



The author in Syria, flanked by brother officers of the Foreign Legion. His raid on a Nazi stronghold makes Beau Geste seem conservative.



Dead end in the road to world conquest. This truck was overtaken by New Zealanders while chasing Rommel from the Western Desert.

We Dynamite a Nazi Airfield

By **CAPT. DOUGLAS
M. SMITH,**

As told to **CECIL CARNES**

About the Author

Captain Smith is a native of Williamsport, Pennsylvania, who likes fighting. He served with the French Foreign Legion during the first World War and rejoined it during the present one. He wound up with the long-range desert sabotage outfit, one of whose daring sorties is described in this article, a chapter from his forthcoming book, *American Guerrilla*.
—The Editors.

A BRITISH undercover man in Nazi-held Tobruk had reported to headquarters that the enemy had established an airfield outpost somewhere east of the town. He didn't know exactly where it was located, but he knew that every Saturday at dusk a fleet of supply trucks left Tobruk and headed for the outpost. So a party of our men, consisting of a captain, a sergeant and ten privates, volunteered to locate it and blow it to smithereens. They had about 500 miles to negotiate by truck, from our headquarters at Kabrit, Egypt, to the desert objective, and a patrol of Messerschmitts almost spoiled the party as it was stopped in a wadi for tea on the second day out. When

the noise of their engines was heard, a camouflage net was hastily thrown over the truck and the men scattered. The enemy patrol, flying at only 1000 feet, roared across the wadi and continued on. The truck must have looked like a pile of sand to the pilots.

It was a nerve-racking day. The fierce July sun drew out a man's juice, then boiled him in it. The heavily laden truck was stuck twice in patches of soft sand. The second time the churning wheels dug themselves in hub deep, requiring an hour of frantic shoveling to set them rolling again. A lone Nazi patrol plane, hunt-

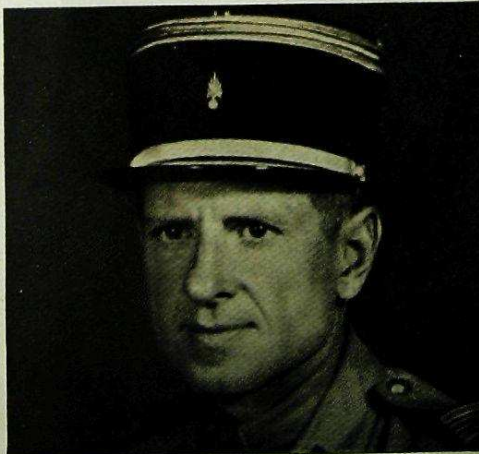
ing for just such ground activity as this, caught them cold in an open, carpet-flat expanse. They spent a hideous hour beneath burlap camouflage mats, tormented by heat and thirst and flies, till the enemy pilot wearied of describing aimless circles above a seemingly deserted area and droned away to the northwest.

Yet they made fair progress between delays, and did particularly well that night, by blundering onto a camel road from which the boulders had been removed. The succeeding day, too, was kind, so that the captain grunted with satisfaction as he checked their position that evening on his large-scale map.

"Barring an out-and-out catastrophe," he announced, sipping a steaming cup of tea, "we'll be near enough to our immediate goal by Saturday morning so we can cover up and sleep all day. That way we'll be fresh as daisies for the night's task."

The immediate goal was a curve some thirty miles east of Tobruk, along the coast road which was Rommel's main line of communication. It was known that at some point along the coast road, to the east of the town, the truck convoy customarily turned off into the desert. It was the raiding party's job to get into that convoy in the dark somehow—and this particular curve seemed the best place—and travel with it to the airfield outpost.

It worked out as the officer had hoped. At dusk on Saturday evening the truck was parked discreetly in a small deep ravine, out of sight of the coastal road, but not twenty yards from it. A sharp-eyed sentinel with the field glasses established himself on a bluff overlooking the road. An hour later, he came slithering down to announce he had spotted twelve sets of dimmed driving lights approaching in the distance.



The author as he looks today.

"Every man to his place in the truck," said the officer, and waited till the order had been obeyed. "Now I'll let you in on the rest of our program. These trucks will be traveling, as usual, about a hundred yards apart. We will let eleven go by. Before Number Twelve comes in sight around the bend, we will cut into the road and fall in line."

