

Bradley: Another Quality Addition To Hunnicutt Series on American Armor

BRADLEY: A History of American Fighting and Support Vehicles by R.P. Hunnicutt, Presidio Press, Novato, Calif., 1999, 470 pp., \$90.

For many years, Dick Hunnicutt has been publishing authoritative, profusely illustrated histories of the development of American armor, well mounted hardbound references that are on bookshelves all over this Army and probably in many others.

An engineer who served as an infantryman in World War II, his books set a very high standard in many ways. His photographic documentation closely follows the details in the text, and the photos selected are clear and well reproduced on heavy, glossy pages. The books themselves are large format, strong enough to stand up to years of frequent use, and reflect very high quality in every detail. This is no-compromise production by a real perfectionist (his first volumes were self-published and barely broke even, he says), and they are well worth their considerable cost.

The title of this volume, like some of Hunnicutt's others, is somewhat misleading. The title focuses on the Bradley, but the first mention of the Bradley in the text does not come until about page 280. More accurate is the subtitle, which begins to give some hint of the broad coverage attempted here. The chapter headings reflect the variety of tracked vehicles covered: personnel and cargo carriers, command and reconnaissance vehicles, high-speed tractors, low ground pressure vehicles, fire support vehicles, specialized tracked vehicles for engineers, maintenance teams, anti-tank sections, and chemical warfare teams, Marine landing amphibians, and infantry and cavalry fighting vehicles.

After an introduction by MG Stan R. Sheridan, a key figure in the development of the Bradley, the text begins as the Armor Branch began...in World War II. Hunnicutt describes the early approach to armored troop carriers — the halftracks — and their limitations in terms of mobility and troop protection. He recounts the British and Canadian efforts to develop improvised, fully-tracked troop carriers from obsolete tanks and SP guns. The move toward fully-tracked vehicles, spurred by the Allies' losing battles with General Mud, led to a remarkable assortment of solutions, some of which you may have never heard of. Willys built a *tracked Jeep* for Canada, for example. This reviewer was also amazed at the number of fully tracked high speed tractors developed to haul heavier and heavier artillery pieces

over difficult terrain. When one thinks of tracks, one thinks of tanks, and this is far too simple an approach. Tracks made many specialized vehicles mobile enough to go to war.

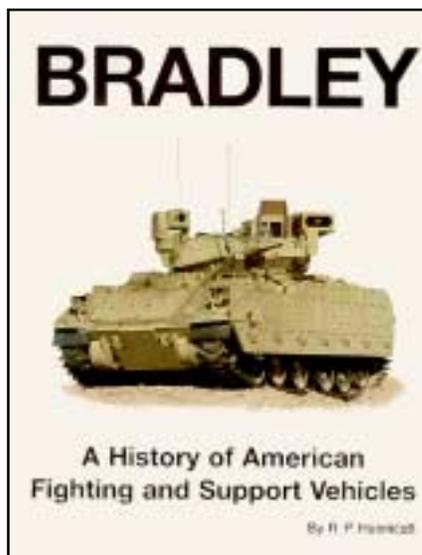
After World War II, the Army began the development of dedicated armored personnel carriers, fully tracked "battle taxis" originally developed on light tank chassis and the high-speed chassis of the M18 Hellcat tank destroyer. But the M75 that emerged was considered too expensive, and it was followed by the T59 and others, culminating in the M113 series that is still in use today. While tracing the development of these APCs, the author also branches off to discuss special purpose variants, like mortar carriers. In service with so many armies for so many years, the M113 series has been developed in an amazing number of variations. Typical of the author's comprehensive approach, there are pictures of each variant mentioned in the text, including turreted versions that utilize major caliber gun systems developed overseas.

The section on command and reconnaissance vehicles is particularly interesting, considering the fact that we are once again in a development cycle to build a new scout vehicle. It is sobering to see how many different approaches have been taken in this pursuit, wheeled and tracked.

The following chapter, on infantry and cavalry fighting vehicles, traces the development of another M113 variant that came to be called the ACAV, or Armored Cavalry Assault Vehicle. Originally developed by the Vietnamese after receiving M113s from their American allies, we adopted the idea, and created gunshield kits that improved upon the originals. In the hands of units like the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, these improvised battlewagons acted passably well in the role of light tanks.

