountains and in California. During the next several years, while studying and teaching, he met several individuals who encouraged his interests in natural history and who, in 1876, put him in touch with Baird at the Smithsonian. Baird was friendly and supportive but had no immediate natural history openings to suggest. Nelson took some zoology courses at Johns Hopkins while he waited for something to become available. (19)

The next year, when Nelson was twenty-two, Baird advised him of an opportunity to go to Alaska. If Nelson would be willing to enlist as a private in the Army Signal Corps and to record weather observations, there would

be spare time for making natural history collections. Nelson underwent a month of training at Fort Myer, Virginia, but, as one of his friends later put it, Nelson "lacked enthusiasm for the school of the soldier and was soon excused from military duty." He arrived in Alaska in late April 1877 and spent four years at St. Michael, then a fur trading community of eight buildings on a small offshore island halfway up the western coast of the territory. The other permanent residents consisted of two or three agents of the fur trading company and a Russian workman who cared for the dogs and kept the men supplied with driftwood for their fires during the long, bitterly cold winter months. In winter, Nelson traveled to neighboring areas by dog sled, making his weather observations and collecting natural history specimens. A keen observer of whatever he found about him, he eventually explored several hundred miles of the coast and penetrated a considerable distance inland, ultimately logging 4,000 miles by dog sled and kayak. Some of this travel was extremely hazardous, and on several occasions he came close to losing his life. (20)

In June 1881 when his four-year tour as weather observer ended, special arrangements were made for Nelson to board the revenue steamer *Corwin*, whose crew was en route to the Arctic Ocean searching for several missing private sealing ships. Nelson was able to visit or observe much of the Alaska coast as far north as Point Barrow and several points on the neighboring Siberian coast, where one stranded crew of sailors was located and rescued. During his years in Alaska, Nelson assiduously bartered for virtually every Eskimo artifact he could carry away, eventually earning among the native people a nickname meaning "the man who buys good-for-nothing things." A century later, however, in 1983, the Smithsonian mounted a major exhibition of the materials Nelson brought back to Washington. His is still considered the largest and best Eskimo collection extant. Nelson sometimes found that his zoological and ethnographic interests intertwined, as when he discovered that the raven was considered by the natives to be not only the father of mankind, but the progenitor of all life. (21)

Nelson's reports on his zoological findings were published in 1883 and 1887; his 518-page monograph on the Eskimos was printed in 1899 and reissued in 1982. On his return from Alaska, Nelson underwent bouts of pneumonia and tuberculosis. He recovered,

although thereafter he suffered from a heart condition. In 1890 he began a new career as a mammalogist and ornithologist with the U.S. Biological Survey. His many years of field work included fourteen spent conducting a biological reconnaissance of Mexico with a younger colleague, and they culminated in his appointment as the Biological Survey's third chief, a post he held from 1916 until his retirement in 1927. (22)

The Army's active support of natural science work largely ended after the 1890s, except where pertinent to the Army's mission. Edward A. Goldman, for example, another Biological Survey mammalogist who had worked with Nelson in Mexico, was commissioned a major and sent to France during World War I. He was asked to use his knowledge of animals while assigned to oversee sanitation and rat control at Army cantonments. (23)

This brief retrospective examination demonstrates that the Army's leadership in advancing American natural science was of critical importance during the nineteenth century. These examples demonstrate that much was accomplished that probably would not have happened as early as it did without the Army's active sponsorship and assistance. The Army's prominent role will deserve far greater emphasis as new historical syntheses of early American developments in zoology, botany, and natural history are written in coming years.

## NOTES

*The author's notes have been somewhat abridged. The complete notes may be obtained by writing to the managing editor.*

1. Standard works on Army and Navy exploration and scientific activity in the nineteenth century include three books by William H. Goetzmann, *Army Exploration in the American West, 1803-1863* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959); *Exploration and Empire: The Explorer and the Scientist in the Winning of the American West* (New York: Knopf, 1966); and *New Lands, New Men: America and the Second Great Age of Discovery* (New York: Viking, 1986); as well as Richard A. Bartlett, *Great Surveys of the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962); Vincent Ponko, Jr., *Ships, Seas, and Scientists: U.S. Naval Exploration and Discovery in the Nineteenth Century*

(Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1974); John D. Kazar, "The United States Navy and Scientific Exploration, 1837–1860" (Ph.D. diss., University of Massachusetts, 1973); and John P. Harrison, "Science and Politics: Origins and Objectives of Mid-Nineteenth Century Government Expeditions to Latin America," *Hispanic-American Historical Review* 35 (May 1955): 175–202.

A. Hunter Dupree, *Science in the Federal Government: A History of Politics and Activities to 1940* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957), provides a valuable larger context for Army science in the nineteenth century.

2. On the Lewis and Clark expedition, see Stephen E. Ambrose, *Undoubted Courage: Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, and the Opening of the American West* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996); and Paul Cutright, *Lewis and Clark, Pioneering Naturalists* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1969). Charles C. Sellers' *Mr. Peale's Museum: Charles Willson Peale and the First Popular Museum of Natural Science and Art* (New York: Norton, 1980) is the standard work on Peale's museum.

3. Stephen H. Long, Zebulon Pike, and John C. Fremont were noteworthy Army explorers prior to the Civil War. See Maxine Benson, ed., *From Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains: Major Stephen Long's Expedition, 1819–1820* (Golden, Colo.: Fulcrum, 1988), and Richard G. Wood, *Stephen Harriman Long, Army Engineer, Explorer, Inventor* (Glendale, Calif.: Arthur Clark, 1966), on Long; Donald Jackson, ed., *Journals of Zebulon Montgomery Pike, with Letters and Related Documents*, 2 vols. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966), on Pike; and Allan Nevins, *Fremont: Pathmaker of the West* (New York: Longmans, 1939 [reprint 1955]); the ongoing publication by Donald Jackson and Mary Lee Spence, *The Expeditions of John Charles Fremont* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970–); and Ferol Egan, *Fremont: Explorer for a Restless Nation* (Garden City, N.J.: Doubleday, 1977), on Fremont. William Stanton, *The Great United States Exploring Expedition of 1838–1842* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975) is the standard text on the first federally sponsored exploring expedition outside the United States. The contributions to natural history of each of the above-named individuals will be discussed and updated bibliographies provided in the forthcoming Keir B. Sterling et al., eds., *Biographical Dictionary of American and*

*Canadian Naturalists and Environmentalists* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1997).

4. E. F. Rivinus and E. M. Youssef, *Spencer Baird of the Smithsonian* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992); Dean C. Allard, *Spencer Fullerton Baird and the U.S. Fish Commission: A Study in the History of American Science* (New York: Arno Press, 1974); William A. Deiss, "The Making of a Naturalist: Spencer F. Baird, the Early Years," in Alwyne Wheeler and James H. Price, eds., *From Linnaeus to Darwin: Commentaries on the History of Biology and Geology* (London: Society for the History of Natural History, 1985), pp. 141–48; "Spencer F. Baird and His Collectors," *Journal of the Society for the Bibliography of Natural History* 9, pt. 4 (Apr 80): 635–45; Debra J. Lindsay, "Science in the Sub-Arctic: Traders, Trappers, and the Smithsonian Institution, 1859–1870" (Ph.D. diss., University of Manitoba, 1989).

5. See especially Rivinus and Youssef, *Spencer Baird of the Smithsonian*, and Lindsay, "Science in the Sub-Arctic."

6. *Reports of Explorations and Surveys to Ascertain the Most Practicable and Economical Route for a Railroad from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean*, 12 vols. (Washington: A.O.P. Nicholson, 1855–60); the monographs on mammals and birds were vols. 8–9 of those reports. See also Harry Harris, "Robert Ridgway: With a Bibliography of His Published Writings and Fifty Illustrations," *Condor* 30 (Jan–Feb 28): 5–118.

7. The only published biography of Wheeler is Doris Ostrander Dawdy, *George Montague Wheeler: The Man and the Myth*, (Athens, Ohio: Swallow Press/Ohio University Press, 1993). See especially ch. 3–5. See also C. E. Dewing, "The Wheeler Survey Records: A Study in Archival Anomaly," *The American Archivist* 27 (Apr 64); Thomas G. Manning, *Government in Science: The U.S. Geological Survey, 1867–1894* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1967), ch. 2; Bartlett, *Great Surveys of the American West*, ch. 17; Frank N. Schubert, *Vanguard of Expansion: Army Engineers in the Trans-Mississippi West, 1819–1879* (Fort Belvoir, Va.: Historical Division, Office of the Chief of Engineers, 1987), pp. 140–49; and Goetzmann, *Exploration and Empire*, ch. 13.

8. For biographies of Wheeler's competitors and colleagues, see Thurman Wilkins, *Clarence King*, rev. ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico



- Press, 1988); William Culp Darrah, *Powell of the Colorado* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1951); Wallace Stegner, *Beyond the Hundredth Meridian: John Wesley Powell and the Second Opening of the West* (Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin, 1953); and Clifford M. Nelson, Mary C. Rabbitt, and Fritiof M. Fryxell, "Ferdinand Vandiveer Hayden: The U.S. Geological Survey Years, 1879–1886," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 125, no. 3 (Jun 81). On Birnie, see Dawdy, *Wheeler: Man and Myth*, pp. 73–74; and Keir B. Sterling, *Serving the Line With Excellence: The Development of the U.S. Army Ordnance Corps as Expressed Through the Lives of its Chiefs of Ordnance, 1812–1992* (Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md.: Training and Doctrine Command Historical Studies, 1992), pp. 43–44. On Yarrow, see Edgar E. Hume, *Ornithologists of the United States Army Medical Corps* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1942), ch. 36.
9. For biographies of Wheeler's civilian colleagues, see Henry Fairfield Osborn, *Cope: Master Naturalist* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1931); Stephen J. Pyne, *Grove Karl Gilbert: A Great Engine of Research* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1980); Edward William Nelson, "Henry Wetherbee Henshaw-Naturalist," *The Auk* 49 (Oct 32): 399–427; Henry W. Henshaw, "Autobiographical Notes," *Condor* 21 (May–Dec 19): 102–07, 165–81, 217–22, and 22 (Jan–Jun 20): 3–10, 55–60, 95–101.
10. Bartlett, *Great Surveys of the American West*, pp. 371–72.
11. Schubert, *Vanguard of Expansion*, pp. 140–46; Bartlett, *Great Surveys of the American West*, pp. 342–48, 354–56; Goetzmann, *Exploration and Empire*, pp. 474–77; Dawdy, *Wheeler: Man and Myth*, p. 39. Lt. Joseph Christmas Ives (1828–1868), a topographical engineer who had begun his military career as an ordnance officer, had in 1858 become the first American citizen to descend to the floor of the Grand Canyon.
12. Schubert, *Vanguard of Expansion*, pp. 145–49; Bartlett, *Great Surveys of the American West*, pp. 368–70; Goetzmann, *Exploration and Empire*, pp. 479–88, with the Hayden quotation on p. 479; Dawdy, *Wheeler: Man and Myth*, pp. 59–62, 68–70.
13. Schubert, *Vanguard of Expansion*, pp. 145–49; Dawdy, *Wheeler: Man and Myth*, pp. 68–76 and 78–80; Peter Guth, Obituary of G. M. Wheeler in *Assembly* 40 (Dec 81): 124; Edwin H. Colbert, *Men and Dinosaurs: The Search in Field and Laboratory* (New York: Dutton, 1968), pp. 66–90 and 97–98; Uri Lanham, *The Bone Hunters* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), pp. 225–28, 231–34, and 244–69. On Marsh, see Charles Schuchert and Clara Mae Levene, *O.C. Marsh, Pioneer in Paleontology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940).
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15. Michael Brodhead, *A Soldier Scientist in the American Southwest: Being a Narrative of the Travels of Elliott Coues, Assistant Surgeon, U.S.A., with his Observations on Natural History*, Historical Monograph no. 1 (Tucson: Arizona Historical Society, 1973). Joel Asaph Allen (1838–1921) was the naturalist who made the point about the danger of collectors themselves being collected by Native Americans. See his *Autobiographical Notes and a Bibliography of the Scientific Publications of Joel Asaph Allen* (New York: American Museum of Natural History, 1916); and Frank M. Chapman, "Biographical Memoir of Joel Asaph Allen," *National Academy of Sciences Memoirs* 21 (1926): 1–20.
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17. Cutright and Brodhead, *Elliott Coues*, ch. 1–16.
18. *Ibid.*, ch. 17–26. The earlier history of the U.S. Biological Survey is described in Jenks Cameron, *The Bureau of Biological Survey: Its History, Activities, and Organization* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1929), and in two publications by Keir B. Sterling, *Last of the Naturalists: The Career of C. Hart Merriam*, rev. ed. (New York: Arno, 1977), and "Builders of the Biological Survey, 1885–1930," *Journal of Forest History* 33, no. 4 (Oct 89): 180–87.
19. Paul Oehser, "Edward William Nelson—The Formative Years," in a new edition of E. W. Nelson, *Lower California and Its Natural Resources* (Riverside, Calif.: Manessier, 1966).
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(1954): 5–16; Morgan B. Sherwood, *Exploration of Alaska, 1865–1900* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), pp. 93–96.

