

Herbert R. Brucker

SF Pioneer: Part II Pre-WWII–OSS Training 1943

by Charles H. Briscoe

THE short biography and photo essay in the last issue of *Veritas* (Vol. 2 No. 2) introduced Major Herbert R. Brucker, one of the pioneers of Special Forces. In twenty years, Brucker acquired a wealth of special operations experience that merits sharing with the Force. Therefore, Part II covers his developmental period of military service before World War II as a CW (Morse Code) radio operator in an infantry regiment through his OSS (Office of Strategic Services) special operations agent training before being detailed to the British Special Operations Executive (SOE) in England. This article will show why and how Brucker was selected to train as an OSS operative, cover facets of the SO assessment and training course, and conclude with his overseas shipment to England.

The Part One photo essay introduced Herbert R. Brucker as a former radio operator of a three-man SOE team that conducted clandestine operations in France before D-Day. British special operations (SO) and special intelligence teams, unlike OSS Jedburgh and Operational Groups, had been operating behind German lines throughout Europe since late 1940. Technical Sergeant Fourth Class (T/4) Brucker was detailed from the OSS to the SOE in England because he had been raised in France and Germany, was naturally fluent in French and German, and was culturally attuned. To fully appreciate what this soldier accomplished in the Army and did for special operations, the reader must keep in mind that Brucker joined the service in 1940—at the time understanding, speaking, reading, and writing very little English. He grew up in France and Germany, living there for seventeen years. Though a graduate of the equivalent to the American high school in France, Brucker is self-educated in English and retired from the Army as a major after twenty years of service.

His French father, who immigrated to America in 1911, joined the U.S. Army as an infantryman and fought Moslems in the Philippines during the Moro War. Medically retired after losing an arm at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, Ernest Brucker married the rebellious daughter of a

middle-class immigrant German family in New Jersey. Six months after the birth of Herbert on 10 October 1921, the couple relocated to Merlebach, France. Ernest became an interpreter for the U.S. Army in the Rhineland and served the French military intelligence. When Herb's mother, Gertrude Promer Brucker, was pregnant with another child, she returned to the United States. At that point in 1924, the responsibility, care, and education of Brucker became a constant game of "musical chairs."¹

He was bounced between relatives living in villages and farms in the Alsace-Lorraine—the often-contested French province bordering southern Germany—and paid caretakers in France and Germany. Then, Brucker joined his father in Metz for a short time before ending up in a Parisian boarding school with his younger brother. After that experience, Brucker returned to Merlebach to attend school and serve as an apprentice tool and die maker for a coal mining company. Finally, he took a job as a temporary agricultural worker—a "cowboy" (barefoot cow herder)—in central France, after a Parisian baker refused to hire him as a helper. Being Alsatian, his efforts to join the French Army were politely rebuffed despite war clouds building over Europe. The recruiters suggested the Foreign Legion. To make matters more difficult, it was the Great Depression.²

Thus, over the years his unique *Alemanische* (a German dialect spoken in the Alsace-Lorraine region) was transformed into high *Deutsche* and the French he had learned in Valence while "boarded" with a Muslim-Algerian family was transformed into *Parisienne* while in a boarding school north of Paris. Meanwhile, after being imprisoned in Spandau for spying, Brucker's father left for the United States with a new wife. It was an American birth certificate that finally enabled his father to bring Brucker back to the United States in November 1938.³

Having lived in France and Germany for seventeen years, Brucker was really a Frenchman with American citizenship. He struggled to learn English on the streets of Newark, New Jersey, by reading comic books, going to



Regimental Orderly Brucker, Fort Devens, Massachusetts, 1941.



Private Brucker with TG-5 Telegraph Set, .45 Pistol and Gas Mask at Fort Devens, Massachusetts, 1941.



Private Herbert R. Brucker, SN 12020283, 18th Infantry, 1st Division, Fort Hamilton, New York, November 1940.

family," said Brucker. "The Army gave me clothes. I was served meals in a dining hall. I shared a room. I slept on a bed with sheets. Life was good."⁵ Still, learning a new language and adapting to the culture required considerable time.

A mastery of English, however, was not essential to be a good telegrapher; Morse Code (CW) was an international language. And Private Herbert R. Brucker, Headquarters Company, 18th Infantry Regiment, 1st Division, became quite

proficient because he loved being a soldier and was intent on doing well. He diligently practiced Morse Code every day at Fort Hamilton to steadily increase his words-per-minute speed. Basic soldiering skills (referred to now as basic and advanced individual training) were taught by unit corporals and sergeants in pre-WWII days.⁶

By the time the 1st Division united its three infantry regiments (under the new German triangular organization) at Fort Devens, Massachusetts, to prepare for the Regular Army training exercises at Fort Benning, Georgia, scheduled for the spring of 1940, Private Brucker, wireless radio operator, could send and receive almost twenty words of CW a minute. And because he spoke two foreign languages, the young soldier was assigned to the reconnaissance element.⁷ A year later, the newly redesignated 1st "Infantry" Division would truck-convoy from Fort Devens to the Carolina Maneuvers. However, few truck drivers existed in the Army of 1941.

