

Volume Three • Issue One APRIL 2009

FREE e-publication

## RALPH BAGNOLD - MAN WITH A DESERT PASSION

by Libby

In June 1940 when the Italians declared war on Britain there was, of course, no Rat Patrol, or any real unit like it. In North Africa a quarter of a million Italian soldiers waited, ready to overwhelm the relatively tiny British contingent based in Egypt. Outnumbered ten-to-one, the British stood little chance in holding the new Axis power away from the Middle East. The best they could hope for was to steal some time—enough for reinforcements to arrive. But how?



Ralph Bagnold

Out of nowhere a surprising series of accidents happened that created the tool needed to steal that time.

Major Ralph Bagnold, a career soldier, an engineer, and possibly the most experienced desert traveller in the world just happened, at that time, to be aboard a troop ship bound for Kenya. But a mid-Mediterranean collision forced the troops ashore in Egypt for a short spell and Bagnold made his way to Cairo where he had once been stationed.

By sheer chance, a reporter for an Egyptian newspaper spotted him and assumed, in print, that Bagnold, the desert expert, was in Cairo to assist the army prepare for a desert campaign. General Wavell, later to become Commander-in-Chief Middle East, happened to see the article. He called Bagnold into his office.

Bagnold, when posted to Egypt years before, had spent his army leave making numerous forays with like-minded friends deep into nearby deserts. With refashioned vehicles and startling inventions, they'd made treks to regions so remote and so arid that no westerner had explored them. Bagnold knew precisely what a small group of men with the right

gear and training could do. He also recognized the military significance such small mobile units could have. But he had to convince the right people—no easy task.

Despite Bagnold's faith, the formation of the Long Range Desert Group (LRDG) might have died had not another with shared foresight come into authority at precisely the right time. General Wavell at last became Commander of the Middle East forces. He believed in Bagnold, his intimate understanding of the desert, and his faith in small mobile military units. Wavell had the power to turn Bagnold's theory to reality, and the LRDG came into being, ready to sweep through the deepest desert and attack the rear bases, petrol supplies, and airfields of the unsuspecting enemy. So effectively did those early LRDG attacks prove that the Italians, advancing toward Egypt, paused and looked back. Bagnold had been right. The LRDG with its successes allowed the Allies time to strengthen and throw the enemy back.

Bagnold and his LRDG associates proved their worth in aiding Allied victory in the desert and contributed to world understanding of the desert. Bagnold himself became a world renowned expert on the stuff that makes up the desert—sand—and wrote many books on the physics of sand and sand movement. Although largely unsung, much is owed to Bagnold and his desert passion.



LRDG vehicle at the Imperial War Museum, London

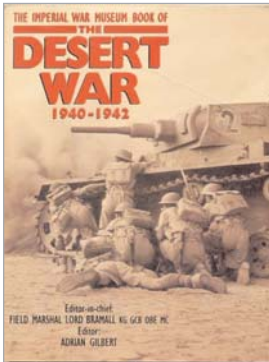
Notes: Historical information drawn from Bagnold's Bluff by Trevor J. Constable. The complete and entertaining story can be read at <http://www.lrdg.org/Bagnold%27s%20Bluff.htm>

## Book Review

### ***The Desert War 1940-1942***

by Adrian Gilbert - Paperback Sedgwich & Jackson, 1992

Reviewed by Barbo



If you ever need to know anything about what happened in Northern Africa during World War II, then this is the book for you. Edited by Field Marshal Lord Bramall, it covers everything from everyday life in the desert to a chronology of the entire campaign from the capture of Bardia by Australian troops in January, 1941 to the victorious Eighth Army entering Tripoli in January, 1943. But, all of that

information is just the tip of the sand dune.

This two-hundred page book is chock full of rare photos, illustrations, maps and paintings. Even though this book is classified as a text book, it takes the reader through the war in plain language. It outlines the main players both German and Allied and is a perfect reference guide of WWII.

But, what I really enjoyed about "The Desert War" is how it tells the stories of the everyday soldier. It is fascinating to read how they survived the harsh Sahara - what they wore, ate and how they spent their leisure time.