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E. C. Birney and J. R. Choate, eds., *Seventy-Five Years of Mammalogy (1919–1994)*, (Provo, Utah: American Society of Mammalogists, 1994), ch. entitled "Presidents;" and Ewan and Ewan, *Rocky Mountain Naturalists*, p. 161. Nelson's later career is discussed in Donald C. Swain, *Federal Conservation Policy, 1921–1933*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963).

23. Stanley P. Young, "Edward Alphonso Goldman, 1873–1946," *Journal of Mammalogy* 28, no. 1 (1947): 91–109; Birney and Choate, *Seventy-Five Years of Mammalogy*, ch. entitled "Presidents;" and Ewan and Ewan, *Rocky Mountain Naturalists*, p. 86.

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### Editor's Journal

This issue features two articles that examine the intersection of military history with the sciences. Keir Sterling discusses the contributions of a group of U.S. Army officer and enlisted personnel who accomplished significant work in the natural sciences in the nineteenth century. John Bennett looks at how the British Eighth Army practiced medicine as it fought in Italy during World War II. Also featured are the latest and most extensive contributions to the on-going debate over whether the popular book by Guy Sajer, *The Forgotten Soldier*, should be judged a memoir or a work of historical fiction. The issue includes a selection of poetry that expresses directly and powerfully the emotions of an American participant in the First World War. It concludes with reviews of recent books on a considerable range of military history topics.

Readers should be aware that a concern for the prudent shepherding of limited resources leads the Center to ask those who wish to continue receiving this bulletin to affirm their current interest by responding to the questions on the last page and to return that page to the Center. Those who do not respond will be removed from the mailing list.

As *Army History's* new editor, I invite readers to send me imaginative essays on any aspect of the history of the U.S. Army and the experiences of its service members, or on any historical developments that substantially influenced American thought or practice relative to land combat. I believe that a historical bulletin should encourage innovative approaches to familiar topics and new modes of conceptualizing past trends and events. I also believe that brief accounts of striking or poignant episodes can often convey to readers as much meaning as elaborate, tightly reasoned analyses. I will thus welcome concise submissions and personal narratives as well as articles of broader scope.

In closing, I believe that I convey the sentiments of the entire *Army History* readership in expressing sincere gratitude to my predecessor Arnold Fisch for the care and thought he continuously dedicated to this publication for so many years.

Charles Hendricks

## The Chief's Corner

### John W. (Jack) Mountcastle

We had a busy summer! The Center is well into the "3 R's" of Reducing our size, Reorganizing internally, and preparing to Relocate next summer. Most of the employees in "surplus" positions have been placed in their new jobs within the National Capital Area. Colonel Clyde Jonas has implemented our plan to consolidate the former Histories Division and Research and Analysis Division. He is also working closely with the Corps of Engineers and the Military District of Washington to ensure that construction at our new site on Fort McNair proceeds as planned. Through all of this activity, we have fought hard for the dollar resources we need to operate the Center in support of the Army History Program and to meet our payroll after the start of the new Fiscal Year on 1 October 1997. This has been an uphill battle, with our Deputy Chief, Colonel Steve Wilson, leading the team effort. LTG John Dubia, the Director of the Army Staff, has continued to do the heavy lifting on behalf of CMH at HQDA.

Our situation isn't unique among downsizing organizations, but it is the one about which we are most concerned. Part of the challenge we have faced has been competing with many other programs for dollars that are very scarce in Fiscal Year 1998. No longer able to anticipate incremental funding as the year progresses (as we did previously), we now have to have our operating funds up front. About 83 per cent of our operating budget goes directly to civilian pay. Without the funding necessary to pay our staff, we will not be able to recruit and hire historians to fill authorized vacancies. We are working with the Army Staff and Secretariat to ensure a viable Center throughout the budget year of execution.

In late August we received news that the planned realignment of the Center with the Army War College would not take place. Instead, the Center will remain a field operating agency of the Army Staff, reporting to the Chief of Staff through the Director of the Army Staff. This decision allows the Center to fulfill most effectively its departmental-level missions and reflects the willingness of the Army's leaders to respond to the recommendations of several special study groups which met with Mrs. Sara E. Lister, the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs), and recommended this position. I believe it is also the beginning of a reinvigoration of the Army's entire history program. At the Center, we have been actively engaged in refining our strategic vision as a first step to ensuring that we continue to serve the Army of the future in the best way possible.

A wide variety of CMH products have appeared during the past quarter. You should have received a copy of Ken Hamburger's monograph, "Learning Lessons in the American Expeditionary Forces." We are presenting this publication as an example of how the U.S. Army has had to improvise when faced with contingency operations, even one on the grand scale of World War I. Also out is editor Charles R. Shrader's three-volume anthology, entitled *United States Army Logistics, 1775-1992*. A number of Army schools will find Reg's work to be very valuable. I am glad that Clay Laurie built on earlier work by Ronald H. Cole to bring the long-awaited *The Role of Federal Military Forces in Domestic Disorders, 1877-1945*, to fruition. There has been a good deal of interest in a new title by a former member of CMH, Robert K. Griffith. In his book, *The U.S. Army's Transition to the All-Volunteer Force, 1968-1974*, Bob has provided some food for thought to Army personnel managers and commanders throughout the force.

Have you checked out our Homepage recently? [<http://www.army.mil/cmh-pg>]. I am reminded frequently of how powerful this medium is—it has really extended our reach beyond what we can do with hard-copy books alone. We find that our Lineage and Honors section gets quite a bit of traffic, as does our section in which we have presented the texts of selected CMH publications.

We have bid farewell to a number of staff members since our last issue. Major Constance Moore, our dynamic Army Nurse Corps historian, departed for her new assignment at Fort Gordon, Georgia. A CMH institution, Dr. Ed Drea, retired this summer. We will certainly miss him, and wish all the best for Ed and his family in the future.

That concludes my "Situation Report" for this issue. Best wishes to each of you for a most pleasant and productive Autumn season, wherever you may be.

## *The Forgotten Soldier: Unmasked*

Douglas E. Nash

Several years ago, Edwin L. Kennedy, in an article on these pages entitled "*The Forgotten Soldier: Fiction or Fact?*" advanced the thesis that *The Forgotten Soldier*, billed as an autobiographical work by Guy Sajer, was in fact fictional.(1) The book describes Sajer's experiences as a volunteer in the German Army during World War II from the time of his enlistment in 1942 until the end of the war.(2) Despite the book's popularity (to date it has been published in at least five languages), the article cautions readers to exercise care and not to place much stock in the book due to its "suspect" nature. Kennedy believes that Sajer's book is a "carefully written novel that cleverly disguises [itself] as a factual account." The implication is, of course, that as a fictional work, *The Forgotten Soldier's* chief significance lies in its entertainment value rather than as a serious work which military professionals may use to enhance their knowledge of the art of war.

This issue is worthy of discussion because *The Forgotten Soldier* has long been included in many professional development reading lists compiled by the U.S. Army and the U.S. Marine Corps. Frequently cited by military leaders and historians as an excellent example of a twentieth-century footsoldier's perspective of combat in its most elemental state, *The Forgotten Soldier* has educated two generations of military readers in the reality of combat, especially its human dimension—how combat affects the individual physically, psychologically, and mentally.(3)

Is *The Forgotten Soldier* fact or fiction? And if it is fiction, why would Sajer offer it up as fact? This article argues that Guy Sajer's account of his personal experiences is true. *The Forgotten Soldier* is an excellent first-person account which allows the reader to experience vicariously the reality of combat and to draw lessons still applicable today. Not only do the contents of the book itself testify to its authenticity, but, as we shall see, they should convince anyone that the book is not fiction. Unfortunately, this claim cannot be made unequivocally, as Kennedy's arguments demonstrate. Another careful examination of *The Forgotten Soldier* itself is required, as well as inquiries about its

author. At this point, it is clear that the pronounced weight of the evidence indicates that the book is factual.

As readers of his book know, Guy Sajer was a 16-year-old French youth living in Wissembourg, Alsace, who volunteered in July 1942 to serve in the German Army. Motivated by a sense of adventure, as well as admiration for the German soldiers who had conquered France in 1940, he initially sought to become a *Stuka* dive bomber crew member, but failed and was sent to the army instead. After his initial training, he was sent to the Russian front, where, because of his youth, he first served in a transportation unit. In April 1943, he volunteered for service in the infantry as a member of the prestigious *Grossdeutschland* Division, at the time one of Germany's most powerful mechanized infantry divisions. Sajer's life over the next two years can only be described as an especially intense experience. His account of these years gives his book its most enduring value. His description of the horror, elation, fear, hope, and sense of sacrifice he felt and encountered during the Eastern Front campaigns mark the book as a landmark in autobiographical military history. To sense what the average German soldier experienced on the Russian battlefield, Sajer's is one of the best works extant. His book concludes in 1945 as his unit surrendered and he was treated as a "doubtful case" by his Allied captors, who were unsure whether to classify him as a German or as a French collaborator. Given the option of rehabilitating himself by joining the French Army after the war, Sajer chose to bury his memories. No one was sympathetic to a former German "collaborator" in postwar France. He was, and remains, a "forgotten soldier" in the country of his birth.

Few until recently have questioned the essential truthfulness of Sajer's account, certainly not previous reviewers. The English language version of his book received an overwhelmingly positive response when it appeared twenty-five years ago. J. Glenn Gray wrote in the *New York Times* in 1971 that Sajer "succeeded uncommonly well in describing the details of action and feeling, of suffering and terror, that fell to his lot as

a private . . . Those who have never known war at first hand will be unable to grasp more than a fraction of the reality he describes. Even veterans of combat will conclude that what they experienced was child's play in comparison."(4) Another reviewer, Walter Clemons, wrote the same year that the particulars of Sajer's narrative, "like nails, drive it home and hurt us in unexpected places." The story, told with "youthful intensity," is "now and again set down with a clarity for which 'Tolstoyan' is not too strong a word." Clemons concludes that "We are reading the memoir of a man whose freshest, deepest feelings were aroused by the ordeal of war, who came out physically whole but never cared so much about anything again."(5)

The success of the book in the United States, Canada, and England has led to numerous reprintings since it first appeared. The most recent American edition, issued by Brasseys in cooperation with the Association of the U.S. Army and the Air Force Association, became available in 1990. Not until Kennedy's article in 1992 did anyone question the book's standing as a genuine autobiography. Indeed, Kennedy's article remains to date the only serious attempt to argue otherwise.

His article attempts a step-by-step demolition of the book's veracity by focusing on a variety of details which, according to Kennedy, prove overwhelmingly that "the book is a carefully written novel that cleverly disguises [sic] as a factual account." Additionally, he asserts, the book "provides a useful example of how analysis of historical works can prove or disprove, lend credibility, or discredit supposed 'history.'"(6) This is stating the obvious, indeed, but it remains to be seen how well the "analysis" stands up to scrutiny.

In broad strokes, the essence of Kennedy's argument is this: Sajer used historical fact to flesh out the background of his "novel." But he wasn't careful enough. Several small details escaped his notice. Taken together, these details expose the work as fiction. In other words, "the book is accurate, but not to a 'tee.'" Kennedy builds his argument around five key discrepancies which appear in the book. These discrepancies involve which *Luftwaffe* training unit Sajer was briefly assigned to, the location of his uniform's cuff title, which unit he was assigned to in the famous *Grossdeutschland* Division, the names of key individuals in the book, and other unaccountable errors

which, by Kennedy's lights, should have been common knowledge. In each instance, the writer makes some interesting points, but none of his objections is totally resilient to challenge, and taken together they amount to little more than a straw man.

Let's examine the discrepancies one by one:

**1. The *Luftwaffe* training unit.** Kennedy doubts Sajer's claim that he was briefly assigned to Colonel Hans Rudel's *Stuka* training unit because during the summer of 1942, Rudel's unit (according to Rudel himself) was located near Graz in southern Austria, quite a distance from Chemnitz, where Sajer claimed to be. Simply because Sajer was not in Graz does not rule out the fact that he could have been with Rudel's training unit. To an impressionable 16-year-old, anything having to do with *Stukas* probably would have made Sajer associate it with Rudel, a well-known hero at the time. Rudel was to *Stuka* dive bombers what Michael Jordan is to basketball. According to Rudel in his book *Stuka Pilot*, "crews are sent to me for further training from the *Stuka* schools after which they proceed to the front."(7) Sajer states that he was assigned to the 26th section of the squadron commanded by Rudel, failed to pass the *Luftwaffe* tests for *Stuka* crewman, and was sent to the infantry. The fact that Sajer was in Chemnitz does not rule out his claim. Rudel's unit may well have had a training and evaluation element at or near Chemnitz. Georg Tessin's *Verbaende und Truppen der deutsche Wehrmacht und Waffen SS*, the standard reference work on German Army and Air Force field and training organizations, locates the 103rd *Stuka* training squadron near the town of Bilina (Biblis) in the modern-day Czech Republic, about forty miles (sixty-five kilometers) from Chemnitz.(8) Incidentally, Tessin's study makes no mention of a unit based in Graz, Austria, at the time. Could it be that the once-famous and never-forgotten Rudel also let small details escape him?