All soldiers in the 18th Infantry Regiment were given driving tests. There simply were not enough drivers for the trucks and command cars. Brucker remembered, "In my mind I thought that I could drive. After all, I had watched others driving . . . working the gears, the brake, clutch, and gas pedal, and steering. It didn't seem that hard even though I had never driven. I was hoping to have my chance with something small. Instead, I was directed to a command car. I got behind the wheel, started the engine, let the clutch out, and promptly stalled it with a great lurch. So much for becoming a truck driver," said Brucker. "And before our convoy cleared Fort Devens, there was a truck off the road in a ditch. So much for Army drivers."⁸

The truck convoys moved day and night getting us down to the Carolinas. We stopped periodically for relief breaks, to hand-pump gas from 55-gallon drums into the

Pre-WWII 1st Infantry Division patch.

18th Infantry Regiment Distinctive Unit Insignia.

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Pre-WWII 1st Infantry Division patch.

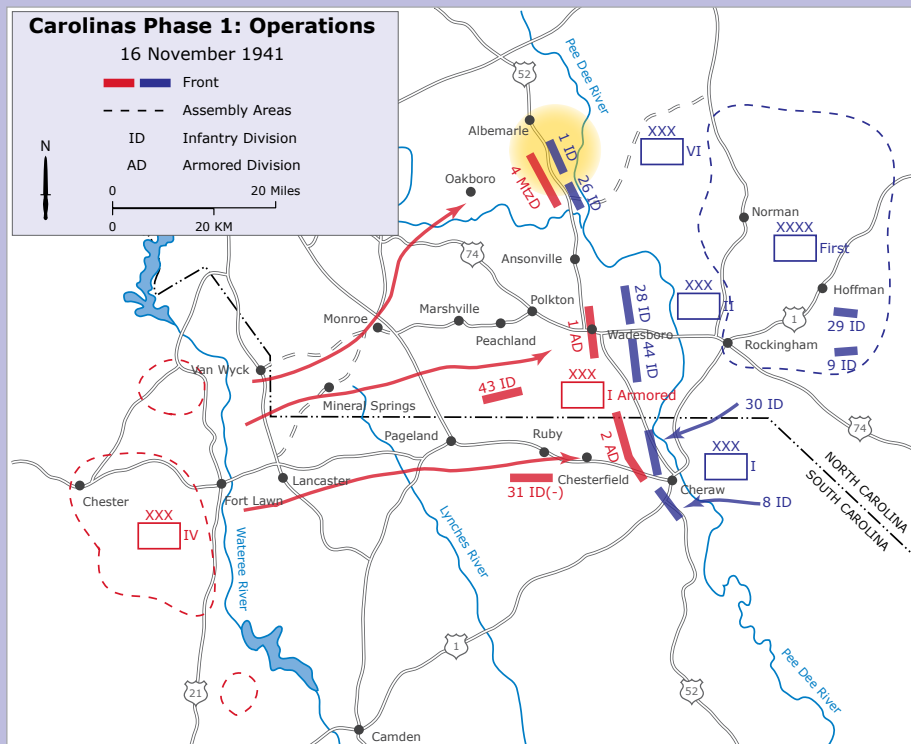
18th Infantry Regiment Distinctive Unit Insignia.

Carolina Maneuvers

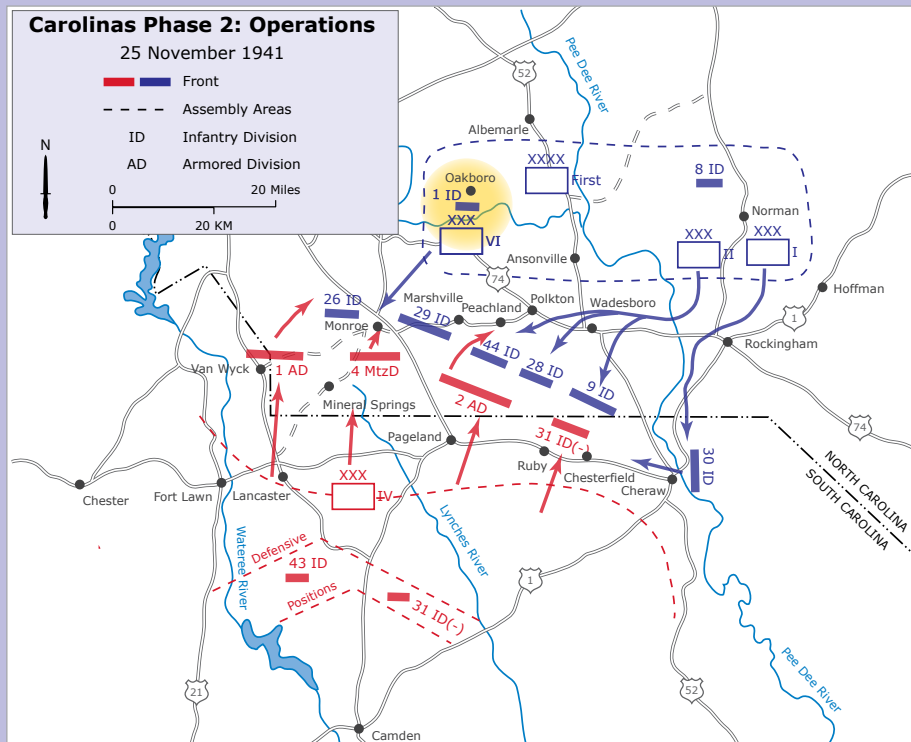
ON 1 September 1939, when Germany's invasion of Poland started World War II in Europe, the U.S. Army was ranked seventeenth among the armies of the world, just behind Romania. There were 190,000 personnel, counting the Philippine Scouts and Nurse Corps, in the U.S. Army; 45,300 of the 174,000 enlisted soldiers were serving overseas. While there were numerous division headquarters on paper, the Army had few units larger than battalions and these were quite understrength.

