

Chapter 6

Instructing for Dangerous Missions

Physically establishing the training camps was comparatively easy because of the pre-existence of the cabin camps in the two national parks. More difficult was creating the training process. To prepare spies, saboteurs, guerrilla leaders, radio operators, psychological warfare specialists and commando teams for their clandestine missions, Donovan's organization had to obtain instructors, prepare a curriculum, develop courses, and devise practical exercises. Ultimately, the effectiveness of the training would be judged by the success of the OSS.

Although OSS was deliberately lax in its approach to Army protocol and procedures, its paramilitary training camps were at least organized like military bases. There may not have been any saluting, close-order drill, bugle calls, or marching to class, but each training area had a commanding officer, executive officer and a cadre of officers and enlisted men who kept the camp running. Because the camp was also a school, there was an instructional staff. Headed by a chief instructor, it included officers and enlisted men and sometimes some civilian instructors. Few of the cadre or the instructors had been professional soldiers, although many had been in the reserves and most had enlisted voluntarily, first in the armed services and then in the OSS.

While the cadre kept the camp going with food, fuel, and other supplies, the instructional staff was faced with diverse groups of students recruited for unconventional warfare. Among the first to take basic Special Operations training at Area B at Catoctin Mountain Park in the spring of 1942 was a group of two dozen young men from Thailand, who had been students in American colleges and universities. They were succeeded by a group that included a number of Yugoslavian guerrillas. Other foreign nationals and American ethnic groups followed. Some classes were a *mélange* of men whose only commonality appeared to be their desire to fight against the Nazis. Edgar Prichard, who had been a journalist from Oklahoma and a company clerk in the Army before Donovan's organization recruited him, recalled years later that his class of sixteen men at Area B-2 in Catoctin Mountain Park in 1942 had been an "interesting lot:"

"We had a Finnish fellow named Aalto who had fought on the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War and another fellow named Doster who had fought on the Fascist side in the same war. They weren't overly friendly with each other. We had a Zionist fellow who had fought with the Haganah [a Jewish paramilitary group] in Palestine and a Lieutenant in the Norwegian Army who had escaped from Norway with the British after Narvick [a key shipping port in German occupied Norway, raided by British commandos in April 1940]. We had a couple of Frenchmen, one of whom had escaped from Occupied France. We had a Polish fellow who had escaped from a German prison camp after the Polish defeat and made his way to Spain. We had a young Greek boy from the island of Samos. We had a football player named Jim Goodwin whom we later [air] dropped into Tito's headquarters. We had a Brazilian whose mother was an American. We had a Scot who had grown up in Peru, an Italian fellow who had been a Treasury

Agent. We had a French Canadian who had washed out of the RAF [British Royal Air Force]. We had a young Foreign Service officer from Chicago, and we had a couple of central European types.”¹

Cadre and Instructional Staff at Area B, Catocin Mountain Park

OSS Area B opened in April 1942, offering four-week courses to prepare recruits for hazardous missions of espionage, sabotage, and guerrilla leadership behind enemy lines. The first arrival was the commanding officer, Major Ainsworth Blogg, a tall, gentle man, who had been an insurance company executive in Seattle and a reserve infantry officer, assigned to military police when the Army called him to active duty and he was subsequently recruited by Donovan’s organization. Blogg established his office at Catocin and set up his residence with his wife, Jane, in officers’ family quarters at Camp Ritchie half an hour away.² In administering Area B, Blogg was assisted Lieutenant James Johnson, a Midwesterner, as his executive officer, and Captain Louis Lostfogel, a short, friendly, pipe-smoking physician originally from Philadelphia, who served as medical officer.³

A former Civilian Conservation Corps work camp, located near an NPS maintenance facility that today is called Round Meadow, was designated Area B-5 by Major Blogg, and it became the headquarters of Detachment B. At B-5 were located the offices, mess hall, motor pool, and accommodations for most of the cadre. There were several commissioned officers, but the majority of the cadre were enlisted men, perhaps most prominent among them, the company clerk, an enlisted man, Corporal Georges George. Despite the variation in spelling, his first and last names were both pronounced “George.” An Arab American from Lebanon, Corporal George was a handsome, dark-haired man with a somewhat haughty attitude, who, according to his assistant, would boast that he was “probably the only man in the OSS who speaks and really knows Arabic.”⁴

¹ Edgar Prichard, “Address to Historical Prince William, Inc.,” 16 January 1991 [actually 1992], p. 1, typescript of a talk and clipping, Deynse Tannenbaum, “Veteran Recals Learning to Spy in Park,” *Potomac News*, 18 January 1992, in the Park Archives of Prince William Forest Park, Triangle, Va.

² Ainsworth Blogg, personnel file, CIA Records (RG 263), OSS Personnel Records, Box 10, National Archives II; plus telephone interviews by the author with Dorothea Dean Dow, Athens, widow of Arden W. Dow, 15 May and 6 September 2005; Albert R. Guay, 24 October 2005; and Frank A. Gleason, 26 December 2007. People’s ranks changed as they were promoted. I shall use the rank they had at the time mentioned.

³ R.P. Tenney to Joseph R. Hayden [COI’s SI Branch], memorandum, 8 June 1942, subject: “Area B,” OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 158, Folder 1721, National Archives II, College Park, Md., hereinafter National Archives II; Jerry Sage, *Sage* (Wayne, Pa.: Miles Standish Press, 1985), 22.; Joseph J. Tully, telephone interview with the author, 29 December 2007; and Dr. Jonathan Clemente, email to the author, 26 December 2007.

⁴ Albert R. Guay, diary entry 6 December 1942, and telephone interview with the author, 24 October 2005. At the author’s request, Mr. Guay agreed to deposit photocopies of the OSS related parts of his diary in the

In the fall of 1942, the assistant company clerk was Private Albert R. (“Al”) Guay, a recent graduate of American University in Washington, D.C., who had majored in personnel management in college, jotted down in his diary brief assessments of some other enlisted men on the camp staff.⁵ “Milton Giffith is first man I knew here. Swell personality, from Pittsburgh. Bus driver, not college man, but damn good company. Likes liquor & women, not offensively. Is married.” “Benton E. Bickham from Louisiana. Real drawl, black, curly hair. Quiet but a real friend and fun. I would trust him & Griffith with anything. Don’t know his background at all.” “Deisher—don’t know his first name. Religious fanatic. Listens to prayers over radio constantly. Got outside & prayed for whole camp one night. Won’t swear & is pained by dirty jokes.” “Corporal Ressler has let his stripes go to his head. A smart guy and an agnostic. Thinks he can do anything. Always talking about himself or what he has done. He has poor taste in women. Wild ones.” “Velleman is a Dutch Jew raised in Antwerp. He isn’t too bad, but he thinks he is superior to us; has very definite ideas about class. Orders people around as if he were a general.” Guay later recalled that Velleman, who spoke several languages, had in the French Army, and after France’s defeat in 1940, he had come to the United States, enlisted in the U.S. Army and been recruited by the OSS. Winding up Guay’s list was “Private Baker, an 18-year-old kid, a good soldier, conscientious and well liked by all. Homesick too.”⁶

Working in the company clerk’s office, Guay was responsible for keeping the Morning Report, a record of the status of every member of the company each morning, whether they were present for duty, on sick call, on leave, or absent without leave. He seldom saw the commanding officer (C.O) of the camp, but he certainly remembered the day that Major Blogg was promoted to lieutenant colonel, because, as he noted in his diary on Saturday, 5 December 1942, the jubilant Blogg let the staff off early, at 2 o’clock in the afternoon and let them spend the rest of the day and evening in nearby Hagerstown on a one-day pass.⁷

Lieutenant Colonel Blogg served as C.O. at Area B through June 1943, when he was succeeded by Lieutenant Montague Meade. Blogg soon went to OSS headquarters in Washington where he served as executive officer of the Schools and Training Branch, supervising the administration of all the OSS training camps in the United States, a position he held until the end of the war, when he returned to the insurance business in Seattle.⁸

The Special Operations School itself, where the students and their instructors were quartered and the classrooms were located, was established up the hill at the former

Park Archives at Catoctin Mountain Park, Thurmont, Md. Guay’s last name stemmed from his French-Canadian ancestry and is pronounced “Gay.”

⁵ Albert R. Guay, telephone interview with the author, 24 October 2005. In 1943, he left the OSS, went to Officers’ Candidate School and became a personnel officer in the Army Air Forces.

⁶ Albert R. Guay, diary entries of 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 13 December 1942, and telephone interview with the author, 24 October 2005.

⁷ Albert R. Guay, diary entry, 5 December 1942; telephone interview with the author, 24 October 2005.

⁸ Ainsworth Blogg file, CIA Records (RG 263), OSS Personnel Files, Box 10, National Archives II.

NPS Cabin Camp 2, Greentop, designated during the war as Area B-2. Finding suitable instructors for paramilitary training in unconventional warfare posed a major challenge to Donovan's organization. The leaders of the Special Operations Branch, Lieutenant Colonel M. Preston Goodfellow and Major Garland H. Williams, faced the problem of finding and developing men who could instruct in a multitude of subjects for which many of them had little or no background or experience, at least not in combat. The very fact that the United States had just entered the war and that the OSS was a new organization and was striking out in new directions made it virtually impossible to recruit men experienced in unconventional warfare. The operational branches—Special Operations (SO), Secret Intelligence (SI), Morale Operations (MO), Maritime Unit (MU), and later Counter-Intelligence(X-2) and Operational Groups(OGs), plus the Communications Branch (CB or “Commo”)—were themselves almost totally inexperienced in regard to their missions and, therefore, could initially offer little practical direction about the kind of training needed. Consequently in the early period, Donovan's organization relied heavily on the British Special Operations Executive and Secret Intelligence Service for assistance. It sent some of the new instructors to British schools in Canada and Great Britain. It borrowed British instructors, and it initially drew upon British curricula, teaching materials, and even some of its weaponry and explosives.⁹ Yet the Americans also drew upon various specializations and connections within U.S. institutions as well.

Lieutenant Louis D. Cohen served as the first chief instructor at Area B. He had been one of the Americans trained at British SOE's Camp X in Canada earlier in 1942. At B-2, he headed the instructional staff from May to August 1942, when he was succeeded by Captain Morris M. Kessler. A psychiatrist, Kessler had succeeded Louis Lostfogel as medical officer. But Kessler also succeeded Louis Cohen as chief instructor and remained in charge of instruction until the school closed in June 1944.¹⁰

As instructors, Major Blogg brought in a number of reserve Army officers from the state of Washington that he knew and trusted, many were from Washington State University, the state's land-grant college and host to a sizable Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) program. At least half of the first ten officer instructors at B-2 had been athletes and ROTC cadets there.¹¹ Several of them had been in the Military Police where Major Blogg had served at Fort Lewis, near Tacoma. One of them, Jerry Sage, 24, would

⁹ “History of Schools and Training, OSS, Part I thru Part VI Inclusive,” pp. 3-4, typescript history, n.d. [before 1948 from internal evidence], included with cover note, by Col. E.B. Whisner, 7 January 1949, “Received this date from W.J. Morgan the following report.” OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 176, Box 2, Folder 13, National Archives II. Dr. William J. Morgan had been an OSS psychologist sent to England in 1943 to assess training there; he was later a member of an SO team that parachuted into central France in August 1944. See William James Morgan, *The O.S.S. and I* (New York: Norton, 1957), 1-104, 164.

¹⁰ “Chief Instructors [and Commanding Officers] by Training Area,” included in “Appendix IV, Part Three of the History [of Schools and Training Branch], OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 158, Folder 1723, National Archives II; for Cohen's inclusion in the first group of Americans at Camp X in Canada (but spelling his first name as Lewis), see “History of the Schools and Training Branch, Office of Strategic Services,” typescript history prepared in 1945, but not declassified until the 1980s; for handiest reference, see the published version, William L. Cassidy, ed., *History of the Schools & Training Branch, Office of Strategic Services* (San Francisco: Kingfisher Press, 1983), 28.

¹¹ Sage, *Sage*, 21.

later become one of the most famous members of the OSS agents because of the number of times he escaped from German prisoner of war camps, including his early participation in the mass escape planned at *Stalag Luft III*, dramatized in the 1963 film, *The Great Escape*, only to be recaptured, until his final successful breakout in January 1945.¹² In the fall of 1941, Sage had been a salesman for Procter and Gamble marketing its products on the West Coast. He was also a 1st lieutenant in the Army reserves, having gone through ROTC, while at the same time playing end on the Washington State football team and becoming Phi Beta Kappa for his academic performance. In September 1941, stirred by radio reports of the war in Europe, he requested active duty and was assigned to Fort Lewis. He proved so proficient at training his unit, that in February 1941, the camp commander put him in charge of training large numbers of reservists. In March 1942, Sage received a telegram from the “Coordinator of Inf.” (Sage thought it meant the Coordinator of Infantry) directing him to report to Washington, D.C. There he was interviewed by William J. Donovan himself. As Sage later described the scene, “Seated behind the desk was an imposing, somewhat heavysset man—not as tall as I, but with good shoulders. He had piercing Delft-blue eyes. His gaze did not waiver for an instant.”¹³

“The reason you’re here is that you’ve been hand-picked,” he said, “We have information from your friends at Fort Lewis, and the FBI also mentioned you. Apparently you’re not afraid to mix it up. You’re not afraid to use your fists, you’re a good athlete, a football letterman, and you learn fast. My guess is that you can learn rapidly enough to keep up with the people who do what we do.”

