

The "Rat Patrol" Field Guide

DUNES

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FREE e-publication

DOGS AT WAR *by Libby*



A working war dog. The German Shepard

Centuries ago military leaders recognized the value of dogs in their war efforts. In the beginning dogs were used primarily for their attacking abilities, but more recently many other abilities of

dogs have been used on the active front, behind the lines, and defending the 'homeland'.

Before war began in 1939, the Germans had war dog training programs and more than 200,000, mostly German Shepherds, were prepared for active service. Once war had been declared, Britain and other nations began their own dog training programs, and when the US entered the war, they too set up war dog training.

In the US certain criteria were required for a dog to be eligible for war dog training. The dog had to be less than 2 years old, a neutral colour, weigh between 40 and 80 lbs, and stand about 26 inches at the shoulder. Once accepted, the first month was devoted to basic training (obeying commands and gestures, wearing a muzzle and gas mask, riding in various vehicles, getting accustomed to gunfire, etc) and developing behaviour suitable for one of the main specializations.

1. Sentry Dog. Dogs trained for this role served in both the active war and at home. They worked with a sentry to protect ammo dumps, airfields, beaches, harbours, factories, and sensitive installations from infiltration by unknowns.

2. Scout Dog. When with a patrol the dog learned to silently warn of ambushes, snipers, and infiltration attempts. Instead of barking, he was trained to freeze, raise hackles, prick ears and hold tail rigid on detecting the enemy. Sentry dogs were highly effective and were used by all armies in all theatres of war.

3. Messenger Dog. These dogs were trained to silently and quickly travel between two handlers. Dogs move fast, make small targets, and travel well through cover so were particularly effective for carrying messages when other methods of communication were impossible.

4. Mine Dog. These dogs were trained to detect trip wires, booby traps, metallic and non-metallic mines. Unfortunately, in battlefield conditions their success rate was deemed too low and that specialization was dropped.

Not specially trained but still important was the Mascot Dog. Many units 'adopted' a mascot (not always a dog) that offered comfort, boosted morale, helped locate the injured, and reduced nervous tensions, all the things (and more) that a dog in peacetime offers.

Considering the little red dog in the Rat Patrol's "The Darers Go First Raid", she was probably not a trained War Dog. Had she been, she'd have clearly notified her German handlers of the Rat Patrol's presence. A trained war dog would not have left her handlers, would probably have been bigger, and would not have been rattled by gunfire. Because she willingly left her German comrades, she probably was not their mascot, but maybe she became Dietrich's at the end.



The morale boosting mascot dog. The Yorkshire Terrier - "Smokey"

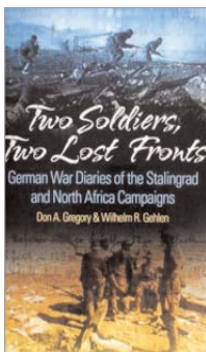
Sources: http://www.qmmuseum.lcc.army.mil/dogs_and_national_defense.htm#History%20of%20Military%20Use%20of%20Dogs

Book Review

Two Soldiers, Two Lost Fronts

German War Diaries of the Stalingrad and North Africa Campaigns
by Don A Gregory and Wilhelm R. Geblen - Published by Casemate
2009

Reviewed by Keryn H.



This book is composed of the diaries of two German soldiers, an unknown soldier of the Stalingrad campaign, and Rolf Kregel of the Afrika Korps.

Both recount the daily lives of the troops. Introductions to each diary give background information, and a timeline at the end puts both campaigns in context with the rest of the war.

Photographs and sketches give a "you are there" feel.

The Stalingrad diary is much more detailed, but perhaps because of its brevity, I found the Africa diary the more readable. Kregel writes of the hardships of the desert war, the lack of food and water, disease, and the sadness of losing comrades, but there are flashes of humor as well. The Italian air force once bombed his unit by mistake twice in one day. "When they came around a third time, we sent an open radio message to their leader 'Please could you bomb the enemy by mistake for once. You are bombing the wrong side.'"