Though 200,000 part-time soldiers filled eighteen National Guard divisions, the regiments were maintained by skeleton cadres. The Protective Mobilization Plan of 1939–1941 that supported President Franklin D. Roosevelt's proclamation of a "limited national emergency" was the first step. That action filled the Regular Army and National Guard divisions sufficiently to maneuver as Red and Blue Armies in Louisiana and the Carolinas during the summer and fall of 1941. These "force on force" maneuvers were the largest ever conducted by the U.S. Army and its first combined arms exercises. After the Great War, periodic Regular Army–National Guard maneuvers were simply "playacting between notional forces."¹

- 1 Christopher R. Gabel, *The U.S. Army GHQ HQ Maneuvers of 1941* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History), iii, 5, 8, 9.
- 2 Gabel, *GHQ Maneuvers of 1941*, 50.
- 3 Gabel, *GHQ Maneuvers of 1941*, 158, 165.



The 9,375 square-mile area of operations (AO) for the Carolina Maneuvers straddled the North Carolina–South Carolina border. The AO was a large triangle with Charlotte, North Carolina, in the northwest, Fayetteville, North Carolina, to the east, and Columbia, South Carolina, to the south.²



From left to right: Private Ferraro, Private Brucker with horseshoe roll (before it was adopted by the U.S. Army from the French Foreign Legion) during Carolina Maneuvers, Summer 1941.



18th Infantry Radio Section truck with Browning Automatic Rifle mounted for air defense during Carolina Maneuvers, Summer 1941.

Private Brucker, 18th Infantry, Radio Section, Carolina Maneuvers, Summer 1941.



18th Infantry Radio Section wire truck and motorcycle messenger moving into bivouac during Carolina Maneuvers, Summer 1941.

Radio Section loading up to move out during Carolina Maneuvers, Summer 1941, with Private Bishop seated on the tire, Private Geller standing to the right, and Private Pollack driving.



18th Infantry Radio Section trucks in convoy to Carolina Maneuvers, Summer 1941. In those days, soldiers wore Class "B" uniforms for maneuvers. Blue Army soldiers were identified by an eighteen-inch blue ribbon attached to their left shoulder epaulet; Red Army men wore red ribbons.

The 1st and 8th Infantry Divisions (triangular) were fully motorized with three attached quartermaster truck companies. They were mobile reserves for the Blue Army commanded by Lieutenant General Hugh A. Drum, the GHQ chief of staff. The 1st Infantry Division troops motor-convoyed to and from the Carolina maneuvers of 1941.³



trucks, and chow. During the maneuvers the radio operators worked shifts. In between these, we pulled guard duty. Army Air Corps planes dropped flour sacks to simulate bombs as well as paratroopers of the Provisional Parachute Battalion stationed at Fort Benning, Georgia. The paratroopers stole the keys from trucks and created a real mess. The Army adopted a keyless ignition switch as a result. I was posted as a road guard one morning and sometime in the afternoon the regimental headquarters relocated and forgot to pick me up. When a farmer came by at dusk and asked what I was doing there, I dutifully recited my general guard orders like a good soldier. He laughed and said that my unit left hours ago. Luckily, he gave me a ride to the nearest unit, a 37mm antitank company. I was standing in the chow line when my company

commander found me and 'chewed my butt.' Now, that's what I remember about the Carolina maneuvers.⁹