**2. Was Sajer ever assigned to the *Grossdeutschland* Division?** Kennedy suggests he was not because Sajer writes that he was assigned to the "*Siebzehntes Bataillon*" (17th Battalion), which, Kennedy says, never existed in that division's structure. He is right. There was no such "battalion," but there was a 17th *Abteilung* (Detachment) in each of that division's two

infantry regiments.(9) The term *Abteilung* describes a unit which may range in size from company to regimental strength, but it was usually used for a unit of approximately battalion size or smaller. There were, however, even *Armee Abteilungen* (army detachments), which were corps-size units. In writing his book, Sajer may have used the term roughly equivalent to *Abteilung*, that being the term "*Bataillon*" (battalion), which would be most easily understood by his French readership. He might instead have used the term "*Kompanie*" (company), but did not. As in many other instances that Kennedy and I noted, Sajer is distressingly vague about such finer points.

Another possibility is that since Sajer had been a truck driver in a transportation unit before volunteering for infantry training and combat duty, he initially could have been assigned to the 17th *Kolonne* (Column) of the division's *Nachschubdienste* (the German equivalent of a U.S. division support command). A *Kolonne* was another German battalion-size unit that has no direct English translation. Regardless, the 17th was a rather high number indeed for an organic element of a regiment in the *Wehrmacht*, be it an *Abteilung*, *Kompanie*, or *Kolonne*, and only a few divisions, the *Grossdeutschland* being one of them, had regimental elements with numbers that went up this high. Most three-battalion German regiments only went up to the fourteenth *Kompanie* or *Abteilung*. The *Grossdeutschland*, as befitting its elite status, had, until its reorganization in July 1944, four battalions per regiment with a total of eighteen *Kompanien* or *Abteilungen*. So, at the very least, Sajer could have belonged at one time or another to the 17th *Abteilung* or *Kolonne*.

Sajer claims, more convincingly, that on the eve of the Kursk offensive he was assigned as a replacement to the 5th Company of one of the division's infantry regiments, which certainly *did* exist.(10) Kennedy fails to mention this in his analysis. Sajer's statement dovetails with the testimony of a former member of the *Grossdeutschland*, Hans-Joachim Schafmeister-Berckholtz. Schafmeister-Berckholtz, who served as a *Leutnant* (lieutenant) with 5th Company, 1st Battalion, *Panzergrenadier-Regiment Grossdeutschland* from 1940-44, stated in a letter to the author that he had only recently heard of Sajer's book and had been given a copy to read. However, he wrote that "At the mention

of the name Sajer, my ears pricked up, because we did have a Sajer in the 5th Company, 1st Grenadier Battalion". Although Schafmeister-Berckholtz added that he did not know this particular Sajer, his statement of which company the man was assigned to does coincide with Sajer's account. At the very least, there seems to have been one *Grenadier* named Sajer in the *Grossdeutschland*.(11)

Although at this time there is no conclusive proof one way or the other that Guy Sajer was assigned to the *Grossdeutschland*, the available evidence seems to show that Sajer knew what he was talking about. He relates to the reader in a very convincing manner his experiences in the battles of Kursk, Kharkov, Kiev, Romania, East Prussia, and Memel. All of these battles and campaigns figured prominently in the battle history of the *Grossdeutschland*.

Nothing short of his service record or a unit muster roll could prove the point beyond the shadow of a doubt. His permanent service record, or *Wehrstammbuch*, would have been located at the *Grossdeutschland's* recruiting office and main personnel records office in a Berlin suburb.(12) If this office and the records contained therein survived both the bombing of Berlin and the street fighting which led to the fall of the city, the files would have been seized by the Soviets. If they exist at all, they may be in the Russian Army's archives outside of Moscow. To date, the Russians have been reluctant to allow Western historians access to this site.

Sajer relates that he was assigned to a variety of ad hoc *Kampfgruppen* (battle groups) during two years of service with the *Grossdeutschland*. That the 17th "Battalion" was not one of them may arise more from the vicissitudes of memory and translation than to the faulty research of a cunning novelist. Moreover, it's a much more plausible explanation.

**3. Sajer's Commander.** For Kennedy, one of Sajer's most convincing errors is that the name of his commander in the book, a certain *Hauptmann* (Captain) Wesreidau, cannot be found on the personnel rolls of the division. In fact, this is hardly convincing at all. That none of the existing muster rolls or records show a "Wesreidau" simply underscores the well-known fact that many wartime divisional records are incomplete. How else could one explain the numerous blank

"faces and spaces" in the various unit organizational charts which are scattered throughout the text of the three-volume divisional history issued by its veterans' association?(13) Officer casualties in the German Army of World War II were so high, especially during the second half of the war, that the names of many company commanders and staff officers may never be identified.(14) This is even more likely in an elite unit such as the *Grossdeutschland*, which suffered far greater officer casualties than other comparable units since it spent a greater proportion of time in combat.(15) Kennedy also seems to have overlooked the possibility that Sajer might have changed his commander's name to spare "Wesreidau's" family further suffering, since "Wesreidau" was killed by a land mine near the Romanian border in 1944.

**4. Other minor errors.** There are many other minor errors in the work, as Kennedy points out. These relate to weapons' calibers, vehicle designations, units, and nomenclatures. Many of these, no doubt, are due to the English edition's poor translation of military terminology. This is even more likely since Sajer was initially writing for a French and Belgian readership and would have felt compelled from time to time to substitute a French equivalent for a German military term. Further, translating these terms into English could have compounded any slight errors. Sajer wrote his rough draft in pencil, which may have led to further errors in the initial publication due to illegibility. Moreover, Sajer spent a brief period in the French Army after the war, and some French military terms would necessarily have crept into his soldier's lexicon.

One must also consider that Sajer was sixteen years old when he enlisted; he was discharged as a prisoner of war three years later at the ripe, old age of nineteen. Besides being little more than a child, Sajer spoke German poorly and did not display a good eye for military details. Thrust into a different culture (German versus French) and sent far away from home, it is a wonder that he was able to remember clearly anything about his experiences at all. The very fact that Sajer sometimes gets the small details wrong, but is correct in the larger ones, actually argues for the credibility of the writer. What could be more human, more believable, than forgetting such things or misremembering them twenty-two years beyond the

events? What American draftee in the Vietnam conflict who experienced months of combat would get every single detail right almost a quarter of a century later? Very few, I would submit, and this would be true even for people with an eye for such things. Details of great significance to college-educated military historians, professional soldiers, and World War II buffs and collectors, such as uniforms, weapons, accoutrements, and vehicles, seem to have been of little importance to Sajer; hence his haphazard, even lackadaisical, description of military trivia.

**5. Uniform insignia.** Kennedy's most serious assertion is that Sajer misplaced the location of his uniform's insignia. Sajer did misstate where the unit cuff title was placed on his uniform. This point was also made to me in correspondence with the present head of the *Grossdeutschland* Division's veterans' association, Major (Retired) Helmuth Später.(16) This accusation alone, as far as Kennedy is concerned, would seem to be enough to label the entire book as fiction. (In Kennedy's words, "To cite the location [of the cuff title] on the wrong place is unimaginable...") It is true that, as an elite unit of the German Army, the *Grossdeutschland* Division was entitled to display a cuff title on the right sleeve of its members. This cuff title, embroidered with the word "*Grossdeutschland*" in German *Sütterlin* script, was as much an honored insignia at the time as a Ranger tab or Special Forces flash is today. The Waffen-SS divisions were also entitled to wear cuff titles, which they wore on the *left* sleeve. Sajer recalls in his book that, upon receipt of their cuff titles, he and his comrades in arms were ordered to sew it onto their left sleeve, a patent error, since they should have been told to sew it onto their *right* sleeve.

So Sajer gets this wrong, but what does that prove? His *forte* was not military details, but feelings, moods, and experiences. The placement of the cuff title was simply another detail that paled beside the horror and heroism he remembered all too well. Sajer may simply have forgotten on which side he wore his cuff title. This is not nearly as inconceivable as it may seem, even though this sort of information is generally known among historians of the wartime German Army. However, as we have already seen, Sajer was often careless about such details. And as a matter of fact, forgetting

such details is not all that uncommon among veterans. I have spoken with U.S. veterans of World War II who could not remember on which side their overseas service stripes were worn. My grandfather, who jumped with the 82d Airborne Division at Sainte-Mère-Église on June 6, 1944, could not remember whether he wore an 82d Airborne shoulder insignia or an unauthorized 508th Infantry shoulder patch. He was by no means senile; some people simply do not regard these details as important. To claim that such a mistake on Sajer's part invalidates his story is straining at a gnat and ignoring the elephant.

On its face, the assertion that *The Forgotten Soldier* is fiction will not stand, although if so inclined, one could nuzzle about the historical trivialities engendered by the discussion forever. Much more conclusive to the outcome of this discussion would be the voice of Guy Sajer himself. The discovery of the truth about the forgotten soldier depended upon whether he could be located and convinced to come forward and lay the fiction/nonfiction question to rest.

This proved to be a daunting task. The first question was whether Sajer was still alive thirty years after his book first appeared in print. If so, where was he? Answering these questions proved easy compared to getting him to reply. Forwarding a letter to Sajer through the current publisher, Brasseys, met with no response. Nor did an attempt to contact him through his original publisher, *Éditions Robert Laffont*.<sup>(17)</sup> Finally, after eighteen months and numerous dead ends, Guy Sajer was located in France through the efforts of three European military historians I had dragooned into the Sajer search service. Through the good offices of one of these historians, I have received background information on Guy Sajer and *The Forgotten Soldier* not previously available in English—and, finally, a response from Sajer himself.

The information on Sajer which has recently emerged sheds further light on his identity and postwar occupation. A letter from a close friend of Guy Sajer, Jacques Le Breton, located the elusive "forgotten soldier" living in a rural village in France east of Paris under his *nom de plume*. The surname Sajer is the maiden name of his mother, who had been born in Gotha, Germany.<sup>(18)</sup> In an interview in 1969 with his German publisher, Sajer disclosed that his father, a

Frenchman from Auvergne in south-central France, had moved his family from Wissembourg in Alsace to Lorient prior to the outbreak of the war. It was there in June 1940, when his family was stranded on the road as refugees, that young Sajer first encountered the soldiers of the *Wehrmacht*, who had only a few days before completed their conquest of France. In the interview Sajer related how, in line with World War I propaganda, he had feared that the Germans would cut off his hands. To his surprise, instead of cutting off his hands, the German *Landsers* handed him food and something to drink.<sup>(19)</sup>

After his family had moved back to Alsace (once again incorporated into the German *Reich*) in 1941, Sajer was called up for labor service duty (*Reichsarbeitsdienst*), since as a half-German he was required to perform six to eight months of manual labor, just as German youth were. While serving in labor service camps in Strasbourg and at Kehl, right across the Rhine, Sajer admitted envying his youthful German counterparts, who seemed so self-confident and eager to serve their country. He remembers his own feelings of inadequacy watching them volunteering for combat. At the time combat seemed a great adventure, but it was a privilege extended only to pure Germans. Finally in 1942, when German manpower shortages began to worsen and he turned sixteen, Sajer was allowed to volunteer for military service. From July 1942 to May 1945, he served in a variety of German Army units on the Russian Front, most notably the elite *Grossdeutschland* Division, and took part in many of the critical defensive battles that eventually decided the fate of Germany in the East.

Following a short period of captivity at the end of the war, he served briefly in the French Army. Shortly thereafter, he found employment as a graphic illustrator in Paris, an indicator of the artistic temperament which manifests itself throughout his book. He married a French woman, who bore them a son in 1954. In 1952, between bouts of asthma, he began recording his memoirs as a means of overcoming the horrible memories which had haunted him since the war's end. By 1957, the single school notebook in which he had begun recording his experiences in pencil had grown to seventeen volumes. Although many times he wanted to destroy his work, friends intervened and persuaded him to allow a Belgian periodical to publish excerpts of



his story in the early 1960s.

The success of these excerpts attracted the notice of the French publishers *Editions Robert Laffont*. Laffont acquired the complete set of memoirs and published them in 1967 as *Le Soldat Oublié* (The Forgotten Soldier). The book, an overnight success in Gaullist France, gained Sajer both accolades and approbation, since his was the first published postwar memoir by a wartime German sympathizer which presented an unabashedly favorable account of the hated former enemy. The German-language version was published in 1969 as *Denn dieser Tage Qual war gross: Bericht eines vergessenen Soldaten* (These Days Were Full of Great Suffering: Report of a Forgotten Soldier). Its roaring success in Germany and Austria led to its being published in a number of other languages, including the 1971 English-language version, *The Forgotten Soldier*.