“I was about to ask what they *did* do, but he quickly continued. “This is a completely volunteer outfit. I want to tell you what it’s like. If you join us here, you will be working on the most dangerous assignments in the military. We’ll be seeking a payoff from your work. You’ll be an agent, a saboteur, maybe an assassin, certainly a guerrilla fighter....” (With each word, my grin got a little bit bigger.) “Your folks will never know where you are. They’ll communicate with you only through a post office box in Washington, D.C. You won’t ever earn any medals. Nobody will know anything about what you do. But it will be a great service to your country. We can really hit ‘em where it hurts most, behind their lines, and we can bring out the intelligence that we *must* have to win this war.”¹⁴

Sage accepted eagerly and was sent directly to Area B-2 to meet the other instructors. He taught there from April to July 1942. “My duties were to indoctrinate the new recruits—who were everything from jailbirds to college professors—and teach them the fundamentals of soldiering and physical conditioning.”¹⁵ According to Sage, the initial instructors tried to make the early trainees, many of whom were civilians, look and act like soldiers. Because all countries had soldiers, that was the simplest cover for an agent. “We taught them how to march and react like military men. Then we turned our

¹² Sage, *Sage*, 1-5, 83-423.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 10-11.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 20.

emphasis on tough training—physical conditioning, explosives work, hand-to-hand combat and knife fighting.” Each man who completed the training had learned how to survive behind enemy lines, to gather intelligence, get it out, and how to conduct sabotage and guerrilla operations.¹⁶

The little group of Washington State alumni also included three other able instructors. Army Captain Joseph H. (“Joe”) Collart was an agile gymnast, tumbler, and diver in college. Now he taught physical training, compass and map reading.¹⁷ Marine Lieutenant Elmer Harris, nicknamed “Pinkie” because of his red hair and pale complexion, came from Ketchikan, Alaska and after graduation had been a marine use salesman for General Petroleum Company. In the spring of 1942, following three months at Marine Corps School, he was assigned to OSS Area B where he taught field craft.¹⁸ Field craft are the skills used in operating stealthily day or night in open or closed areas, using camouflage or natural concealment, moving undetected across open ground or across obstacles, selecting effective firing and resting positions, and conversely being able to detect camouflaged enemy positions. The motto is “to see without being seen.”

Army Lieutenant Arden W. (“Art”) Dow had recommended the other instructors to Blogg. A tall, ramrod-straight, 21-year-old ROTC graduate from Washington State, Dow had served under Blogg in the Military Police unit at Fort Lewis in 1941. After the major was summoned by Donovan’s organization to command Area B, he sent for Dow and the Washington State comrades Dow recommended. The spring of 1942 was certainly a momentous time for Dow. In March he married Dorothea (“Dodie”) Dean, a recent graduate of the University of Washington, and when they returned from their week-long honeymoon, orders were waiting for Dow to report to Area B as an instructor. The two newlyweds drove across the country, accompanied by another Washington State football star and friend of Dow’s, Lieutenant Ira Christopher (“Chris”) Rumburg, center and team captain. Rumburg had also been recruited as an instructor at Area B by the OSS. After reporting for duty at Catoctin, Dow put his wife up at an apartment in Frederick, Maryland, visiting her on weekends. He was not permitted to tell his wife, or anyone one else, what he was doing up at the mountain camp.¹⁹

Tall and husky, Lieutenant Rex Applegate hailed from Oregon and had played football for Oregon State, but he became acquainted with Blogg in the Military Police Unit at Fort Lewis. Blogg brought him to Area B where Applegate was one of the

¹⁶ Ibid., 20-21.

¹⁷ Background information from Dorothea Dean Dow (Mrs. Arden W. Dow), telephone interview with the author, 15 May 2005; Joseph Lazarsky, telephone interview with the author, 14 March 2005; see also R.P. Tenney to Joseph R. Hayden, memorandum, 8 June 1942, subject: “Area B,” OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 158, Folder 1721, National Archives II.

¹⁸ Robert E. Mattingly, *Herringbone Cloak—GI Dagger: Marines of the OSS* (Washington, D.C.: History and Museums Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1989), 173; Dorothea Dean Dow (Mrs. Arden W. Dow), telephone interview with the author, 15 May, 9, 16 June 2005; and Sage, *Sage*, 22.

¹⁹ Dorothea Dean Dow (Mrs. Arden W. Dow), telephone interviews with the author, 15 May and 9 and 15 June 2005. For Rumburg’s recruitment by the OSS as an instructor at Area B-2, see Sage, *Sage*, 21, 430.

instructors in close-combat and pistol shooting techniques.²⁰ He popularized a method of pistol shooting, known as “instinctive firing” or “point shooting” that emphasized training for close range, fast response shooting. Rejecting traditionally careful sighting of the target with the pistol raised to eye level, Applegate argued that speed even more than accuracy was essential. He advocated quickly crouching, feet squarely apart, both eyes on the enemy, and simultaneously, swiftly whipping up the pistol to hip level with the arm fully extended as though one were pointing his finger at the enemy, and immediately and instinctively firing off two shots, followed by another two if necessary. “You hit where you look,” he said, and his system was adopted throughout the OSS.²¹ In addition to Area B, he taught at most other OSS training camps in the United States during the war. In 1943, he wrote an instructional manual for hand-to-hand combat and combat pistol shooting, entitled *Kill or Get Killed*.²² Applegate became famous for this pistol firing technique which he taught after the war to the military and to law enforcement officers.²³

Most of the contingent of officer instructors from the Northwest—Applegate, Collart, Dow, and Harris—as well as executive officer James Johnson from the Midwest, were newlyweds, and around June 1942, they rented a big old house just across the state line in Blue Ridge Summit, Pennsylvania, that could serve as quarters for the five young couples. It was closer to Catoctin Mountain Park than Frederick, Maryland had been and was also more secluded. The married officers drove home together each night in an Army truck and returned to the camp every morning, except Sunday. Each couple had a private room, and the women took turns cooking. “We were all young brides,” Dorothea (“Dodie”) Dow recalled. “We didn’t know anything about housekeeping, cooking or anything.... We had a lot of hot dogs and pineapple and cottage cheese salad. I think finally the men complained about the hot dogs.” For six weeks in the fall, most of the men were sent to England for SOE instruction. For protection for the wives due to the secluded area, they gave pistols to each one and had target practice in the basement. The women were not enthusiastic. “We were afraid to get up at night and go to the bathroom,” Dodie Dow said, “for fear that somebody, one of the others, would shoot you.”²⁴ The

²⁰ R.P. Tenney to Joseph R. Hayden, memorandum, 8 June 1942, subject: “Area B,” OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 158, Folder 1721, National Archives II.

²¹ “Battle Firing: For Those Who Want to Live,” in Lt. Col. Serge Obolensky and Capt. Joseph E. Alderdice, “Outline of Training Programs at Areas ‘A’ and ‘F’ for Operational Groups, Office of Strategic Services,” typescript, n.d., [August 1943], OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 140; Folder 1466, National Archives II.

²² Rex Applegate, *Kill or Get Killed* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Military Service Publishing Co., 1943); Rex Applegate, *Kill or Get Killed: Manhandling Techniques for Police and the Military*, 3rd ed. (Harrisburg, Military Service Publishing Co., 1956); Rex Applegate and Michael D. Janich, *Bullseyes Don’t Shoot Back: The Complete Textbook of Point Shooting for Close Quarters Combat* (Boulder, Colo.: Paladin Press, 1998); Rex Applegate and Chuck Melson, *The Close-Combat Files of Colonel Rex Applegate* (Boulder, Colo.: Paladin Press, 1998).

²³ For celebratory accounts, see “Rex Applegate,” American Combatives, www.americancombatives.com/applegate.php; “Military Expert Dies: Rex Applegate,” www.fas.org/irp/news/ 1998, accessed 22 May 2007.

²⁴ Dorothea (“Dodie”) Dean Dow (Mrs. Arden W. Dow), telephone interview with the author, 15 May 2005. Mrs. Dow could remember the first names of only Rita Collart and Betty Harris.

women lived there until October 1942, when most of the men were transferred to new assignments.

In addition to the athletes and military police officers that Blogg and Dow brought from the Northwest, the officer instructors at Area B included one agent from the Federal Bureau of Narcotics and two demolitions experts from the Army Corps of Engineers. Captain George H. White was one of the top investigative agents from the Federal Narcotics Bureau, who had attended the SOE's school at Camp X in Canada.²⁵ Two of White's early students, Lieutenants William R. ("Ray") Peers and Nicol Smith, both of whom served in the China-Burma-India Theater, recalled that White had taught undercover work. He gave practical insights into how to trail people without being noticed, how to use recording devices and tiny cameras, how to detect if someone had entered your room (by stretching a hair across the keyhole and attaching it with tiny specks of gum), how to interrogate or how to resist interrogation.²⁶

Explosives were taught by two young, engineering officers, both Pennsylvanians and fraternity brothers from Penn State University, 1st Lieutenant Charles M. Parkin and 2nd Lieutenant Frank A. Gleason. Born in Pittsburgh and raised in Lancaster, Parkin was an "Army brat," the son and grandson of regular Army soldiers. After graduating with honors in engineering from Penn State and the ROTC, he spent a year in training with reserve officers, graduated at the head of his class, and received a commission in the regular Army. He spent the next year, as an instructor at the Corps of Engineers School at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, teaching, as he later said, everything the engineers did, from how to build bridges to how to blow them up.²⁷ He actually did blow up a number of bridges in the winter of 1941-1942, that were going to be abandoned and buried beneath reservoirs being constructed by the Army Engineers for the Tennessee Valley Authority. In testing explosives, particularly in the destruction of bridges with stone or concrete pillars, Parkin discovered that the Engineers Field Manual written during World War I greatly underestimated the amount of explosive charges needed for destroying such bridge supports. As a result of his findings, the Field Manual was rewritten.

On the way back to Belvoir, Parkin, on his own initiative, took a platoon of engineering troops out at night and secretly placed dummy charges around the pillars on the U.S. Route 1 Bridge at Quantico, demonstrating how inadequate the security was with just one night watchman on the main southern route to Washington, D.C. Lieutenant Parkin wrote up a report on the exercise and turned it in to his commanding officer Monday morning. He soon received a call from the commander of Fort Belvoir, who told him "I think you are either going to be court-martialed or honored for this." A little later,

²⁵ John C. McWilliams, "Covert Connections: The FBN, the OSS, and the CIA," *The Historian*, 53/4 (Summer 1991): 665-69; Harry J. Anslinger with J. Dennis Gregory, *The Protectors: Narcotics Agents, Citizens and Officials against Organized Crime in America* (New York: Farrar, Straus, 1964), 79-80.

²⁶ William R. Peers and Dean Brelis, *Behind the Burma Road: The Story of America's Most Successful Guerrilla Force* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1963), 30; Nicol Smith and Blake Clark, *Into Siam: Underground Kingdom* (Indianapolis, Ind.: Bobbs-Merrill, 1946), 49-50.

²⁷ Charles M. Parkin, telephone interview with the author, 10 May 2005; and discussion with the author and other OSS veterans after a tour of Catoctin Mountain Park, 18 May 2005.

Parkin received a summons from Goodfellow and Williams in Donovan's office, recruiting him as an instructor in demolitions and night field exercises at Area B.²⁸

Enthusiastic, energetic and impetuous, Frank Gleason was, at 21, the youngest officer at Area B. Boyish and engaging, the red-haired Gleason was friendly and well-liked by all, regardless of rank.²⁹ He came from the suburbs of Wilkes-Barre in the coal mining region of northeast Pennsylvania, and one of his colleagues recalled that "we used to call him the 'Wilkes-Barre Kid.'"³⁰ Because his relatives had worked in the mines, Gleason was already familiar with explosives. At Penn State, he graduated with a degree in chemical engineering and an ROTC commission. Called to active duty in the Corps of Engineers in April 1942, Parkin got him assigned to the COI and Area B.³¹ Parkin also brought up two sergeants from Fort Belvoir, Joseph Lazarsky and Leopold Karwaski, who, like Gleason, were from the coal regions of northeastern Pennsylvania. The three—Lazarsky, Karwaski, and Gleason—were soon nicknamed, "the Three Skis."³² Gleason had an infectious enthusiasm. "He loved to blow up simulated enemy targets," Jerry Sage remembered. He and the other engineers had a range of explosives to work with: dynamite, TNT, the new more stable and moldable "plastic" explosive, Composition C, and a variety of igniters: fuses, blasting caps, time-pencils, and delaying devices.³³ "With a wide grin, he would discuss our upcoming demolition blasts, calling them big booms."³⁴ Later, as will be detailed in a later chapter, Gleason would get a chance to set off some of the largest "booms" in China.

At Area B in 1942, the instructional staff from the Army Engineers, Lieutenants Parkin and Gleason and Sergeants Lazarsky and Karwaski, led the trainees in studying and discussing British commando raids on Norway, France, and North Africa. Although these young Americans had no personal experience with such raids or guerrilla warfare, they learned from the lectures and reports from British and American sources. Between March and June, several Special Operations Branch officers had attended the SOE

²⁸ Charles M. Parkin, conversation with the author and other veterans after a tour of Catocin Mountain Park, 18 May 2005. A brief history of Parkin's military service is included in Lt. Col. C.M. Parkin to Assistant Chief of Staff, G-1, War Department, General Staff, 6 June 1945, subject: request to enter Army and Navy Staff College, in Charles M. Parkin, personnel file, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 92A, Box 47, Folder 785, National Archives II.

²⁹ See for example, comments by Private Albert Guay, diary entry of 5 November 1942; Lt. Jerry Sage in Sage, 22; and assessment of Gleason's personality by interviewer, 27 April 1945, in CIA Records (RG 263), OSS Personnel Files, Box 22, National Archives II.

³⁰ Joseph Lazarsky, telephone interview with the author, 2 January 2008.

³¹ Frank A. Gleason, Atlanta, Ga., telephone interviews with the author, 31 January 2005, 9 May 2005.

³² Charles M. Parkin and Frank A. Gleason on a tour of Catocin Mountain Park, arranged by the author, 18 May 2005, and reference to the "Three Skis" in Peers and Brelis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 30..

³³ Charles M. Parkin, Frank A. Gleason and Reginald Spear, OSS veterans, interviewed during and after a tour of Catocin Mountain Park arranged by the author, 18 May 2005.

³⁴ Sage, Sage, 22.

paramilitary school near Toronto.³⁵ In the late summer of 1942, during a lull at B-2, Gleason and half a dozen other instructors from Area B, were sent to SOE schools in Britain for six weeks and trained there for raids and industrial sabotage with people from Norway, France, Czechoslovakia, and other German occupied countries.³⁶ From all these sources they passed on as much information as they could obtain to the students.