It was shortly after the conclusion of the Carolina Maneuvers that Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. "I remember because I was on KP [kitchen duty] when the news came over the radio. Like every military unit, we were immediately put on alert and all soldiers were recalled from pass and leave. We had spent weeks aboard merchant ships after the maneuvers to practice amphibious landings with Higgins boats so we weren't sure what the division was going to do," said Brucker. "Training was taken more seriously by everyone. After Pearl Harbor, the 1st Infantry Division maneuvered against the Texas National Guard 36th Infantry Division at Camp Blanding, Florida. Following that maneuver, I left the 'Big Red One' (1st Infantry Division). It had been my home for two years."¹⁰

In the early spring of 1942, Brucker was sent to Fort Meade, Maryland, as training cadre for the newly-formed 76th Infantry Division. His selection as a CW trainer carried an automatic promotion from private to staff sergeant. Morse Code proficiency proved to be a blessing and somewhat of a curse.¹¹ After America declared war, quality



Technical Sergeant Fourth Class Brucker, 1st Infantry Division training cadre for 100th Infantry Division, Fort Jackson, South Carolina, 1943.

trainers were needed to get new combat divisions ready for overseas. After his stint with the 76th, Staff Sergeant Brucker was reassigned to Fort Jackson, South Carolina, to train CW operators in the 100th Infantry Division. By mid-1942, only privates were being permitted to volunteer for parachute school, the Rangers, and flight school as an aerial gunner or radio operator. Even after being "busted" to technical sergeant fourth class for not having his "dog tags" while on pass in Columbia, this calculated demotion still blocked him from volunteering for a combat assignment.¹²

Thus, it was pure chance that T/4 Brucker read a notice on the bulletin board soliciting foreign language-speaking volunteers for a classified assignment. Wanting to escape and get "into the war," but worried about a possible assignment as a mail censor, he made sure that he was the last to sign in and slipped into a back row seat close to an auditorium door—to enable him to bolt if it were a censor job. When the Army major ended the classified assignment brief, Brucker was shocked to be the first person called up for an interview. "After the major found out that I would volunteer for a dangerous assignment and parachute from an airplane, he sent me to



36th Infantry Division shoulder patch.



76th Infantry Division shoulder patch.



100th Infantry Division shoulder patch.

another room to talk with a captain. Hell, I'd only been on a train, aboard a ship, and ridden in cars and trucks. I'd never been inside an airplane. Since the captain spoke poor high-school French, the language test was easy," remembered Brucker. "He commented, 'You talk like a native' . . . which I was."¹³ Sometime later, T/4 Brucker had orders to the "OSS" in Washington, DC, with directions to report to Building Q. Typical of most soldiers at mid-month (when soldiers were only paid monthly), the T/4 was "broke" and had to "borrow" five dollars from his squad leader for the train to Washington. Per usual, this debt to Staff Sergeant Lightner was not repaid. Unbeknownst to either soldier, Brucker, in August 1943, had volunteered for duty with the OSS.¹⁴

It would be resourcefulness and good "street sense" that kept the barely English-literate American soldier in the OSS selection and training program. By going on the premise that his response to every situation or dilemma was being evaluated, Brucker constantly strived to do everything to the best of his ability. If he didn't fully understand the directions, he would hesitate a moment to see what the others were doing and figure out what was to be done. Sometimes this method worked and other times it did not. He could follow orders, but getting to the correct OSS training camp proved a challenge.¹⁵

Since his orders were in a sealed manila envelope, T/4 Brucker followed the instructions printed on the outside which did not specify a report date. Thus, he dutifully "reported in" on a Saturday. The duty secretary told him to come back on Monday morning. He was not due for another week. Brucker faced a weekend in Washington with a dollar and a half in his pocket. Monday morning, virtually penniless and quite hungry, he reported in again and was sent to see Mr. Ingersoll in Room 2047. He was told to go up the hill behind the building to board a truck that would arrive at 1600 hours. When three trucks arrived at the appointed hour, over thirty men, who had been "nonchalantly standing around for hours trying to be inconspicuous," climbed aboard. The trucks took them to what was probably a Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp near Frederick, Maryland. "I hadn't eaten since Sunday, so finding out that the mess hall held chow for us was great," said Brucker. "I didn't mind pulling guard duty that night."¹⁶

The next morning, all new personnel were formed up in three ranks. A sergeant marched the first rank away. The rest of the men were told to take a break in the shade. While Brucker was pondering why a group of Norwegians carrying M1 Garand rifles had just double-timed past them, a runner came searching for him. The T/4 was in the wrong place (Area B) and he was to return to Washington and report to Mr. Ingersoll in Building Q. (This was George F. Ingersoll, his OSS Special Operations handler. To him Brucker was "Herbert E-54"). After their meeting, Herbert E-54 was given seventy-five dollars and told to go back home and buy specific civilian clothes—a business suit and a "lounging suit" (sports coat and slacks) in New York. He was also told that all further contacts with

OSS Training Areas

Area "A"	Advanced Training was a 5,000 acre wooded area five miles west of Quantico, Virginia.
Area "B"	Basic Training was 9,000 acres of mountainous terrain in the Catoclin National Forest twenty miles north of Frederick, Maryland.
Area "C"	Communications Training was done in 4,000 acres of wooded area adjacent to Area A.
Area "D"	Marine Training was 1,400 acres of wooded terrain on the Potomac River across from Quantico, Virginia.
Area "E"	Special Operations Covert Activities and Secret Intelligence Training was done at "The Farm."
Area "F"	OSS Operational Group (OG) Training was conducted at the Congressional Country Club in Washington, DC.