Through German historians, I finally got in contact with the reclusive M. Sajer. What led the search to the "forgotten soldier's" door was a letter from Jacques Le Breton, a close friend of Sajer whom he has known for over a decade. M. Le Breton advanced a strong case for Sajer's veracity:

Nothing [in Sajer's book] proves that he didn't go through the events he describes . . . on the contrary, he describes, without bragging, the usual daily experiences of the life of a *Landser* on the front lines. A fraud would have claimed to have destroyed more tanks by his own hand and would have been more boastful about it . . . Sajer does nothing of the kind. On the contrary, Sajer remains modest, sensible, and plausible. He doesn't claim any Iron Crosses or great deeds of heroism (as many other French volunteers did).(20)

According to this close associate, Sajer writes military history not with a big "H", but as a testimony from a humble soldier who served on the Russian Front. Sajer's friend claims to trust his veracity implicitly, though he admits that Sajer possesses a dark, pessimistic personality. Le Breton says Sajer prefers to live with the memories of his wartime service while holding the current world in contempt.

Finally able to question Sajer through German historian Klaus Schulz, I posed to him all the questions Kennedy had raised: the matter of his cuff title, unit

designations, company commander, and so on.(21) Sajer replied almost immediately, squelching any further speculation about his book's authenticity. In his response to Herr Schulz, Sajer explained why he wrote the book in the first place, in words both illuminating and moving:

I succeeded in having this horror story from the Second World War published in a country hostile to me [France] against my own best interests, and with all of the problems . . . in describing the well-merited compassion I still feel for my German soldier comrades . . . all of them. I conveyed the difficulty of these moments . . . the anguish and the horror. I [publicly] acknowledged the courage and good will of German *Landser*s in a climate where one was not permitted to talk about them. I depicted their faithfulness and self-sacrifice . . . I moved the hearts of millions. I have proudly glorified the honor of all German soldiers at a time in history when they were slandered and reviled. In my opinion, this was my duty and I asked for nothing in return.(22)

His book, then, is a memorial to his comrades in arms, both living and, in their hundreds, dead.

In regards to questions about cuff titles, commanders and so forth, Sajer answered with ill-disguised contempt:

You ask me questions of chronology, situations, dates and unimportant details. Historians and archivists (Americans as well as Canadians) have harassed me for a long time with their rude questions. All of this is unimportant. Other authors and high-ranking officers could respond to your questions better than I. I never had the intention to write a historical reference book; rather, I wrote about my innermost emotional experiences as they relate to the events that happened to me in the context of the Second World War.(23)

Thus, what could be fairly adduced from a close reading of the book itself, as I have shown, is now confirmed by the author himself. Details did not cloud the author's vision as it did some readers'.

What is more important, Sajer writes, is the favorable impact that his book has had, and the enormously favorable public acceptance it has received. To date,

according to Sajer, it has been published in sixteen languages and has been read by millions. Sajer cites the thousands of letters from readers who have been moved by his book in the thirty years since it was first published. Concluding on a sad, poignant, and yet majestic note, the seventy-year-old Sajer writes that "I am now an old man, tired, sick, and disgusted with human incoherence; I would like nothing more than to be left in peace . . . I give you my book as an homage to the German people, whatever their generation."(24)

To my surprise, I finally received a reponse from Guy Sajer directly. In his letter, Sajer echoed the same sentiments that he had expressed in his letter to Klaus Schulz several months prior. Asked to explain inconsistencies in his book, Sajer replied,

Apart from the emotions I brought out, I confess my numerous mistakes. That is why I would like that this book may not be used, under no circumstances, as a strategic or chronological reference. Except for some clear landmarks, we didn't know exactly where we were (I am speaking about Russia). We had only code numbers for mail which meant nothing to us . . . In the black Russia of winter, I would not have been surprised if someone had told me that we were in China.(25)

At this point, is there still room to argue that this man is a fraud? That his book is a clever concoction? That it does not, as thousands of readers attest, bare the soul of a single human tossed into the pitiless cauldron of war? In the words of M. Le Breton, "A serious criticism of Sajer's feats of arms coming from a genuine veteran of the *Grossdeutschland* Division could, in a pinch, be taken seriously, but coming from an American, and especially a young one (who did not take part in that war), . . . does not seem to merit being taken into account."(26)

What do German veterans think of Sajer's book? One German veteran of the war, Herr Hans Wegener, who fought in Russia from 1941 to 1943 as a noncommissioned officer in the 39th Infantry Division, had this to say:

I read Sajer's book in the early '70s . . . [it] depicts something personally experienced . . . the depicted deeds and events . . . correspond even with the minute

tactical and great strategic events of the period described in the book. The language is of overpowering simplicity yet extremely smooth and impressive. The train of thought and reflections correspond to those of a young soldier who is tossed into the maelstrom of the hard suffering and hopeless retreat battles of the Eastern Front. I can verify that the *Landsers* thought this way, acted this way, and suffered and died in the pitiless retreat actions on the gigantic expanses of Russia, which in itself gave you a feeling of loneliness and loss if faced . . . as an individual human being. Even small inconsistencies cannot change my belief, because the overall impact of the manuscript, the inherent balance and truthfulness, are for me the determining criteria [as to its authenticity]. I am quite sure that Guy Sajer did not tell a fictitious story. I look at this book as a tremendous monument for the great and singular achievements of the German soldier during a hopeless situation.(27)

This is a powerful endorsement, indeed. By the way, Wagener has never met Sajer, yet still feels strongly about the book more than twenty years later.

Perhaps even more persuasive testimony comes from a member of the vaunted *Grossdeutschland* Division itself, Herr Helmuth Später, a former major who commanded the division's reconnaissance *Abteilung* during the war and served for a period as the head of the division's veterans' association. Quoted by Kennedy as one of Sajer's most vociferous critics, Später was absolutely convinced, until recently, that *The Forgotten Soldier* was fiction. However, when I provided him a copy of Sajer's letter to examine, he was evidently moved enough to completely reexamine his earlier position. "I was deeply impressed by his statements in his letter," he told me. "I have underestimated Herr Sajer and my respect for him has greatly increased. I am myself more of a writer who deals with facts and specifics—much less like one who writes in a literary way. For this reason, I was very skeptical towards the content of his book. I now have greater regard for Herr Sajer and I will read his book once again. Thank God I still have a copy of it here."(28) Apparently here is one skeptic who is willing to abandon his preconceptions and look at Sajer's book from a new perspective, and a well-known member of the *Grossdeutschland* Division who fought in the same battles as Sajer did, no

less. Später's reversal suggests a course of action that might wisely be taken by other skeptics far less personally engaged in these matters.

To date, no existing service record for Guy Sajer that substantiates his service in the *Grossdeutschland* Division has been found, but that is not unusual. Hundreds of thousands of *Wehrmacht* soldiers' personnel files, perhaps millions, were destroyed either during or after the war. Only incomplete personnel rosters exist from the *Grossdeutschland* Division. Trying to track down the identity of one man in an organization that, with its offshoots, had over 100,000 men pass through its ranks from 1939 to 1945 is a nearly impossible task.<sup>(29)</sup> But one doesn't need this kind of proof to reach a conclusion about Sajer's identity. Both his personal testimony and the overwhelming amount of circumstantial evidence point to the inescapable conclusion that his book is genuine. Until solid evidence that shows otherwise emerges, an unlikely event in any case, the words of Guy Sajer himself, as well as numerous other witnesses, all point to the conclusion that Guy Sajer is genuine and *The Forgotten Soldier* is autobiography: fact, not fiction.

## NOTES

I would like to gratefully acknowledge the substantial assistance I have received on the research and writing of this article from my friend Dr. Thomas E. Schott of Brandon, Florida. The help extended to me by Dr. Schott, a professional historian, went way beyond the call of duty or even the demands of friendship.

1. Edwin L. Kennedy, Jr., "The Forgotten Soldier: Fiction or Fact?" *Army History*, no. 22 (Spring 1992): 23–25.
2. Guy Sajer, *The Forgotten Soldier* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971).
3. See, for example, Col. Harold W. Nelson, "From My Bookshelf," *Military Review* 70, no. 3 (March 1990): 90, and Maj. Gen. Michael F. Spigelmire, "From My Bookshelf," *Military Review* 70, no. 5 (May 1990): 89–90.
4. J. Glenn Gray, "The Forgotten Soldier," *The New York Times Book Review*, 7 Feb 71, p. 4. (Gray, then

a philosophy professor at Colorado College, was the author of *The Warriors: Reflections on Men in Battle* [New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1959]. Sajer's book has more recently been used for historical documentation by the academic historian Stephen G. Fritz in *Frontsoldaten: The German Soldier in World War II* [Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1995].—Ed.)

5. Walter Clemons, "A Young Man's Marriage to War," *The New York Times*, 18 Jan 71. See also Maj. Robert C. Clarke, "The Forgotten Soldier," *Military Review* 51, no. 6 (June 1971): 106.
6. Kennedy, "Fiction or Fact?" p. 23.
7. Col. Hans-Ulrich Rudel, *Stuka Pilot* (Costa Mesa, Calif.: The Noontide Press, 1987), p. 53.
8. Georg Tessin, *Verbände und Truppen der deutsche Wehrmacht und Waffen SS in Zweiten Weltkrieg*, 17 vols. (Osnabrück, Germany: Biblio Verlag, 1979), 1: 353.
9. Helmuth Später, ed., *Die Geschichte des Panzerkorps Grossdeutschland*, 3 vols. (Duisburg, Germany: Selbstverlag Hilfswerk, 1958), 1: 404.
10. Sajer, *The Forgotten Soldier*, p. 207.
11. Ltr, Hans-Joachim Schafmeister-Berckholtz to Douglas E. Nash, 11 Mar 97, in author's possession.
12. *Ibid.*
13. For an example of this, refer to Später, *Panzerkorps Grossdeutschland*, 1: 541–44.
14. For further examples of this, refer to Rudolf Lehmann, *Die Leibstandarte: Die 1. SS Panzer Division*, 4 vols. (Osnabrück, Germany: Munin Verlag, 1982), or Martin Jenner, *Die 216./272. Niedersächsische Infanterie-Division, 1939–1945* (Bad Nauheim, Germany: Podzun Verlag, 1964), which both frequently depict organizational charts with names missing. After the war, many survivors forgot the names of men with whom they had served with only briefly.
15. Omer Bartov, *Hitler's Army: Soldiers, Nazis, and War in the Third Reich* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 56–57, states that officer casualties for the *Grossdeutschland* Division over the course of the war totaled approximately 1,500 men, more than five times the number of officers authorized.
16. Ltr, Später to Nash, 10 Sep 96, in the author's possession. Incidentally, Später claims to have never met nor heard of Edwin L. Kennedy.

17. Ltr, Editor, *Editions Robert Laffont* to Nash, 15 Feb 96, in author's possession.
18. Ltr, Jacques Le Breton to *Studiendirektor* Friedrich Pohl, 8 Oct 96, copy in author's possession.
19. "Zur Person des Autors," in Sajer, *Denn dieser Tage Qual war gross: Bericht eines vergessenen Soldaten* (Munich: Verlag Fritz Molden, 1969), pp. 6-7.
20. Ltr, Le Breton to Pohl, 8 Oct 96.
21. Ltr, Klaus Schulz to Sajer, 4 Oct 96, copy in author's possession.
22. Ltr, Sajer to Schulz, 13 Oct 96, in author's possession.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. Ltr, Sajer to Nash, 16 Jan 97, in author's possession.
26. Ltr, Le Breton to Pohl, 8 Oct 96.
27. Ltr, Hans Wegener to Schulz, 2 Oct 96, copy in author's possession.
28. Ltr, Später to Nash, 24 Nov 96, in author's possession.
29. Ltr, Später to Nash, 6 Nov 96, in author's possession. Später's three-volume history shows that the *Grossdeutschland* suffered approximately 56,678 casualties from June 1940, when it first saw battle as a regiment, to May 1945, when it ended the war as a *Panzer Grenadier* division. Comparing these losses against its authorized strength in 1943 of approximately 18,000 men shows that the division suffered some 300 percent casualties in five years of its existence.

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## *The Forgotten Soldier: Authentic Fiction by a Real Guy*

Edwin L. Kennedy, Jr.

*The editor invited Lt. Col. Kennedy, author of the 1992 Army History article which initially questioned the historical accuracy of The Forgotten Soldier, to comment on Lt. Col. Nash's article. Colonel Kennedy here provides reflections both on this latest contribution to the debate and on the briefer exchanges between him and Lt. Col. Nash on this issue that have appeared in the pages of Military Review.*

In response to the article above, I wish to offer a few observations and then let the matter rest. First, I wish to compliment Nash on his tenacity in researching this issue. He has certainly come a long way from his earlier "extensive research in the CARL," the Combined Arms Library at the Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth. By seeking primary-source information this time, instead of relying solely on secondary-source library materials, I believe he has presented a more effective defense of "Guy Sajer"—but not for the authenticity of *The Forgotten Soldier*. To state my view succinctly, I will quote Dr. Richard Swain (author of "*Lucky War*": *Third Army in Desert*

*Storm*) on this matter: "It is authentic bad history? But it's okay because Sajer, whoever, was a real guy!" (Excuse the pun.)