It seems the U.S. Army had no monopoly on snafus. In the desert, when what was desperately needed was shade, the German Quartermaster sent Kregel's outfit tents with sun roofs. Kregel's comment? "What fun!" Kregel relates several encounters with then General Rommel. "Just before 3:00 pm General Rommel arrives right at the front....Like a young boy General Rommel jumps from one hole to the next.....shouts orders and even directs a Pak to fire on enemy tanks. He even helps the crew pull the gun around." It is easy to see why Rommel was so admired and respected.

I came away from reading this book with a better understanding of what the war was really like, and a feeling that Rolf Kregel was a person I would have liked to have known. To anyone interested in either campaign, this book would be a valuable resource.



Movie Review

Five Graves to Cairo

Starring Erich von Stroheim, Franchot Tone & Anne Baxter
Reviewed by Val



Five Graves to Cairo is a 1943 black and white movie, starring Erich von Stroheim (Field Marshal Rommel), Franchot Tone (John Bramble) and Anne Baxter (Mouche), set in Egypt in 1941.

The movie opens with our hero, John Bramble, last survivor of a tank crew stranded in the desert. After hours of walking he reaches a small town, just deserted by the British troops and soon to be invaded by the Germans. Bramble meets the owner of the local hotel, Farid, and the maid Mouche, then promptly passes out from sunstroke. While he is unconscious, the Germans take control

of the town. The hotel is to house the German high command - most notably, Erwin Rommel. Having avoided capture, thanks to Farid's help, Bramble poses as Davos, the recently killed hotel waiter. He is now in a unique position to spy on the Germans, and circumstances will hand him the key to an Allied victory in Egypt, if he plays his cards right...

I did not have high expectations for this movie, and that may be why I was pleasantly surprised by it. It doesn't take itself too seriously, and while the dialogue has a sharp and sometimes lunatic humour, it never becomes unbelievable or ridiculous. The atmosphere, somewhat light-hearted at first, grows darker as the plot thickens. The story relies on the tension between the characters and the ever-present risk that Bramble's masquerade may come to a dire end, not on fast action (there is only one fight in the movie), but the story is well-done and the pace is fast enough that it doesn't become boring. I do have a few gripes. The decors and props aren't entirely convincing (I kept feeling like Rommel's Iron Cross was way too big), but this was made in 1943 and we must make allowances. My main problem was with Rommel, as I don't feel the character accurately portrays him. I know Rommel was vain - up to a point - but he was no fool, and I don't think he would have blurted out his plans to a bunch of enemy officers (even if he didn't give them the most critical piece of information). And I did not feel like the actor looked much like Rommel, either. However, I've read a number of reviews very favourable to Stroheim's performance, so you'll have to make up your own mind on that count. There are also some die-hard stereotypes: the clueless Italian General, the fearful Arab, the French girl who doesn't quite know whose side she's on, the brave and resourceful British soldier who saves the day. That, however, is to be expected considering the time this movie was made, and it is at least a lot more subtle than most movies made during the war. Also, the Germans are much less demonized than, for instance, in "Sahara" (1943).

Overall, the actors deliver a fine performance and this movie is definitely worth watching. One of the best war movies of the early 1940's.





LETTERS HOME by Barbo

DEAR MOM & DAD

I AM SITTING ALONE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE SAHARA DESERT. IT'S ABOUT 3AM. YOU WOULDN'T THINK IT WOULD BE COLD IN THE DESERT, BUT AT NIGHT IT IS. IT'S MY TURN TO TAKE WATCH, I JUST RELIEVED MY COUNTERPART TULLY, AND HE'S ALREADY FAST ASLEEP. ALL IS QUIET AND QUITE PEACEFUL. THERE ARE BILLIONS OF STARS OUT TONIGHT. IT'S A BEAUTIFUL SIGHT. IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE, AT TIMES LIKE THIS THERE IS A WAR GOING ON. AND, WHEN I WAKE UP TOMORROW WE COULD BE IN A FIGHT FOR OUR LIVES! NOT TO WORRY THOUGH, WE ALL LOOK OUT FOR ONE ANOTHER, I'M PART OF A GREAT TEAM.