At the conclusion of this chapter, the author explains the early history of attempts to build an infantry and cavalry *fighting* vehicle, with a dedicated, turreted armament that supported the infantry and cavalry soldiers it carried. This leads up to the development of the Bradley, a chapter that also includes many of the prototype efforts to improve the Bradley's armament, adopt it to air defense, and use it to carry and fire missiles. The author also explores the Bradley-chassis variants, like the MLRS carrier and proposed ambulance, command and control, and logistics versions.

The next chapter covers a family of vehicles less familiar to Army readers than their Marine counterparts, the tracked landing amphibians. This 40-page chapter traces their develop-



ment from the primitive "Alligators" of WWII to the many variations of amphibians used today.

In summary, it is true that a \$90 book is an expensive book for most of us. But they say price is what you pay and value is what you get, and the value here is impressive, indeed.

JON CLEMENS
Managing Editor

THE RIVER AND THE HORSEMEN: A Novel of the Little Bighorn by Robert Skimin, Herodias, Inc., N.Y., 1999, 364 pp., \$26.

While the outcome of this historical novel is never in doubt, the author's approach to telling the oft-told story of George Armstrong Custer and the troopers' of the 7th Cavalry's C, E, F, I, and L Companies ride into annihilation and history in southern Montana on the 25th of June 1876 is different and well worth the read.

Skimin's story is about the people on both sides of the battle — soldier, Indian, and civilian — and their individual stories as told through the author's eyes, and woven into a complete fact and fiction tapestry leading ever directly to that fateful and tragic day in June 1876. It is obvious that the author has done his homework, both on the ground in southern Montana, and with the lives of the well known and not so well known participants on both sides of this preventable tragedy.

Skimin's writing gives meaning and understanding to the day-to-day good life of the plains Indians — their customs, religion, loves and hatreds, and the warrior's absolute belief in personal invincibility over the hated Long Knives. The author explains the need for mutilation of an enemy to "steal forever the enemy warrior's power;" but at the same time mentions how the Indians showed compassion for a fearless enemy, as in the case of the non-mutilation of Custer's body. Skimin paints a pretty good picture of the tough life in the post-

Civil War western Cavalry — not your typical Hollywood John Wayne Cavalry; but one of long days, weeks, and months of boredom, lack of supplies and equipment, few promotions, low pay, heavy drinking, whoring, and moments of hard fighting for the honor of the regiment, the company, and fellow troopers. Insight is given into the extended Custer “Royal Family” of intimate friends and family serving in the 7th Cavalry — two brothers, a brother-in-law, and a nephew died with him. The author also explores Custer’s ego, his complete lack of fear, and his reckless drive to win a great victory, national acclaim, and promotion to general officer rank.

Throughout the book, the author has used actual known incidents to develop fictional characters and background that otherwise would be difficult to portray. As an example, it is a fact that an Indian with a high-powered Sharps rifle fired into Reno Hill on the south east end of the battlefield, causing casualties from as far away as 700 yards. Using this incident as a base, Skimin skillfully develops a fictional Hunkapapa Sioux warrior and traces his development to warrior status and his fictional interface with Sitting Bull, Gall, and Crazy Horse up to and throughout the battle. Sitting Bull’s god-like persona, influence, and impact on all the tribes is skillfully described. “Custer’s Luck” is emphasized throughout the book; but little is said of “Custer’s Folly” other than in passing — such things as his turning down General Terry’s offer of four companies of the 2nd Cavalry so as to assure that the coming victory would be purely a 7th Cavalry affair; his rejection of four “cumbersome” Gatling guns; the splitting of his force twice during the battle (the premature commitment of Reno across the Little Bighorn River and Yates and Smith’s F and E Companies down Medicine Tail Coulee); or his failure to listen to and properly use his scouts. When it was all said and done, the reader is clearly exposed to how Custer’s eagerness to box in the hostiles overshadowed his judgment and caused a piecemeal commitment of his force, leaving him with insufficient combat power to counter the surprisingly overwhelming Indian force. In the end, Custer is portrayed as realizing his folly, but still completely surprised by the size and ferocity of the hostile force.