Regardless of how "autobiographical" are the experiences which the author relates, he did not create a true autobiography. "Sajer" wrote, as many soldiers before him have done, what in literary terms is known as a *roman à clef*—a novel based on real persons and events. In this regard, it is similar to Siegfried Sassoon's *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer* or Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet On the Western Front*. Although these deal with the First World War, both novels, like *The Forgotten Soldier*, are powerful evocations of their respective authors' experiences in the cauldron of combat. Both, especially Sassoon's *Memoirs*, place incidents and events experienced by their respective authors into a prose narrative which traces the wartime experiences of their central characters. Many of the events and experiences described are based on fact. The Battle of the Somme, for example, definitely occurred, and Siegfried Sassoon participated in it as a young British subaltern. As such, these novels are,

therefore, authentic. What the novels are not, however, are autobiographies, regardless of how authentic they may seem and despite their authors' participation in the historical events which provided them with inspiration for their narratives.

The *roman à clef* is a powerful literary form, based upon actual events, which permits the author the literary license to, for example, create characters for dramatic effect, move events forward or backward in time, assign the experiences of several individuals to one central character, or disguise the identity of the novel's principal character by using an assumed name. All of these, in one degree or another, are found in *The Forgotten Soldier*.

I reiterate my point: *The Forgotten Soldier* is a great book and I have nothing personal against "Guy Sajer." I enjoy his book immensely and see value in it, but I don't use it for validating serious historical research. I believe that Nash has become so emotionally attached to this work that he is unable to objectively separate fact from fiction, to analyze the information and discern what is true and what is not. Nash's admiration for Sajer and *The Forgotten Soldier* has led him to rationalize its errors and discrepancies by the most imaginative methods possible. Nash implies the errors are minor; they are critical and undermine the credibility of the book.

Nash's correspondence with *Grossdeutschland* veteran Hans-Joachim Schafmeister-Berckholtz is a classic case of not seeing the forest for the trees. Interestingly Herr Schafmeister-Berckholtz has a phenomenal memory, according to Nash, who writes that Schafmeister-Berckholtz now recalls the famous "Sajer"—the same "Sajer" who uses the *nom de plume* "Guy Sajer" to protect his anonymity. Schafmeister-Berckholtz says to Nash, "At the mention of the name Sajer, my ears pricked up, because we did have a Sajer in the 5th Company, 1st Grenadier Battalion." Wait a minute. Doesn't "Sajer" himself say that the name "Guy Sajer" was not his name but only a cover? I think attorneys consider this "coaching" the witness. In other words, Schafmeister-Berckholtz now remembers the famous "Sajer" as a member of his unit when he is prompted with the name.

Nash's current research is more scholarly than his original work, but some of the most important pieces, the analyses, are still flawed. I can only agree with a few of his points regarding the destruction of German records, the inability to remember some facts by veterans, and "Sajer's" wish to remain anonymous. However, it's the quantity of

errors taken *in toto* and the lack of corroborating specific information that make the book suspicious. It is replete with errors of fact. I contend that it is still a great novel based on history. Only the most recent publisher has claimed it is an autobiography; the others knew better. Any good writer with access to open-source archival material on the *Grossdeutschland* could do what "Sajer" has done—match many real dates, places, and units to known historical events. This has been done before. (Michael Shaara's *The Killer Angels* is my favorite example). I don't deny there is a possibility "Sajer" really served in the German Army, maybe even in the *Grossdeutschland*, but when does using incorrect facts pass for "autobiography," or more importantly, history?

Nash's interpretation of my articles seems to indicate that I think that everything in *The Forgotten Soldier* is wrong. Not so. The use of Le Breton's weak *argumentum ad hominem* adds nothing of substance to Nash's thesis in this regard. There are some things that are right. But enough blatant misrepresentations and incorrect information occur to cause me serious concern for its use as a legitimate historical reference. Notwithstanding the publishers' editorial errors in my *Army History* and *Military Review* articles regarding this subject, I have never denied that *The Forgotten Soldier* is interesting and good reading dealing with the human dimension of war.

"Sajer's" refusal to answer my correspondence only makes my suspicions more acute. Somehow Nash has broken the code in corresponding with "Sajer." I was unsuccessful, not because I did not try, but I did not approach "Sajer" in the same corroborative manner as did Nash. I simply wanted honest answers to questions that might prove the veracity of *The Forgotten Soldier*, none of which would have violated "Sajer's" privacy or revealed his true identity. I never received a reply to any of the requests through the different publishers. This sent me a fairly negative and unequivocal message.

Nash's efforts in researching "Sajer" are commendable. He has certainly gone to great efforts to achieve his goal. I would caution him, however, not to let his significant emotional involvement cloud

his reason as a professional soldier. I sincerely hope that "Sajer" is a real German Army veteran because I like the story he tells. I wish that there weren't so many errors in the book that make it implausible as a historical "autobiography." I will not, however, throw out my first edition, hardback version of the book because of its faults. My challenge on *The Forgotten Soldier* is aimed at professional soldiers. They should question supposed "autobiographies" (or "histories") with honest skepticism and curiosity until they are proven authentic. The problem with *The Forgotten Soldier* is that we cannot be certain that it is not fiction. *The Forgotten Soldier* is great literature and has been recognized as such; but it is neither an official history of the *Grossdeutschland* Division nor an autobiogra-

phy of "Guy Sajer."

Nash's arguments are getting better, but they are still flawed. My friend, the author and former *Grossdeutschland* officer, Herr Später, has not abandoned his position, despite what Nash implies. Therefore, long live *Grossdeutschland* veteran "Guy Sajer" and his outstanding novel, *The Forgotten Soldier!*

*Lt. Col. Edwin L. Kennedy, Jr., is an instructor at the Combat Studies Institute, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. He will retire from the Army in August 1997. Readers may obtain a copy of his 1992 Army History article, "The Forgotten Soldier: Fiction or Fact?" by writing to the managing editor.*

## Medical Support for the British Eighth Army in Italy during World War II

John D. C. Bennett

*This article is a revised version of a paper that Dr. Bennett delivered in Arlington, Virginia, at the 1992 Conference of Army Historians.*

### Introduction

Following the successful conclusion of two difficult years of fighting in North Africa, the British Eighth Army's attention turned to Italy. Although, as Winston Churchill commented, "Britain's prime and capital foe is not Italy, but Germany," the strategic concept was to make the former a "springboard, not a sofa." However, instead of aiding the main attack on Europe by diverting German resources, over the next two years the Eighth Army's campaign proved to be a long, costly slog north through Italy. Medical support for the maintenance of the fighting force played an important role in the Eighth Army's advances during that effort.

On 2 September 1943, the day before the start of the Allied invasion of the Italian peninsula, a medical conference in Algiers decided that the general policy would be for casualties to be evacuated by air from Italy to North Africa and the Middle East, using Sicily only as a transit center. A hospital base would be developed in Naples as quickly as possible after its capture, where cases would be held that could be discharged within six

weeks. Planners estimated that the Eighth Army would have 12,000 casualties within the first month and that there would be about the same number from Lt. Gen. Mark Clark's U.S. Fifth Army, which had the Eighth Army's 10 Corps under its command. As there were only 2,400 beds, difficulties were anticipated from D+12 until the Naples hospital base was well established, and it normally took sixteen days to open a 1,200-bed hospital. Eighth Army commander General Sir Bernard Montgomery well understood the value both of air evacuation and of medical cover forward that was visible to the troops. He stated, "If you do not see to this, then the troops get anxious, morale suffers, and then other troubles creep in."

The 15th Casualty Clearing Section, a field hospital, landed on D+2 and opened in a deserted training college in Reggio; it was joined the next day by the 14th Field Ambulance, a medical battalion. Hospital ship evacuation was organized by D+6, with ships arriving daily off the beaches. Their time of arrival, however, could not be predicted, leading to large numbers of stretcher cases being held for long periods without cover. Enemy aircraft posed a serious threat. On 12 September 1943 the hospital ship *Newfoundland* was bombed, and five medical officers and five nurses lost their lives. On the

ground, field ambulances accompanied their brigades as these went forward. By D+12, evacuation by air had begun from the airfield at Reggio.

The Medical Services personnel had to adjust to conditions very different from those of Libya and Tunisia. The terrain was mountainous and the roads tortuous. Heavy rain and incessant traffic frequently made the routes impassable with mud. Demolition also hampered any advance. Buildings often were destroyed or booby trapped, as were roads, bridges, and culverts. Some expected the Germans to withdraw from the leg of Italy, perhaps to make a stand north of Florence, but once completely in control of northern Italy and strongly reinforced, they held on to Rome and opposed the Allied advance at the Winter Line, which ran and across Italy through Cassino at the peninsula's narrowest width.

### The Medical Response to Battle

*Evacuation of the Wounded.* The Eighth Army's crossing of the Sangro River south of Pescara during its assault on the Winter Line provides an example of the creativity required in this campaign. Swelled by ill-timed rains, the river ran five to six feet deep in a bed 100 yards wide between sheer banks which were about ten feet high. It was crossed by an advanced dressing station, equivalent to a U.S. Army clearing company, which was wholly mobile on six Bren-gun carriers. The station established itself on the escarpment beyond.

The assembly and crossing points for the New Zealand forces were in full view of the German positions, and they were often shelled. Red Cross identifiers were not used, for fear of giving away important tactical information. When the initial attempt to evacuate casualties by amphibious vehicles proved unsuccessful, a procedure was devised whereby the patient was winched across on a stretcher slung from a 120-yard cable. This was developed into the "Flying Fox," an aerial ropeway suspended on bipods carrying a light trolley on which a stretcher could be hitched. One was issued to each field ambulance.

Medical personnel also devised an eight-man raft by lashing together nine stretchers and covering the whole with a truck tarpaulin. The use of sleds and mule litters demonstrated further ingenuity, enabling casualties to be taken along evacuation routes that consisted of little more than rough tracks and mud. Despite these technical innovations, many casualties still had to be manhandled by stretcher-bearing (SB) squads. At least six men were

required per litter, and eventually SB chains were established consisting of a series of eight-man squads, situated 300 yards apart. If the chain was long, an administrative center would be established, as fifty bearers were needed per mile—a considerable drain on manpower.

*Treatment of the Wounded.* By ingenious means and with a great expenditure of manpower, it was possible to bring casualties to the main dressing station, a medical battalion, within about four hours. It was standard practice for such a unit to have two medical companies operating in buildings—one forward to sort all the cases and to treat battle casualties, and one in the rear to act as a reception station for both sick soldiers and local casualties. As the fighting advanced, the companies would leap-frog forward. The aim was to take surgical operating as far forward as was realistically possible. It became customary to evacuate patients from the main dressing station to the field hospital with transfusions running. Field transfusion units supervised preoperative resuscitation and also distributed transfusion materials and equipment to forward units. Transfusion attachments were devised for the litters on which patients were carried—a technique far in advance of contemporary civilian practice.

In addition to the distances required for casualty evacuation, bombed-out buildings could pose challenges to medical personnel. At the Anzio beachhead, where the Eighth Army's 10 Corps fought under General Clark, the constricted tactical situation dictated that medical care be placed underground. Despite this handicap, extensive effort—including that of nurses—was put into medical support. Although medical planners had intended to provide only life-saving surgery far forward and to evacuate cases back to base hospitals, the lines of communication became so stretched that this policy could not always be maintained. Indeed, during the advance on Rome, casualty evacuation chains reached over 130 miles in length. In consequence, medical resources were brought forward in an attempt to conserve manpower.

*Surgery.* The types of wounds generally encountered in Italy supported what had been known since World War I—that most battle wounds were fragment wounds. A development perfected during this campaign was the formation of specialist units, each containing a "specialist trinity" of neurosurgeon, maxillo-facial surgeon, and ophthalmologist. The concept of a mobile surgical operating team was developed early in 1942 in

the desert, though there had been various earlier experiments. Each casualty clearing station (field hospital) was equipped with two forward surgical units, which could operate relatively independently. They could be sent out to sites where there was holding and nursing capacity for patients, but little surgical expertise. Each forward surgical unit was commanded by a surgeon and was supported by an anesthetist, six medical orderlies, and three drivers, all transported in a car and two 3-ton trucks. Despite the lack of specially built vehicles from which to operate, the units could be sent where needed and could be performing surgery in tents within an hour.