The text covers more than just the war in the desert, it also includes chapters on "Coastal Operations", "Prisoners of War", "The Commonwealth Contribution", "Correspondents and Cameramen", and "Private Armies".

The book also outlines military offensive and defensive strategies, desert vehicles, native peoples and casualty data. It also explains the campaign, on the ground, in the air and on the sea.

"The Desert War" is a well written and complete guide that is a must have for anyone interested in the North African conflict during World War II. Below is just one of hundreds of photos in the book.



Colonel David Stirling - founder of the SAS with jeep patrols

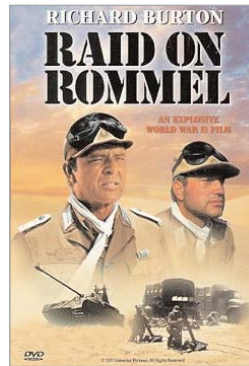


## Movie Review

### ***Raid On Rommel***

Starring Richard Burton

Reviewed by Val



Raid on Rommel is a 1971 movie directed by Henry Hathaway, with Richard Burton and Wolfgang Preiss, set at the turning point of the war in Africa. Captain Foster, from British Intelligence, has orders to pave the way for the attack of Tobruk by the Allies. In order to do that, he lets himself be caught by the Germans so he could join a group of prisoners who are supposed to help him.

Unfortunately, he ends up by mistake with a captured British medical unit.

The German officer in charge interrogates Foster, but gives up after asking only a few questions (and getting no answers in return). Then the prisoners gather together so they can have a little talk. The sentries don't seem to care much what the prisoners say, since they keep conveniently out of earshot, which allows our heroes to discuss in peace their plans to take over the convoy. The British senior POW is none too happy about it, but somehow tags along all the same. Along the way, our heroes blow up Rommel's fuel reserves (after all, who cares if it's not their primary mission? At least, fuel depots make for fancy explosions). There is also an Italian girl in the convoy, but it is hardly necessary to mention her, as her primary reason for existing in the movie seems to be showing off her legs. The Germans are stereotypical and cardboard characters without much personality at all, who are obviously only here so they can get killed and the British be heroes.

The rest of the movie details the Englishmen's attempt to fulfill their mission, and it is so full of incoherences and ludicrousness that I don't even want to detail it all. For instance, the languages get all mixed up; they speak alternatively English and German with the Germans, who don't seem to notice anything strange. At some point, two of their men simulate having typhus so as to get to a field hospital, which is conveniently visited by Rommel only a few minutes later. I find it rather unlikely that the Germans would expose their top general to an infectious disease such as typhus (especially since Rommel was not in very good health to begin with). Which all leads me to say, this movie is an historical absurdity, and has few redeeming qualities. The acting is passable but far from brilliant, the scenario is all too predictable and lacking in subtlety. I would advise not wasting time watching this, except for those who really love desert war movies and have nothing else to do.







## LETTERS HOME by Barbo

Dear Ma,

There's a break in the action, so I thought I'd send you a note. I've been thinking of home a lot lately. I miss Kentucky. I miss the color green - seeing actual grass! Here, everything is beige. The terrain is beige, our uniforms are beige - even the enemy is beige. As soon as I get home, the first thing I'm going to do is take off my shoes and socks and run bare foot through the grass!