OSS Area C Training Camp.



OSS Area F Training Camp.

Ingersoll would be by telephone. Brucker was given a slip of paper with his number and dismissed. Because there was a sizeable French population in the West Side of New York City, he headed there.¹⁷

Seventy-five dollars proved insufficient for the task. As a soldier, Brucker did not have the requisite ration coupons to buy leather goods. Civilian shoes and a belt were a “bridge too far.” He returned to Washington in uniform carrying his new civilian clothes in a cardboard box along with an Army musette bag containing toilet gear. When Brucker called Ingersoll, he was instructed, “Go across Constitution Avenue to the park. Look for a gentleman wearing a white hat sitting on a bench reading a newspaper. He will leave his newspaper behind when he gets up to leave. Your instructions are inside the newspaper,” and hung up. “Sure enough, when I snatched up that newspaper and opened it there was a sealed envelope inside. Ripping it open, I saw a yellow sheet of paper inside stamped ‘SECRET’ in red and a train ticket from Baltimore to Phoenix. I almost dropped the paper because I had never seen, let alone handled, a classified document. It read: ‘Wear civilian clothes. At the Phoenix train station you’ll see a black sedan at the curb. Ask the driver if he is waiting for Mr. Brown.’ There was no money nor a ticket from Washington to Baltimore. Once again I felt like I was being tested on how I would respond,” recalled Brucker.¹⁸

At the Greyhound bus station, T/4 Brucker hid his civilian clothes. Claiming that he had been mugged (his excuse for wearing a disheveled khaki uniform) and had to get to Baltimore, a sympathetic passenger bought him a bus ticket. When he got to the train station in Baltimore, he dressed in his civilian suit with his Army belt and brogans and ditched his uniform and musette bag. He asked for the track of the train going to Phoenix. Not realizing that the Baltimore station had two levels of tracks (express and local), he got on an express that went by Phoenix without stopping. A friendly conductor marked his ticket, told him to get off in York, Pennsylvania, go back to Baltimore, and take the local to Phoenix. Perseverance finally got him to Phoenix, Maryland, shortly after midnight. Needless to say, there was no black car waiting at the station. Sleeping on an outside bench had unforeseen consequences.¹⁹

At daybreak, Brucker went to the village post office (public telephones are available in French postal offices) to find a telephone, but was directed to the nearby hardware store. His collect call to Ingersoll resulted in a one-way conversation: “Get back to the train station now and stay there!!! A black sedan will pick you up.” Brucker did just that. Shortly a black sedan arrived. When he dutifully repeated his line, “Is this the car for Mr. Brown?” The reply was, “Get the hell in here,” and off they roared. En route his two Army officer escorts told him about a “game” played in the school. Everyone had to “zero in” on one fellow and collect all the information he could about him. “Obviously, you’re military by your Army brogans and belt,” they said. “You’ve got to do something about

them. It’s like wearing a sign.”²⁰

When they arrived at “The Farm,” instead of being given something to eat, Brucker was sent to an ongoing lock picking class. “No one said a word to me when I showed up. But, everyone kept staring at me. I didn’t figure it out until I glanced in the wash-room mirror just before lunch. I was covered with coal soot from head to toe—the price of sleeping at the train station—a heavy coat of soot had accumulated from the trains passing by all night. Thus, I made my OSS debut looking like the popular Al Jolson in black grease paint except I couldn’t sing, ‘Maamie, how I love ya, how I love ya . . .,’” chuckled Brucker.²¹



Al Jolson in the 1927 movie The Jazz Singer.

Because most OSS SO training was conducted on “The Farm” and only the practical aspects done in Baltimore, the trainees were housed on the grounds. Two men shared a pyramid tent with plywood sides and floor in August and September 1943. At the Farm they practiced surveillance, learned to sketch observations, practiced memorization techniques, did simple interrogations, received basic demolitions training from Army combat engineers, and prepared false documents—from birth certificates to draft deferments and marriage papers. They were taught hand-to-hand combat, knife fighting, and two-handed instinctive pistol marksmanship by British Major William E. Fairbairn, a retired Shanghai deputy police commissioner.²²

Instinctive pistol shooting skills were honed in Fairbairn’s “house of horrors” almost daily. Trainees armed with their .45 cal Colt automatic pistol and carrying two six-round magazines had to enter the darkened building with Fairbairn at their shoulder. As they negotiated narrow dark passages, spring-activated cardboard German soldiers popped up in rooms, from behind walls, and around corners. Trainees engaged the targets and Fairbairn critiqued reaction times and shooting accuracy.²³ “It was a nerve-wracking drill that most dreaded. I don’t know which was scarier—the spook house or Fairbairn—but it later paid off for me,” said Brucker.²⁴ Off-site practical training was not as stressful.