### The Health of the Troops in Italy

*Malaria.* In the twelve weeks following the invasion of Italy, a division's worth of men was lost from the battle front due to the hospitalization of 9,000 proven and 6,000 suspected cases of malaria. Learning from the experience gained in Sicily, malaria prophylaxis in the form of daily mepacrine tablets became compulsory, and mosquito nets and repellents were used in suspected infectious areas. A malaria field laboratory landed in Italy on D+1 and carried out surveys immediately behind the advancing troops.

War exacerbated the problem by producing more stagnant water for mosquito larvae as a result of damage to irrigation and drainage channels. The war also reduced the number of cattle on which the mosquitoes could feed. The Eighth Army set up a malaria control organization that used power sprayers to spray DDT mixed with kerosene. Every building treated was clearly marked with the letters "DDT." The value of these preventive measures was considerable; in contrast, during World War I malaria cases in Macedonia had been numerous enough to compromise military operations. At the beginning of the Italian campaign, the highest malaria figures were 410 cases per 1,000 troops per year. Following the implementation of the preventive measures, this ratio had dropped to 39 per 1,000 troops per year.

*Typhus.* At the end of the malaria season, malaria control units were given instructions in typhus control and employed on disinfection duties. Prior to the war there had been relatively little typhus in Italy, so after the 1943 Allied bombing of Naples, which led to indescribably bad sanitary conditions, the local population was highly susceptible. Mass delousing in Naples was carried out with DDT on a scale never before attempted, and

the epidemic was contained, but only at the cost of 1,040 lives. The city was placed off limits, all ranks were immunized, and strict attention to hygiene was imposed. From the beginning of the campaign, it had been the medical planners' goal to have showers provided by a mobile section operating from trucks. Each truck could provide 450 showers per day, allowing each soldier a weekly shower. As a result, there were no recorded cases of louse-borne typhus among Eighth Army personnel.

*Venereal Disease.* The rate of venereal disease (VD) encountered by the Eighth Army in Italy was more than twenty times that found in Britain. Dire warnings of the dangers of VD were published in the "Health Notes" issued by the director of medical services. As VD was considered a "self-inflicted wound," a soldier admitted to the hospital with this condition lost trade and efficiency pay, which, in the case of a married soldier, would show up as a lower pay allotment sent to his wife.

Largely for cultural reasons, the Eighth Army had much more serious problems with VD in Italy than it had encountered in North Africa. In one sample month (December 1943), 80,000 man-days were lost. At the Allied Conference on War Medicine in March 1944, the vexing question as to whether brothels should be licensed continued to prove controversial. Attempts to control venereal disease in this way had not been successful. This might have been because, as was revealed at the conference, prostitutes could take on as many as thirty men per day. Treatment with penicillin began in earnest in September 1944, and following this the bedstate fell dramatically.

*Penicillin.* Because of its value, the production of penicillin was accelerated, despite wartime difficulties. Initially, it was issued only to the medical branches of the armed forces. The first units to receive it were the six British forward surgical units earmarked to take part in the Eighth Army's assault landings on Sicily.

Soon after the invasion, the War Office, in conjunction with the Medical Research Council, sent out a penicillin research team to monitor its use in what was, essentially, a large field trial. So dramatic were penicillin's effects that later in the campaign—when supplies were running low—directives restricted its use to VD cases, since these men could, with its assistance, be quickly returned to the front. In other words, penicillin was a force multiplier. The directives were, however, not always heeded by the surgeons.



### Summary

Medical support for the Eighth Army in Italy had to be very adaptable to cope with long static sieges (as at Monte Cassino), beach landings, and rapid mobile armored advances. Every imaginable means of medical evacuation was utilized, and problems posed by river crossings, mountain tracks, and mud produced some ingenious solutions. The challenges of operating in an environment where disease was endemic taxed medical resources, but ultimately the fighting ability of the Eighth Army's troops was not compromised. In addition, medical personnel undertook during the campaign important research into surgical techniques and the clinical use of penicillin.

### Sources of Additional Information

The Eighth Army's operations in Italy are described in Volumes 5 and 6 by C. J. C. Molony and William Jackson of Ian S. O. Playfair et al., *The Mediterranean*

*and the Middle East*, 6 vols. (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1954-88), part of the History of the Second World War, United Kingdom Military Series. British Army Medical Support in Italy is discussed in Volume 3 of Francis A. E. Crew, *The Army Medical Services Campaigns*, 5 vols. (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1956-66), part of the History of the Second World War, United Kingdom Medical Series.

*The author gratefully acknowledges the help of Professor Harold Rodgers, former Officer Commanding, 23d Field Surgical Unit, and Col. Robert J. T. Joy, U.S. Army, Retired, Professor Emeritus, Department of Medical History, Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, Bethesda, Maryland.*

*Dr. John D. C. Bennett is an ear, nose, and throat surgeon who developed an interest in history while serving in the British Royal Army Medical Corps.*

## Call for Papers: 1998 Conference of Army Historians

The Center of Military History is soliciting papers for the summer 1998 biennial Conference of Army Historians. The theme of the conference will be "The U.S. Army in the American Century, 1898-1998." Papers may deal with any aspect of the evolution the U.S. Army's role in international affairs from the Spanish-American War through the middle and late periods of the Cold War (1958-91) to ongoing operations in Bosnia. However, Army missions in World War II and the early years of the Cold War, which were the focus of recent conferences, will not be emphasized in 1998. Prospective participants should send their proposed topics to Dr. John Greenwood, U.S. Army Center of Military History, ATTN: DAMH-FP, 1099 14<sup>th</sup> Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20005-3402. Dr. Greenwood may also be contacted by e-mail at [greenwood@cmh-smtp.army.mil](mailto:greenwood@cmh-smtp.army.mil).

## Defense Technical Information Center Annual Users Meeting and Training Conference 3-6 November 1997

The Defense Technical Information Center (DTIC) will hold its Annual Users Meeting and Training Conference on 3-6 November 1997 at the DoubleTree Hotel in Arlington, Virginia. The theme of the conference will be "Information in the New Millennium."

The gathering provides an opportunity to explore in detail new developments at DTIC and throughout the federal information network. The conference organizers have arranged for a number of speakers and exhibitors from other federal agencies, including the Department of Defense.

For further information, consult DTIC's homepage at <http://www.dtic.mil>, or contact Ms. Julia Foscue by phone at (703) 767-8236 or by e-mail at [jfoscue@dtic.mil](mailto:jfoscue@dtic.mil).

## Poems of the First World War by Alan Seeger

*While many Americans have produced narrative accounts of their personal wartime experiences, few have written more profoundly of the sacrifices of war than did poet Alan Seeger (1888–1916). Seeger was one of ninety American volunteers who fought in the French Foreign Legion during World War I. Of these American volunteers, thirty-eight, including Seeger, died of wounds received in battle. Ten were commissioned in the U.S. Army after this nation entered the war in 1917.*

*Alan Seeger was the son of a prosperous merchant who sold American products in Mexico. He grew up in Manhattan and Staten Island, New York, and lived for two years in Mexico City. Seeger attended Harvard College, graduating in 1910 with a degree in Celtic literature. After spending two years in Greenwich Village, New York, as a bohemian poet, he joined the American artistic community in Paris.*

*Seeger enlisted in the French Foreign Legion soon after the outbreak of World War I. His regiment was committed in the Aisne in October 1914 and fought in Champagne in 1915. Seeger also found time to write poetry and serve as a war correspondent for the New York Sun and the New Republic. On 4 July 1916, the fourth day of the French offensive at the Somme, Seeger's unit led an assault on Belloy-en-Santerre. The regiment captured the town, despite heavy losses. Seeger was killed by a machine-gun bullet. The French posthumously awarded him a Croix de Guerre and the Médaille Militaire.*

### I HAVE A RENDEZVOUS WITH DEATH . . .

I HAVE a rendezvous with Death  
At some disputed barricade,  
When Spring comes back with rustling shade  
And apple-blossoms fill the air—  
I have a rendezvous with Death  
When Spring brings back blue days and fair.

It may be he shall take my hand  
And lead me into his dark land  
And close my eyes and quench my breath—  
It may be I shall pass him still.  
I have a rendezvous with Death  
On some scarred slope of battered hill,  
When Spring comes round again this year  
And the first meadow-flowers appear.

God knows 'twere better to be deep  
Pillowed in silk and scented down,  
Where Love throbs out in blissful sleep,  
Pulse nigh to pulse, and breath to breath,  
Where hushed awakenings are dear . . .  
But I've a rendezvous with Death  
At midnight in some flaming town,  
When Spring trips north again this year,  
And I to my pledged word am true,  
I shall not fail that rendezvous.

## CHAMPAGNE, 1914-15

In the glad revels, in the happy fêtes,  
When cheeks are flushed, and glasses gilt and pearly  
With the sweet wine of France that concentrates  
The sunshine and the beauty of the world,

Drink sometimes, you whose footsteps yet may tread  
The undisturbed, delightful paths of Earth,  
To those whose blood, in pious duty shed,  
Hallows the soil where that same wine had birth.

Here, by devoted comrades laid away,  
Along our lines they slumber where they fell,  
Beside the crater at the Ferme d'Alger  
And up the bloody slopes of La Pompelle,

And round the city whose cathedral towers  
The enemies of Beauty dared profane,  
And in the mat of multicolored flowers  
That clothe the sunny chalk-fields of Champagne.

Under the little crosses where they rise  
The soldier rests. Now round him undismayed  
The cannon thunders, and at night he lies  
At peace beneath the eternal fusillade . . .

That other generations might possess—  
From shame and menace free in years to come—  
A richer heritage of happiness,  
He marched to that heroic martyrdom.

Esteeming less the forfeit that he paid  
Than undishonored that his flag might float  
Over the towers of liberty, he made  
His breast the bulwark and his blood the moat.

Obscurely sacrificed, his nameless tomb,  
Bare of the sculptor's art, the poet's lines,  
Summer shall flush with poppy-fields in bloom,  
And Autumn yellow with maturing vines.

There the grape-pickers at their harvesting  
Shall lightly tread and load their wicker trays,  
Blessing his memory as they toil and sing  
In the slant sunshine of October days. . . .

I love to think that if my blood should be  
So privileged to sink where his has sunk,  
I shall not pass from Earth entirely,  
But when the banquet rings, when healths are drunk,

And faces that the joys of living fill  
Glow radiant with laughter and good cheer,  
In beaming cups some spark of me shall still  
Brim toward the lips that once I held so dear.

So shall one coveting no higher plane  
Than nature clothes in color and flesh and tone,  
Even from the grave put upward to attain  
The dreams youth cherished and missed and might  
have known;

And that strong need that strove unsatisfied  
Toward earthly beauty in all forms it wore,  
Not death itself shall utterly divide  
From the beloved shapes it thirsted for.

Alas, how many an adept for whose arms  
Life held delicious offerings perished here,  
How many in the prime of all that charms,  
Crowned with all gifts that conquer and endear!

Honor them not so much with tears and flowers,  
But you with whom the sweet fulfilment lies,  
Where in the anguish of atrocious hours  
Turned their last thoughts and closed their dying eyes,

Rather when music on bright gatherings lays  
Its tender spell, and joy is uppermost,  
Be mindful of the men they were, and raise  
Your glasses to them in one silent toast.

Drink to them—amorous of dear Earth as well,  
They asked no tribute lovelier than this—  
And in the wine that ripened where they fell,  
Oh, frame your lips as though it were a kiss.

Champagne, France, July 1915

Book Review  
by Terrence J. Gough

*Making Arms in the Machine Age: Philadelphia's Frankford Arsenal, 1816-1870*

by James J. Farley  
Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994, 142 pp., \$32.50.

Taking on a big challenge in a brief book, James J. Farley seeks in *Making Arms in the Machine Age* to encompass technological, military, labor, and social history. Farley focuses on technological change in the making of small arms and ammunition for the Army at the Ordnance Department's Frankford Arsenal from the installation's founding in 1817 (the government bought the land in 1816) through the early post-Civil War years. He treats Ordnance's role in the evolution from handicraft manufacture to systematic industrialized production and the impact of this change on the department. In addition, he addresses the effects of technological innovation on the arsenal's skilled workers.

For those interested in military history, especially its technological aspects, the greatest significance of Farley's work is as a gloss on Merritt Roe Smith's argument for the importance of the Ordnance Department in the development of the "American system" of manufacturing. Covering the period before the Mexican War, Farley can adduce little more than increasing "bureaucratic orderliness" and Alfred Mordecai's tests on gunpowder in the 1830s to demonstrate innovation at Frankford. His case for the arsenal's consequence strengthens somewhat as he relates the reluctance of private firms to produce an innovative Ordnance rifling machine in the 1850s and the inability of the Remington Arms Company during that decade to make percussion locks to exacting Frankford specifications. Such incidents, he suggests, show that the Ordnance Department led the private sector in mechanized uniformity and interchangeability of parts. The Civil War, he declares, pushed Frankford to a "wholly integrated industrial system" with steam power and a wide array of machine tools for specialized production of ammunition by a large civilian work force.