One of the instructors at Area B had actual combat experience in a commando raid. Edward (“Ed”) Stromholt, a lieutenant in the Norwegian Army, had helped British commandos in their raid on the Lofoten Islands in German-occupied Norway in March 1941. That raid destroyed factories producing glycerine for explosives and more importantly, captured the current settings for the German Enigma coding machine, which enabled the British Code and Cypher School at Bletchley Park to break the enemy’s naval coded radio traffic for the previous month, a major intelligence coup. After the raid, Stromholt taught raiding techniques at commando schools in England and then at OSS schools in the United States. At Area B in 1942, he gave instructions in compass and map reading and other forms of scouting, which he called “orienteeing.”³⁷

Unexpectedly, Stromholt became the center of attention at Area B one summer afternoon when Franklin D. Roosevelt arrived for a visit to his new Presidential retreat. Riding with the President in the back of his open-top car was a beautiful Norwegian princess, Princess Märtha, who was in the United States to accept two U.S. Navy destroyers for the Norwegian Navy. As the Presidential automobile stopped by a group of OSS instructors and trainees, the princess suddenly stood up, pointed a finger at one of officers and exclaimed loudly in perfect English, “Stromholt! What in the hell are you doing here?” As instructor Charles Parkin said later, Stromholt probably thought, “Well, what in the hell is she doing here?” A tall, handsome man, he later married an American movie actress, but not before continuing his commando work, including a parachute mission back to Norway.³⁸

“Dangerous Dan” Fairbairn, the “Shanghai Buster”

The man who would become famous among the instructors at the OSS Training Camps was British Army Captain William Ewart (“Dan”) Fairbairn. He was one of the

³⁵ “Record of Discussion regarding collaboration between British and American S.O.E.,” 23 June 1942, a British document, in M. Preston Goodfellow Papers, Box 4, Folder 3, Hoover Institution, Stanford, Calif.

³⁶ Frank A. Gleason, telephone interview with the author, 31 January 2005; and Gleason and Charles M. Parkin, during a tour of Catoctin Mountain Park, 18 May 2005. Those sent to the SOE schools in Britain in staggered, six-week periods between July and October 1942 included a least Ainsworth Blogg, Charles Parkin, Frank Gleason, Jerry Stage, Joseph Collart and Arden Dow.

³⁷ Sage, *Sage*, 34; and R.P. Tenney to Joseph R. Hayden [COI’s SI Branch], memorandum, 8 June 1942, subject: “Area B,” OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 158, Folder 1721, National Archives II.

³⁸ Charles M. Parkin, interview during a tour of Catoctin Mountain Park, 18 May 2005. Princess Märtha, born a Swedish princess, had married to Crown Prince Olav of Norway in 1929 and became a Norwegian princess. After the Germans invaded Norway she fled to Sweden and then the United States.

world's foremost experts on close combat techniques, and none of the American trainees who saw him in action would ever forget him. After teaching at British SOE schools in Britain and Canada, Fairbairn had been lent to the OSS in April 1942. He remained for the duration of the war, taught at all the OSS camps, and rose to the rank of lieutenant colonel. As a youth, he had left Scotland, enlisted in the Royal Marines, served in the Far East, and then joined the British-led Shanghai Municipal Police Force. In response to a beating by Chinese gangs, he became a master of jujitsu, a Japanese Samurai system of unarmed fighting, as well as Chinese boxing and other martial arts. He learned to disable or kill an attacker with his hands and feet, a knife, or any instrument at hand, and reportedly engaged in hundreds of street fights in his twenty year career in Shanghai, where he organized and headed a special anti-riot squad³⁹ Much of his body, arms, legs, torso, even the palms of his hands, was covered with scars from knife wounds from those fights, recalled an American officer who roomed with him at Area B.⁴⁰ Fairbairn had retired from the Shanghai police at 55 and returned to Britain in 1940 to help train commandos and SOE agents in his own mélange of martial arts, he called *Defendu*, and which he described in a book entitled, *Get Tough*.⁴¹

While training British commandos and SOE agents in England, Fairbairn and British Captain Eric Anthony Sykes, a colleague from Shanghai, also developed innovative and effective techniques for combat pistol shooting,⁴² and they designed the famous Fairbairn-Sykes fighting knife. A razor-sharp stiletto dagger, it was carried by British special forces and initially by some OSS agents before the OSS replaced it in 1944 with the less brittle, M3 trench knife.⁴³ In 1942, Fairbairn was transferred first to Canada and then the United States, where he taught his techniques to instructors and recruits in Donovan's organization.⁴⁴

³⁹ Biographical material on Fairbairn's early years from Peter Robbins, *The Legend of W.E. Fairbairn, Gentleman and Warrior: The Shanghai Years* (London: CQB Publications, 2005); William L. Cassidy, "Fairbairn in Shanghai," *Soldier of Fortune*, September 1979; Fred Wakeman, Jr., *Policing Shanghai, 1927-1937* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1955). Fairbairn recommended such riot squads for maintaining order in occupied Germany and Japan; see Maj. W.E. Fairbairn, "Shock and Riot Police: Proposal Regarding Establishment and Maintenance of Order in Enemy Territory after Successful Allied Invasion," June 1943, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 1936, Box 164, Folder 1785, National Archives II.

⁴⁰ Charles M. Parkin, telephone conversation with the author, 10 May 2005.

⁴¹ W.E. Fairbairn, *Defendu (Scientific Self-Defence): The Official Textbook of the Shanghai Municipal Police, Hong Kong Police, and Singapore Police* (Shanghai: North-China Daily News & Herald, 1926); W. E. Fairbairn, *Get Tough: How to Win in Hand-to-Hand Combat* (New York : Appleton, 1942).

⁴² W.E. Fairbairn and E. A. Sykes, *Shooting to Live with the One-Hand Gun* (Edinburgh: Oliver, 1942).

⁴³ John W. Brunner, *OSS Weapons*, 2nd ed. (Williamstown, N.J.: Phillips Publications, 2005), 68-72.

⁴⁴ Lt. Col. William E. Fairbairn, British Army, to Director of Office of Strategic Services, 23 March 1945, memorandum, subject: resumé of service of Lt. Col. William E. Fairbairn, in OSS Records (RG 226), Director's Office Files, Microfilm 1642, Roll 46, Frames 18-23. A typical week for Fairbairn in 1943 included demonstrations at A-3 on Monday, A-4 on Tuesday, Area E on Wednesday, and Area B on Thursday and Friday. "W.E.F., Itinerary, 15th November-21st November 1943," OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 163, Folder 1784, National Archives II.

Fairbairn's basic message to the young recruits—and it was a message that pervaded the training at Donovan's organization—was to forget any idea of gentlemanly conduct or fighting fair. Get tough, get down in the gutter, win at all costs was his mantra. "I teach what is called 'Gutter Fighting.' There's no fair play; no rules except one: kill or be killed," he declared. The average American's sense of sportsmanship and repugnance to such fighting presented a handicap, Fairbairn admitted, but he emphasized, "when he [the student] realizes that the enemy will show him no mercy, and that the methods he is learning work, he soon overcomes it."⁴⁵ Fairbairn taught the techniques not only as survival skills, but to build up a strong self-confidence that would enable agents to overcome their fears and be more effective in accomplishing their missions.⁴⁶

Because the thin, gray-haired, bespectacled Fairbairn looked more like an accountant or a mild-looking bureaucrat than an expert killer, the overconfident, young trainees usually misjudged him at first. But they were soon impressed with what they saw. "He didn't seem like anything special," was the first impression of communications trainee Marvin S. Flisser, when he saw Fairbairn at Area C in late 1943, but he quickly changed his mind. Often the Scot would call out one of the largest students first and ask the young giant to throw a punch at him. If the youth refused to hit the older man, Fairbairn would kick him in the groin. The infuriated student would lunge, and Fairbairn would flip him onto the ground, face down, with his arm twisted behind his back. "He was really something else, I'll tell you. Quite a guy," Flisser recalled. "Everybody looked up to him. We didn't play around with him. He was very serious. He was all training. He wanted to make sure that we stayed alive! He taught us all the holds and moves. As a civilian afterwards, I was very careful not to get into fights or anything, because by this time I was sort of a—well, if somebody hit me, I knew what I was going to do! I thought it was dangerous."⁴⁷

In addition to showing instructors and students how they could overcome their enemy whether unarmed or armed with a knife or a pistol, Fairbairn had brought the idea of a realistic testing facility, a "house of horrors" or what he called an "indoor mystery range," to the OSS. He had started these in Shanghai, then brought the idea to Britain and the United States. "In the Mystery Ranges," Fairbairn explained, "a simulation was affected of actual battle noises, conditions under which shooting affrays occur, especially in house to house combat. The training included methods of entering closed and locked doors, methods of bursting open such doors, methods of using trap doors, methods of roof top fighting and firing on moving and possibly concealed targets. Under varying degrees of light, darkness and shadows, plus the introduction of sound effects, moving objects and various alarming surprises, an opportunity is afforded to test the moral fibre

⁴⁵ Maj. W.E. Fairbairn, script for OSS training film, "Gutter Fighting," Part I, "The Fighting Knife," 11 February 1944, p. 2, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 133, Box 151, Folder 1258, National Archives II.

⁴⁶ Lt. Col. William E. Fairbairn, British Army, to Director of Office of Strategic Services, 23 March 1945, memorandum subject: resumé of service of Lt. Col. William E. Fairbairn, pp. 1-2, in OSS Records (RG 226), Director's Office Files, Microfilm 1642, Roll 46, Frames 19-20, National Archives II.

⁴⁷ Marvin S. Flisser, telephone interview with the author, 27 January 2005.

of the student and to develop his courage and capacity for self control.”⁴⁸ For Donovan’s organization, the first such “indoor mystery range,” was built at Area B-2, then at A-2 (or possibly A-3), and finally at Areas E and F.⁴⁹

When first assigned to the OSS in April 1942, Fairbairn trained instructors and students at Special Operations camps at Area B and Area A. Upon the formation of the first Operational Group (OG) units in spring 1943, Fairbairn was based at Area F, but this did not keep him from continuing his rounds of instruction and demonstrations on a routine basis at the other OSS training camps, Areas A, B, C, D, E, F, and RTU-11 (“The Farm”).⁵⁰ The official history of the Schools and Training Branch of the OSS, written at the end of the war, credited not simply Fairbairn’s unquestioned knowledge and skill in close combat but also the strength of his personality in building a cadre of able American paramilitary instructors and raising their confidence and morale to a very high level.⁵¹

Hollywood Director John Ford and OSS Training Films

From the beginning, Major Garland H. Williams had insisted that instruction be varied and go beyond classroom lectures to include field exercises and training films. Donovan too wanted OSS to have photographic and motion picture capabilities not just for training but to record visually developments in modern warfare and the contributions of the OSS and to show them to the President and to the public. Thus, he set up Field Photographic Branch under Hollywood director John Ford and subsequently a Visual Presentation Branch. In addition to making documentary films in the war zones, Ford, his cameramen, and screenwriters like Bud Schulberg, produced training films.⁵² “OSS Training Group,” for example, which shows students, Fairbairn, Applegate and other instructors, all with masks to conceal their identity from the audience, engaged in hand-to-hand combat, pistol shooting, demolition, and field exercises, was filmed under John

⁴⁸ Lt. Col. William E. Fairbairn, British Army, to Director of Office of Strategic Services, 23 March 1945, memorandum subject: resumé of service of Lt. Col. William E. Fairbairn, pp. 1-2, in OSS Records (RG 226), Director’s Office Files, Microfilm 1642, Roll 46, Frames 19-20, National Archives II.

⁴⁹ There is a discrepancy in the records over whether Fairbairn’s “indoor mystery house” at Area A was at A-2 or A-3. Contemporary records indicate A-2, but Fairbairn remembered it as at A-3. It is possible that Fairbairn misremembered; a less likely possibility is that the structure was moved between A-2 and A-3.

⁵⁰ Lt. Col. William E. Fairbairn, British Army, to Director of Office of Strategic Services, 23 March 1945, memorandum subject: resumé of service of Lt. Col. William E. Fairbairn, pp. 2-3, in OSS Records (RG 226), Director’s Office Files, Microfilm 1642, Roll 46, Frames 19-20, National Archives II.

⁵¹ “History of the Schools and Training Branch, Office of Strategic Services,” prepared in 1945, but not declassified until 1980s; published version in Cassidy, ed., *History of the Schools & Training Branch*, 88.

⁵² OSS, *War Report of the OSS*, 69-70, 161. OSS training films transferred to videotape are in OSS Records (RG 226), Motion Picture Branch of the National Archives II; films, scripts and continuity sheets are in OSS Records (RG 226), e.g., Entry 133, Box 151, Folder 1258; and Box 154, Folder 1299, National Archives II.

Ford's direction at Area B in 1942.⁵³ Trainees and instructors were forbidden to take photographs at the secret training camps, but OSS photographers and cameramen took pictures of training area Areas A, C, and other OSS schools.⁵⁴ The Visual Presentation Branch praised the cooperation they received from instructions at Area A while making a film there on Special Operations and demolitions but complained about difficulties of getting the approval from suspicious, mid-level officials in some other branches, such as the Communications Branch's Peter Mero, who was reluctant to let them film at Area C.⁵⁵ This situation was certainly rectified, because in the spring of 1944, Commo chief Lawrence Lowman praised the Field Photographic Unit for the "very valuable and excellent work' done in the "production of the rather complicated and highly technical film of the SSTR-1 [OSS's "suitcase" radio transmitter/receiver] set."⁵⁶

Practicing Espionage and Sabotage Techniques in American Cities

Sometimes following completion of their courses, new SO and SI graduates were sent on local undercover operations, including mock industrial espionage and sabotage exercises in industrial cities. Lieutenants William R. ("Ray") Peers and Nicol Smith were in one of the first classes at Area B-2. Their final assignment was to infiltrate the Fairchild Aircraft Plant in nearby Hagerstown, Maryland, which they did, returning with a detailed plan of how to sabotage the facility.⁵⁷ Such realistic undercover exercises proved appealing to the OSS hierarchy, which in late 1942 approved a plan—they called it a "scheme"—to have SO students about to graduate at Area A in Prince William Forest Park try to penetrate war production plants in Pittsburgh. Their assignment was to gain employment at one of twenty selected plants using cover stories, fictitious names and forged credentials, to work there for a day, and then develop a theoretical plan for

⁵³ "The OSS Training Group," a 27-minute film, a videotape of which Rex Applegate donated to the CIA Museum in January 1996, and which Applegate stated was filmed by Ford at Catocin in 1942. Ford's filming there was confirmed by former Area B instructors Frank A. Gleason and Charles M. Parkin in an interview during a tour of Catocin Mountain Park 18 May 2005; Sage, *Sage*, 37-38; and James W. Voigt, Resource Manager, Catocin Mountain Park, after looking at videotaped excerpts from "OSS Basic Training," confirmed the location as Cabin Camp 2 (Area B-2). James W. Voigt, email to the author, 21 August 2007. Videotape copies at Catocin Mountain Park and Prince William Forest Park. Similar scenes are described in the script for "OSS Basic Training," Entry 133, Box 116, Folder 937, National Archives II

⁵⁴ For nearly 40 still photographs of OSS Training Areas A, B, C, F, and RTU-11, see OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 159, Folder 1730, National Archives II.