The author’s description of the Custer part of the battle, where there were no survivors other than hostile Indians, is brief and in keeping with the official scenario of the battle. Having just recently visited and extensively walked the battlefield, I am convinced that there may be other plausible scenarios of how the Custer part of the battle progressed and ended. But that is another story for other students of Custer lore to pursue. Suffice it to say that Skimin has spun a yarn with substance and historical credibility that is well worth reading by Custer buffs, students of the Cavalry of the West, and by folks just looking for a good story on a cold night.

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Chronicle of the 7. Panzer-Kompanie, 1. SS-Panzer Division “Leibstandarte”
by Ralf Tieman, Schiffer Publishing Ltd.,
Atglen, Pa., 1998, 298 pp., \$29.95.

The *Chronicle of the 7. Panzer-Kompanie, 1. SS-Panzer Division “Leibstandarte”* is an interesting look at the organization, employment, members, and events in the life of a small unit during World War II. The author held several command and staff positions in the 1st SS Panzer Regiment, including command of the 7th Company during its formation and again during the Battle of Kursk. This book is a great companion to the many unit and campaign histories currently available. It is of particular note since it presents the view from “the other side of the hill” and covers some campaigns that are frequently not covered by books generally available in the United States. The 7th Company also played a part in the notorious Malmédy Massacre as part of Kampfgruppe Peiper; the author covers this event and the subsequent trial following the war. The book is well written though it suffers from some editing problems. The *Chronicle of the 7. Panzer-Kompanie, 1. SS-Panzer Division “Leibstandarte”* is a valuable addition to any library and well worth the price.

The 7th Company was originally formed in Wildflecken in 1942 with the 1st SS Panzer Regiment. Many readers will recognize pictures of the barracks at the Wildflecken Training Area. The company was initially equipped with a mixture of Panzer IIs and short-barreled Panzer IVs. After completing training in Germany and France, the company was re-equipped with the long-barreled 75mm Panzer IV and sent to Russia in February 1943, where it participated in the Battle of Kharkov. Following their first action and losses at Kharkov, they assimilated replacements and conducted intensive training in preparation for Operation Citadel, the Battle of the Kursk Bulge. The company participated in the Battle of Kursk, taking part in the largest armor battle of the war at Prokhorovka. During the course of the battle, the company destroyed 79 enemy tanks while losing only two of its Panzer IVs totally destroyed. The company was then transferred, along with the rest of the division, to Italy to assist in disarming the Italian Army. The company returned to the Russian Front at the end of October and participated in defensive battles in the vicinity of Kiev, and later in the relief of the Cherkassy Pocket. During the battles for the Cherkassy Pocket, the company lost most of its combat vehicles. Subsequently, during the Soviet offensive that resulted in the encirclement of the 1st Panzer Army at Kamenets-Podolsk, the company was forced to conduct a dismounted defense of their assembly area against a Russian tank attack. Members of the company also had to fight as infantry during the breakout from the Kamenets-Podolsk Pocket. The company transferred with the division to the west, where they received new equipment and replacements. They fought in Normandy, including Operation Goodwood, and the Mortain Counterattack. Following the breakout from Falaise,

they were again reconstituted and participated in the Ardennes offensive. The company was part of Kampfgruppe Peiper, and some of its members were involved in the Malmédy Massacre. The company sustained heavy casualties in the Ardennes and was merged with the remaining Panzer IVs of the 1st SS Panzer regiment to form a composite panzer regiment. They then participated in Operation Spring Awakening in Hungary and the subsequent withdrawal through Austria. The company marched along with the rest of the Leibstandarte as a unit into captivity on 12 May 1945 in Mauerkirchen, surrendering to the Americans.

One of the strengths of this book is that it provides a glimpse into events and allows the reader to see the enemy as individuals rather than a faceless mass. In this respect, readers will find it comparable to American small unit histories. Not only do you read about the combat actions of the unit, but also some of the routine of army life — the daily administrative requirements, setting up training programs, assimilating replacements, the usual routines that all soldiers will recognize.