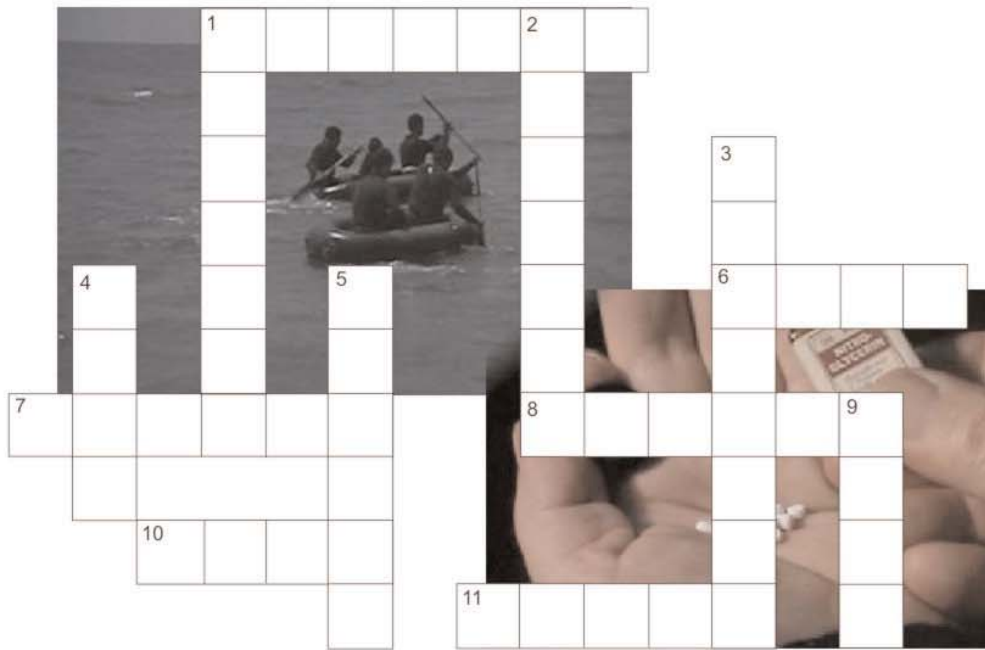
We did get out of the desert for a few weeks last month. We had to escort this sergeant to a little North African town to retrieve an important German document. We had to get there by sea so it was a nice change from the usual. The man we delivered there got sick during the mission though, so it was a bit tense. We all got out okay though.

Hitch, the other private in our patrol, is becoming a really good friend. I hope you will be able to meet him some day. You'd like Troy too, even though he can be intense at times. Sometimes I wish he would just relax, but I suppose he has a lot more pressure than I do. I try to take things in stride no matter what. You know me!

Well, I have a lot of work to do on the jeeps. That's sort of my main job - keeping us mobile. I hope all is well. I miss you. Write to me soon - and some treats from home would be nice.

Love Tully P.

# RAT PUZZLE PAGES **DO OR DIE RAID**— crossword



## ACROSS

1. Troy said, "Get up you expert. Get up you \_\_\_\_\_ expert!"
6. Major method of transportation in this episode.
7. How many years the lock expert had been working with pick locks.
8. The commanding officer warned the Patrol that their mission had to be, "...fast, accurate, and \_\_\_\_\_."
10. When waiting on the beach for Troy, Moffitt said, "We'll give them \_\_\_\_\_ minutes."
11. The oasis was where the American \_\_\_\_\_ Armored was located."

## DOWN

1. The last name of the pick lock specialist.
2. The actor who guest starred in this episode was Warren \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The military rank of the pick lock specialist.
4. The unusual weapons of choice in this episode.
5. The director for this episode.
9. Who got all wet (but not in the sea)?



Answers for the crossword puzzle in the November 2008 issue.

ACROSS: 2. stuck; 3. chain; 6. south; 7. cinema; 8. Silvera. DOWN: 1. binoculars; 2. shirt; 4. truck; 5. ninety; 6. Simms.