⁵⁵ H.E. Miner to DZ [David Zablodowsky], untitled Memo, n.d. [October 1943], p. 1, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 85, Box 13, Folder 225, National Archives II.

⁵⁶ Col. Lawrence W. Lowman, chief, communications branch, to Lt. Kellogg, 16 May 1944, subject: production of communications film, SSTR-1, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 90, Box 18, Folder 244, National Archives II.

⁵⁷ William R. Peers and Dean Brelis, *Behind the Burma Road: The Story of America's Most Successful Guerrilla Forces* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1963), 31-32.

sabotaging that plant. Only the chief executive officers of the plants had been alerted. If any of the trainees were arrested, they were to be turned over to the FBI, with the head of the local office informed of the operation. The men were to be released after being interrogated. OSS considered Pittsburgh an ideal city as a testing ground for sabotage training, not only due to the extensive number of industrial plants, but also due to the large number of central European nationalities working there, with whom some of OSS's ethnic and bilingual students could operate with their undercover plans.⁵⁸

Changing Uses of Area B

After sixteen classes had graduated at B-2, the training school there was closed temporarily in the late summer of 1942 because the War Department was slow in approving positions and assignments overseas for OSS graduates. While most of the headquarters cadre remained at B-5, half a dozen members of the command and instructional staffs spent six weeks studying at SOE schools in Canada or Great Britain.⁵⁹ Louis D. Cohen, who had gone to Camp X in Canada, went to Area A-2 as chief instructor in late summer 1942, and then to the new Area E north of Baltimore in November 1942. Elmer ("Pinky") Harris went to Camp X in August, then was sent to Area A. Area B-2 would remain largely inactive until the inflow of Operational Groups began in the spring of 1943. Meanwhile, among those who had been sent to SOE schools in England, only Blogg and Gleason returned to Area B. Sage went to Area D; Dow, Parkin and Collart were sent to Area A. Later Sage and Harris would leave for North Africa. Collart would join the airborne engineers and head for Europe. Dow, Parkin, and Gleason would go to China in spring 1943 to train Chinese guerrillas and to conduct Special Operations.

Training Operational Groups at Areas F, B, and A

Donovan had from the outset wanted to infiltrate ethnic Americans and foreign nationals into German occupied lands to encourage and lead guerrilla actions. Planning the training program in early 1942, Major Garland H. Williams wrote that "The special courses for racial or national groups will consist of the same instructional material as is given in the other courses, and the only changes will be those made necessary by the character of the group and the special area in which they are to operate. Special provisions must be made for segregation of these groups, and special instructors and

⁵⁸ William L. Mudge, Jr. to J.M. Scribner, Chief, SSO, 1 January 1943, subject: plan and operation of SO scheme, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 164, Folder 1791, National Archives II.

⁵⁹ Charles M. Parkin and Frank A. Gleason, interview during tour of Catoctin Mountain Park, 18 May 2005; Sage, *Sage*, 38-49. B-2 was largely shut down from July 1942 until spring 1943. B-5 remained in reduced operation for the cadre. Albert R. Guay, diary entries, 21 October to 19 December 1942.

instructional material will have to be provided.”⁶⁰ Even before the term Operational Group was adopted in 1943, these kinds of groups trained at Area B in the spring and summer of 1942 and were composed mostly of foreign nationals. Demolitions instructor Lieutenant Frank A. Gleason remembered that in addition to Americans training separately at the Special Operations camp, “we trained groups of Thais, Norwegians, Frenchmen, and Yugoslavs, members of Mihailović’s organization [Chetniks who fought against both the Nazis and the Communists].” “We even trained a group from Spain, or rather Americans who had fought in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade in the Spanish Civil War [in the 1930s], some of them Communists,” Gleason added. “Donovan had gotten them into the OSS, and they were going to be infiltrated into Spain, because they knew the country so well. We trained them in sabotage and that stuff.”⁶¹

In December 1942, the Joint Chiefs of Staff approved OSS’s request to form Operational Groups (OGs). Foreign-language speaking Americans would be recruited from the armed forces and trained by OSS to operate as military units behind enemy lines in coordination with resistance groups.⁶² Ability to speak a foreign language was a requirement. Unlike the smaller Special Operations teams, the OGs were military units and always served in uniform. Officially, each county-specific unit had four officers and 30 enlisted men, although the sections sent behind enemy lines frequently numbered 15 or less. Most of the Operational Groups were trained during the year between the spring of 1943 and the spring of 1944. There were French, German, Greek, Italian, Yugoslavian, and Norwegian Operational Groups. In 1945, the OSS recruited and organized Chinese Operational Groups in China; however, the Chinese OGs were composed of indigenous recruits, not Chinese Americans.⁶³ (Chinese Americans, Korean Americans and Japanese Americans, the third group despite the fact that many of their relatives were incarcerated in U.S. internment camps, volunteered to serve as interpreters with the OSS in China and the Pacific.) Unlike Special Operations agents who were trained to work as individuals or in two- or three-person teams. Operational Groups were designed to operate as larger groups of uniformed combatants, sections of a dozen men, and their officers participated in their training. Much of the OGs’ success would depend upon a cooperative spirit and teamwork within the groups.

French educated Jacques F. Snyder, a member of one of the French OGs, being trained in Fall 1943, recalled that at that time, before the Americans had much experience with the French resistance groups, the *maquis*, the initial French OGs were told to operate on their own behind enemy lines and avoid local contact. This he said was because the average member of the French OG came from northern New England or Louisiana and

⁶⁰ Maj. Garland H. Williams, “Training,” p. 4, n.d. [January-February 1942], in OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 161, Folder 1754, National Archives II.

⁶¹ Frank A. Gleason, telephone interview with the author, 31 January 2005, and letter to the author 9 August 2005. The Allies feared that Franco might ally with Hitler instead of remaining neutral. Despite helping to supply Germany, Franco ultimately rejected Hitler’s overtures for an alliance.

⁶² Office of Strategic Services, *Operational Group Command*, OSS, December 1944. I am indebted to Caesar J. Civitella, St. Petersburg, Fla., for sending me a copy of this booklet, 25 April 2008.

⁶³ Troy J. Sacquety, “OSS (Office of Strategic Services),” *Veritas: Journal of Army Special Operations History*, 3/4 (2007): 40-41; and OG website, OSS Society. <http://www.ossorg.org/> accessed 14 May 2008.

their French Canadian accent was so strong that they could never pass as native Frenchmen. Agents speaking such a patois would quickly be identified, and because of the profusion of collaborators and would-be informants in France in 1943, they might be quickly betrayed. Consequently, the initial plans were for units to be infiltrated, hide in the woods, make attacks, and be quickly gotten out of the country. Only later, when the importance, real value, and trust-worthiness of the French *maquis* became known did the policy change to encourage the OGs to make full use of the local underground for liaison and support.⁶⁴

Preparation of Operational Groups in significant numbers began in the spring of 1943. They were to receive six weeks training in the United States followed by additional training overseas. Most of the OGs spent two to three weeks in preliminary training at Area F, the former Congressional Country Club, in Bethesda, Maryland. There, they underwent physical conditioning, training in various weapons and munitions, and field exercises. Afterward most of the OGs went to Area B for two to three weeks of intensive training especially in weaponry, field maneuvers, and demolitions. So many OGs were at Area B—more than 300 men in some instances—that they filled both B-2 and B-5 to capacity. Area A, specifically A-2 and A-5, also provided training sites for OGs, and some of the overflow went to Area D and Area C.⁶⁵ Many of the OG units and SO teams from Europe and the Mediterranean returned to the USA in late 1944 and early 1945, and a number of the Training Areas, particularly F, A and C were used as holding areas for them, while some of them were prepared for assignment to the Far East.⁶⁶

Curriculum for Operational Groups

A written guide for instructors training Operational Groups emphasized the need for the trainees to achieve proficiency, self-confidence and determination and to recognize that unconventional warfare behind enemy lines was a hazardous undertaking and required not only much skill but a certain degree of ruthlessness. Students were

⁶⁴ Jacques F. Snyder, “Cloak and Dagger Days,” typescript memoir, n.d., late 1990s, pp. 1-2, provided to the present author by James Snyder, his son, 16 January 2008.

⁶⁵ “History of the Schools and Training Branch, Office of Strategic Services,” prepared in 1945, but not declassified until the 1980s, published version in Cassidy, ed., *History of the Schools & Training Branch*, 87, 138-39, 7-24; Lt. Col. H.L. Robinson, “Schools and Training,” October 1943, p. 3, plus “Outlines of the Courses at All of the U.S. Training Areas, December 1943, both in “Appendix IV, Part Three of the History [of the Schools and Training Branch of OSS], in OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 258, Folder 1723; also *Mobilization Training Program Mobilization Training Programs for Officers and Enlisted Personnel Required for Special Overseas Assignments* (Washington, D.C.: Office of Strategic Services, n.d. [in compliance with JCS 155/11/D of 27 October 1943], p. 8, in OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 146, Box 223, Folder 3106, all in National Archives II.

⁶⁶ In August 1944, there were 246 OSS enlisted men at Detachment A, 233 at Detachment C, 162 at Detachment F, 51 at E and none at B which had been closed down. Chief Warrant Officer Stanley S. Stokwitz to Files, 7 August 1944, subject: strength return for purpose of determining welfare funds dividends, OSS Records (RG 226) Entry 136, Box 177, Folder 1885, National Archives II.

required to master at least ten of twelve different techniques in martial arts, plus the use of knives, to disable or dispatch an opponent in a course that was entitled “Silent Killing.” Instructors were told to get the trainees away from ingrained ideas of fighting fairly. The use of normally unacceptable methods, the manual indicated, was to be justified to the students. “Naturally under such conditions as exist in present day warfare,” the students were to be told, “one must have no scruples as to the way and manner in which it is intended to fight an opponent. The justification for using any foul method in accomplishing this end does not, when one stops to think what has already been used against us, have to be considered. It simply resolves itself into a matter of two things—kill or be killed.”⁶⁷ The syllabus noted that since the time available to the students was limited, “it is essential, therefore, to confine the teaching to what is simple, easily learned and deadly.”⁶⁸ Hanging dummies, some filled with straw were used, but for noiselessly attacking a sentry from behind, an individual with a German helmet helped in the exercise. In that case instead of a knife, a handle with the “blade” of thick rope was used. If anyone expressed qualms about “foul play,” the instructor was to inform them that, “This is WAR, not sport. Your aim is to kill your opponent as quickly as possible. A prisoner is generally a handicap and a source of danger, particularly if you are without weapons.... ‘Foul methods’ so-called, help you to kill quickly. Attack your opponent’s weakest points, therefore. He will attack yours if he gets a chance.” Thus, students were instructed how to kill, temporarily paralyze or badly hurt their opponent by striking or jabbing vulnerable parts of the body. Stressing “attack mindedness,” the instructor was to encourage students to attack and keep attacking until the enemy was dead. The syllabus declared bluntly, “this course of instruction is meant to teach you to kill.”⁶⁹

In the curriculum for OGs, the Preliminary Course, usually taught at Area F, but sometimes at Area A or B, began with an hour of Introduction and Training Objectives. Over the next few weeks, it would include 22 hours of Map Reading, Sketching, and Compass Work, both theoretical and field problems; 20 hours of Scouting and Patrolling; 14 hours of Physical Training; 7 hours of Camouflage and Field craft; 4 hours of Close Combat and Knife Fighting; 6 hours training on the Obstacle Course; 4 hours instruction on the .45 caliber pistol; and 4 hours on the submachine gun. There would be 7 hours of Training Films. The longest amount of time, 57 hours, was devoted to Tactics. That included compass runs, target approach, and day and nighttime field problems. Finally 2 hours were devoted to Hygiene and Camp Sanitation; and 4 hours went for Special Subjects: enemy organization, communications, security, and current events. Total OG preliminary instruction and training was 152 hours.

Then the OG team moved to Areas B or A, where the Final Course involved 8 hours of Physical Training, 22 hours of Demolitions, 40 hours of Weapons training, which included 2 to 3 hours each on the mechanics and firing of the M1 rifle, carbine,

⁶⁷ “Close Combat,” in Lt. Col. Serge Obolensky and Capt. Joseph E. Alderdice, “Outline of Training Programs at Areas ‘A’ and ‘F’ for Operational Groups, Office of Strategic Services,” n.p., typescript, n.d., [August 1943], OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 140; Folder 1466, National Archives II.

⁶⁸ “Close Combat,” typed lecture, December 1943, included in “Syllabus of Lectures,” February 1944, in OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 158, Folder 1717, National Archives II. Emphasis in the original.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, Emphasis in the original document.

light machine gun, Browning Automatic Rifle, Colt .45 automatic pistol, British Sten gun, Thompson submachine gun, Marlin submachine gun; M1 and AT rocket launcher, 60 mm mortar, 81 mm mortar, and the .50 caliber machine gun. There was also a bit of hand grenade and anti-tank training. Ellworth (“Al”) Johnson, remembers firing a bazooka at Area B, “just to get the feel of how it worked.”⁷⁰ Thereafter students went through 4 hours on care of clothing and equipment, 4 hours on hygiene and camp sanitation, and 8 hours of training films. Finally, there was ground training for parachute jumps that would be made at Fort Benning or overseas. Total OG advanced training was 106 hours; grand total 250 hours.⁷¹ In large part because of their success in World War II, the OSS Operational Groups became the predecessors of the U.S. Army’s Special Forces.⁷²

Instructors at Area B, during OG training, 1943-1944

The Operational Groups that filled both B-2 and B-5 during much of 1943-1944, trained under their own officers, but there were also some specialist instructors. Rex Applegate continued to teach instinctive firing techniques of pistol shooting. William (“Dan”) Fairbairn continued to make his rounds of the training camps teaching his own methods of close combat. He was joined, beginning in February 1943, by an old friend Shanghai, Hans V. Tofte. A fine athlete and an exceptionally able student, the Danish born Tofte had mastered the art of silent killing under Fairbairn’s guidance in Shanghai. After the Germans occupied Denmark, he had joined British SOE and led teams taking weapons to Chinese guerrillas through Burma. In the autumn of 1942, Tofte came to the United States and enlisted in the Army. Fairbairn had his former student transferred to the OSS as a special assistant.⁷³ Tofte worked out of Area F, but he spent considerable time at Areas A and B.⁷⁴ In addition to silent killing, the long-legged Tofte also tried to teach the recruits a new style of cross-country running he called the “elastic stride,” in which instead of jogging, he bounded along, stretching and leaping, like an antelope.⁷⁵ After

⁷⁰ Ellsworth (“Al”) Johnson, telephone interview with the author, 27 June 2008.