A FEW WEEKS AGO, I GOT HURT SAVING A LITTLE DOG. HE REMINDED ME OF OUR DOG SCAMP. REMEMBER HIM? HE WAS MY FIRST DOG WHEN I WAS ABOUT 5. ANYWAY, THE DOG WAS TRAPPED AND I STUPIDLY RAN OUT TO SAVE HIM. I DID, BUT TROY HAD TO SAVE ME. HE WASN'T HAPPY ABOUT THAT, I CAN ASSURE YOU.

ALL IS WELL NOW. I MISS YOU ALL —
SAY HELLO TO EVERYONE FOR ME Mark

RAT PUZZLE PAGES **DARERS GO FIRST RAID** – Fill-In Puzzle By Janet B.

Put the words below into the correct spaces in the grid.



3 LETTERS

dog

5 LETTERS

fetch

6 LETTERS

idiots

sniper

timber

7 LETTERS

barking

barrels

8 LETTERS

canteens

fortress

grenades

hopeless

9 LETTERS

motor pool

pinky ring

white paws

10 LETTERS

headphones

heat stroke

steal a tank

wet blanket

11 LETTERS

supply depot

wooden gates

Yshaped road

12 LETTERS

dust and smoke

13 LETTERS

blue mountains

16 LETTERS

insignia on berets

19 LETTERS

thirty degrees hotter

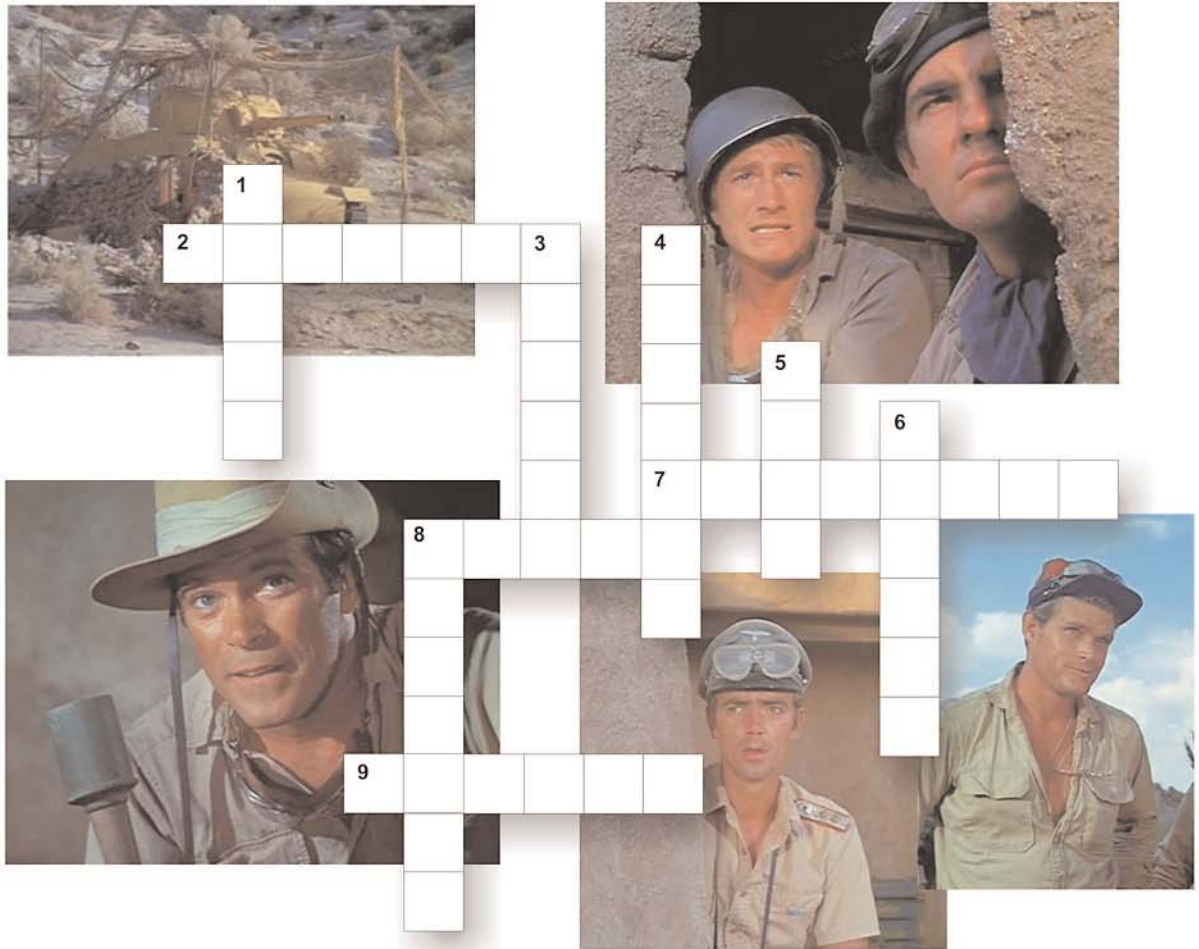
20 LETTERS

jeeps out of commission

23 LETTERS

one hundred twenty degrees

DARERS GO FIRST RAID — Crossword Puzzle *by Libby*



ACROSS

2. Who once learned to operate a tank?
7. Tully knew they'd lost the column because he could no longer hear them
_____.
8. The Panzer was a Mark _____ tank.
9. What did Troy unscrew from the tank?

DOWN

1. At one point Troy called the dog this.
3. What did Tully use to jam the tank tracks?
4. The director of this episode.
5. How many Germans were inside the tank when Troy dropped in the grenade?
6. How many degrees hotter was it inside the tank than outside?
8. Hitch asked Troy if he was thinking of joining the _____.

Jitters

by SarahAnne

"Don't worry," teased Sergeant Sam Troy, watching Sergeant Jack Moffitt straighten his tie in the mirror. "If you don't make the rendezvous, we'll tell the brass how heroic you were."

"Troy, you risked your life for a stray dog last week," Moffitt pointed out dryly. And no: he wouldn't ever let Troy (or Private Hitchcock, for that matter) live that down. "I should bloody well hope that if I don't make the rendezvous, I'll rate at least as high as a stray dog on your priority list."

He picked up the briefcase that contained his notes. He was supposed to be an Egyptologist from Dusseldorf: he needed to look the part.