"Mightn't it be better, sir, if we let all twelve go by and then fell in at the rear?" the sergeant asked.

"No," said the captain. "The men on the twelfth truck will know they're the last in line. They'd probably be suspicious if another car turned up suddenly behind them. As it is, Number Eleven will think we're Number Twelve, and Number Twelve will think we're Number Eleven. Right? . . . When we reach the jerry camp, there are bound to be sentries at the entrance. We can't risk one of them noticing thirteen trucks, instead of the expected dozen. So, when we find ourselves getting close to the camp—and we're bound to see or hear some sign of it ahead—we break down in the middle of the road, blocking it. Jerry Number Twelve comes up, stops and asks what the trouble is. Well, we tell him—with knives. Then we park our truck beside the road, where it will be our rallying point for after the show. Privates Brewster and Guffey will stay with the car, ready to use the machine gun, if necessary, to cover our escape. Private Jones will take that gadget Captain Crumper prepared for us and proceed according to orders already given him." Captain Crumper was the explosives instructor at Kabrit. He had a fine, devilish sense of mischief.

"I think they're coming, sir," said Sam Barrett, the driver. His head was sticking out sideways in the direction of the road. "I can hear somethin' that sounds like 'em."

"Right. Get your engine going, quietly. The noise they're making themselves will drown out ours. Be ready to start when I give the word. . . . You eight men in the back there, get down in the truck and pull the camouflage net over you. Every man check his equipment—canteen, iron ration, knife, revolver, bombs and two grenades. . . . That's Étienne Latour beside you at the rear, sergeant? Good. Better start chinning in German, you two—be in practice if you need it later. And if anything goes wrong, use your knives! One shot would give the show away."

"Here they are, sir!" whispered Barrett.

The Swastika Trail

THE dimmed driving lights of a truck swept into view around the curve, followed by another and another. Leaning forward to peer through the dark, the driver was studying the intervals between the units of the convoy as they flashed past the mouth of the wadi at an easy thirty-mile gait. He reported his findings with satisfaction. "Keeping a bit better than a hundred yards between 'em, sir."

A dramatic account of the destruction in the dark of a secret desert base by a super-commando outfit of French and British guerrillas.

"That's a break," muttered the captain. "Get ready, Sam!" He began counting aloud in a tense whisper: "Eight . . . nine . . . ten. . . . Here comes eleven. . . . Now!"

The truck shot out from the ravine as if the word had cut some invisible leash. A lurch or two, a few stiff jolts, and it took the highway smoothly, pointing east, some forty yards behind the jerry ahead and comfortably in advance of the one yet to round the curve.

"They're using no taillights!" exclaimed the captain. "Douse ours, quick!"

"Doused already, sir," was the reply from Sam Barrett. "I'd noticed it myself, sir."

"Good man! Now keep your fingers crossed for the next two or three minutes."

He crossed his own, blushing inwardly for his childish superstition. He kept his head turned, staring back at jerry No. 12, which had come out of the curve and was trailing by a scant fifty yards. The captain held his breath. What was the driver of No. 12 thinking? What had he thought when he straightened out from the curve and discovered himself so close to the truck ahead? Would he think No. 11 had fallen off the pace? Would he think he had been driving too fast himself? These Nazis were such methodical devils—would he speed up to investigate?

No. 12 was dropping back! His speed checked perceptibly till he was the required hundred meters to the rear. The captain's pent-up breath escaped in a long sigh of relief. He uncrossed his fingers and rubbed the palms of his hands on his trousers. He swallowed hard and was himself again.

"We'll be meeting Tobruk-bound trucks, I expect," the captain said. "Keep your eyes peeled."

They did presently meet a string of six empty lorries, coming head-on and presumably returning to their base from the German front for further supplies of men or matériel. They rattled past with a genial blinking of lights that Sam Barrett politely acknowledged with blinks of his own, and then the sergeant threw his voice over his shoulder cautiously, "Got a look at Number Twelve in their headlight glare, sir. Small open truck—not much of a load, I'd say—bit of canvas pulled over it. Two men on the front seat, sir."

Twenty minutes later there was an alarm that turned the captain colder than the night itself. It was three short blasts from the horn of No. 12.