The company also participated in some lesser reported combat actions. An example is the final offensive in Hungary and withdrawal into Austria in 1945. The Leibstandarte was a shell of its former self, the panzer regiment no longer fielded battalions, rather an ad hoc combination of tanks into two companies, one of Panthers and one of Panzer IVs, reinforced by the remains of the 501st SS Heavy Panzer Battalion. Following the failed offensive in Hungary, the Germans retreated into Austria, the 1st SS Panzer Division was fighting on its home ground for the first time. The *ad hoc* panzer regiment had been reduced to individual vehicles supported by various groups of soldiers. Soldiers and civilians continued to resist the Russians to their utmost to protect their villages and allow the population to escape the Red Army. In one particular case, two young ladies volunteered and served as panzer crewman. The SS men found uniforms for the two girls, trained them to operate the weapons, and the girls helped defend their village against the Russians. When the company retreated, the girls chose to remain behind and continue to protect their homes. Another example is the extraordinary efforts the company and division exerted in order to surrender to the Americans, literally a race to beat the Russians to the crossings over the Enns River — a race that parts of the division did not win. A search of the Enns River crossing sites would probably yield a cache of disposed weapons including the last of the unit’s panzers.

The 7th Company had seven members convicted for their roles in the Malmédy Massacre. The author, Ralf Tieman, a former commander of the 7th Company, contends the prisoners were shot as a result of continuing attempts to escape. He focuses primarily on the process that the American prosecutors used to elicit confessions and testimony against the accused members of the com-

pany. While the author does not deny that there were members of the company present at the site; neither does he adequately deal with the event. The reader must be wary not to accept this version as the definitive account of the massacre and subsequent trial. The fact remains that soldiers of Kampfgruppe Peiper killed 79 American soldiers at the crossroads of Baugnez.

A continuing problem with books published by Schiffer is inadequate editing. This book is no exception. A typical example being the use of "concern" instead of Kasserne or barracks. While the editing can be distracting, it does not significantly diminish the quality of the book.

Chronicle of the 7. Panzer-Kompanie, 1. SS-Panzer Division "Leibstandarte" is an interesting book that covers the organization, combat operations, and demise of a small unit. As mentioned previously, the book describes the company's actions in many pivotal campaigns as well as some that are less well known. It gives a personal glimpse into the daily life of a tank company both in and out of combat. It provides interesting insights into the last days of the German Army and helps explain why it continued to fight fiercely up to the very end. It is well written and extremely readable, appendices provide lists of awards received by each member of the company, casualties, maps, and texts of key documents. In spite of the editing problems mentioned, it is well worth the price. I recommend it to all students of mounted combat operations and particularly those interested in the German Panzer Corps.

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Spearheading D-Day: American Special Units in Normandy by Jonathan Gawne, Histoire & Collections, Paris, 1998; 288 pp. with photos, illustrations and maps; price \$49.95 (ISBN 2 908 182 793).

Advantages: Great companion book to the histories of D-Day; fascinating detailed explanation of what it takes to mount a full-fledged invasion!

Disadvantages: Probably very hard to find

Rating: Highly Recommended

Recommendation: For all historians and modelers

Most of us grew up with the movie *The Longest Day*, based on the Cornelius Ryan book, which told in a then-new *cinema verite* style the story of the D-Day landings and all that they entailed. Later, other books were found and read, such as works by Charles B. McDonald and Stephen Ambrose, which detailed even more of the events of that day and its aftermath. Then came the 50th Anniversary in 1994, and finally, the moving film *Saving Private Ryan* in the summer of 1998.

This book — which went to press in October 1998 — is a fascinating companion work to all those mentioned above. Unlike others, which cover what took place during the invasion, and when the key decisions were made, this one shows how and why things happened the way that they did. Illustrated with a tremendous number of crisp new photographs — most taken by the photographic units that accompanied the landing forces through training and embarkation — the book contains nicely done maps and schematics of the formations described. The author, who is an American living in Framingham, Mass., has been helped by a number of French historians and reenactors in putting this book together.