⁷¹ “Operational Groups Training, Preliminary Course F and Final Course B,” December 1943, in Appendix IV, Part Three of the History [of Schools and Training Branch], typescript in OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 158, Folder 1723, National Archives II.

⁷² Ian Sutherland, “The OSS Operational Groups: Origin of the Army Special Forces,” *Special Warfare* 15 (June 2002).

⁷³ Henrik Krüger, biography of Hans Tofte (in Danish, *Hans V. Tofte: Den danske Kriegshelt, der kom til top i CIA* (Copenhagen: Aschehoug, 2005), pages 25-31. Krüger email to the author, 5 September 2006.

⁷⁴ For Tofte on the instructional staff, see Capt. Don R. Callahan, commanding officer, Detachment A, to Col. H.L. Robinson, executive officer, S&T Branch, 13 March 1944, subject: housing and training facilities, Detachment A, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 153, Folder 1658, National Archives II.

⁷⁵ William B. Dreux, *No Bridges Blown* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1971), 12-13.

more than six months as an instructor, Captain Tofte was sent in August 1943 to SO in Cairo, Egypt and then Bari, Italy. At the latter, he headed Operation Audrey, supporting Tito's partisans in Yugoslavia.⁷⁶

Among the American officer instructors at Area B were Lieutenants Paul A. Swank and John K. Singlaub. Both taught demolitions at B-2 in the fall of 1943. Singlaub was a graduate of the University of California at Los Angeles, and had joined the Army with a commission through ROTC there. He joined the paratroopers and was selected by SO at Fort Benning. Swank was a West Point graduate and a member of the Corps of Engineers. He was the demolitions instructor at B-2. Singlaub, who arrived as an SO student from Area F, the Congressional Country Club, broke his leg, and was then assigned to assist Swank, since Singlaub had learned American and British explosive at parachute demolitions school.⁷⁷ As will be described in a subsequent chapter, Singlaub and Swank later parachuted into different areas of occupied France in the summer of 1944 to lead French guerrillas in hindering German reinforcements against the Allied landings in Normandy and the Riviera. Singlaub returned to head a successful mission in China. Swank was killed in France.⁷⁸

Cadre and Instructional Staff in Prince William Forest Park, Area A

Since OSS Area A was planned as the Advanced School for Special Operations, its instructional cycle was to follow from the basic SO training given at Area B. The first Commanding officer of Detachment A, Captain William J. Hixson, had arrived in April 1942 and established his headquarters at A-5. In November the headquarters was moved to A-4. Captain Harold Rossmiller of the Medical Corps arrived in the summer of 1942 to serve as medical officer for both Areas A and C in Prince William Forest Park. Rossmiller was sent to Algiers as the OSS prepared for the American invasion of Vichy French North Africa, and he was succeeded as medical officer at A and C by Captain Louis Lostfogel, who was transferred from Area B. Lostfogel remained at Areas A and C in Prince William Forest Park until the closure of Area A in early 1945.⁷⁹

The first groups of advanced Special Operations students arrived at Area A in late May 1942. Captain George H. White, the former narcotics agent, who had been instructing in undercover work at B-2, was transferred down to A at the end of May to

⁷⁶ Krüger, *Hans V. Tofte: Den danske Kriegshelt*, 25-31.

⁷⁷ John K. Singlaub, telephone interview with the author, 11 December 2004; plus interview by Maochun Yu and Christof Mauch, 31 October 1996, pp. 1-8, OSS Oral History Transcripts, CIA Records (RG 2673), Box 4, National Archives II.

⁷⁸ John K. Singlaub, *Hazardous Duty: An American Soldier in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Summit Books, 1991), 30-31, 69; Will Irwin, *The Jedburghs: The Secret History of the Allied Special Forces, France 1944* (New York: Public Affairs Press, 2005), 258-59.

⁷⁹ Jonathan Clemente, email to the author, 26 December 2007; Frank A. Gleason, telephone interview with the author, 26 December 2007; Joseph J. Tully, telephone interview with the author, 29 December 2007.

serve as the first chief instructor.⁸⁰ In November 1942, he was succeeded by Captain Arden W. Dow, one of the original instructors at B-2, who had just returned from SOE training in Britain. Under Dow were several friends and colleagues from Area B and Washington State University, among them Joseph H. Collart and Elmer (“Pinkie”) Harris, now joined by former WSU football team captain Chris Rumburg. Outside the circle of Washingtonians were at least two men from Area B who came to Area A in late 1942: Charles Parkin, a Pennsylvanian who had taught demolitions, and James Goodwin a football player from upstate New York who had been an early student at Area B and then had attended SOE school in Britain. At Area A, the married officer instructors rented houses in the nearby towns of Triangle and Dumfries, brought their wives down and went home each night.⁸¹ Unmarried officers, like Parkin and Rumburg, lived in accommodations in the park, as did most of the officers of the base cadre and all of the enlisted men, as well as the trainees and those who were being held there awaiting assignment or transportation overseas. Parkin recalled that during the winter of 1942-1943, “we cleaned up the old CCC camp [A-4, the new headquarters] there and make it livable [winterized it]. We mainly put the men through exercises, physical exercises. It was then being used mainly as a holding area.”⁸² In the spring of 1943, many of the instructors from Area A as well as B would be sent to active duty overseas: Dow, Gleason and Parkin to China; Collart, Goodwin, Harris, Sage, and Rumburg to the Mediterranean or European Theaters of Operation. Only Rumburg would never return.

Arden Dow, who left for China in March 1943, would remain there until May 1945, serving first as commander of an OSS training camp for Chinese guerrillas located just south of Loyang on the Yellow River. Frank A. Gleason from Area B was his deputy at the camp.⁸³ The school they established in China was modeled after the SO schools at Areas B and A. At the camp, nicknamed “Camp Rowdy,” despite being located by an old Buddhist temple, twenty American instructors trained hundreds of Nationalist Chinese guerrillas to conduct raids and sabotage behind Japanese lines.⁸⁴ Later, Parkin personally commanded the first airborne unit mission behind Japanese lines in China (Operation Akron), a feat that earned him the Legion of Merit and a Bronze Star Medal.⁸⁵

⁸⁰ White was no longer at Area B, when R.P. Tenney reported to Joseph R. Hayden, memorandum, 8 June 1942, subject: “Area B,” OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 158, Folder 1721, National Archives II.

⁸¹ Dorothea Dean Dow (Mrs. Arden W. Dow), telephone interview with author, 15 May 2005.

⁸² Charles M. Parkin, during a tour of Catoctin Mountain Park arranged by the author, 18 May 2005.

⁸³ Frank A. Gleason, telephone interview with the author, 9 May 2005.

⁸⁴ Ibid., and also “Training Program at Pact Rowdy,” typescript report, 1 January 1944, [by Arden W. Dow], in OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 146, Box 256, Folder 3550, National Archives II.

⁸⁵ Arden W. Dow, file in CIA Records (RG 263), OSS Personnel Files, Box 16; and Lt. Col. C.M. Parkin, to Assistant Chief of Staff, G-1, War Department, General Staff, 6 June 1945, subject: request to enter Army and Navy Staff College, in Charles M. Parkin, personnel file, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 92A, Box 47, Folder 785, National Archives II.

Four Sub-camps in Area A, Prince William Forest Park

Detachment A at Prince William Forest Park ultimately included four separate sub-camps: Areas A-2, A-3, A-4, and A-5. Their main role was training Special Operations agents, but they often performed other functions as well. The nature of the regular courses at the sub-camps changed over time in response to lessons learned at other camps or overseas. Courses varied in length, but they all assumed 40 to 48 hours of training per week.⁸⁶

Area A-2, the former NPS Cabin Camp 2, Mawavi, was the first OSS camp opened by Detachment A. It began instruction in May 1942 as Advanced Training in Special Operations, and the emphasis was on organization, recruiting and handling indigenous resistance forces and the conduct of sabotage activities. The faculty included Captain George White, as chief instructor, later succeeded by Captain Arden Dow, plus Lieutenant Christopher Rumburg and two sergeants. An inspector from headquarters reported in early July 1942 that students attended lectures and also engaged in target practice, each given a quota of 100 rounds of .45 caliber night pistol firing at bobbing targets, and 15 rounds of submachine gun practice. "Advance demolition practice is given with actual targets such as concrete retaining walls and abandoned houses. Advanced booby trap training is given with electrical and time fuse connections." The inspector also reported that "excellent meals are served, considerably better than those are regular Army camps."⁸⁷ The following year, A-2 was used to train or hold Operational Groups waiting their combat missions abroad. Then, beginning in the spring of 1944, it was used to give basic military training to OSS personnel, when the Army required this for everyone being sent overseas.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ The following information on Area A sub-camps is derived from several sources, including, but not limited to Training Directorate to All Geographic Desks and Area Operations Officers, 1 January 1943, subject: The Training Areas, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 146, Box 223, Folder 3106; Lt. Col. H.L. Robinson, executive, S&T, "Schools and Training," October 1943, pp. 1-2, report on status of all S&T's camps and programs; plus "Outlines of the Courses at All of the U.S. Training Areas, December 1943, both in "Appendix IV, Part Three of the History [of the Schools and Training Branch of OSS], in OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 258, Folder 1723; *Mobilization Training Program Mobilization Training Programs for Officers and Enlisted Personnel Required for Special Overseas Assignments* (Washington, D.C.: Office of Strategic Services, n.d. [probably January 1944], pp. 4-6, in OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 146, Box 223, Folder 3106; and Capt. Don R. Callahan, C.O., Detachment A, to Lt. Col. H.L. Robinson, executive, S&T Branch, 13 March 1944, subject: housing and training facilities, Detachment A, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 153, Folder 1658; Chief Warrant Officer Stanley Stokwitz to Files, 7 August 1944, subject: strength return for purpose of determining welfare funds dividends, OSS Records (RG 226) Entry 136, Box 177, Folder 1885, National Archives II.

⁸⁷ J.R. Brown to J.R. Hayden, 7 July 1942, [report on the course given at Area A (A-2), 21 June to 3 July 1942], OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 161, Folder 1754. The amount of ammunition for practice at the SO training camps far exceeded the limited amounts available for recruits in US Army basic training where, at least at the beginning of the war, recruits were given a dozen rounds of rifle ammunition for target practice. See 1st Lt. James E. Rodgers, supply officer, report on ammunition supplies expended, 6 September 1943, in OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 153, Folder 1658, National Archives II.

⁸⁸ Beginning April 1944, a four-week basic training course was instituted at A-2 to take the place of the course at A-4. All Army enlisted personnel who were in OSS, or who transferred to OSS, were required to take this course at A-2 or Area C. OSS Training Board, Minutes of Meeting of 14 April 1944; and Maj.

Located near A-2, Area A-5, which had been NPS Cabin Camp 5, Happy Land, served briefly as the first headquarters for OSS Detachment A before the command center was transferred to A-4 in November 1942. Thereafter, for much of 1943, A-5 was used as a holding area for individuals or Operational Groups. In late 1943, it initiated a 118-hour course with particular emphasis on physical training, weaponry, and demolitions. In spring 1944, A-5 was used as a holding area or finishing school for SO personnel who had completed all their other courses

Area A-3, which under NPS had been Cabin Camp 3, Orenda, served temporarily in the summer of 1942 under Captain Louis O. Rucker as the OSS Parachute School in connection with the airstrip at the Quantico Marine Base. In the fall of 1942, Rucker was joined by Marine Lieutenant Elmer (“Pinky”) Harris, just returned from Camp X training in Canada, as an instructor in the OSS parachute training unit.⁸⁹ After Rucker and Harris were sent to North Africa, A-3 seems not to have been much used by OSS until October 1943, when it was designated to provide SO and MO students with “E-type” training. The “E-type” course, named for Area E where it originated, gave an overall picture of the work of the operational branches of OSS in order to improve their coordination in the field. The 156-hour course included a little of everything: undercover techniques, intelligence gathering and reporting of SI, the counter-espionage of X-2, the sabotage, weapons, demolitions, close combat techniques of SO and the spreading of rumors and other disinformation of MO. Like the early SO and SI training at Areas B and A, it concluded with a three-day undercover penetration by Special Operations and Secret Intelligence trainees of defense plants, usually in Baltimore, Philadelphia or Pittsburgh. The E-type course was given at A-3 from late 1943 to November 1944. A-3 also served at different times as a holding area for men awaiting training or assignment elsewhere. In actual practice, however, the SO Branch during 1943 came to see A-4 as the basic SO training area (as SI came to see Area E as its basic training school).⁹⁰

The use of the “E-type” general, introductory course at Area A-3 came about because of the dissatisfaction of SO and MO with the SI orientation at Area E. In October 1943, Anthony (“Tony”) Kloman, a civilian instructor at Area E was assigned to replicate the course as chief instructor at A-3.⁹¹ When the first class began late in the fall, the cabins and other buildings at A-3 remained fit for summer use only. Consequently, Kloman and his instructional team had to teach the classes while the buildings were being winterized. In February 1944, A-3 had seven civilian instructors, who taught police work, field craft, knife and close combat, SO material or MO material, and seven military

Philip K. Allen, for Col. H. L. Robinson, to “All Concerned,” n.d. [April 1944], subject: OSS Basic Training Course, both in OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 146, Box 223, Folder 3106, National Archives II.

⁸⁹ Mattingly, *Herringbone Cloak—GI Dagger: Marines of the OSS*, 173-74.