# DO OR DIE RAID— word find

by Janet Brayden

W I N E S I D S E L T T O B E N I W M O T S O C  
 B O T T R F S T A E N I T R O M A P S C E B I N  
 Z U Z Z L E I N T E X L L G A O P Q Z V W A L L  
 Y S I D E W A L L M A P C A R M O T A H A N S G  
 E C H R I S T L A W R E L N I T R W O A B O O B  
 S T R A P N O O N B S K C O L M A C H G U H S S  
 A M A N I E N I H C A M E C S T O P H R E N P H  
 C H C Z U L I G H T S O G O V I L I G C A A E A  
 E B E L C Y C R O T O M R L B O O B Y T R A P N  
 C A D E A B I N F M A P O W A L L N I T R O G S  
 N T I T R O G A L Y C E E R I N E M O T O R C G  
 E D S P T R R U P S N U G E N I H C A M A P S U  
 R N I Y W R E N C E V E R W A V E T F T S A R D  
 W O A R H A F T T S T F E C A B T O C E N A N E  
 A L A N E T M A N D M I H N E A M I N S E N I G  
 L O O K E N C T S T U O P L C K S O L O C S K A  
 E D U P L I I N T E L L O K H A N S G U R H A S  
 N C H R L T J U A L A R T C A S T A W A L H Y T  
 I N C P Q S R T H H W L S P X A S H O K I P P L  
 R U U D E U I N T E L L I G E N C E M A P S Y Y  
 E D F I R J M A I N S O R C A R R Y N S E N R F  
 C Q R X Z O P U N Y K O H D W E R M O N N E R W  
 Y S A I R J E E K E P K C L A N D M I F T V A O  
 L O L G R I W L O P P O Z Z L A N M I N E E C R  
 G R O E G E O R G O Z U W I D O D K T H H T S R  
 O T O W R M O D L E N T O W N N L I G H V S N A  
 R O V E R R H A E D L S T H A G H T S L I N A D  
 T H G I L D A E H R E V O L E O C E W A V E M N  
 I S I D E C A B E X P L O S C E X P L O S R E A  
 N N E D N O M Y A R Y R A G O G A R L E T R R W  
 S T E V E C H R I M L N P Q Q Z U P I N W A I O  
 O W T O W N M O D E L W T I L P H E X Z T W F B

BARRELS  
 BOOBY TRAP  
 BOW AND ARROW  
 CART WHEEL  
 DUPLICATE  
 EXPLOSION  
 FIREMANS CARRY  
 HEART ATTACK  
 INTELLIGENCE MAPS  
 KNIT HATS  
 LAND MINES  
 LOCKS  
 LOOKOUTS

MACHINE GUNS  
 MOTORCYCLE  
 NITROGLYCERINE  
 OARS  
 OCEAN  
 OVERHEAD LIGHT  
 RAFTS  
 SIDE CAR  
 TOWN MODEL  
 WALL MAP  
 WAVES  
 WINE BOTTLES



Also find the names of the five regular Rat Patrol actors and this episode's guest star.

## Unburied Treasure

By Cynthia. K. Taylor

Hans Dietrich pulled down the sleeve of his tuxedo jacket in a futile attempt to cover the thread-bare sleeve of his shirt as the British soldier at the door checked his Allied-issued identification. Although the guard was impeccably correct, the undercurrent of hostility was impossible to miss. Dietrich sighed. Since he had taken his current position in the Allied-run German government, he had attended more than his share of such events, but none at this level. Even the invitation (to a reception for an archaeologist who had made some major finds in the North African desert in the years after the war), with its engraved letters and fine heavy paper bespoke elegance and importance. It was not the type of affair a poor, former Wehrmacht officer should be attending, or would be attending, Dietrich thought, had a scribbled, unsigned note on his invitation not piqued his curiosity.

"Please come. Someone is looking forward to seeing you again."

As the wait lengthened, Dietrich fought to control his temper. Then a very proper English voice rang out over the crowd. "Captain Dietrich, how good of you to come."

Startled, Dietrich looked up to see a tall, well-muscled man, pushing his way through the guests. "I think you must have me confused with someone else, sir," Dietrich said quietly. "I am not in the military."

"Not now, of course. The Allies are rather touchy about letting an officer who served under Rommel get into a position of military power, even if that man did kill a crazed SS officer to save an Allied soldier and gave his Iron Cross to an Arab girl for her bravery in fighting against him."

Dietrich eyed the man with suspicion. How did he know these secret things? No one did; Dietrich had made sure of that.

The Englishman liberated two glasses of champagne from the tray of a passing waiter and handed one to Dietrich. "I'm Dr. Alistair Moffitt, archaeologist, and indirectly responsible for this evening."

Dietrich took a sip of champagne to cover his thoughts as the pieces fell into place... the same face, but younger, with dark hair, speaking fluent German... a man who could have guessed his secrets. "You're the father of Sergeant Moffitt of that damned Rat Patrol," Dietrich said as he followed his host into a less crowded room off the main hall. "It will be interesting to see him again."

"See him again?" Dr. Moffitt looked at Dietrich in confusion.

"I'd assumed tonight . . ."

"No, no." The light dawned on Dr. Moffitt. "Jack found this type of thing somewhat frivolous after the war. He's working with law enforcement to prevent illegal trading in artifacts."