The chapters cover nine basic areas: the Assault Training Center, which worked out the "bugs" of landing troops; the US and British landing craft, which were developed and used to put the troops ashore; the initial assault troops and their functions; Naval beach clearing and preparation parties; regimental combat teams and attached units; Ranger and Marine units; Naval Beach Battalions and their work; the Engineer Special Brigades and their functions; and the Seabees and port installation and operating personnel who kept them ashore once the forces got off the beach. All are well illustrated, and in many cases, French reenactors pose in the uniforms representing the forces described in that particular chapter.

Among some of the items covered are the development of beach assault jackets, which were to be used by the first waves for carrying all of the extra items needed. This was an "exempt" garment, not unlike a fishing vest seen today, which was locally manufactured in the UK for the US Army. Fourteen thousand of these vests were procured, mostly for the 1st, 4th, and 29th Infantry Division regimental assault teams which hit Omaha and Utah beaches. While little has ever been said about them, the author shows via detailed photographic evidence that it was a necessity and very much in demand for the first few weeks of the invasion, as well as just the initial assault.

The book also covers how the fleet was set up for the actual assault, with specific boats, teams, and task forces with very specific tasks in mind when they came ashore. While many historians and buffs are familiar with the Ranger operations at Pointe du Hoc, this book provides detailed information on specific operations and teams, as well as composition, of how other obstacles were to be cleared and tanks and other support equipment landed to provide immediate support. While a number of books have concentrated on failures at the beach, this book provides quite a bit of photographic evidence that shows more successes than failures.

The book also covers the actions of units like the 70th, 741st and 743rd Tank Battalions. Of the three, the 741st took many losses in its Duplex Drive Sherman tanks due to a failure by a naval officer to abide by his instructions, and two overeager tank company commanders tried to show what the DD Shermans

could do by actually trying to swim the tanks — with an average of 8 inches of freeboard — through the surf. (It is noted two of the tanks were later found nine miles off the coast, indicating that they were launched way too soon.) Thirty-two were lost, which caused a great deal of trouble; however, where calmer heads prevailed, as with the 743rd, most of the tanks were beached and able to get into action fairly quickly and much more effectively.

Overall, the reference which this volume represents is a boon to modelers as well, as many vehicles which are not normally covered, such as the M29 Weasel, are shown in action and also placed in perspective of what they accomplished on D-Day.

However, as an import, this book may be hard to locate. Nevertheless, it's worth the effort.

STEPHEN "COOKIE" SEWELL
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EXIT ROMMEL: The Tunisian Campaign, 1942-1943 by Bruce Allen Watson, Praeger Publishers, Westport, Conn., 1999, 227 pp., \$39.95.

Watson attacks the Desert Fox in a way few authors have the audacity to do. He presents Rommel only in strategic defeat, thus giving a negative assessment of Field Marshal Erwin Rommel and the Afrika Korps. He analyzes the North African campaigns from the Second Battle of El Alamein across Libya to the Battle of Medenine in Tunisia. He reveals the weaknesses in the Axis command structure, defeats the myths of superior German weapons, and exposes the personality conflicts amongst Axis officers that led to the eventual destruction of the Afrika Korps. Lastly, the author discusses the combat leadership of Rommel with an appreciation for the many variables imposed by external influences.

In his analysis, Watson provides key insights to the Battle of Kasserine Pass, among others. He illustrates the collective bravery of Allied soldiers, and attacks the American leaders who caused terrible tactical errors. However, he makes rash judgments on tactics without strong doctrinal basis. He fails to present the doctrine of either army, and then make a case for better methods to fight the battle. He also confuses terms, causing superficial lessons to be learned from the battle. More detailed illustrations with computer-enhanced graphics could have provided a clearer picture on the development of each battle in his book, helping the reader gain an appreciation for the terrain, presenting options for modern maneuver tactics, and assisting the reader in retaining lessons for the future. Additionally, the author could have used an annex in the back of the book for organizational charts, and provided a better comparison of weapon systems to reinforce his points.

Despite some shortcomings, Watson's book is a great addition to the study of the North African campaigns of World War II. His candid assessments and detailed discussions of the

battles inspire both tactical and operational professional development and an examination of the qualities that make great leaders. I recommend this book to students of the Desert Fox and the North African campaign.