⁹⁰ “History of the Schools and Training Branch, Office of Strategic Services,” prepared in 1945, but not declassified until the 1980s, published in Cassidy, ed., *History of the Schools & Training Branch*, 91-92.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 100. Kloman was the cousin of Erasmus (“Ras”) Kloman, SO veteran who trained at Area B as well as other areas in winter 1943-44 before being sent to the Mediterranean Theater. Erasmus Kloman said that his cousin’s name had been Joseph Kloman, but he changed it to Anthony Kloman for unknown reasons. Erasmus Kloman, telephone interview with the author, 24 January 2005.

instructors, who taught weaponry, demolitions, maps and ciphers.⁹² By spring 1944, fewer SO agents were needed in Europe and enrollment at A-3 declined as did the instructional staff headed by a civilian, H.B. Cannon from Area E. The course shut down from March to June 1944. It reopened under Captain Eldon Nehring from Area E, who served as chief instructor at A-3 from July to November 1944, when he left to become chief instructor at an OSS training school in China. A-3 closed in December 1944.⁹³

In early 1944, while A-3 was simply a holding area, several recruits for the Communications Branch, awaiting openings at Area C, were temporarily housed there. Perhaps they were bored or maybe they just became friends; whatever the reason, and fortunately for us, they told each other their names and provided information about their backgrounds, despite OSS rules against it. They represented some of the diversity in the OSS. David Kenney, 19, had grown up in a hamlet of 400 people on the windswept grasslands of southern Wyoming. When he graduated from high school, he was drafted into the Army and trained to be a radio operator. Young and eager, he volunteered for hazardous duty and wound up in the OSS. Jerry Codekas was a Greek-Cypriot American, who later became part of one of the Greek Operational Groups. After the war, Codekas had a date growing farm near Palm Springs, California, and Kenney who also settled in California, renewed their acquaintance. Leonard Iron Moccasin was a Sioux/Lakota Indian from South Dakota. "I asked him, what was an iron moccasin?" Kenney recalled. "He said, it was a horseshoe....He lived on a reservation and was a high school teacher there. I don't know what he taught. He was very talented. He was good with electronics. He and Jerry [Codekas] disappeared from me in England [where they were sent in July 1944]. I don't know what happened to Leonard [Iron Moccasin]."⁹⁴

Area A-4, a former CCC work camp, had been opened as an OSS facility in November 1942 as the new headquarters of Detachment A as well as a training camp. During the winter of 1942-43, Area A-4 replaced B-2 as the preliminary training area for Special Operations (Area B-2 would resume in spring 1943 as the advanced OG training camp). Under Schools and Training's attempt at centralization in the winter of 1942-1943, the two-month, S&T program of training each OSS operational recruit, whether SO, SI, MO, or X-2, began with two weeks preliminary training at A-4 (although many of the older men in SI skipped it as too strenuous). The "A-4" course, as it came to be called, was an intense, basic paramilitary program that could be given to people from any branch. Initially two weeks, its 130 hours of instruction included 27 hours of field craft, 23 hours of demolitions and explosives, 23 hours of weaponry, 12 hours of code and ciphers for wireless radio messages, 10 hours of map reading, sketching, and compass,

⁹² Instruction Staff, A-3 to Commanding Officer, Detachment A, 15 February 1944, subject: weekly report on training & instruction, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 153, Folder 1661, National Archives II.

⁹³ "History of the Schools and Training Branch, Office of Strategic Services," prepared in 1945, but not declassified until the 1980s, published version in Cassidy, ed., *History of the Schools & Training Branch*, 101-102. Final chief instructor, November to December 1944, at A-3 was Lt. Compton N. Crook, formerly training executive at Area E. "Chief Instructors [and Commanding Officers] by Training Area," in "Appendix IV, Part Three of the History [of Schools and Training Branch], OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 158, Folder 1723, National Archives II.

⁹⁴ David Kenney, telephone interview with the author, 11 April 2005.

and then assorted other instructions. Each class consisted of fifteen to twenty men and two classes generally running concurrently on a staggered basis. A constantly changing roster of some twenty to thirty instructors maintained the course.

One of those instructors at A-4 in 1943 was a future “Jedburgh,” Captain Francis L. (“Frank”) Coolidge, who had gone through SO training at Area B and then Area E. It was probably during that instruction at Area A that he met Marine Major Peter Julien Ortiz who underwent more OSS training after recuperating from a wound suffered in Tunisia. Ortiz, the son of a French-Spanish father and an American mother, would receive the Navy Cross, the second highest military decoration of the U.S. Navy (after the Medal of Honor) for his first parachute mission into France in 1944. As will be seen in a subsequent chapter, his second, in August 1944, in mission that included Frank Coolidge, was not so fortunate. One team member was killed in the parachute drop. Later the team was trapped in a village by the Germans. Ortiz and two sergeants surrendered to save the villagers from Nazi reprisals. Coolidge, although wounded in the leg, and another sergeant were able to escape unnoticed by the Germans. Freed from a German POW camp in April 1945, Ortiz was awarded a second Navy Cross, and with his many other medals became one of the most decorated U.S. Marines in World War II.⁹⁵

Under the centralized plan of Schools and Training Branch, the preliminary paramilitary training at Area A that began in 1943 was followed by two more weeks of advanced agent training at Area E, the newly established training school in country estates near Towson and Glencoe, Maryland. Then there would be two more weeks at the specialist and finishing school at Area RTU-11 (“the Farm”) near Clinton, Maryland (although few SO agents went there in practice), and additional weeks in parachute training at Fort Benning, Georgia, or in advance SO and sabotage and guerrilla techniques at Areas A or E. Ultimately, however, the two-week course at Area E evolved into a basic OSS agent course, and the SO and SI students were given advanced and finishing training in their own separate areas under their own training staffs.⁹⁶ Beginning in February 1944, as a result of requests from several OSS branches, the training course at A-4 was expanded to three weeks, increasing the number of hours from 136 to 194, and including more instruction on techniques of operating in the field.⁹⁷ In July 1944, after the bulk of SO and OG personnel had been deployed following the Normandy invasion, A-4's role was reduced, the course was cut back to 132 hours, and it became simply another site for advanced SO training.⁹⁸ Still, other uses of A-4 were training for

⁹⁵ Mattingly, *Herringbone Cloak—GI Dagger: Marines in the OSS*, 114-31; Francis L. Coolidge, “Jedburghs,” 30 November 1944, pp. 2-3, Interviews with Returned Men, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 161, Box 2, Folder 31, National Archives II.

⁹⁶ “History of the Schools and Training Branch, Office of Strategic Services,” prepared 1945, but not declassified until 1980s, published version, Cassidy, ed., *History of the Schools & Training Branch*, 66-68.

⁹⁷ Lt. Col. H. L. Robinson, executive S&T branch to Directorate, et al., 29 January 1944, subject: enlarged course at Area A-4, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 137, Box 3, Folder 24, National Archives II.

⁹⁸ “Paramilitary Course, A-4,” “December 1944 [in pencil],” unsigned document in White Binder, “OSS,” in Park Archives, Prince William Forest Park, Triangle, Va.

some of the Operational Groups and also for communications training for SO or OG radio operators members who needed it for work behind enemy lines.⁹⁹

Although Area A began as the Advanced SO camp, it functioned as the main training center for Special Operations agents from late 1942 through early 1945. Its instructors trained individual agents or two- or three-man teams who would conduct sabotage, espionage, guerrilla activity, or hit-and-run raids. They also trained Operational Groups and some Morale Operations personnel. The various subcamps—A-2, A-3, A-5, and most especially and continuously A-4—offered basic or advanced courses ranging from two to four weeks in length. As the official history of the Schools and Training Branch indicated, “the A training areas during their period of operation built up a creditable and enviable tradition. No only did students see action and engage in direct operations against the enemy, but many of the instructors, too, were assigned overseas in active theatres on operations—where they really wanted to be anyway.”¹⁰⁰ As will be seen in subsequent chapters, several of them won medals there. For some of them, like A-4 instructor Lieutenant J. Holt Green from an old Charleston family who subsequently led missions into Yugoslavia and then Czechoslovakia, the award was posthumous.¹⁰¹

SO Trainee George Wuchinich, Serbian American from Pittsburgh

The anonymous student identified only as “George” in the history that Schools and Training Branch wrote at the end of the war was, in reality, Lieutenant George Wuchinich. In many ways, he had a typical student experience in the early SO training program at Areas B, A, and C.¹⁰² Like many so many members of the OSS, however, he was also an extraordinary individual. A second-generation American, whose parents were Eastern Orthodox Serbs from Slovenia, Wuchinich had been born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. As a youth, he worked and saved enough to attend Carnegie Tech but became jobless during the Great Depression and hitchhiked across the country looking for work. In 1936, he considered enlisting in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade to fight against Franco in the Spanish Civil War but was deterred by pleas from his mother and sister. He did find employment in Pittsburgh, and the big, energetic, ebullient Wuchinich

⁹⁹ “Communications Course, A-4,” OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 177, Folder 1883, National Archives II.

¹⁰⁰ “History of the Schools and Training Branch, Office of Strategic Services,” prepared 1945, but not declassified until 1980s, published as Cassidy, ed., *History of the Schools & Training Branch*, 88, 91.

¹⁰¹ “History of the Schools and Training Branch, Office of Strategic Services,” prepared 1945, but not declassified until 1980s, published version, Cassidy, ed., *History of the Schools & Training Branch*, 90.

¹⁰² “A Good Joe Named George,” 9 December 1944, p. 1, Interviews with Returned Men, Schools and Training Branch, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 161, Box 2, File 31, National Archives II. Although “George’s” last name is redacted on the typescript, the tab attached to it indicates “Wuchinich.” For the account of the training of a recruit named “George,” see “History of the Schools and Training Branch, Office of Strategic Services,” prepared 1945, but not declassified until 1980s, published as Cassidy, ed., *History of the Schools & Training Branch*, 30-31

gradually worked his way to become a top salesman of major industrial steel products from locomotives to tugboats.

Hitler's invasion of Yugoslavia in 1941 led Wuchinich to enlist in the U.S. Army, and he was soon recruited into Donovan's organization.¹⁰³ Wuchinich was a member of the fourth class (Class G-4) to go through the OSS SO training process in spring 1942. The first week of training at Area B in Catoctin Mountain Park consisted of an introduction to military life, since unlike Wuchinich many of the recruits had come directly from civilian life. The second week introduced the students to map-reading, field-craft, protection against poison gas, familiarity with weaponry, including small arms and also a 60 mm mortar. The final two weeks involved lectures and demonstrations of close-combat techniques, house-to-house fighting, cryptography, and the nature and ideology of the Nazi regime, German and Japanese unit identification and order of battle, surveillance, photography, sketching, interrogation, and some basic demolition work. In the final field exercise, the graduating class had to penetrate an "enemy" camp, overpower the guards, generally obtained from enlisted men on the training staff, but sometimes played by other students. Accomplishing that objective and passing all written tests and personal evaluations, the class graduated in June 1942.

Following graduation from Area B and a brief leave, Wuchinich and his classmates were taken to the Advanced SO School at Area A in Prince William Forest Park. The emphasis there was on direct action, and the three main subject areas included Organization; Recruiting and Handling of Indigenous Agents; and Selection and Execution of Sabotage Activities. At Area A in the summer of 1942, Wuchinich found no emphasis on military routine. Instead there was an informal atmosphere, much different from a regular Army facility. Still the training was rigorous, from 7 a.m. when training began with calisthenics and swimming until 5 p.m. when it ended with close combat, although in some evenings, instruction continued with night field problems. In this advanced course, the trainees learned the finer points of agent operation. That included actual practice in listening devices, the use of secret inks for passing messages (a course later dropped by SO but maintained for SI agents), propaganda and influence and control of civilian populations. Wuchinich and the other students were given problems in reconnaissance as well as concealment of weapons, radios, and other equipment. The students became proficient and self-confident in close-combat, the use of American and foreign weapons, and most importantly, in sabotage—the employment of various types of explosives to destroy bridges, road lines, industrial plants or warehouses, or even ships in harbors. As a graduation exercise, individuals or teams of students were required to penetrate an industrial plant in a nearby city and return with information about its operation or how it could be disabled by explosives.¹⁰⁴

The final part of the Special Operations training cycle for Wuchinich and his classmates involved three more specialized qualifications. At Maritime School, either at Area A or Area D, they spent two weeks learning about infiltration by water into hostile

¹⁰³ "More About George," 29 January 1945, pp. 4-5, Interviews with Returned Men, Schools and Training Branch, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 161, Box 2, File 31, National Archives II.

¹⁰⁴ "History of the Schools and Training Branch, Office of Strategic Services," prepared 1945, but not declassified until 1980s, published as Cassidy, ed., *History of the Schools & Training Branch*, 31-32.

areas. Then for two weeks at Communications School in Area C they went through a crash course in ciphers, telegraphy and wireless radio operation. Finally, they went to Parachute School either at Area A or at Fort Benning, Georgia, and earned their paratrooper's wings after completing the required five parachute jumps.¹⁰⁵

After completing his training by the end of 1942, SO agent Wuchinich was ready to be sent behind enemy lines in German-occupied Yugoslavia. But his and others' dispatch was held up for several months. The reasons were complex, involving an initial reluctance by the Army and particularly its theater commanders to authorize significant numbers of positions for OSS personnel, delays in political clearance by the State Department, disagreement within the OSS, and, in this case, problems caused by the internecine fighting within the Yugoslavian resistance movements, between royalist Chetniks under Mihailović and communist-led partisans under Tito. With a number of proposed OSS missions cancelled, the Yugoslavian-American trainees like Wuchinich, who had been brought to a peak of eagerness and self-confidence, were suddenly left with nothing to do but wait.¹⁰⁶

Lieutenant Colonel Garland H. Williams, who had been in charge of the SO training program through August 1942 had been aware of this type of problem for recent graduate and had insisted that there must be "a planned course of instruction which will not permit a lessening of his enthusiasm or desire to active work."¹⁰⁷ Wuchinich did take some "refresher" courses, but as he later complained: "Delay is the agent's greatest frustration, hanging around holding areas waiting to get overseas, hanging around field bases waiting to get a plane, hanging around in a plane searching for signals to make a pinpoint landing, then losing it entirely and being forced to come back to base. All this gets on a man's nerves. And there's nothing that can be done about it!"¹⁰⁸ Finally, in February 1943, after near a year in training and holding camps, Wuchinich finally found himself on his way to Yugoslavia. Despite further delays, he eventually led the "Alum" team that parachuted into Tito's camp. He would spend considerable time working with the partisans in Yugoslavia and engaged in a number of daring operations, as will be described in a subsequent chapter. George Wuchinich came home with many stories and a Distinguished Service Cross.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 33. On the OSS in Yugoslavia, see Strategic Services Unit, Office of the Assistant Secretary of War, *War Report of the OSS*, Volume II: *Overseas Targets* (New York: Walker and Company, 1976, original classified version, 1947), 127-132; and Patrick K. O'Donnell, *Operatives, Spies, and Saboteurs: The Unknown Story of the Men and Women of World War II's OSS* (New York: Free Press, 2004), 79-101.