The sergeant's voice was anxious as he reported, "Number Twelve put on speed a moment ago, sir. He's overhauling us fast. I think he meant that horn as a signal for us to stop!"

Another short, querulous blast from the German truck.

The captain forced himself to speak coolly, "We'd best pull up. Sergeant, this is your baby, I think. Let Latour do the talking. If a situation arises, meet it according to your best judgment. No more noise than necessary."

"We'll manage, sir," said the sergeant.

Their truck drew over to the side of the road and stopped. Twenty yards to the rear, the German did the same, and the man seated beside the driver jumped to the ground and came forward afoot. Outlined in the faint gleam of the truck lights behind him, his figure showed bulky and powerful.

Fiction While You Wait

THE Nazi came within a yard of the truck. The sergeant and Étienne Latour sat motionless, their legs over the tailboard, their hands gripping their knives.

The German halted. He spoke, "Please, has anybody here got a match?"

"There isn't a bleedin' match in th' bunch except English," whispered Sam Barrett to the man next to him.

Étienne Latour, who had been born and raised in Alsace, replied in German, "I am sorry, my friend, but neither my comrade nor I has a match. However, here is a lighter which I will gladly lend you."

The captain moaned to himself. Latour's lighter was of French make.

Latour's voice went on serenely, "Please, you must be careful of it and give it back to me later, *hein*? I treasure it highly. It is a French lighter that I took from the body of a French major at Bir Hacheim." He hesitated, then added a detail with the delicate care of an artist. "I bayoneted him myself," he said.

The Nazi grunted his appreciation. "So! You were at Bir Hacheim? It must have been fun to stick those dirty French! I have heard they leave slime on one's bayonet instead of blood! Thank you, comrade; I will return your war trophy without fail." An impatient toot from truck No. 12 sped his departure. He called back gruffly. "Auf wiedersehen!"

"Auf wiedersehen!" said Étienne Latour.

"Get going, Sam," said the captain rather weakly. "Bear down on it, lad!" He was silent a minute or two while Barrett stepped on the gas, anxious to regain their ordained position before somebody came back to see where they were.

Twenty minutes more and the convoy swung sharply off the coast road to the south. The going was rougher, yet not too bad. It was obvious to the captain that the Germans had done a spot of roadwork. When they came to a steep (Continued on Page 73)



German trucks hauling water in North Africa. It was by joining a similar convoy that Captain Smith's party reached their objective.



This Axis photograph shows fragments of one of Hitler's armored vehicles soaring skyward after a direct hit during the Battle of Alamein.

WE DYNAMITE A NAZI AIRFIELD

(Continued from Page 29)

wadi, the way down was cleared of rocks and the way up on the other side was surfaced with cord matting to afford traction.

He slid back the shield on his luminous wrist watch. It was eleven o'clock. He raised his glasses, and every time the truck mounted a rise he peered hopefully into the black distance. He didn't believe the jerries would go too deep into the desert just to establish a casual camp and airport, and he was right. At the end of an hour, the invisible track they were following topped a height and showed a cluster of pinpoint lights making a pale yellow circle in the blackness.

He announced the news quietly, without lowering his glasses, "That's it, Barrett. Half mile ahead."

"Yes, sir." Mindful of his officer, whose attention was distracted from the road, Barrett added, "Watch out, sir; we're just dipping into a wadi."

"Stop when you get to the bottom and park us across the road," the captain ordered, "as if we'd lost control and skidded, eh?"

The truck stopped with a jolt. A twist of Barrett's wrists set the truck diagonally across the route, with one of two great rocks at each end.

Bumping and clattering, No. 12 came charging on. Barrett, standing alongside his truck and pretending it was disabled, swung the powerful beam of his flashlight straight into the faces of the two men on No. 12, thereby accomplishing three desirable results. It deepened the darkness in which the sergeant and Latour were lurking behind a rock; it blinded the two Germans, so that they halted their truck with a squealing of brakes; it startled and infuriated them, and angry men lose caution. Grumbling in gutturals, they jumped to the ground, one from each side of the cab. For luck, Sam Barrett gave them both another blinding flash from his torch.

They died quietly. The sergeant and Étienne Latour wiped and sheathed their knives, then hurriedly lugged their victims out of the roadway.