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Proud Legions: A Novel of America's Next War by John Antal, Presidio Press, Novato, Calif., 1999. 356 pp., \$24.95, ISBN: 0-89141-667-6.

Every soldier has had the thought of writing a Harold Coyle-type book with his unit as the focus. That seems to be the basis of this work. The author, the former battalion commander of the 2d Battalion, 72d Armor (2-72 AR), has placed his old unit at the center of his work. To quote Admiral Nelson, "A willing enemy and sea room" is the basic theme here. It takes place in Korea in the near future. The 2d Infantry Division has been equipped with all of the latest equipment, including the real stars of the story, which are M1A2 tanks.

The Korea of this story is basically the Korea of today. The North is poor, impoverished, starving, hostile, and militaristic. The South is economically troubled, corrupt, and unwilling

to believe in the chance of war. Through a very contrived set of circumstances, the North Koreans conduct a surprise attack on the South. With lots of purchased help and a convenient typhoon, they proceed to not only obtain great surprise but eliminate each one of the United States' technical superiorities except one; the M1A2s and the men who crew them from 2-72d AR.

The battalion finds itself perfectly placed to blunt the main attack of the North Korean forces. This being a story about tankers by a tanker, the other services barely make an appearance, and even other branches have only minor supporting roles. The situation is a battalion commander's dream. Not only is there a beautiful woman to protect, but best of all, there is no interference from brigade!

Antal covers both sides of the conflict, the perspectives ranging from individual soldiers to generals. His characterizations of the fog of war and the thought processes of the U.S. and Korean troops are some of the best parts of the book. On the other hand, his book was written for the general population, thus the early conversations of the American characters seem to be stilted and unbelievable. These conversations are intended to introduce the equipment and setting to the reader. By the end of the book he is in full bloom, with acronyms flying as fast as 120mm sabots.

I wish the author had included more of the planning processes in his descriptions. The few poorly detailed maps show where a unit fought, but none of the reasoning for why the commander chose this ground. Likewise, he barely touches on the role and the positioning of the scouts. I would have liked the author to have gone into greater detail about the more technical aspects of battle, such as the effects of different types of ammunition. While defending the area around a range complex, the battalion S3 mentions that there is plenty of training ammo at the range if it is needed, and also that there are two STAFF rounds (a special fire-and-forget tank round recently in development. -Ed.) per tank. Throughout the rest of the book I kept wondering, did the situation become so desperate that they had to use the training ammo? Did it work? Also, what were the effects of the STAFF rounds?

Proud Legions is a book that should be read for entertainment. It's fast-paced and exciting, even if the end is never really in doubt. Tankers can give it to their friends and family and use it to explain that "this is what I do for a living." It is not a work that will be used for a serious discussion of tactics, techniques and procedures. Antal has shown that he can clearly describe a tank battalion/task force in an entertaining manner.

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VIDEOS

America's First Battle Tank, Video in NTSC format from Hayes Otoupalik, Box 8423, Missoula, MT 59807 (phone 406-549-4817). Price \$19.95 plus \$5.00 postage, Visa/MC accepted.

No, not coverage of Shermans or Pattons, but a far older machine. When the U.S. entered the First World War in 1917 they had no tanks, so turned to Britain and France for first vehicles, then ideas and designs. The first U.S. armored units fought in British heavy tanks and the French light tank, the FT17. In due course, American industry began to build tanks, with their own version of the FT17 entering production and service under the designation M1917 Six-Ton Special Tractor. This is the vehicle covered in this video. One has been restored to original, running condition, and we are treated to a guided tour from driver's compartment to its trench-crossing 'tail', while our attention is drawn to the tank's many interesting and unusual features. Any one familiar with modern AFVs, and even those used to the armor of the '40s and '50s will be amazed by the apparent lack of refinement. This vehicle, in its original French form especially, was responsible for introducing many nations to tank ownership, use, and even manufacture, back in that simpler era.