¹⁰⁷ Lt. Col. Garland H. Williams quoted in "History of the Schools and Training Branch, Office of Strategic Services," prepared 1945, but not declassified until 1980s, published as Cassidy, ed., *History of the Schools & Training Branch*, 33.

¹⁰⁸ Agent/trainee "George," quoted in "History of the Schools and Training Branch, Office of Strategic Services," prepared 1945, but not declassified until 1980s, published as Cassidy, ed., *History of the Schools & Training Branch*, 33.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 30, 33.

Friction and Demoralization among the Staff at Area A

Although many of the original C.O.s and instructors at Area A left in the spring of 1943 for assignment overseas in the European, Mediterranean or China-Burma-India Theaters of Operation, new officers and civilians took their places. Sometimes there were personality problems. Captain Joseph J. Grant, Jr., became commanding officer of Detachment A in 1943. He had been a member of the first group of Americans to attend SOE training at Camp X near Toronto in early 1942.¹¹⁰ Unlike most OSS officers, Grant was punctilious, issuing dozens of regulations and alienated a number of his subordinates. The record reveals increasing friction between the testy C.O. and his chief instructor, Captain Eliot N. Vestner. Admittedly, the chain of command between the commanding officer and the chief instructor of the OSS training camps had never been entirely clear, and they each reported to different superiors at OSS headquarters. But Grant's abrasive style strained that inherently ambiguous relationship.

Soon after taking command, Grant launched a series of caustic memoranda. Chief Instructor Vestner became the target of his ire. On 10 May, Grant dispatched a memorandum demanding that Vestner explain why fire guards and firefighting equipment had not been posted during mortar target practice when, the target, an abandoned house had caught fire and burned to the ground, "seriously endangering the countryside." Two days later Grant demanded to know why Vestner had not responded, and fired off a copy to his superiors in Washington.¹¹¹ Vestner answered the next day, stating that he was responding within forty-eight hours and had had to wait until the instructor involved had free time to write a report. The fire had never endangered the countryside, Vestner insisted; it had been prevented from spreading to the grass around the house. It was a small, dilapidated house, he indicated, that had been gradually being destroyed over the past five months as a target for mortar practice. Discussions with the National Park Service about fire hazards, Vestner wrote, had concerned only demolitions using explosives, not mortar rounds which flare upward on contact. The vexed chief instructor added a personal note to Grant: "Living as we are in close association with one another, it seems absurd that you feel it necessary to waste time and correspondence when the same ends could be met by friendly contact."¹¹²

¹¹⁰ "Chief Instructors [and Commanding Officers] by Training Area," included in "Appendix IV, Part Three of the History [of Schools and Training Branch], OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 158, Folder 1723, National Archives II.

¹¹¹ Capt. Joseph J. Grant, Jr., to Capt. Eliot N. Vestner, 10 May 1943, subject: failure to comply with order governing forest fire precautions; and Grant to Vestner, 12 May 1943, copy to Col. Paul J. McDonnell and Lt. Col. Kenneth Baker; OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 153, Folder 1658, National Archives II.

¹¹² Capt. Eliot N. Vestner to Capt. Joseph J. Grant, 13 May 1943, memo, and attachment, Vestner to Director of Training, OSS HQ, 12 May 1943, subject: report of incident, both in OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 153, Folder 1658, National Archives II.

Within the next few weeks, Grant issued a plethora of regulations for Area A, each with penalties for infringement. He imposed new speed limits, requirements to read bulletin boards, prohibition of swimming in park waters without a lifeguard, mandates about taking bottles away from the PX, restrictions on late night snacks at the mess halls, and requirements that beds be made up according to Army regulations. Violations would result in “appropriate disciplinary action.”¹¹³ When there were complaints about Grant’s latest set of rules, and perhaps Captain Queeg-like behavior, Grant’s superior in Washington required an explanation. Grant’s justifications only confirmed reports of their demoralizing impact, and the head of the Schools and Training Branch required Grant to send all future camp regulations he wished to promulgate to him for review.¹¹⁴

Most embarrassingly in the midst of this exchange, Grant humiliated two new civilian instructors at Area A in mid-June 1943. Chief instructor Vestner had invited the new instructors to eat with the officers, but when he learned of this, Grant immediately issued an order forbidding these civilians to use the officers’ dining facilities or sleeping quarters. Not being officers, they were relegated to using the eating and sleeping accommodations of the enlisted men or the students. When OSS headquarters learned of this insulting and demoralizing edict, they quickly reversed it. They also recommended an apology, which Grant declined to make.¹¹⁵ An inspector from headquarters concluded that Grant was in the wrong job: “You can’t make a silk purse out of a sow’s ear.”¹¹⁶

Grant was later transferred. He was succeeded as commanding officer by Captain Don R. Callahan, his adjutant, who remained C.O. at Area A for a year. Chief Inspector Vestner left in the fall of 1943 and was succeeded by a series of officers until March 1944 when Captain Stephen W. Karr, became the last chief instructor, serving until September 1944, when training essentially ended at Area A. Although the instructors and trainees left, a reduced base cadre remained, commanded by Captain James E. Rodgers, former supply officer at the camp, who served as the last C.O. of Detachment A. The unit was shut down in January 1945, and responsibility for it was shifted to the commanding officer of Area C in the eastern section of Prince William Forest Park.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ See memoranda by Capt. Joseph J. Grant, 12, 13, 20, 22, 26 May, 4, 8 June, 1943, in OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 153, Folder 1658, National Archives II.

¹¹⁴ Vestner to Baker, 8 June 1943; Baker to Grant, 9 June 1943, subject: issuance of orders, Area A; and *ibid.*, 11 June 1943, subject: orders restricting activities of training personnel; Lt. Don R. Callahan by order of the Camp Commander, to Chief Instructor, Detachment A, 12 June 1943, subject: enlisted quarters, training staff; Grant to Baker, 15 June 1943; all in OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 153, Folder 1658, National Archives II.

¹¹⁵ Lt. Col. Kenneth H. Baker to Commander of Troops [Detachment A], 17 June 1943, subject: treatment of civilian instructors in OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 153, Folder 1658, National Archives II.

¹¹⁶ J.W. [Capt. John W. Williams?], “Notes on Interviewing Martin on the Quarters and Messing Status at ‘A’ of himself and Ed,” 16 June 1943, report [to Kenneth Baker, director of training], in OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 153, Folder 1658, National Archives II.

¹¹⁷ “Chief Instructors [and some Commanding Officers] by Training Area,” included in “Appendix IV, Part Three of the History [of Schools and Training Branch], OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 158, Folder 1723, National Archives II. Lieutenant Gordon B. Hartzfeld and then Lieutenant John T. Handy, each served at chief instructor at Area A for three-month periods during the winter of 1943-1944.

Problems with the British SOE Training Model

Admitting that SOE's assistance had been "indispensable" at the beginning of SO and SI training, OSS Schools and Training's official history declared at the end of the war that "a number of the original tenets laid down later either proved unrealistic or were outmoded...."¹¹⁸ Some problems proved difficult to eliminate. By necessity the initial training had been based on the experiences of SOE, which had been in the war for two years before the Americans entered. But the British organization had only been created in 1940 and did not have the maturity and solid experience that its officers often led others to suppose. The British instructors at Camp X in Canada and then in the United States—men like Major Brooker, Lieutenant Colonel Skilbeck, and Major Dehn, who lectured at OSS training camps in 1942 and 1943—had little or no personal commando experience and were a long way in time and distance from the active theaters of the war in Europe, the Mediterranean, and the Far East and were thus removed from current developments in the theaters effecting the training goals. Finally, because of the bureaucratic division in the British system, SOE's functions were primarily special operations and psychological warfare, not foreign espionage and intelligence which were assigned to the entirely separate Secret Intelligence Service.¹¹⁹

British SOE courses and instructors stressed the secret means by which agents achieved their purpose in special operations, disinformation distribution or intelligence gathering and reporting. Their specialty was projects for Special Operations or Morale Operations Branches—hit-and-run raids, sabotage, black propaganda efforts—rather than Secret Intelligence. They emphasized agent techniques and provided examples of successful and unsuccessful undercover operations by British or German agents. In doing so, the focus was particularly on secrecy and the need for cover. This "cloak and dagger" approach, as it was called, permeated the entire recruitment and training process. During the course of the war, OSS Schools and Training Branch came to conclude that this extreme emphasis on cover and on means rather than goals was misdirected and problematic. It was not until 1944, asserted the official history of S&T, that OSS training "finally achieved emancipation, largely discarded the 'cloak and dagger' approach, and got down to brass tacks on such questions as 'What is intelligence?', 'How do you get intelligence?', 'How do you report intelligence?', 'Who is a customer for what kinds of intelligence?', 'Exactly how may a power plant be most effectively sabotaged?'"¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ "History of the Schools and Training Branch, Office of Strategic Services," prepared 1945, but not declassified until 1980s; published as Cassidy, ed., *History of the Schools & Training Branch*, 72.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 72-73. After Brooker left, Skilbeck worked with OSS Schools and Training in July and August 1943, and Dehn, whose specialty was propaganda, assisted as a general instructor at Area A during those two months and also worked with MO as an instructor and adviser in training officers. Anthony Moore, "Notes on Co-Operation between SOE and OSS," January 1945, p. 6; OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 158, Folder 1722, National Archives II.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 73.

This was the result of American pragmatism: the test of how things actually worked. As S&T reported: “This change came about when OSS experience in the field demonstrated that ‘intelligence’s the thing’, and many amateur but aggressive operators who possessed none of the finesse of the classical figures [in espionage and sabotage], oftentimes produced just as good results in the midst of the hurry and confusion of the war by keeping their eye on the objective rather than the means.”¹²¹

Operational Group (OG) Training and Field Exercises

A guide for training the Operational Groups at Areas F, B, and A was prepared by Lieutenant Colonel Serge Obolensky, the former Czarist Army officer and New York socialite, with the assistance of Captain Joseph E. Alderdice. “The greatest operational value of the groups,” the training manual indicted, “is the breaking down of enemy communications and supply lines and the uplifting of the morale of the subjugated peoples in occupied areas, who need only be organized, supplied and led to offer effective resistance to the enemy.”¹²² In a lecture on guerrilla warfare, the instructor was told to emphasize that the main objects are “to inflict the maximum of damage to the enemy and to force him to tie up regular troops who might otherwise be engaged in the major effort.”¹²³

The two-week specialized training course for OGs at Area A-2 in August 1943, for example, included 12 hours of physical training and 43 hours of instruction in the use of various forms of explosives—TNT, nitrostarch, dynamite, nitramon, composition C and C-2—plus various forms of blasting caps, fuses, and primacord. These were for demolishing wooden, steel or concrete structures—bridges, buildings, railroads, ships, oil tanks and refineries, ammunition dumps, dams and powerhouses. The trainees also learned how to use anti-tank mines, anti-personnel mines, and booby-traps. They spent 23 hours learning tactics, including both day and night field problems. They were given 33 hours of instruction and practice with a dozen different types of weapons. They also spent three hours watching training films. The total was 114 hours of instruction. Training lasted every day, from 6:15 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., plus some night exercises.¹²⁴

One of the original Operational Group officers, Lieutenant Aaron Bank, who later would become known as a founder of the U.S. Army’s Special Forces, contrasted the situations at Areas F and A as they received their OG training in 1943. At the

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² “Operations,” in Lt. Col. Serge Obolensky and Capt. Joseph E. Alderdice, “Outline of Training Programs at Areas `A` and `F` for Operational Groups, Office of Strategic Services, “ n.p.,” typescript, n.d., [August 1943], OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 140; Folder 1466, National Archives II.

¹²³ “Lecture: Guerrilla Warfare,” in Ibid.

¹²⁴ “Two Weeks Training Course, Area `A-2`” in Ibid.

Congressional Country Club and its vicinity, during the tactical field problems in the area, the trainees were often frustrated when after carefully creeping and crawling through the underbrush toward their targets such as guarded road bridges and culverts, their silent progress would be interrupted with shouts of “There they are!” from neighborhood youngsters, who made a game out of spotting the stealthy trainees. But this kind of harassment was absent when the OGs moved to Area A at Prince William Forest Park. It was completely isolated. Bank also thought the training was better there. “Here [at Area A] our exercises lasted longer and were more vigorous and we did perfect ourselves as commandos with a guerrilla flare....Physically, the unit was in really good shape: no calisthenics, but good hard rope climbing, chinning, pushups with a knapsack on our back, and crossing streams on ropes slung horizontally between trees, topped off with five-plus miles of daily running. We had a good martial arts instructor and we specialized in knife fighting and throwing, a silent form of killing.”¹²⁵

Field Exercises in and around Prince William Forest Park

There were thousands of acres of varying types of terrain in Area A in Prince William Forest Park, and the OSS used them as well as areas outside the park for its training exercises and tactical problems. For field exercises outside the park, the Occoquan Bridge and Power House and the Manassas Power Dam and Control Tower were available; so were the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac Railroad Bridge at Woodbridge, and the Fredericksburg Highway Bridge.¹²⁶ In one exercise, for example, after studying explosive charges and their placement in the classroom using drawings and models, the students were then called upon for a field test. The problem site was eleven and a half miles north of Area A-2. The mission was to stage a night sabotage raid that would in theory drop the steel-trussed Bland’s Ford Bridge into the creek, destroy the locks of the adjoining dam, and blow up the turbine generators in the power house. After midnight, the class, along with the instructor, was trucked to the target area, where the students would make a reconnaissance through the woods and the instructor would show them where to place the demolition charges and how much explosive to use. Each student was told to assume that he was the leader of a 16-man OG section. After the 2:20 a.m. attack, the group was to rendezvous at a friendly farmer’s house as quickly as possible. In this tactical problem, instead of actually re-enacting the attack, each student would plan and write out the calculations for obtaining each objective—who would do what, when, where and how, including a diagram of the placement of each charge—from the initial assembly point in the woods to the placement of the charges and then the final

¹²⁵ Aaron Bank, *From OSS to Green Berets: The Birth of the Special Forces* (Novato, Calif.: Presidio Press, 1986), 5-6; “Col. Aaron Bank, U.S. Special Forces Founder, Dies,” *OSS Society Newsletter*, Summer 2004, 13.