"Howdy, Captain." Dietrich whirled at the sound of a voice behind him. A tall distinguished-looking man held out his hand. "I always hoped to get a chance to shake your hand."

"Captain, meet our guest of honor . . . Dr. Tully Pettigrew."



## The Sight

by SarahAnne Corlett

Captain Hans Dietrich of the German Afrika Korps strode into the only tavern in the now occupied town and ordered a glass of wine from the tavern keeper before sitting, alone, at one of its simple wooden tables. He found, from time to time, that the odd drink helped him to relax... particularly after an invariably frustrating encounter with the Allied 'Rat' Patrol. He'd managed to repel them this time, but at a tremendous cost in men and equipment.

He didn't see her enter the bar. It was like she'd simply materialized at his elbow. A young girl, barefoot and dirty, she couldn't have been more than ten or eleven years old. She held a deck of large cards in one hand.

"I've been waiting for you, Captain," she said simply. "I was starting to think you wouldn't come."

"I'm sorry," he replied gently. "I think you must be mistaking me for somebody else."

She was undeterred. "Not at all, Captain." She laid two cards on the table: Death and the Knight of Swords. The oversized deck she held was Tarot. It was a parlour trick, he thought with distaste.

"I'm not interested," he said dismissively.

"It doesn't matter," she told him. "They're coming back. You don't have much time."

He looked at her sharply. "Who is coming back?"

"You know who," she said. "They always come back."

He narrowed his eyes at the child. She set down another card. It sported a picture of a crumbling tower.

"What do you want?" he asked suspiciously, though he was fairly certain the answer was money. It was always doom and gloom with these fortune tellers, until you paid them to 'lift the curse'.

"I want you to set aside your pride, Captain," she told him. "There's a man in your unit: a young man." She laid down a card. It was the Page of Cups. "Germany will lose this war. What happens in this town is immaterial. This man must survive."

Dietrich bristled. She was impudent, but there was something about her... "Why?"

"If he lives past today, he'll be reassigned. He'll go back to Europe.

He'll become a guard at one of the camps. He will save innocent lives."

"Save lives?" Dietrich echoed faintly. "Whose lives?"

"Innocent lives," she repeated.

This whole conversation was starting to make him uncomfortable.

"What do you expect me to do?" he asked.

"You know what to do," she told him, laying down the Nine of Swords. "They'll be here soon. You must do it now."

Dietrich looked towards the door uneasily. "But what..." He started to speak, but when he turned his attention back where the child had stood, she was gone. The Page of Cups sat alone on the table. He picked it up and slid it into his pocket, before striding out of the tavern. He was met by his lieutenant in the street.

"Herr Hauptmann, there are reports..."

"Pull the men out."



### The French Connection

by Pat Shaw

The moon had passed its zenith and its light waning made the desert dark before the dawn of the new day. For the men of the long range desert patrol known as the Rat Patrol it meant an early breakfast. Hefting a shovel from the back of the jeep, Hitch stretched and said, "Just going for my morning constitutional." The other three men knew what he meant.

"Don't go too far," Troy called after him.

The blond waved his free hand and disappeared behind an outcrop of rocks. There was still enough light to see where he began to dig. Suddenly the sand began to shift beneath his feet and a gaping hole appeared before he could jump back.

He landed with a dull thud, winded but conscious. It was black in the hole, and as he reached to his shirt pocket he was pleased to find the book of matches he'd picked up on their last stopover still inside. Striking one he turned full circle. The first match burned his fingers and he dropped it. Striking another he walked carefully towards what looked like a reed torch lying on the ground. It took another of his precious matches to light it. Light flooded what appeared to be a small cave, casting an eerie light. Forgetting what he had come to do Hitch walked toward what looked like a door in the cave before noticing he was not the first person to reach it. He almost dropped the torch when its light fell on three bodies huddled together beside the apparent door. "What the ...!!!" He took a shaky breath and let it out. "Pull yourself together Hitchcock," he said aloud, "they're just skeletons." His nerve almost broke when he heard his name being called, until he realized it was Troy shouting to him. Turning to go back to the hole he had fallen through something caught his eye, a flash of red and gold. Then he heard the rushing sound. The air thickened with falling sand. Scooping up the red object he stuffed it into his belt, and ran back to the hole. A rope was dangling and Troy was shouting.