After a run-down of the vehicle, we accompany the crew and a squad of suitably dressed and armed 'Doughboys' in an attack

on a German trench and pillbox, where the tank's 37mm gun is shown in action. Viewed from inside and outside, we see some of the advantages of the use of armor, and a few of its drawbacks. To end the story, we see two answers to the tank, in the form of an un-restored M1917 shattered by an encounter with a field gun, and the then new and fearsome (to both tank and rifleman!) 13mm Mauser T-Gewehr, fired against a steel plate. (The Mauser was essentially a scaled-up bolt action rifle.)

The re-enactors featured in this presentation use either replica or original equipment, from uniforms to the tank itself, including the German Spandau and Doughboys' Lewis and Browning Automatic Rifle. They have been considerate enough to allow us to see the effort they have gone to in order to amass and restore all these items, and this hour-long presentation is a unique chance to see it all in use and almost in action. While original film of the tank in action at the time exists, the coverage here gives a clear impression of what using these tanks in the Meuse-Argonne would have been like, and should interest later generations of tank crews for serious study or pure entertainment.

Panzers - Marsch and Die Artillerie, VHS videos codes CHR034 and CHR035 from Chronos. Both approx 60 minutes long. Available through Chronos UK, Stu-

dio J401, Tower Bridge Complex, 100 Clements Road, London, SE16 4DG, England, email chronos@callnetuk.com. UK VHS format, price £14.95 each plus postage as appropriate. American NTSC format should be available from Squadron Mail Order, 1115 Crowley Drive, Carrollton, Texas 75011-5010 (phone 972-242-8663, fax 972-242-3775, email mailorder@squadron.com) at \$29.98 plus postage (\$4.75).

These tapes are produced in the same format as the "Die Deutschen Panzer" series using wartime German footage with English voice-overs. "Panzers - Marsch!" is in a different format to the series, and uses two sources of material. The first is newsreel film with sections showing tanks in action during Operation Zitadelle and the withdrawal to the Dniepr. This includes early Tigers and the voice-over contains a contemporary war correspondent's account of them in action. Various other German vehicles appear, as well as Russian AFVs in various stages of destruction. Additional short sequences show what is claimed as the only known film of Pz IV/70(V) and late Brummbar, and film from the Battle of the Bulge which has appeared as stills in several publications. The main part of the tape is two training films which allow insights not only into vehicles but the German Army's tactics as well. One concentrated on early Panthers,

showing how to attack a Russian defended position and counter the methods the Red Army used against attacking tanks. This, of course, shows these tactics as well. The "Russians" are clothed and equipped realistically but their actions owe more to method acting than battle tactics. That apart, the film demonstrates changing damaged vision blocks under fire alongside the use of grenades, machine guns, and fire extinguishers and the method of collapsing trenches where tank hunter teams would lie hidden to attack the tanks from behind.

The second film shows Panzergrenadiers planning and executing a counterattack against the Russians. Several SdKfz 251 supported by Jadgpanzer IV and SdKfz 251/16 Flammpanzerwagen show the approved textbook methods. The film also shows methods of concealing vehicles and scouting and marking routes. The planning and orders lead to the group attacking, with the halftracks taking the troops forward to leap

from their vehicles to engage in hand-to-hand combat, supported by their own weapons and the tank destroyers. Now cut off, the Russians are mopped up using the flamethrowers and the lessons are summarized using an animated map.

"Die Artillerie" shows the whole range of artillery used by German ground troops during WWII. It concentrates on towed weapons — self-propelled ones have already been covered — with film from all theaters of war. Background details tell how the rearmament was planned within the restrictions of the Versailles Treaty, then each type is shown in detail. These range from infantry guns like the 75mm IG18 with its odd breech system and the larger 150mm model, to the standard 105mm and heavier field guns, on up to larger calibers, and finally to the railroad guns, such as the K5E. Sequences also include guns on the Atlantic Wall using film original German audiences were told showed the Allied landings being repulsed.

The section on antitank guns includes the whole range, 37mm, 50mm, and 75mm, as well as anti-aircraft guns with 20mm single and quad and the larger 37mm series in the hands of Luftwaffe field units in use against aircraft and ground targets. There is a lot of footage of the well-known "88" in all its roles, from pure anti-aircraft gun used against Allied bombers and its anti-tank as well as a general support roles on all fronts. This includes a rare view on the 41/43 type.

