

# ON THE DRAWING BOARD

## Reflections

*My father was a career Marine. He joined right after Pearl Harbor, saw active duty in the Central Pacific in WWII, and continued to serve his country until the mid-70's. I was born in 1948. I was raised on Marine bases from Hawaii to North Carolina in the 1950's and 60's. I know that my involvement in wargaming is directly connected to my father's military career. So, with the conclusion of the 50th Anniversary of WWII, I wanted to get the views of other gamers on the impact of WWII on their lives. Did this great event in history have a connection to their involvement in gaming?*  
RBM

### Echoes of World War II

by Tony Zalewski

The experience of World War II is a reality for me. It's not that I fought in it, or survived it. I wasn't even born until many years later. However, being the child of parents who suffered through the maelstrom of death and destruction that was the East European experience, my life was impacted by the long shadow of that war.

My father started the war in the 11th Infantry Division of the Polish Army — you may have read a short sidebar article he wrote about his adventure in *Fire & Movement* Nr.86. After retreating from the Germans, he was captured by the Russians and somehow escaped over the Carpathian mountains to Czechoslovakia. After a hair-raising journey through Italy and France, he ended up in the Polish Army in Great Britain just as the *blitzkrieg* in the west began.

My mother's family is Estonian. They welcomed the German *panzers* as liberators from the Soviets. A couple of years later, and after the death of her brother and the loss of her family's property, she was a refugee — trapped in the Courland Pocket with the shattered remnants of Army Group North. She was lucky to have a life-saving pass onto the last ship to Danzig (now Gdansk). Together with one of her sisters and a baby niece, my mother was in Berlin when it fell to the Soviets. In the ensuing confusion they hid in barns, and walked west into the American lines.

BY RODGER MacGOWAN  
VICE PRESIDENT, GMT GAMES



After the post-war tally of casualties, my father had no family, and only a few friends who had survived. My mother was more fortunate. Her own mother and four sisters had survived and were living in Scandinavia and Estonia.

My parents met and married in England some years after the war. Even though the danger was long past, the scars had not healed. I remember a claustrophobic over-protective childhood, and insecure parents who lived in terror of causing trouble or coming into conflict with authority.

Life was like walking through a minefield in which small mistakes had potentially dire consequences - jackbooted men might kick down the door to haul us away at any time. Whether it be bank account, or school report, my parents were anxious that all documents had to be always kept perfectly in order. I believe that the extreme events my parents witnessed and survived, when so many others did not, left them with a permanent war zone refugee mentality.

Did my parents inspire my interest in wargames and the WWII era? I see no direct link. My primary education about the war came from a steady diet of WWII movies and TV shows which were produced during the post-war era. Being a tank commander looked cool.

I'm happy to report that my parents are alive, healthy, and content. I would love to use their wartime experiences as the raw material for a great saga. However, soliciting details of their adventures continues to be like pulling teeth. The pain is still there after fifty years.

*Tony Zalewski is a screenwriter and former Editor of Fire & Movement*

### What World War II Meant to this Wargamer

by Peter P. Perla

I guess I was in one of the last waves of the post-war baby boom. My father was too young for World War II, but not for the Korean War drafts. He was in Germany when I was born in December 1951, serving with the 2nd Armored Division of Battle of the Bulge fame. *Hell on Wheels* according to his unit patch.

Like many of us, I grew up with television. Some of my earliest memories are of those still-exceptional post-war documentaries: *Victory at Sea*, *The Twentieth Century*, *Air Power*. I sopped it all up. It was strange; it seemed so long ago, but, at the same time, as real as if it had happened only yesterday.

Those vivid images from the small silver screen seemed to get into my blood. In addition to *Batman* and *Superman*, and the *Green Lantern*, my comic book heroes included, *Sergeant Rock*, the *Haunted Tank*, and of course, *Sergeant Fury and his Howling Commandos*. The war dominated our play time. Equipped with my father's steel pot and web belt, a child-size reproduction of a real, bolt-action Springfield .030, and an overactive imagination, I joined my friends on the wooded slopes behind our homes in active games of *war*. The comic books provided us the necessary information for the required sound effects — *pee-oww*, *pee-oww* was my favorite.

The first *grown-up* book that I remember owning and reading was a Dell paperback edition of *Combat: The European Theater of World War II*. My best friend's parents gave me a boxed paperback edition of Churchill's *Second World War* for my birthday. (And I still have and use it!) It was inevitable, I suppose, that all this fascination with World War II would lead eventually to the gaming table.