"Yeah, well, the stray dog was cute and helpless. You're neither. But I guess the information you're getting is pretty important, so I'll consider coming in after you."

"Lovely," Moffitt said flatly. "Thank you."

Troy laughed. "Loosen up, Professor. It's going to be fine."

"I'm supposed to be German, Troy. Loosening up would blow my cover," he joked, straightening his tie again.

"Yeah," Troy teased, "because the British are so laid back."

"Piss off," he retorted, though there was more amusement in his tone than anything else.

Troy laughed again, slapping him on the back. "Your tie's not getting any straighter. Let's shake it."



Silent Night

By Keryn H.

Late December in the North African desert. The Rat Patrol, returning to base camp from a mission deep in enemy territory, came upon the remains of a German convoy. Investigating to see if there was anything salvageable, they found Hauptmann Dietrich unconscious beside his overturned Kubelwagen.

"I say, Troy, we can't leave him to die," said Moffitt.

"His friends will find him soon enough."

"I don't know, old man. With all the alarm and despondency we've spread recently, it may be some time before they look for him."

"All right." Troy shot Moffitt one of his patented scowls. "Load him in the jeep, and let's get out of here. It'll be dark soon."

Later that evening, after making Dietrich as comfortable as they could, they sat around a fire in the small, well hidden cave they used as a camp and supply cache.

"Hey, guys, I just realized it's Christmas eve," said Hitch.

"So it is." Moffitt removed his pot of boiling water from the fire. "Would anyone care for a spot of tea? Mum sent me a supply of splendid Earl Grey."

For once, perhaps because it was a special night, no one refused. A beaming Moffitt served them with a flourish. As the crackling fire and hot tea dispelled the night's chill, they relaxed, letting go of the tensions of the past weeks.

Tully smiled, remembering. "Christmas eve, Ma would make hot cocoa and pop a huge batch of popcorn while Pa went out to cut a tree in the woods behind our house. Me and Sis strung popcorn and dried fruit to hang on the tree. I miss the smell of pine trees."