Farley contends that, as Frankford evolved, the

Ordnance Department grew "large, bureaucratic, managerial, and powerfully influential." Ordnance officers and enlisted men, formerly isolated, became "integral parts of the community" through interaction with workers. Rather than being deskilled by industrialized munitions production, the arsenal's workers successfully applied existing skills to the hand-finishing of machined work and developed new skills consonant with industrialization.

Springing from an examination of a single establishment, all of these claims require thorough primary documentation to be granted weight. Farley is most successful in making the case for the innovativeness of Frankford Arsenal and the adjustment of workers to industrialized munitions production, but even here there are large gaps in the evidence, not all of which he acknowledges. For example, he seems not to have investigated, as Smith did in studying armories, the records of the U.S. General Accounting Office's predecessor agencies. Moreover, Farley concedes that Frankford may not have been representative of Ordnance installations generally. And he does not come to grips with Donald Hoke's point that some civilian industries developed the "American system" independently of military practice. His contention that Ordnance officers went from isolation to integration in the community is not persuasive, as it is based almost solely on interaction within the arsenal during the work day.

Specialists in the various fields of history into which Farley ventures will note major works that he has not consulted, among them books by William B. Skelton on the antebellum Army officer corps, Matthew A. Crenson on Jacksonian bureaucracy, and J. Matthew Gallman on Philadelphia during the Civil War. Had he done and assimilated deeper research and written a book twice the length, Farley, a capable stylist, might have met much of the challenge he set himself. Instead he has given us an underdeveloped monograph whose greatest value is in tentatively fitting a small piece into the puzzle of technological advance in the nineteenth-century United States.

*Dr. Terrence J. Gough is chief of the Center's Historical Support Branch. He specializes in the history of industrial mobilization and military-business relations.*

## Book Review

by Brooks D. Simpson

### *The Hard Hand of War: Union Military Policy toward Southern Civilians, 1861–1865*

by Mark Grimsley

Cambridge University Press, 1995, 244 pp., \$29.95.

It has long been a part of the cherished myth of the Lost Cause that the Yankee vandals burned and pillaged (and some say raped) their way through the Confederacy during four years of ruthless war. This vivid portrayal of utter destruction is reinforced periodically by the inflammatory images contained in *Gone With the Wind*, citations from that bible of neo-Confederates, James Ronald Kennedy's and Walter Donald Kennedy's *The South was Right* (1994), and various forums where Civil War buffs continue to wage the war on paper and across the Internet. Most scholars have demonstrated a bit more restraint in their discussions, some going so far as to challenge previous characterizations of the Civil War as a total war. Now, Mark Grimsley offers a substantial and sophisticated explanation of exactly how and why Union generals and soldiers waged war against the Confederacy. Sensitive to issues of change over time, the difference between behavior prescribed in orders and undertaken by soldiers, and the conduct of war in the Western world, Grimsley's work points the way to a more mature, robust, and informed understanding of Union military policy by placing it in larger contexts.

The outlines of Grimsley's narrative—the transformation of the Union war effort from a limited war looking toward the conciliation of white southerners to a broader assault on material and psychological resources coupled with the emancipation of enslaved blacks—are familiar to most scholars. It is the fullness and precision with which he traces the transformation of the Union war effort that deserve loud applause. He takes full advantage of the Clausewitzian insight that war is politics conducted by other means to establish military measures within their larger political context in discussing the emergence of emancipation as a war measure and the concomitant abandonment of conciliation as a prime constraint upon the actions of commanders and soldiers. Yet as Grimsley points out, the hard war envisioned by Ulysses S. Grant and William

T. Sherman did not become an essential and systematic element of Union policy until Grant's appointment as general in chief in 1864. His discussion of how Sherman justified what he did in 1864–1865 merits comparison with interpretations offered in recent studies by Charles Royster, John F. Marszalek, and Michael Fellman.

Grimsley does not limit himself to the headquarters tent in examining the impact of Union advances upon Confederate civilians. Following leads offered by Royster, Joseph T. Glatthaar, and Gerald F. Linderman, he explores how common soldiers understood and implemented directives from above—and how at times they ignored them in their desire to strike back at recalcitrant rebels. They rarely assaulted white civilians, preferring instead to terrify them as they destroyed property and freed slaves. Thus soldiers as well as officers possessed a sense of restraint as they practiced what Grimsley terms "directed severity" against southern civilians. The bluecoats sought not to exterminate white southerners but to strike at the material and psychological resources necessary to resist the invaders.

By exploring the behavior of Union commanders and soldiers against Confederate civilians in the larger context of military history, Grimsley persuasively argues that the destruction wrought by Union forces was in line with previous practices and was limited in scope. In large part these limits reflected cultural, ethical, and political concerns: after all, the primary purpose of the Union war effort remained the elimination of the Confederacy as a political entity and the reintegration of its residents into the United States, not the wholesale destruction of the American South. Yet Grimsley could have said more about the interplay of policy ends and military means and about other efforts to promote resurgent loyalty, from the establishment of wartime Reconstruction regimes to the mixed motives behind the cotton trade. Olive branch as well as sword remained elements of Union policy; Grant later reflected that some of the destruction resulting from military operations in the spring of 1865 was counterproductive precisely because it did nothing to contribute to Confederate defeat while depriving southerners of economic resources needed for postwar recovery. One might quibble with certain assertions: while McClellan's failure to take Richmond might have

shattered the viability of conciliation in some northern minds, it played virtually no role in shaping the responses of Grant and Sherman to civilian behavior in West Tennessee, and it was only one of several considerations in Lincoln's thinking on the matter.

This book represents a major step in advancing the debate about how and why the Union waged war and in viewing the Civil War against the larger backdrop of military history. Using crisp prose and clear logic, Grimsley has left his mark on Civil War scholarship in ways that transcend the traditional absorption with battles and leaders. Whether the result influences popular impressions of the war remains to be seen.

*Brooks D. Simpson is an associate professor of history at Arizona State University and author of Let Us Have Peace: Ulysses S. Grant & the Politics of War & Reconstruction, 1861–1868 (University of North Carolina Press, 1991). This review appeared in the April 1997 issue of The American Historical Review and is reprinted here with permission.*

#### **Book Review** by Frank N. Schubert

*Fort Meade & the Black Hills*  
by Robert Lee  
University of Nebraska Press, 1996, 321 pp., \$14.95,  
paper.

Fort history has long been a staple in the literature of the American West. This book deals with the history of a post established in the far western part of Dakota Territory in the wake of the great Sioux Wars. The Army had been in the region since the expeditions of Engineer Lieutenant Gouverneur K. Warren in the late 1850s, and it built Fort Meade in 1878 to assure settlers that residents of the nearby Sioux reservations would not trouble them.

Fort Meade's history was marked by no spectacular events. It had no bloody battles, such as the wagonbox fight near Fort Fetterman, and no dramatic homicides to match the stabbing of Crazy Horse at Fort Robinson. Custer never slept there, and its garrisons included some of the least stellar cavalry regiments of the frontier Army, the Seventh,

with its string of ordinary commanders—Custer, Samuel Sturgis, James Tilford, and George Forsyth; and the Eighth, which stayed in South Dakota while most of the Army went to Cuba in 1898.

Basically, Fort Meade, near the town of Sturgis in the Black Hills, stood guard over the Sioux reservations. It did serve as a major source of troops for the Pine Ridge campaign of 1890–91, and it became involved in ending the Ute migration of 1906. Major Marcus Reno's court martial at Fort Meade resulted in his dismissal for his unwanted and unconventional expressions of interest in Colonel Sturgis's daughter Ella. And the post did house one of the companies of Indian regular troops that were organized during the 1890s in a short-lived attempt at acculturation.

More importantly, Fort Meade represented a substantial public investment in the expansion of Anglo-American settlement of the Black Hills. In this critical regard, Meade resembled all other western posts. Lee knows this role of the post is important, because he repeatedly says it is. He also knows that because Fort Meade was a relatively marginal post, the War Department frequently considered closing it, forcing the local civilians to lobby very strenuously to keep it open. Well into the twentieth century, they waved the bloody ghost shirt to remind Congress of the dire Indian peril that would sweep over the region if Fort Meade were abandoned.

However, Lee does not seem to know how to determine the extent or nature of the post's importance. In this regard, many significant questions go unanswered. Who benefited from its presence? Did the military outlays provide the economic basis for local political and social power? What was the connection between public expenditures for the post and local economic activity? How did local communities try to exploit the military presence, especially those activities usually considered under the category of vice? Lee sticks to a straightforward narrative of the events associated with the military presence at Fort Meade and does not address these issues or use the local documentation—tax records, city council minutes, and police court dockets—that might provide answers.

There are the usual small editorial problems.

The worst involves the misspelling of Thomas R. Buecker's name in the endnotes and bibliography. Buecker is the author of many articles on the military history of the northern plains, and he deserves to have his name spelled correctly. In addition, the National Archives collection of records of continental army commands is identified as Record Group 93 instead of 393.

Overall, the book provides a good narrative of Fort Meade's history. It tells us who passed through and what military activities took place. It is less useful concerning the impact of the post on local development.

*Dr. Frank N. Schubert is chief of the Joint Operational History Branch in the Joint History Office in the Pentagon. He is the author most recently of On the Trail of the Buffalo Soldier, which was selected by Choice as one of the outstanding reference books of 1995, and Black Valor: Buffalo Soldiers and the Medal of Honor, 1870–1898, both published by Scholarly Resources Inc.*

#### Book Review

by Graham A. Cosmas

#### *The War with Spain in 1898*

by David F. Trask

Paperback reprint, University of Nebraska Press, 1996, 654 pp., \$29.95.

This paperback reissue of David Trask's 1981 volume in the Macmillan Wars of the United States series is a welcome event as the centennial of the conflict with Spain in 1898 approaches. David Trask, a former chief historian of both the Army and the Department of State, in this volume combines military and diplomatic expertise to produce the definitive modern account of the "Splendid Little War." In spite of the Spanish war's importance as America's introduction to the stage of twentieth century world power, its historiography, especially on the military side, has been until recently sparse and unsatisfactory. Historians during the past three decades have produced major reassessments and reinterpretations of the domestic and international political aspects, but until Trask's study the most authoritative

general military account remained the two-volume work published in 1911 by Rear Admiral French Ensor Chadwick, himself a veteran of the conflict. Walter Millis's satirical *The Martial Spirit* and later hasty imitations contributed little to our knowledge beyond providing generations of college instructors with anecdotes for their freshman survey courses.

In *The War with Spain in 1898*, Dr. Trask met the need for a new synthesis of the military history of the war. Trask's volume traces the course of what was really the Spanish-American-Cuban-Philippine War from its beginnings in the Cuban nationalist insurgency of 1895–1898 to its conclusion in the downfall of Spain's Caribbean and Pacific Ocean empires. Trask takes fully into account the recent political and diplomatic studies of the war, as well as the expanding monographic literature on the military background and conduct of the conflict, including this reviewer's work on U.S. Army administration and logistics. He draws not only upon American, but also upon Spanish, British, other European, Cuban, and Philippine sources.

This is a military-political history, detailing the interaction of diplomacy, military preparations, and armed conflict, an approach well justified for the war is a classic illustration of Clausewitz's oft-quoted lines about the continuation of politics by other means.

In assessing the reasons why the United States went to war with Spain, Trask portrays President William McKinley as a capable wartime chief, who shaped military operations to achieve his policy goals. At the same time, he notes that McKinley had a keen sense of the limitations which domestic public opinion places on the president's choices in foreign policy. Taking issue with the William Appleman Williams' "Open Door Imperialism" interpretation that focused on economic matters, Trask declares that the United States entered the war in response to an idealistic impulse to free Cuba, combined with great power assertiveness and the chauvinistic emotions aroused by the probably accidental destruction of the battleship *Maine* at Havana.

The pacific McKinley resisted public and congressional pressures for intervention as long as he could and gave way in the end out of conviction that Spain could not or would not end the violence and suffering in Cuba by the only possible means: granting Cuban independence. Trask demolishes the myth that Spain already had agreed to all McKinley's demands before the presi-

dent asked Congress to authorize armed intervention in April 1898. Indeed, on the basis of evidence from Spanish sources, he suggests that the fragile Madrid government in the end preferred to lose Cuba in war with the United States rather than by a domestically divisive deal with the despised *insurrectos*.

Trask effectively lays to rest Mr. Dooley's canard that "The United States fought the war in her sleep, but Spain fought in a trance." He gives a full account of the extensive military planning that preceded hostilities — planning unprecedentedly detailed and sophisticated compared with previous American practice. In that planning, the U.S. Navy, and especially the new Naval War College, had the leading role. Trask acknowledges the competence and professionalism of the reformed Navy. He details the fleet's maneuvers that brought to battle and destroyed the Spanish squadrons at Santiago and Manila. Trask tells in full the often-neglected but fascinating story of Spain's attempt to send a reinforcement squadron through the Suez Canal to Manila, a plan foiled by nominally neutral Britain's obstruction of the Spaniards' refueling after they passed through the canal. He also describes the U.S. countermove: formation of the Eastern Squadron from the fleet in the Caribbean for operations in European and Mediterranean waters. Neither force actually carried out its mission, but the story of these squadrons indicates the far-flung nature of the operations of 1898.