Off-duty police detectives served as instructors for surveillance missions in downtown Baltimore. While that training was realistic, any “cloak and dagger” aspect was lost when all the teams had to rendezvous at the bus station for their ride back to the Farm. “There was nothing more ridiculous than thirty guys hanging around doing their best to be inconspicuous and ignoring one another, and then all getting on the same bus,” said Brucker. “But, we were preparing for the three pass/fail SO tasks.”²⁵

Two individual tests and one two-man team exercise in Baltimore evaluated clandestine operating skills. The “singleton” missions merely required obtaining employ-

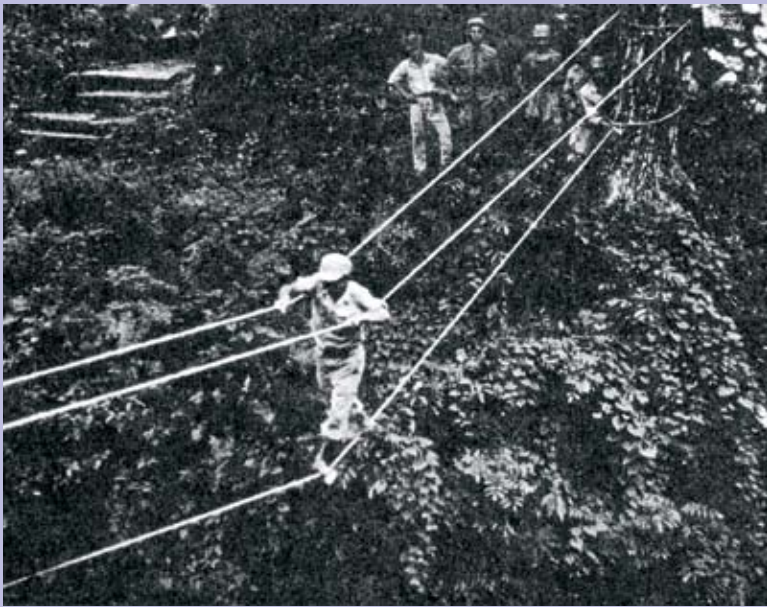
OSS Assessments



OSS Assessment: The Ball and Spiral Test.



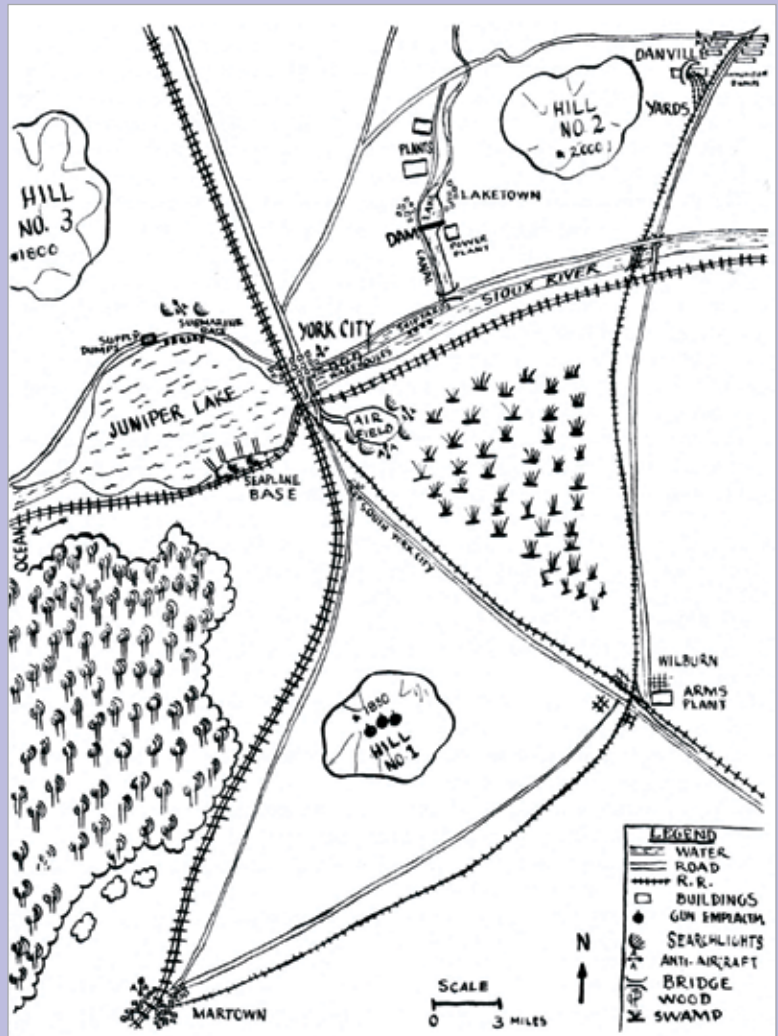
OSS Assessment: Major Fairbairn's "House of Horrors."