Ed, my best friend, introduced me to Milton Bradley's *Broadside*. He also discovered *Summit* and *Risk*, and *Battlecry*. I begged for *Dogfight* and got it for my 10th or 11th birthday. It wasn't much later that I discovered a marvelous new thing, games that claimed to put you there, in the shoes of the famous commanders of WWII.

## Reflections – 1945-1995

I had found Avalon Hill games. My life was changed forever.

Of course, my first Avalon Hill games were about World War II, or "W—W— II, the big one!" as Dobie Gillis's father might say. Midway was the first, followed by **Afrika Korps**, **Stalingrad**, and **Tactics II**. And as television, comics, real books, and movies fed my interest in the war enough to get me hooked on games, the games returned the favor. I devoured everything I could find on the war. I read the theory of the *blitzkrieg* in J.F.C. Fuller and Liddell-Hart. I collected *Minitanks* and built 1/72—scale airplane models.

I learned world geography by reading and playing games about World War II. I learned about the power of courage, and example, and inspiration from a wonderful short novel (and movie), *Imitation General*, which I discovered quite by accident when consuming an anthology of World War II writings. Indeed, the history of the war taught me basic life lessons in good and evil, and what it can cost when good men fail to act against evil, whether from fear or from a failure to recognize it for what it is.

Inexorably, childhood fascination metamorphosed into something more. As I sought more sophisticated ways to represent and study the realities of combat away from the battlefield, I stumbled on the notions of game theory and combat modeling, again by accident, in a little book titled *The Compleat Strategist*. Geez, I thought, you can actually make a career out of this stuff! And so I did.

From a kid entranced by the spectacle of World War II on television, to a teenage wargame fanatic, and finally to a professional operations research analyst. I have even had the surreal experience of authoring a book on the marriage of the subjects I came to love: war and games. And they even pay me

*Peter Perla is a Senior Writer for C3i, game designer and the author of the book The Art of Wargaming.*

### WW II and me by Vance von Borries

WW II may have been the *Big One* but it never figured as such around my house while growing up. My father had wanted to join the war as a fighter pilot but the Navy asked that he remain in his job here as his company was producing critical electrical equipment found on all US Navy ships. WWII was a subject he could not discuss very much. My parents spent so much time talking instead about how tough times were during the Great Depression that I actually feel like I lived through it, not WWII. So, Cowboys-and-Indians or Cops-'n-Robbers became my favorite pre-adolescent activities.

My interest in WWII began with Dad's collection of WWII *Life* Magazines, the whole war. This collection is still buried somewhere in a closet. An interest in history began with this collection, largely pictorial but there anyway, and WWII seems to be the *Big One* as far as history is concerned. As a baby-boomer all textbooks during my school years seemed to conclude with the beginning of WWII. Only specialized courses in college seemed to go beyond. Economics oriented textbooks, by contrast, seem all to start with WWII, or certainly no farther back than the Great Depression, as though all of previous economic history was deemed to be more in line with medievalist thinking. A look into wargames provided a way to go beyond where the school books left off and certainly into the concepts of military history and military science, again subjects not covered by school books (and, I suppose, even less covered today). Notably, WWII is close enough to my own concept of time and history to be real. Its realness stands in stark contrast to the fantasy we see in today's electronic media. It is still a wonder that real humans actually fought and suffered as they did during WWII.

Most early boardgames covered WWII topics and WWII seemed prominent in everyone else's thinking. Besides, the WWII games were fun, they had more movement or at least evoked the promise of more movement. I generally prefer WWII as a topic.

Both World Wars I and II feature opponents roughly equal in sum of

technology and capability; if one side is deficient in one area, it made up for that deficiency in another area. So strategic decision making assumes paramount importance. This leads to the adult interest in the subject. Lessons in such critical decision making are of similar importance in today's business world. My post-graduate degree in business has given me the more strategic outlook and I expect this shows up in my game designing. As a designer I want to show the operational, grand operational, or strategic impact of decisions garners will make.

In the early days of wargaming (yes, the 1960s), in my grand ignorance, I thought wargames actually taught something about who was where and when, and that all these strange lands and countries actually looked like the map in front of me, and that maybe I was learning something valid about tactics. Well, get out the real history books, the ones found in the real libraries, and you see something different. You can find a lot of books on WWII so again, WWII takes front seat in my thinking.

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*Vance von Borries is the designer of many games including GMT's Typhoon!*

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### How has WWII affected me? by Alan Emrich

Besides producing many of the hit tunes that I enjoying listening to and singing (which is ironic when considering that WWII was not, primarily, a musical), WWII was also the era where animation began to really shine. There are many classic cartoons where our heroes fought the *Axis*, and the Warner Brothers stable had the best of the bunch with their *Private SNAFU* series for the US Military. (I'd give my eyeteeth for the last half of that cartoon series on video.)