"Hitch, get yourself up here. NOW! Shake it!"

Hitch needed no second bidding and scrambled up the rope. Moffitt and Tully pulled him up the last couple of feet as the sand walls collapsed behind him. He looked back. Except for a settling cloud of dust, it was as if the hole had never been.

Back at the jeeps Hitch recounted his adventure.

"Pity you didn't get a souvenir," commented Tully.

From his belt Hitch produced a folded kepi style hat in red and gold with a black bill and tried it on for size. "I did." He grinned.



## THE DO OR DIE RAID – Missing Scene

by Libby Ginn

*The set up: At the German HQ Troy has sent Moffitt to collect the two privates and wait at the beach for him and the ailing lock pick expert*

...

Hitch jumped the last two ladder rungs and dropped next to Moffitt without a sound. "Where's Troy?" he whispered as he stripped off the German uniform he'd been wearing. Moffitt didn't answer. His attention was back the way he'd come. Next to Hitch Tully appeared and tossed his balled up German uniform into the darkness of the nearby alley.

"Come on," Moffitt said. He turned and hurried down the street toward the beach. Hitch caught up to him, Tully right behind, but no one spoke as they zigzagged through the streets. Not any too soon, thought Hitch. He was glad they were getting out before the sun came up. At the beach Moffitt crouched, peering back at the town while Hitch and Tully dragged the deflated rafts from under the sand and began pumping them up. The wash of the waves covered their sounds. "Where's Troy?" Hitch asked again.

Moffitt checked his watch. He looked worried, and when Moffitt looked worried it made Hitch's stomach twist up. "Did something go wrong?" Hitch asked.

Moffitt took a deep breath and let it out. He began to look more bugged than worried. "The bloody General showed up ahead of schedule."

"Geez," Hitch breathed. "But you got the maps changed, right? They didn't catch Troy, did they? Or Griffin?"

Moffitt shook his head. The knot in Hitch's stomach eased a little.

Tully flopped down on the damp sand next to Hitch. "So where are they?" Moffitt's eyebrows pulled into a frown. "A very good question."

It didn't make sense Troy and the lock guy hadn't come back with Moffitt. Moffitt wasn't telling them something. "Something went wrong," Hitch said.

Moffitt's jaw tightened up. He was definitely bugged. "It seems our special guest didn't think it important to tell us that he has a heart condition."

"Holy cow! Did he have an attack?"

Moffitt nodded.

"He's dead?!"

Moffitt shook his head. "Not unless Troy killed him after I left" Sometimes Hitch wasn't sure when Moffitt was joking. "He had medication with him," Moffitt went on, "but he should never have been assigned to anything so important as this mission. Now he has put it—and us—in extra danger. It's unconscionable."

Tully spat out the match he'd been chewing. Moffitt's attention jerked in his direction and Tully scooped the used match up and into his pocket.

"So Troy's bringing him out?" Hitch asked.