OSS Assessment: Constructing a rope bridge.



OSS Assessment: Getting a team over two walls with only a board.



OSS Assessment: Map Memory Test.

ment—one without documents and the other with false papers—not actually working. Two-man teams were to infiltrate factories, preferably sensitive factories making war materials that had armed guards. The team had to escape without being detected. City boarding houses (“flop houses”) filled with transient workers that had responded to the war manufacturing boom and commensurate good salaries were good places to “obtain” unguarded working papers and documents, especially during family-style evening meals and while residents used communal bathroom facilities.²⁶

Merchant seamen from torpedoed vessels were common. In Baltimore, they rarely had papers. And, newspapers reported the names of ships recently sunk by German submarines operating off the Atlantic coast. Thus, Brucker, claiming that he had shipped out from Boston and been torpedoed, had no trouble getting hired at a radio manufacturing plant since new papers were “being sent” to him in Baltimore. After paying fifty cents for a night’s lodging, he managed to “borrow” documents and a cap at a flop house and get another job. According to Brucker, “Employment was a ‘piece of cake.’”²⁷ The last test—the two-man infiltration—was tougher.

Infiltrating and escaping undetected from the Baltimore Shipyard proved more difficult. Brucker and his assigned partner did a reconnaissance and installed themselves in a blue-collar bar, the Silver Dollar, just outside the main entrance. From there they could observe the workers entering and leaving and the security guard routine. Observing shift changes over several drafts of beer, the two formulated their plan. The late afternoon influx seemed best. Day guards were complacent because their rotation was due. And, since the largest work shift was daytime, the mass exodus of workers offered good cover because the night shift had to fight the larger outgoing tide to get inside. Blending into two of the initial groups of night workers, Brucker and his partner grabbed time cards from their slots, “punched in,” and moved inside. Then, they assumed the role of janitors by simply picking up brooms and dustpans and proceeding to sweep up debris. The two “janitors” moved unnoticed as they worked throughout the plant to determine their means of escape. Shortly after midnight the pair headed to the darkest section of the fence pushing a wheelbarrow and carrying shovels. While one kept lookout, the other dug a shallow trench under the fence. Then, the two scooted under the fence, filled in the escape route, and discarded their shovels as they split up to escape. They had gotten in and out of the shipyard without a hitch. The final task for each was to buy a bottle of liquor—the requisite “ticket” to board the bus back to the Farm.²⁸

The bottle of liquor was required for the SO “graduation” party the next evening. That was the final test. Everyone that had successfully passed the previous evaluations assembled in the great room of the farmhouse with their bottle of liquor. Unfamiliar with American whiskey, Brucker had bought a bottle of *Southern Comfort*. Early in their training, everyone had been told to focus on

another trainee and learn all they could about him. Now it was the time to reveal in turn what they had discovered and get the “facts” substantiated.²⁹

The finalists were seated on the floor in a circle with their liquor bottle in front of them. Instead of these “Indians” smoking the peace pipe in turn, ritual “belts” of liquor had to be taken by each man before presenting his “findings.” The drinking was to “loosen tongues” to see what else the trainees would reveal. The man who focused on Brucker was close on only two things: that Herbert E-54 was European, based on the way he flicked his cigarette ash when smoking—by tapping the top of the cigarette with one finger; American men used their little finger to flick the ash; and surreptitious rifling of E-54’s personal things led to the discovery of a Free French Navy shoulder epaulet (souvenir from a sailor while on his clothes-buying expedition in New York)—proof that he was French. This time Brucker’s U.S. citizenship saved him from expulsion, but it was not enough to keep him, *Southern Comfort*, and “Ralph” from embracing the toilet later.³⁰

But, the revelations made an impression on Brucker. He realized that he had to be more careful in the future. Those that “graduated” from the OSS SO course were given a set of lock picks (which they were told were illegal to carry) as a present and told to pack their equipment and prepare to go overseas. Herbert E-54 was told to report back to Mr. Ingersoll in Washington. When he returned to the nation’s capital, Brucker was issued complete battle gear—from weapons to helmet and gas mask. Overseas orders would come directly. On the way to the OSS “safehouse,” Herbert E-54 stopped to look at some movie posters.³¹

Unbeknownst to him, a soldier in full-battle dress and wearing a .45 Colt automatic was an uncommon sight in Washington. Thus, while looking at theater movie posters trying to decide which movie to see, Herbert E-54 was apprehended by a Military Police patrol and taken to the station.³² That proved to be quite an experience for all concerned.