The captain began giving orders, "Tumble out, everybody! Into the jerries' truck! Make it nippy, men! . . . Barrett, get our truck parked fifty yards up the wadi; that will be our rallying point after the raid."

The Jumping-Off Place

Latour, who was familiar with German truck controls, took the wheel and No. 12 took out after the convoy again.

"You know your mission," the captain went on. "Scatter, keep in the darkest areas as much as possible, set your fuses for thirty minutes, plant your bombs where you think they'll do the most damage. Bateson, Connolly and I will locate the airfield and fix the planes. . . . Jones, you're ready back there with Captain Crumper's gadget? We'll drop you off just before we reach the camp. Couple of minutes now."

No. 12 kept going at a rate which brought it up presently to its proper distance from No. 11. The trucks in the van of the convoy had already disappeared through a gap in what seemed a fence. Private Jones was the first to leave No. 12.

"Right-o, Jones! On your way, and good luck."

"Yes, sir. Good hunting, sir!" A thump and a metallic clunk from the tin container he was carrying announced Private Jones' contact with the desert. Since Brewster and Guffey were back in the British truck with the machine gun, acting as rearguard and reserve, the party was now reduced to nine.

No. 12 lumbered through a broad gap in a triple fence of barbed wire. The sentries at each side were leaning idly on their rifles, looking at the vehicle incuriously. By the time No. 12 came into the parking space, the men of No. 11 were walking away from the dark bulk of their charge, heading for tobacco and coffee and beer.

A moment later, the driver shut off the engine and put out his headlights. Over his shoulder, the officer gave the order to jump out.

"I think I've spotted the airfield, sir," Bateson whispered. "Got a glimpse against the sky of a pole with what looks like a wind sleeve on it."

Clipping German Wings

They slid through the night. Cautiously, they made a wide detour around the one building that showed signs of human life. A hum of voices came from it, and a paper-thin strip of light from an otherwise closely shuttered window. It was a cookhouse. They reached the airfield without incident and halted for a brief survey.

"Planes dispersed around the edges, of course," murmured the captain. "Connolly, you circle the field to the left. I will go this way. . . . Bateson, there's a group of buildings down at that end; pilots' quarters or repair shops, probably. Take care of them. When you've used up all your bombs, you two, don't hang around waiting for me. Leg it for our truck and hop aboard."

Left to himself, the captain swung to the right for his tour of the field. Presently he found what he was looking for—a wall of rubble and logs and rocks. Tucked behind it were nine planes—bombers and fighters. With typical attention to symmetry and neatness, the Germans had lined them up in threes, their wing tips almost touching. The captain placed one bomb in the center plane of each trio and went on his way rejoicing. He found two more revetments, but to his disappointment there were only three planes in the first and just one in the second. Still, that brought his total up to thirteen. If Connolly did as well, the night's bag would be something to shout about.

He tucked one of his two remaining bombs into the vitals of a small tractor which was probably used for odd jobs around the field. The other he placed under a tool shed. Then he turned and went back over the path by which he had come, moving in the same swift and stealthy fashion.

The officer was abreast of the cookhouse when it happened.

Out of the darkness near the building came a loud, harsh challenge in German, "Halt there! Who are you? Hands up! Quick, somebody! A light here! I've got —"

The shout ended on a gasp. But the alarm had been given. The cookhouse door was flung open and a dozen men boiled out. An arc light flashed on, illuminating the whole area. It showed a thickset man on the ground, and another just yanking a dagger from the huddled body. The man with the knife headed for the nearest darkness, running like a frantic deer. Six or seven of the cookhouse contingent chased after him.

When beyond the circle of light, the captain whipped out his revolver and fired at the leading pursuer. The Nazi fell, rolling over and over. The men at his heels dropped in their tracks, flattening their bodies on the ground.

Lights were springing on everywhere. The post was a bedlam of shouting. Then, as the captain sprinted for the exit, from a point in the desert just beyond the southern boundary of the camp came an ear-splitting racket. The staccato explosions rose and fell convincingly, settled to a steady roar, then died away.