More importantly, and closer to home, were those I know who survived the war, including my uncle, a foot soldier with Patton's 3rd Army. My father — and mother-in-law, Franz and Sylvia Schlunk, grew up in Bremen during the war, surviving Allied bombing and scrounging to survive in the devastation left in the war's wake. My wife's dear grandmother still lives in *the old country*,

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and I still hear my beautiful wife, Petra, chiming in with the right word or phrase in German, the language spoken in the house where she grew up.

Today, however, WWII has become an ever more distant memory to my generation, and that saddens me greatly. My contemporaries seem to have lost sight of the greater things worth sacrificing for, and have taken to whining about their petty little personal problems instead. While they tend to remember the down side of WWII (the evils of Hitler, primarily), many don't see the positive things about the United States that came out during the war. I feel adrift amid a generation that no longer remembers MacArthur's watchwords: *duty, honor, country*, and the strength and vigilance that freedom needs to survive in a world still shaped all too often by the aggressive use of force.

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*Alan Emrich is an author, game developer, publisher and gamer's servant.*

### **Impressions of World War II** by James P. Werbaneth

In the longest-term historical sense, war was not an overwhelming factor in my family. There was no extensive military heritage. On my father's side, one of my grandfather's brothers fought in World War I and had his health ruined, not by bullets or gas, but in a rear-area truck accident. My grandfather once said that he was drafted for the Great War, but since his induction was scheduled for November 11, 1918 the US Army lost all interest by the time he showed up.

My mother's family had even less of a military tradition. Her great-grandfather, Franz Pott, was a sergeant in the Prussian Landwehr, a combat veteran and an accountant. When away from active service, I was told, he worked in Britain for an aristocrat, taking care of his horses. Because of his travels, Westphalia and England alternated as the places of his children's birth.

But then Bismarck came to power, and Prussia became increasingly aggressive, and Franz decided he wanted no more of this. So when he sailed for Britain he kept right on going, settling outside of Pittsburgh. My maternal grandfather

remembered riding a buckboard with his father to visit Franz at his cabin, sited at the bottom of the hill where I now live. There, Franz would teach the Prussian manual of arms and parade ground drills to the little boy who would become my mother's father.

There was a little more of a heritage in the families of my grandmothers, both of whom were the daughters of Irish immigrants. On my father's side there was a great-great grandfather who left the village to join the British army. That was a matter of shame for my grandmother, right to her death in 1983. On my mother's side, there was a cousin who was a captain in the IRA during the civil war following World War I. He was assassinated as he sat on a fence by pro-British *Black and Tan* militia. That was a matter of great pride. Also, on the day of his funeral the trucks supposed to carry the Black and Tans to the church, where they intended to kill his comrades, did not start. This was credited as an Act of God, a genuine miracle.

World War II was much different. My father and his only brother served in the Army Air Force in the Pacific, flying B-29's against Japan. My father was a tailgunner and his brother a bombardier/navigator.

Growing up, this was all the military heritage of which I was aware; all the other stories were far more distant, and many were learned only in my teenaged years. Even now, understandably, the Second World War remains much more immediate.

I grew up on stories of the war, and my father had put together a large scrapbook of wartime photos. Many are simply of men in shorts standing around palm trees and quonset huts, but a great many are B-29's, reinforcing an article of faith on which I was raised; the Superfortress was the greatest airplane ever built. Nonetheless, the war instilled in him a major case of fear of flying.

War was never considered glorious in my house, and a military career, though not actively discouraged, was certainly not expected. Partially, this was because from World War II my father acquired a deeply-seated pacifism.

Ultimately, I upheld the family traditions and remained a proudly serving civilian.

War was seen as an extremely dirty, unpleasant and dangerous job. When called upon to fight a just war, it was one's duty to go and do it. But one did not actively seek it out. On the other hand, there was no right to refuse to go. Vietnam draft evaders were seen as cowards and ingrates who enjoyed the benefits of citizenship, but refused to pay the price.

I was fourteen when Saigon fell, but we still had some differences of opinion about the Vietnam War, and the justice of a peacetime draft (I strongly opposed it, and still do). Despite the closeness of World War II to my own generation, I grew up on Vietnam, a war that undercut all my father's ideas of civic duty, patriotism, and the worthiness of the government to exact the highest price for citizenship. His generation fought in response to the outrages of Pearl Harbor and the Bataan Death March; mine was scammed and disillusioned by Vietnam, Watergate, and the revelations about John F. Kennedy's assassination. I could never trust the government, or any other large institution, in the same way that he did.