While recognizing that naval action decided the conflict, Trask also gives the U.S. Army its due. He points out that while less well prepared for war than the Navy and less well led at the War Department and senior command levels, the Army nevertheless expanded tenfold within four months and launched successful expeditions to Santiago, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines — truly an early demonstration of global power projection. The Army's performance in 1898, in the face of obstacles greater in many ways than those confronting the Navy, was an impressive demonstration of effectiveness and laid the groundwork for Elihu Root's postwar work of modernization and reform.

Trask's account of the Army's role in the war contains some questionable interpretations and at least one minor factual error. In my view, he has Maj. Gen. William R. Shafter's objective in the 1 July 1898 attacks on San Juan Hill and El Caney wrong. Trask believes that Shafter intended to storm the city of Santiago on 1

July, whereas his surviving dispatches to the War Department, and other evidence, point to the more modest goal of clearing the outer defenses and positioning the V Corps to assault or besiege. Trask also makes too much of Shafter's failure to call for naval gunfire support at San Juan and El Caney. Such support would have required the use of indirect fire, for which the Army and Navy in 1898 had neither the doctrine nor the equipment.

In his conclusion (p. 485), Trask falls into the common error of confusing canned roast and refrigerated beef in the "embalmed beef" scandal. The refrigerated beef, not the canned beef, was the target of Maj. Gen. Nelson A. Miles's unsubstantiated embalming charges; the canned beef proved unsatisfactory in the tropics and an Army court of inquiry found Commissary General Charles P. Eagan to have made an error in procuring so much of it. (In fact, the Army continued issuing the stuff well into the 1900s.)

These nitpicks and caveats aside, Trask's history remains the authoritative current account of the war with Spain. If you do not already have it in your library, by all means purchase the paperback edition.

*Dr. Graham A. Cosmas is chief of the Histories Branch of the Center. Among other works, he has published An Army for Empire: The United States Army in the Spanish American War (2d ed., White Mane Publishing Co., 1994) and the chapter on "San Juan Hill and El Caney" in Charles E. Heller and William A. Stofft, eds., America's First Battles, 1776–1965 (University Press of Kansas, 1986).*

#### **Book Review** by Michael Miller

*The French Secret Services: From the Dreyfus Affair to the Gulf War*  
by Douglas Porch  
Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995, 623 pp., \$32.50.

In this lengthy study of the French secret services in the twentieth century, Douglas Porch recounts a series of French intelligence successes. Yet his objective is to chronicle a history of counterproductive behavior and failure. The French pioneered cryptoanalysis and air reconnaissance. In the 1930s,



they warned of German armored doctrine and signaled German intentions. Their intelligence on the Vietminh during the Indochina War was first-rate. Yet they squandered early technological leads, they failed to anticipate the force of the von Schlieffen offensive, and they hedged on German movements in May 1940 and miscalculated battle order formations. Their opium trafficking in Indochina paved the way for the Dien Bien Phu fiasco, and, indeed, from 1945 on their history evolved into a squalid one of scandal, loose cannon botch-ups, post-colonial intrigues, and mutually destructive service rivalries, culminating in the Rainbow Warrior disgrace and the humiliating dependence on American intelligence during the Gulf War.

Often the failures were commonplace ones: good intelligence wasted on command structures incapable of or disinterested in using it. Porch has few, if any, kind things to say about the leadership of Joseph Joffre, Maurice Gamelin, or Henri Navarre. Still, he is not prepared to let the secret services off the hook. Beyond clear-cut errors in judgment, they conformed to the fatal patron-client intelligence relationship, awarding highest priority to personal or organizational survival and thus slanting information to fit preconceived notions or hedging their bets with smorgasbord offerings. Moreover, the French secret services, Porch tells us, were almost destined to fail, so embedded were they in the inadequacies of French military and political culture. As primarily military organizations, they lacked the independent initiative to force unwanted intelligence on reluctant superiors. As heirs to the French Resistance, they overcommitted to covert operations. Mimicking a military command that sought a release from strategic difficulties in daring moves, they, too, pursued the will-o'-the-wisp of special operations. And, like the governments that created and employed them, they were riven with distrust, fragmentation, and political intrigue.

Porch has always known how to tell a good story, and readers of this volume will not be disappointed, although his special talent for describing lightning raids across the Sahara or the forbidden lands into which French military units poured has been lost somewhat amid the more mundane confines of agency offices. His real strengths are the professional lifetime he has devoted to scrutinizing French military files at Vincennes and the foundation he possesses in the

doctrine and practice of military command, so that he can write confidently—even controversially—about the relationship between intelligence and strategic decision-making. Gifts for narrative, bold analysis, and close archival reading can combine superbly, as they do, for example, in his discussion of the collapse at Dien Bien Phu. On the other hand, long stretches of this book, especially the more contemporary segments, rely, unavoidably, on a memoir and journalistic literature whose tales of scandal and manipulation may not always place truth-telling at the top of their agendas. Porch's willingness to run with such sources, plus a reluctance to advance beyond a critical reading of French Republican politics, at times produce a predictable quality to a work that otherwise adds considerably to our understanding and evaluation of French intelligence operations in modern times.

*Michael Miller is a professor of history at Syracuse University and author of Shanghai on the Metro: Spies, Intrigue, & the French between the Wars (University of California Press, 1994). This review appeared in the April 1997 issue of The American Historical Review and is reprinted with permission.*

#### **Book Review** by Joseph Whitehorne

*A Dark and Bloody Ground: The Hürtgen Forest and the Roer River Dams, 1944–1945*  
by Edward G. Miller  
Texas A & M University Press, 1995, 272 pp., \$29.95.

The 1944–45 battles in the Hürtgen Forest area south of Aachen, Germany, were familiar to generations of Command and General Staff College students, thanks in part to exercises based upon Charles B. MacDonald's excellent study of the battle of Schmidt in the official history, *Three Battles*. MacDonald later incorporated this work into his *The Siegfried Line Campaign*. The focus on Schmidt obscured for many people the fact that fighting in the Hürtgen Forest had, by the time of that battle, been at a high pitch for four months and would not conclude for another two.

Maj. Edward G. Miller has now produced a well-researched volume which describes the Hürtgen fight-

ing from the American perspective from start to finish. U.S. forces first entered the western edge of the forest in September 1944, convinced that victory was attainable within a matter of weeks and that enemy forces were shattered beyond repair. Allied forward momentum ended coincident with entry into the forest, in part because of General Dwight D. Eisenhower's broad front strategy, but, more importantly, because of severe logistical strains that necessitated regrouping.

The American forces entered the forest with no greater objective than to clear it through to the Roer River, while protecting the right flank of forces operating against Aachen to the north. American units in the forest lost every advantage superior mobility, material, and air support afforded them, and they were forced to deal with the German defenders on virtually equal infantry terms. U.S. division- and higher-level commands never seemed to fully recognize this fact, nor to appreciate the appalling physical conditions imposed by the terrain and weather. Consequently, as Miller points out, a great deal of planning and direction for subordinate units proved to be unrealistic.

Unlike the Americans, the German forces established clear and important objectives in conducting their tenacious defense. It was essential for them to protect the northern shoulder of the build-up for the proposed mid-December Ardennes offensive. Additionally, they had to defend the dams on the Roer River in the forest, so as to be able to use flooding later as a defensive measure against Allied operations further north along the river. Miller notes that U.S. commanders recognized only belatedly that the dams were one reason for the tough German defense, and only then—almost as an afterthought—did they incorporate them as an American objective.

*A Dark and Bloody Ground* paints a picture in which the German leadership had a clearer concept of conditions and objectives than did senior American commanders. The latter increasingly turned to micromanagement, applying pressure on their subordinates to achieve the impossible as their orders were frustrated by lack of success. The first half of the book focuses on these high-command decisions, which brought increasing numbers of American troops into the Hürtgen morass. The last chapters spend more time discussing the situation at the regimental level and below, providing gripping descriptions of units' combat experiences

under extremely difficult conditions. Miller's interviews with eyewitnesses make a major contribution. His very sound concluding analyses stress the obvious need for commanders to develop a well-defined objective before committing troops to battle.

In his summary, Miller also touches on aspects of German success, raising some points that deserve further study. He set out to describe the American experience in the Hürtgen, and he does this competently. German success against the overconfident Americans merits greater analysis. The author points out that few U.S. units had training in forest fighting. Surely the same can be said, however, of German *Luftwaffe* and *Polizei* units. What then made these latter forces so formidable in the forest? Miller correctly credits German headquarters groups with a remarkable capacity for assembling cohesive units from diverse elements, yet he does not explore how this was achieved. This sound book would have been greatly enhanced if more attention had been paid to these aspects on the German side. The author seems to have made little use of recently available German unit histories and studies which could shed light on these capabilities.

Miller's comprehensive discussion of unit deployments mandates equally detailed maps. Unfortunately, there are only seven (the last two of which are transposed). *A Dark and Bloody Ground* also would have been strengthened by a bibliography, in addition to its endnotes. On the other hand, this book is well illustrated with clear, fully-described photographs that enhance the narrative. All in all, this is a thorough, interesting study, which every student of World War II operations in northwest Europe should read. It is the best single book available on the Hürtgen Forest and should remain so for a long time.

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**Book Review**  
by Conrad Crane

***Code-Name Downfall: The Secret Plan to Invade Japan—and Why Truman Dropped the Bomb***

by Thomas B. Allen and Norman Polmar  
Simon and Schuster, 1995, 351 pp., \$25.00.

Naval historian Norman Polmar and freelance writer Thomas B. Allen have collaborated for the sixth time to create a useful account of the end of World War II in the Pacific. They believe that the projected invasion of Japan would have been the bloodiest battle in history and that the use of the atomic bomb was fully justified not only within the context of what decision-makers knew at the time, but also by the future death and destruction it prevented by bringing the war to a close.

The book is not without its flaws, however. The first three chapters, where the authors summarize the Pacific war before Okinawa, are remarkable only for an obvious disdain for Douglas MacArthur that colors the whole book and detracts from the narrative. Polmar and Allen continually belittle the general's contributions in the Pacific and even manage to give him most of the blame for Admiral Chester Nimitz's costly operations in Peleliu. The most questionable theme of the book is that MacArthur was motivated to pursue the invasion of Japan mainly because he thought it would be his ticket to the presidency. Allen and Polmar even imply that President Franklin Roosevelt decided to support the American return to the Philippines more to deprive conservative Republicans of a "MacArthur martyrdom" issue for the 1944 election than for any logical strategic reasons.

The authors do much better once they get to the campaign on Okinawa and Japan's increasingly desperate, and effective, defensive measures. They do an excellent job conveying the impact that suicidal Japanese resistance and rising American casualties had on U.S. planners and leaders. Their coverage of the development and final structure of Operation DOWNFALL, the Allied invasion of Japan, and the plans of the defenders to resist it, is not quite up to the research standards of John Ray Skates' *The Invasion of Japan: Alternative to the Bomb*, but Allen and Polmar provide a useful supplement to it. Whereas Skates emphasizes

American firepower advantages and Japanese defensive difficulties and concludes that the invasion of Japan would really not have been very bloody, these authors do a more realistic evaluation of the difficulties involved in the Allied operation and the desperation and fanaticism evident in Japanese preparations and make a far different prediction. Their analysis of how the opposing forces matched up on Kyushu and Honshu is very persuasive. Landings on those islands would likely have been amazingly costly for both sides.

Allen and Polmar also do an excellent job examining the factors surrounding the dropping of the atomic bomb. Especially noteworthy is their compilation of all the different casualty estimates that President Harry Truman was getting about the invasion, ranging from a low of 31,000 based on the experience in Luzon to a high of "500,000 to 1,000,000 American boys" contained in a plea from Herbert Hoover to modify unconditional surrender. The authors are thorough in their assessment of Truman's options concerning the bomb and his overarching motivation to save lives. They also devote considerable effort to examining the tortuous process leading to Japanese surrender. While their account is not as thorough as Robert C. Butow's classic, *Japan's Decision to Surrender*, they do provide ample support for their argument that the use of the atomic bomb was crucial in ending the war. If the conflict had continued, the authors contend that both sides were prepared to resort to chemical and biological warfare. The Japanese had plans to spread plague-infected fleas from submarine-launched scaplanes over West Coast cities in September.

The book does include some nagging errors, such as claiming that the Eighth Air Force would have deployed from Europe with B-29s. In addition, the footnoting style is awkward and often incomplete. Still it should be recommended reading for anyone who is interested in the continuing controversy about the use of the atomic bomb and the end of the war in the Pacific.

*Lt. Col. Conrad Crane is a professor of history at the United States Military Academy and the author of Bombs, Cities, and Civilians: American Airpower Strategy in World War II (University Press of Kansas, 1993).*

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