*continued on page 9*

## NOT ALWAYS A RAT Pictures of the month



**Lawrence Casey**

as Elliot in  
"The Gay Deceivers"  
1969



**Gary Raymond**  
as Prince Sancho in  
"El Cid" – 1961



**Eric Braeden**

as Reese Paxton in  
"The Man Who Came Back"  
2008



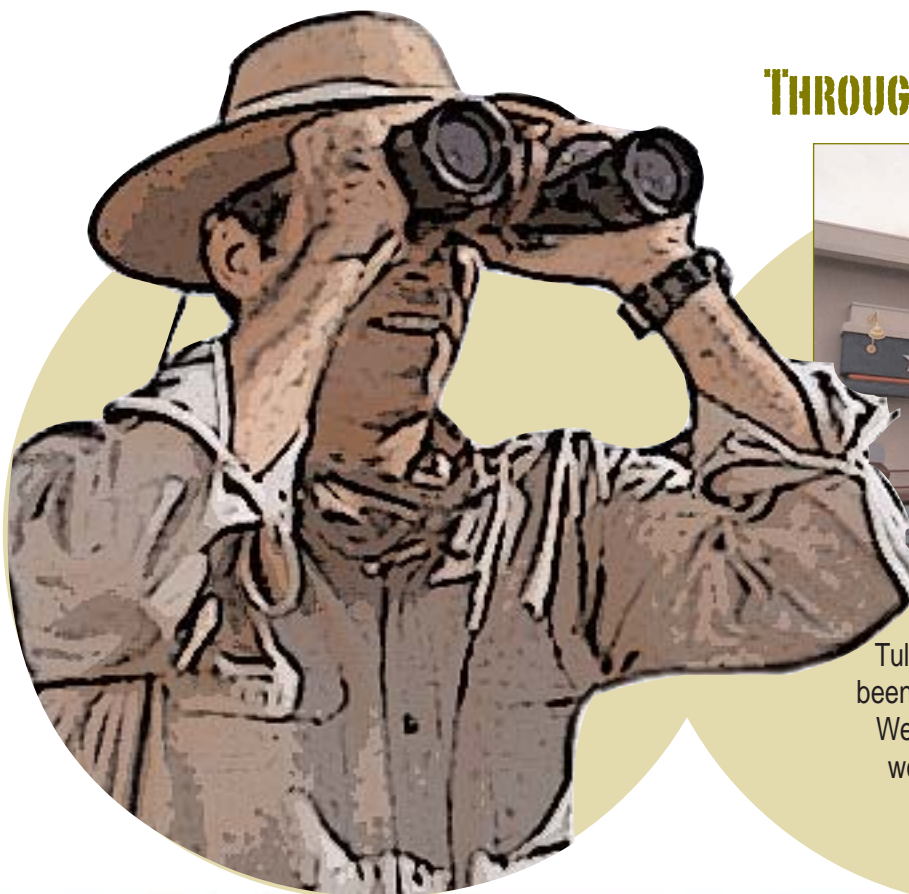
**Christopher George**  
as Michael Kelly in  
"Grizzly" – 1976



**Justin Tarr**

at aged 17  
1957

## THROUGH THE FIELD GLASSES



Tully's presence has recently been spotted in New York State. We are sure the affable Tully would offer up a good time at his restaurants.

Photo by Kit



## THE DO OR DIE RAID – Missing Scene - cont'd

Moffitt's focus went back to the still empty street. "That may be the question," he said. "Is he?"

"Maybe we should go help him."

Moffitt raised his arm to check his watch again, a sure sign he was getting back to worried.



The featured RAT PATROL episode in the next issue of DUNES will be "The Decoy Raid". Watch the episode and write a short scene that you think could have been part of the episode but wasn't. Consider sharing your 'Missing Scene' with DUNES and the readers. For more details check the submission guidelines at: [http://www.suncompass.fandom.tv/dunes\\_submissions.htm](http://www.suncompass.fandom.tv/dunes_submissions.htm)

## RAT HOBBIES

by Barbo

Here are a few of my Rat Patrol collectibles. Of course there is Tully's helmet, which I must say weighs a ton - how Tarr ever wore it in that heat, I'll never know. Also shown is Troy's Aussie Slouch hat and Moffitt's tankman beret. Unfortunately, Hitch's kepi is much harder to come by.

There are the two TV Guides that the guys graced and a photo of Moffitt and Tully autographed by Gary Raymond. He was also kind enough to sign my RP baseball cap.

I also have some WWII goggles, and map carrier. And, how could I forget the wooden matchsticks our enigmatic Tully used to chew on.



## RAT RECIPE – Troy's SPAM and Eggs by Barbo

There's nothing better than starting the day with a good breakfast. That is Sam Troy's motto. And, why make it complicated. Life as a desert rat is trying enough... right old buddy?

12 eggs  
1/4 cup camel butter  
1 wild onions  
1 tsp. salt  
2 cans SPAM rations  
pinch of sand (not optional)

First, have Hitch scout out some local guinea fowl nests and snatch as many eggs as possible. Second, have Hitch dig around for a wild onion. Just one will be sufficient. Third, wake up Hitch and have him chop up the onion, fry up the eggs, open the SPAM cans and heat. There's nothing like having your own personal assistant while cruising the Sahara.



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