"I miss Mum's plum pudding. The house smelled heavenly when she made it. Moffitt inhaled deeply, as if he could smell it even there.

"Grampa Troy would hitch his team to the sled and take us kids to get our tree." Troy seemed miles away. "I can still hear the horses' hooves in the snow."

Hitch put another chunk of wood on the fire. Watching the sparks rise, he sighed. "I miss the roasted chestnut vendors on the street corners and the lighted wreaths on the lampposts."

Tully pulled a harmonica from his jacket pocket. He'd traded a box of matches for it a couple of months ago, and he'd gotten pretty good. He began playing carols.

Singing along, the men were startled by a weak but mellow baritone voice joining theirs. "*Stille Nacht! Heil'ge Nacht! Alles schläft; einsam wacht.*"* When the song ended, Dietrich spoke softly from the shadows. "I miss the carollers singing in the snow."

They were no longer American, English, German. They had become simply five men far from home celebrating Christmas as best they could. In that one corner of the desert, if only for a little while, all was calm, all was bright. 

*Stille Nacht (Silent Night) music by Franz Gruber. German Lyrics by Joseph Mohr

Missing Scene

Every Dog Has Its Day

by Libby

Background: The Rat Patrol captured a German tank and, leaving the German tankers waiting for their return, they headed off to attack Dietrich's base.

Two men sprawled next to their unconscious comrade in the shade of a pair of palm trees. Not far away a fresh mound of sand and rocks showed where the fourth of their crew now lay buried.

"Verdammt hot," Heine muttered and wiped his hand across his forehead and then on his pants.

"Better than in the panzer," Manfred said. He took a swig of water from the canteen.

Heine nodded. "Taking off the netting. That was pretty smart of them."

"Did you see their headgear?"

Heine looked puzzled.

"All different. That," said Manfred, "was the Rat Patrol."

Heine sat up, his eyes widening on Manfred. "The Rat Patrol?! You mean *the*—!"

Manfred nodded. "The same one that wiped out our supply convoy last week," he started counting on his fingers, "and destroyed the *Englander* fuel dump we were supposed to get, blew up our radar station near El Jebel, broke out the POWs at Benghazi, destroyed our ammo train in Sidi Bar—."

Heine whistled and flopped back against the tree. "No wonder they got our panzer! Smart."

Manfred took another drink from the canteen and handed it to Heine. "But that dud grenade," he said, "that was just lucky."

"Not for Kreiner and Schmidt," said Heine. He took a drink and looked around. "Where's Marlene got to?"

Manfred sighed. "You and that mutt. She's no Marlene Dietrich," he said. "And she's no loyal friend either. She's gone off with the Rat Patrol and our panzer." He took off his beret and fanned his face with it. "You got any idea what kind of trouble we're in for losing that tank?"

"I'm going to miss her."

"She was a lousy guard dog."

"She didn't mind eating left overs."

"What left overs," muttered Manfred. "Hauptman Dietrich's going feed us to the dogs after this."

"It wasn't our fault. It was the Rat Patrol. They're unbeatable. If anybody knows that, it's Dietrich."

"If he's still around to know it. Their dust cloud was headed for the supply depot and that's where he's headquartered."

"Oh oh." Heine took a deep breath and let it out. "Maybe we should start walking for Tripoli. Before they get back." But he made no move to get up.

"Yeah, sure. Only a couple hundred miles. No water, no weapons, no compass, no map, and carrying Schmidt. How long before the Rat Patrol found us do you figure?" Manfred made no move to get up either.

They sat in silence, the sweat dripping off their chins.

"Wow," breathed Heine with a wistful smile. "The Rat Patrol." Manfred threw his beret at him.



Missing Scene

Idiots

by Anne

Background: After the Rat Patrol delivers their captured German tank and prisoners to headquarters, Moffitt reflects on their latest adventure. Epilogue to the "Darers Go First Raid".

"Idiots," Jack said again, but this time to himself. He glanced across at Tully who was maneuvering the jeep with his usual skill over the bumpy excuse for a road.