(Continued on Page 75)

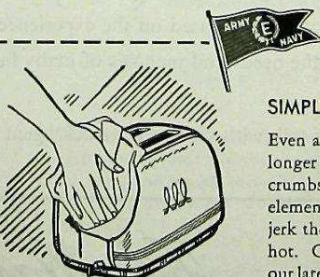


"OF COURSE THEY'RE ONLY LENDING IT"

Perhaps doting parents conditionally surrendered their priceless *Toastmaster* toaster. Anyway . . . here's to a shipshape breakfast nook, with the toast-galley popping up the perfect slices—and no watching, turning, or burning!

Toastmaster toast makes breakfasts heartier, as well as more appetizing. It's bread in its most digestible form; a favorite "breakfast cereal," rich in protein and carbohydrate. And what a touch it adds to other meals—as an ideal extender of scarce or rationed foods. Serve them on toast!

Naturally, you can't buy such a luxury as a new *Toastmaster* toaster now. Today our factory is a war factory—proudly flying the Army-Navy "E." . . . Also, today, *War Bonds* are a better buy than the finest toaster ever made!



SIMPLE CARE . . . FOR YEARS OF WEAR

Even a long-enduring *Toastmaster** toaster lasts longer and toasts better if well treated. Remove crumbs often. Don't risk damaging the heating elements by prying inside with a fork. Don't jerk the cord or coil it around the toaster while hot. Oil occasionally, unless you have one of our latest models. And see your dealer for repairs.

TOASTMASTER Toasters

REG. U. S. PAT. OFF.

* "TOASTMASTER" is a registered trademark of McGraw Electric Company, Toastmaster Products Division, Elgin, Ill. Copyright 1943, McGraw Electric Co., manufacturers of Buss Electric Fuses, Clark Electric Water Heaters and Toastmaster Products.

(Continued from Page 73)

No more than thirty seconds, just long enough for Private Jones to race away, elapsed between the revolver shot and the moment when Captain Crumper's special gadget went into action.

While the Germans were giving tongue to the south, the raiders made haste to escape to the east. The captain was about thirty yards from the gap in the barbed wire by which they had driven in. He remembered the two guards, and the lamp at one side which lighted the vicinity. He hugged the shadows and went slowly forward, revolver in hand. He stood still when the gap was in clear view. The light was still burning. That meant a nasty twenty-yard sprint in full view of anyone who happened to be around; the unattractive alternative was a try at breaking through or climbing the fences. Hardly practicable, with every passing second cutting into his margin of safety. The truck would not wait long, even for the party leader, nor would he want his men to risk their lives for a laggard. He must make a dash for it. Where the devil were those guards?

Abruptly, he saw them. One was stretched full length on the ground in the straight shadow of a fence post. Across the gap the other was doubled over the top strand of barbed wire, a monstrous human clothespin, his arms and legs dangling grotesquely. Guerrillas had passed that way. The captain put his head down and sprinted into the desert.

The wadi at last. The truck should be fifty yards to his right and a bit farther on. Rashly, he left the road and tried for a short cut. In half a minute he was lost. He stood, panting, a little more nervous than he cared to admit, even to himself. He looked about him and saw only darkness; he listened, and heard nothing. He drew in his breath sharply. Could the truck have gone?

Ears as keen as his own were listening too. Perhaps they had heard his stumbling step. Through the darkness, not at all from the direction he expected, came the softly whistled refrain of a barrack-room ditty then popular in the camp at Kabrit. He whistled it back, and his spirits revived. In a minute he was with his men, asking for reports.

"Three missing, sir," said the sergeant. "No use going back to look for them, sir."

They copped it fair. I saw it. Four of us, including Sam Barrett, got twisted and came up against the wire. I found a hole and turned to call them. Then a light went on somewhere. There was a burst of machine-gun fire." The sergeant cleared his throat. "That's all, sir."

With Connolly at the wheel, the truck moved out of the wadi. The officer jumped out when the big car was safely over the sky line. He called his men and led the way back to the crest. "May as well see some of the show," he said, adding, "after all, we paid our admission."

They crouched, looking back in the direction of the Nazi camp. They were barely settled before the night split open in a crimson burst of flame that streamed to the heavens. A crashing report almost deafened them, a concussion shivered the air, and even at that distance shook the ground beneath them.