Almost all the film is black and white, but it does have some color footage which shows light flak guns and 88s in action and one sequence where a horse-drawn Pak 40 is brought into action in grand style. Both tapes contain much interesting film with informative captions. Seen as research material for models in its own right, they make good companions to the original series.

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SOFTWARE

West Front and West Front: Battle Pack I by Talonsoft, \$49.95 and \$19.95 from Talonsoft website or local software retailer.

Requires Windows 95/98, Pentium 133 or higher, 4x CD-ROM, 32 MB RAM minimum, Microsoft compatible mouse, 16-bit high color SVGA graphics and any Windows compatible sound card.

Reviewed on IBM PC 133 Pentium with Windows 98 and 56 MB RAM.

Talonsoft has released the second game in its World War II series of tactical games. *West Front and West Front: Battle Pack I* simulate World War II tactical combat from platoon-through brigade-level operations. The game and the module have scenarios from the Operation Torch landings to the end of the war in Europe along the Elbe River. The battle pack comes separate from the game. It adds 50 scenarios, additional linked campaign scenarios, and additional equipment.

The game presents the player with scenarios, both single, multiple player, modem, and linked scenarios, and campaigns. Each scenario comes with a background description, difficulty rating, recommended number of players, and recommendation for type of play. Along with these detailed descriptions, the game has a lengthy rulebook. The rulebook is organized into sections that explain each function a player may perform during each game turn. In these sections, there is an example with an illustration of that function. Each nation also has an equipment listing with photographs of various pieces of equipment and their different game ratings. The best feature of the rulebook is the in-depth tutorial and background information about the principles of war and how they apply to the game.

A game turn follows a simple pattern. The player is notified of any reinforcements. He then points and clicks units to move or fire. Artillery and air strikes are separate pull down menus or toggle keys. The game has numerous toggle keys in toolbars that allow a player to customize everything from the map layout to unit information. There are two primary windows that allow players to see an individual section of the map and the entire map. Objectives are terrain features, such as villages, hills or road intersections.

The game actually portrays over 25 different terrain types, ranging from beach to *bocage* to large urban areas. The game also takes into account battlefield effects such as burning vehicles and weather. Movement is based on unit type, plus the effects of terrain entered. Units move individually or in groups. Fire combat is based on observation, weapon type and range, and target type. The game is aesthetically pleasing with battlefield sights and sounds.

The game's primary strengths stem from the well-designed rulebook, ease of play format, and overall appearance. The tutorial allows players to immediately install the game and play within minutes. It covers all of the game situations a player may face. It has integrated amphibious assaults, paratroop and glider operations, along with all aspects of movement and fire functions. The Windows-based game system allows players to learn the game format itself quickly. It also allows players to customize game features, even during play. Finally, the graphics and sound effects just make an enjoyable gaming experience.

On the negative side, I have found the command and control rules hard to understand. The supply rules are also a problem based on that feature. Battalion and higher

headquarters are represented in the game with leaders and command and control vehicles. These units have either visual or radio contact with subordinate units or higher headquarters. The rules do not cover how units maintain command and control by defining the radius or span of command. The game automatically calculates command and control and notifies the player when units are not in command and control. So, a player can move units out of higher headquarters' command radius and not know how to move units back into that radius. If a unit is out of command radius, it can run low on ammo as well. Again, this creates a dilemma for the player without a solution. Some of the larger scenarios can also take a lot of time to complete. This time results from more than one unit in an area operating at the same time. Players can have large numbers of individual or grouped units to move, and all functions pertaining to movement and fire are regulated by hexes. Watching a unit move hex by hex actually takes time during each turn as well, so individual turns can take up to a half hour in larger scenarios to complete.

This game does an excellent job in providing the user with a well researched, detailed simulation of tactical operations on the West Front in World War II. The order of battle, equipment listing, and scenarios or campaigns allows a player to fight most actions using many different nationalities. Despite the command and control rules, I recommend Talonsoft's *West Front and West Front Battle Pack I* as a game to enjoy again and again. The graphics and sound effects, along with the above-mentioned features, make this a great way to spend an evening alone or linked with friends.

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