Didn't these chaps understand his concern for their safety? No dog was worth seeing one of them get hurt, or even killed. As it was, Hitch had been hit...as usual...but this time he had only himself to blame. What had he been thinking, leaving cover to try to rescue that poor dog? And then Troy followed him!

Jack found he was clenching his jaw, and reminded himself he needed to relax or these bloody Yanks would be the end of him.

Of course, he himself had got into a few tight corners, but never over a dog!

Such as the time he had been caught stealing documents from that German camp, and the resourceful Troy had dressed up in a dead Hauptmann's uniform to stage a fake prisoner exchange to rescue the injured and delirious Jack. What an absolutely insane scheme.

Idiots!

Then there was the time Troy had been ordered to kill Jack before he could be questioned by the Gestapo, after he had been caught destroying an ancient map. But Troy and Hitch

started up a shootout instead with Jack's captors and, somehow, instead of receiving a bullet through the brain as had been previously agreed upon, he was freed.

Idiots!

And then there was the time Jack had flouted orders in order to rescue his father. Instead of leaving him and his father to their fate, Troy organized a rescue operation of his own, and the two jeeps had roared into that village and swept the two of them up to safety.

Idiots...

Out in the open desert that evening, Tully built a carefully shielded fire so he could heat their K-rations for an evening meal, and Jack could brew up a badly needed cup of tea.

The four of them gathered around the fire in the chill desert night, and discussed the events of the day.

"Think Dietrich's going to enjoy his new friend?" Hitch chuckled at the remembrance of his last sight of the irritated Hauptmann gazing after the four Rats in their stolen tank, the little dog joyously jumping up at his side.

"Why not?" said Troy. "We know the good Captain has a soft side. He just doesn't get enough opportunities to show it."

"Since you and Hitch went to all that trouble to rescue the mutt, let's hope he's got a good home now," Tully said with a grin and a sidelong glance at Jack.

Jack heaved a sigh, and then shook his head, remembering his thoughts earlier in the day. "Dietrich has a soft side for certain, and so do each of you. And I, for one, am very glad that you do." He raised his cup of tea in salute to his three friends.

"To my comrades: idiots, one and all!"



NOT ALWAYS A RAT



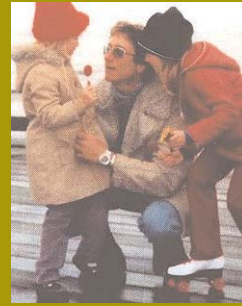
CHRIS GEORGE
El Dorado - 1967



HANS GUDEGAST
Charlies Angels - 1981



LARRY CASEY
Dad - 1967



JUSTIN TARR
Dad - c. 1970



GARY RAYMOND
The Invisible Man - 1959

RAT HOBBIES

A Rattie Lunchbox!

by Cindy G.

Imagine how welcome this little lunch box filled with goodies could be on a desert trek (even though it has no thermos bottle).

Cindy Giesbrecht took a plain white lunchbox (bought at a craft supply store) and used her rattie imagination and a few special images (printed, cut out, glued into place and sealed) to turn it into a smashing Rat Patrol collectible. It may be only five and a half inches across but from any angle this Rattie lunchbox is beautiful as well as useful!



RAT RECIPE – Date Turnovers by Barbo



- 1 cup flour
- 1 cup oats
- 2 eggs
- 1/2 milk
- 1/2 butter
- 1 tsp. salt
- 12 dates
- 1/2 cup sugar
- pinch of sand (not optional)

Whenever the Rat Patrol checked into Head Quarters, Hitch and Tully made sure they loaded up on basic food supplies. And, when they did, they made sure there were items for their favourite treats. One of them was Hitch's date turnovers. Head Quarter's supply sergeant provided the basics for simple meals and the North African villages offered the dates (a staple of the region.)

To make Hitch's date turnovers, mix dry ingredients. In a separate bowl combine butter, eggs and milk. Mix wet and dry together to make a dough. For the filling mash 12 dates and add sugar. Form dough into flat rounds approximately 4" in diameter. Spoon date mixture into the center of the dough, and "turn over". Place turn overs into flat pan and cover. Place over fire for 20 minutes.

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