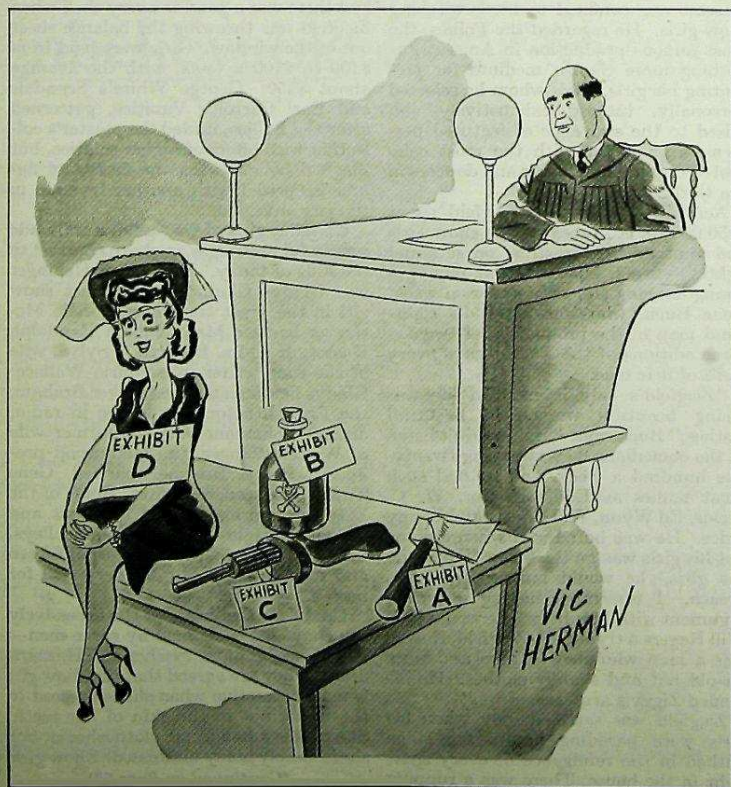
"That's Number Twelve, the bus we rode in," said the sergeant. "The first half-hour bomb was planted in her."

With No. 12 still hurling destruction in every direction as lot after lot of ammunition exploded, a minor sheet of flameshot up to the left. Then the show really hit its stride and pyrotechnical effects came too fast and close together to be identified. There were two more major upheavals. One appeared to be a second truck of explosives possibly fired by burning debris from No. 12. The other was a thunderous fiery cataclysm. The sergeant said he believed it was an ammunition dump he had mined.

A big stack of gasoline tins sent a great curtain of flame to the sky. By its light, the officer was able to get a clear view of the scene through his glasses. He ran over the score in his mind: twenty planes, an ammunition dump, two truckloads of ammunition and explosives, storehouses of food and miscellaneous supplies, a tractor, the gasoline dump, officers' quarters, a big barracks; he didn't try to estimate the number of smaller buildings and tents demolished. Against it he set the loss of three men killed in action, and the balance did not please him.

"They'll rebuild this camp," he said. "Now that we know the way here, I'd like to come back in a week or ten days and do a really good job."

They did just that, and blew it to pieces again without losing a man.



This blackout tail lamp tells quite a story to the driver of the vehicle following. Watching it as he proceeds in convoy through the night, he can tell whether he is too far back, too close, or just right. It's all done by the accurately-spaced apertures in the blacked-out lens, which change in number at certain specified distances away from the lamp.

Working closely with military engi-



Guide Lamp manufactures complete sub-machine guns, machine gun barrels, cartridge cases and aircraft parts.

YOU'RE WITH THEM WITH WAR BONDS

neers, Guide Lamp has applied its long experience in the field of automotive lighting to the design and manufacture of military lighting equipment. Guide-built products are serving on trucks, tanks, armored cars, half-tracks, full-tracks, gun carriages and other military vehicles.

On the home front, Guide Sealed Beam units and Guide original equipment lamp service parts help make the nation's highways safer.

Guide
LAMP
DIVISION OF

GENERAL MOTORS

BUILDER OF AUTOMOTIVE LIGHTING EQUIPMENT



"Your idea seems to work, Corporal!"

YOU'LL GO OVERBOARD for this suggestion once you've tried it! To make your pipe taste better (and smell sweeter), clean it regularly and switch to mellow Sir Walter Raleigh. It's cool, fragrant and extra-mild. Today, try "the quality pipe tobacco of America"!

**SIR WALTER
RALEIGH**
PIPE TOBACCO

Smokes as sweet as it smells

UNION MADE