T/4 Brucker explained that he was awaiting orders for overseas. He was armed with his .45 cal Colt automatic and homemade dagger. This got the MPs really excited, even more so when E-54 proceeded to show them that the gun was loaded—an OSS requirement—as he surrendered it. Then, he asked if they wanted his other weapon . . . a shoulder-holstered Hungarian .32 cal pistol under his tunic. It required calling Mr. Ingersoll to keep him out of jail. The final agreement was that the MPs would hold all of his weapons until he shipped out. Amazingly, Brucker and all of his weapons were in a truck headed for New York (the port of debarkation for Europe-bound troopships) early the next morning. “It was quite a night, but I got to see the movie, *Sahara*, a World War II adventure film starring Humphrey Bogart,” laughed Brucker.³³

This article chronicled the early life of Herbert R. Brucker, his pre-WWII military service, and his assessment and training by the OSS. It took him from being

a telegrapher Private in the Radio Section, 18th Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division before Pearl Harbor to service as a signal cadre man (CW) training signalmen of the 76th and 100th Infantry Divisions from 1942–1943, where he rose to the grade of Staff Sergeant. It was his upbringing in France and Germany for seventeen years and languages that attracted OSS interest. This led to assessment and training as a Special Operations operative while an Army Technical Sergeant Fourth Class. The description of OSS training by Brucker is very down-to-earth and erodes some mythology and romanticism that have grown up over the years. Being a Frenchman with American citizenship was the key to being selected for OSS training and why Brucker was detailed to the SOE in England.

It would not be until he was detailed to Britain's Special Operations Executive and underwent their training that Brucker realized how shallow OSS training for combat really was. See "The Failures of Detachment 101 (Burma) and Its Evolution into a Combined Arms Team" in this issue. Part III will cover Major Herbert R. Brucker's SOE training in England. It will end with his jump into occupied France in May 1944 to replace a team "rolled up" by the Gestapo shortly after capturing a female Hindu radio operator, Noor Inayat Kahn, "Madelaine" of the SOE Prosper Circuit.³⁴ ▲

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Endnotes

- 1 Major (Retired) Herbert R. Brucker, interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 21 November 2005, Fayetteville, NC, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter Brucker interview 2; Herbert Brucker, biographical summary (undated), USASOC History Office Classified Files; Brucker, interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 3 July 2006, Fayetteville, NC, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter Brucker interview 6.
- 2 Brucker interview 2; Major (Retired) Herbert R. Brucker, interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 12 July 2006, Fayetteville, NC, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, hereafter Brucker interview 7.

- 3 Brucker interview 2, Brucker received his first serial number at the Parisian boarding school: HB25; Major (Retired) Herbert R. Brucker, interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 30 May 2006, Fayetteville, NC, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter Brucker interview 5.
- 4 Brucker interview 2.
- 5 Brucker interview 2.
- 6 Brucker interview 2; Christopher R. Gabel, *The U.S. Army GHQ HQ Maneuvers of 1941* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History), 15.
- 7 Brucker interview 2.
- 8 Major (Retired) Herbert R. Brucker, interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 14 August 2006, Fayetteville, NC, notes, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter Brucker interview 8.
- 9 Brucker interview 2.
- 10 Major (Retired) Herbert R. Brucker, interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 14 November 2005, Fayetteville, NC, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter Brucker interview 1 and Brucker interviews 2 and 5.
- 11 Brucker interview 2.
- 12 Brucker interviews 1 and 3.
- 13 Brucker interview 2.
- 14 Major (Retired) Herbert R. Brucker, interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 27 March 2006, Fayetteville, NC, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter Brucker interview 4; OSS Letter of Receipt, George F. Ingersoll to Douglas Dimond, dated 14 September 1943, Herbert R. Brucker's personal files, Fayetteville, NC; Brucker interviews 1 and 3.
- 15 Brucker interviews 1 and 3.
- 16 Brucker interview 3.
- 17 Brucker interviews 3 and 7.
- 18 Brucker interview 3.
- 19 Brucker interview 3.
- 20 Brucker interview 3.
- 21 Brucker interview 3.
- 22 Brucker interviews 3 and 6. William E. Fairbairn and colleague Eric Sykes designed the Fairbairn-Sykes fighting knife carried by British Commandos, OSS operatives, and the Canadian-American First Special Service Force.
- 23 Lieutenant Colonel Will Irwin, *The Jedburghs: The Secret History of the Allied Special Forces, France 1944* (New York: Public Affairs, Perseus Books, 2005), 49.
- 24 Brucker interviews 3 and 5.
- 25 Brucker interview 3.
- 26 Brucker interview 3.
- 27 Brucker interview 3.
- 28 Brucker interviews 3 and 5.
- 29 Brucker interviews 3 and 5.
- 30 Brucker interviews 3 and 5.
- 31 Brucker interview 3.
- 32 Brucker interview 3.
- 33 Brucker interview 3.
- 34 Brucker interview 8.