He was the lucky one.

Our world is, in great part, the product of World War II. Besides fixing borders and having other influences on macropolitics, it shapes the attitudes of everyone alive today, whether they admit it or not. The psychological influences may be overt and easily identifiable, such as in the revisionist nationalism and deep grudges of the former Yugoslavs, as well as unrepentant neo-Nazis. They can also be much more subtle, and identifiable only by our descendants, with the benefits of historical perspective.

So it is certain that the war had some bearing on my interest in wargaming. How much, I cannot be sure. But I do know that it was an inescapable factor.

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*James Werbaneth is the Editor of Line of Departure and Designer of GMT's Britain Stands Alone.*

## Reflections – 1945-1995

Don't Waste Time  
by Richard F. DeBaun

I was born in 1946, the year after World War II ended. When I was growing up, the war was a great story. It was as real and as unreal as any other great story. It was fodder for the dream-experience movies of my childhood that celebrated the warrior virtues of comradeship, duty, and courage. It was the story of my father as a young man.

I remember listening, enthralled, as Dear Old Dad and Uncle Pat swapped war stories while they watched *Victory at Sea* on Uncle Pat's tiny black-and-white TV set. There couldn't have been a better backdrop than Richard Rodgers's stirring score and those grainy images of combat at sea to hear the tale of how a *Nazi* U-Boat had torpedoed Dad's tanker out from under him. This piece of history was his story.

I keep Dad's old seabag tucked away in a corner of our garage. Along with memorabilia from the Merchant Marine Academy, there's a faded photograph of my very young-looking Lt(jg) father — younger-looking than I ever remember being myself — at the real *Havana Joe's* in Cuba. In the photo, Dad stands at the

bar with his equally young best friend, their arms around each other's shoulders. Dad told me his friend was later killed in a bar fight when a randomly thrown beer bottle hit him in the temple.

There's another photo of Dad in Egypt astride a camel, posing by the pyramids like Lawrence of King's Point. It reminds me of Dad's story of hearing the guns of the Battle of El Alamein in the distance while he unloaded cargo in Alexandria.

Other photos bring back his stories of the Pacific: How Dad described the veteran U.S. Rangers who came aboard for supplies as *men with dead men's eyes*. How at Okinawa he saw the face of the *kamikaze* pilot who pulled up at the last minute and crashed into the sea rather than kill Dad and the other men who stood frozen at the ship's rail. How some drunken crewmen on Dad's first ship created an invasion panic in Juneau when to ring in the New Year they fired a few rounds from the ship's 5-inch stern gun over the town.

The seabag also holds a bundle of faded love letters to my mother, written on the fragile tissue paper of wartime stationery and posted from exotic foreign

ports. Who would have guessed that my laconic, usually reserved, relentlessly logical father once harbored a heart full of passion that matched Cyrano's, much less had the inclination to proclaim it in his clear, precise, engineer's hand.

When I got older and discovered Avalon Hill and SPI, Dad and I would sometimes play wargames together. Deploying our cardboard forces on hexagon maps, it was my Yamamoto to his Nimitz, his Patton to my Rommel.

My father — the young man in an ill-fitting uniform who laughed in *Havana Joe's*, drank vodka with Russians in Murmansk, played Mr. Roberts for real in the South Pacific, and wrote love-letters to my mother from the Med — died of cancer in 1975. I'd give anything if we could play just one more game.

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*Richard DeBaun is a screenwriter and was Managing Editor of Fire & Movement.*

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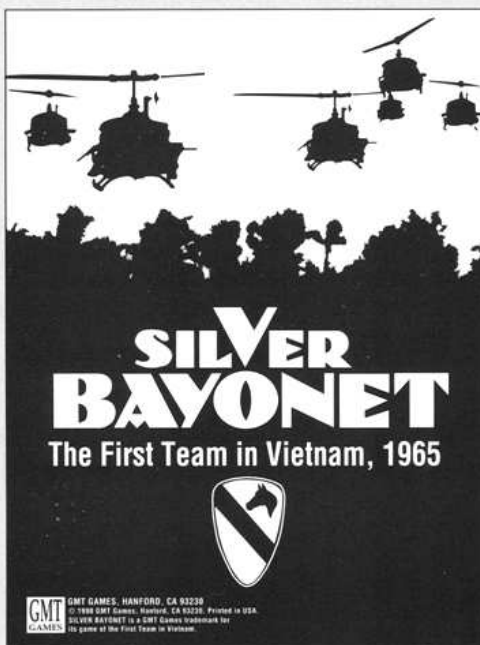
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