¹²⁶ Capt. Don R. Callahan, C.O., Detachment A, to Col. H.L. Robinson, Executive, Training, OSS, 13 March 1944, subject: Housing and Training Facilities Detachment A, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 153, Folder 1658, National Archives II.

rendezvous. Afterwards, there would be a critique and a discussion of the problems. The entire night exercise was scheduled to take four hours, from the time the class left Area A-2 for Bland's Ford Bridge, to the time it returned to the training camp in Area A.¹²⁷

In some field problems, there were more realistic exercises involving actual rather than theoretical maneuvering, but these were only held within the OSS training area itself. In such cases, some members of the cadre were dressed as enemy soldiers, and staff officers served as umpires for these small unit "war games." In one field problem labeled "Clearing Buildings of Personnel," the target was an enemy command headquarters, located some seven hundred yards north of Joplin Road, which was patrolled by motor vehicle every hour on the hour. Allegedly the target was the headquarters for an enemy regiment, bivouacked at Triangle, Virginia. The mission of the OG team was "to attack enemy command headquarters, located at (Point X on sketch) and eliminate all personnel quartered there, and secure all the information possible."¹²⁸

Such exercises proved quite similar to much of what the SO teams and OG units did when sent into action overseas—blowing up bridges, tunnels, warehouses, power stations—to impede the enemy. SO and OG operations were conducted in a dozen or more countries in all major theaters of operation. Probably the largest effort was put into operations in support of the invasion of France in 1944. There 85 officers and radio operators in American SO teams and 83 Americans in multinational "Jedburgh" teams parachuted mainly from Britain into northern and central France between June and September 1944. The Jedburgh teams later received considerable publicity for their successes in blocking German reinforcements, but the 85 members of regular SO teams and the 355 members of 22 Operational Group sections, although receiving less publicity, were no less successful overall. In support of the Allied invasion of Normandy and of the Riviera, the OGs were parachuted into southern and central France by planes from Algiers. Like the SO, the OG units had to depend on the protection of resistance groups and their own ingenuity to avoid capture since they were in enemy occupied territory. Of the 523 American SO and OG personnel, who worked behind enemy lines in France in 1944, 18 were killed, 17 missing or captured, and 51 were wounded in action. Total American SO/OG casualties: 86 or nearly 17 per cent of those involved.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ "Instructor's Manuscript: Explosives & Demolitions, Tactical Problem, Lesson No. 8," in Lt. Col. Serge Obolensky and Capt. Joseph E. Alderdice, "Outline of Training Programs at Areas `A' and `F' for Operational Groups, Office of Strategic Services," n.p. typescript, n.d., [August 1943], OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 140; Folder 1466, National Archives II. Bland's Ford Bridge may have been an old wooden bridge across the Occoquan River at Woodbridge. The bridge washed out in 1972.

¹²⁸ "Problem No. 2: Clearing Buildings of Personnel," in Lt. Col. Serge Obolensky and Capt. Joseph E. Alderdice, "Outline of Training Programs at Areas `A' and `F' for Operational Groups, Office of Strategic Services, n.p. typescript, n.d., [August 1943], OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136 Washington & Field Station File, Wash-OG-AD-1-1; Box 140; Folder 1466, National Archives II. The other night field problems in the folder included mock attacks on a hydroelectric dam and on a power plant.

¹²⁹ Kermit Roosevelt, "Introduction," to OSS, *War Report of the OSS: Overseas Targets*, xii.

A Faltering Beginning at Area C

In the northeastern part of Prince William Forest Park, the OSS had established Training Area C in the early summer of 1942. Initially run by the Special Operations Branch to provide SO and SI agents with a smattering of knowledge about OSS communications and equipment, the so-called SO-SI School of Communications had not been very successful that summer. Few of the SO and SI trainees had any previous telegraphy or short-wave radio experience, but had simply had shown some aptitude for it. After the excitement of the regular SO or SI training camps, students found themselves in a rather makeshift and demoralizing situation. An anonymous student reported in August 1942 that the camp was seriously pervaded by a “lack of morale.” In contrast to the exciting paramilitary training at Area B and A, he complained that “radio work is thankless and unrewarding. None of the students had entered this course from any real love of the work. Not a single thing was done at this camp to keep the spirits of the students up...the morale of the complement [the cadre] was poor also. The blame for all of this should be laid directly at the feet of the officers who either do not remember or have never been told that their function is more than the simply mechanical administration of the camp plus some radio repair work. The rest of the course itself is quite interesting for those who like radio work. For the others it is dull and uninspiring. These others should be told clearly and explicitly why they are here. Otherwise they are bound to become very depressed.”¹³⁰ Not only were the instructors lackluster, but apparently the initial commander was a martinet. Two years later, an S&T report on an interview with returning veteran George Wuchinich, who had between a student at Areas B, A, and C, stated that in the summer of 1942, Area C was “a tough camp for student-agents. It was the only one of our schools at the time to subject them to some kind of GI regulation such as K.P., bed-making, and restricted liberty, etc...certain of our more sensitive students had objected violently to this kind of treatment.”¹³¹

Creation of the Communications Branch School

When the new Communications Branch (CB) took over at Area C at the end of 1942, it transformed the Communications School. As indicated in the previous chapter, when Marine Major Albert H. Jenkins arrived from his previous position as an instructor and executive officer at SI’s RTU-11 (“The Farm”), in December 1942, he oversaw the

¹³⁰ Unidentified SO student [only the first two pages of the report remain] to Lt. Col. P[hilip]. G. Strong, 15 August 1942, subject: operation of the SA/G [SO] Schools, p. 2, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 161, Folder 1754, National Archives II.

¹³¹ Interviews with Returned Men, “A Good Joe Named George,” [George Wuchinich, his name is on the tab], 9 December 1944, p. 1, OSS Records (RG 226) Entry 161, Box 2, Folder 31, National Archives II. K.P. was an abbreviation for “Kitchen Police,” referring to duty peeling potatoes and washing dishes.

arrival of new equipment and new instructors, new staff, and the creation of more comfortable year-round accommodations. Included in his improvement plan and in keeping with the OSS policy, were plenty of physical exercise, meals that were far superior to regular Army bases and an overall atmosphere that was informal rather than strict military. Morale was also improved by the fact that most of the students at Area C were recruits for the Communications Branch, learning to be operators and technicians at the regional base stations that the Commo branch was establishing around the world. Some of them would also be radio operators in the field. Most of the recruits for SO, SI, MO or other operational branches who would be given brief training in wireless telegraphy, codes, and radio operation, would thereafter generally receive their instruction from Commo instructors at their branch training camps, from Area A to Area F. At Area C, the Cadre lived primarily in Area C-1, the former NPS Cabin Camp 1, called Goodwill. The Communications School itself, with accommodations for students and most instructors, was half a mile away in Area C-4, the former NPS Cabin Camp 4, called Pleasant.

Major Jenkins, commanding officer of Detachment C, may have been relaxed in regard to military protocol, but he had a serious, no-nonsense attitude toward the essentials of training men for their missions overseas. As Lawrence (“Laurie”) Hollander, one instructor remembered, Jenkins “was obsessed with the thought that everyone in the outfit, military or civilian, should be physically fit and be qualified in the use of weaponry. Classes in these categories were compulsory.”¹³² He often gave instruction personally in the use of the Colt .45 automatic pistol. But on the whole the paramilitary training in weaponry, demolitions, close combat, and field craft, given to Communications Branch trainees at Area C was provided mainly by SO instructors from Area A, augmented by the peripatetic William E. Fairbairn.¹³³

Every new arrival at Area C, beginning in August 1943, received a typed, four-page copy of “Information and Regulations for All Personnel at Detachment ‘C’” signed by Major Jenkins. It was straightforward and precise, written in easily understood language, not legalistic or bureaucratized, and it typified Jenkins’ view that these OSS trainees should be treated as adults with their own responsibility for following rules which were explained and justified not simply promulgated. He relied on the self-discipline of individuals and their own motivation. The instructions were simple and direct.¹³⁴

¹³² Lawrence L. Hollander, N4JYV, “A Brief History of Area C,” in James J. Ranney and Arthur L. Ranney, eds., *The OSS CommVet Papers*, 2nd ed. (Covington, Ky.: James F. Ranney, 2002), 11.

¹³³ “History of the Schools and Training Branch, Office of Strategic Services,” history prepared in 1945, but not declassified until 1980s, published as Cassidy, ed., *History of the Schools & Training Branch*, 134.

¹³⁴ “This camp is part of America’s war effort, and the enemy would like to know who is trained here, how they are trained, when they leave, where they go, and many other facts which may seem small and unimportant but which may cost American lives or delay the winning of the war. Therefore: In talking to anyone in this camp— If you are a student or trainee, do not tell anyone anything about yourself—your personal history or the mission you are being prepared for....In talking or writing to anyone outside this camp— DO NOT TELL ANYONE:

1. The location of this or other O.S.S. camps, or anything which would indicate their location—such as the names of nearby towns, or the characteristics of the surrounding countryside.
2. Names of persons here, or other information about them or their arrivals at and departures from ‘C’.
3. The methods and equipment of the Communications School or other information about it.

In February 1945, Major Jenkins retired as commanding officer at Detachment C. “He was a tough nut, an old Marine.... You did not want to cross him. A tough little guy. He let you know that he was in command and you would do what he said. He was a disciplinarian, not unfair, but tough,” recalled Joseph J. Tully, an enlisted member of the cadre. “When he retired, we threw him a hell of a party.”¹³⁵

Jenkins was succeeded as C.O. by Captain Howard E. Manning. Veterans remember Manning as a fine commander, a pleasant, serious officer, who, in keeping the OSS tradition did not insist on strict military protocol.¹³⁶ Manning came from Chapel Hill, North Carolina, where his father had been dean of the medical school and his grandfather, dean of the law school. Howard Manning was graduated from the University of North Carolina and then Harvard Law School. He returned home to become a practicing attorney, and an amateur ham radio operator.¹³⁷ In January 1941, at age 26, he enlisted in the Army as a private but within a year had risen to sergeant-major and after OCS was commissioned a 2nd lieutenant in 1942. Assigned as an instructor at the Field Artillery School at Fort Sill, Oklahoma and then Camp Roberts, California, Manning earned excellent reviews and promotions.¹³⁸

Jenkins’ replacement was personally selected by Colonel Henson L. Robinson, head of the Schools and Training Branch. He picked Manning because, Robinson thought the was “ideally suited by civilian background and military experience to do a superior job” as commanding officer at Area C, “where a knowledge of radio communications, ability to command troops, and supervise and control the varied and complex

Don’t try to maintain secrecy by telling lies. In talking or writing to your family, friends or other people—if you are an enlisted man or officer—just tell them you are in a military camp where you get the usual military training—such as drill and marksmanship with weapons. Then you won’t arouse curiosity or get tangled up with a story you can’t make ‘stick’....

[Instructions on mail, which went through P.O. Box 2601, Washington, 13, D.C.; proper response to armed guards who patrolled Area C during hours of darkness; prohibition of cameras or taking pictures; the posting of Communications School Training schedule for each week; the posting each day of schedules for physical training, weaponry, close combat, etc. The training schedules were posted on the bulletin boards at the Mess Hall, Code Room, and School Headquarters]

You are held responsible for being there at the right time, and no claim that you did not notice your name or section number of this schedule will excuse you.... Maps, showing camp C-1 and C-4 and the ranges are posted in the mess halls and elsewhere, and you can also get information from men who have been here long enough to know their way around.”

Albert H. Jenkins, Major, USMCR, Commanding, “Information and Regulations for All Personnel at Detachment ‘C,’” 18 August 1943, copy in White Binder, “OSS,” Park Archives, Prince William Forest Park, Triangle, Va.

¹³⁵ Joseph J. Tully, telephone interview with the author, 23 March 2005.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, and Roger L. Belanger, telephone interview with the author, 11 April 2005.

¹³⁷ Betty Bullard Manning, widow of Howard Manning, telephone interview with the author, 4 March 2005.

¹³⁸ Howard E. Manning, file, and Col. H.L. Robinson to Chief, Personnel Procurement Branch, OSS, 3 January 1945, subject: request for procurement of military personnel, both in CIA Records (RG 263), OSS Personnel Files, Box 37, National Archives II.

administrative functions incidental to camp operation” was required.¹³⁹ The tall, imposing 30-year-old Manning replaced the small, wiry, and aging Jenkins. Manning brought a new burst of energy to the command, and Donovan himself came down to Area C shortly after Manning had assumed command.¹⁴⁰ The two COs at Area C had different leadership styles. Jenkins was commanding but Manning was persuasive.¹⁴¹ Effective accomplishment of mission was a strong point with Manning.¹⁴² “He was an aggressive man and a tough man. He could control other men,” his widow recalled. He was also imaginative, she said. “He told me one time they needed a building, and he made a ‘midnight requisition,’ that is, he stole an entire small building and bought it to the camp.”¹⁴³

In addition to the commanding officers, the cadre of Detachment C included an adjutant, supply and mess officer, and an officer in charge of transportation, the post exchange, and the theater, plus a medical officer. From late 1942 through 1945, the medical officer for both Areas A and C was Captain Louis Lostfogel of the Medical Corps. His infirmary at C was like a doctor’s office; it had no beds. If someone was sick enough to stay overnight, they were sent to the medical facility at the Corps of Engineers School at Fort Belvoir.¹⁴⁴ One of the officers at Area C developed spotted fever after being bitten by a tick and died in June 1945.¹⁴⁵ In addition to the officers, the cadre at Area C included 25 sergeants and 32 privates, under the command of a First Sergeant, who, at least in 1944-1945, was Leonard (“Len”) Putnam from Manassas.¹⁴⁶ They included clerks, cooks, mechanics, drivers, firemen, projectionists, even a camp barber.

Perhaps the most popular officer in the camp was Captain John F. Navarro, the supply and mess officer. Navarro had been a restaurateur in New England, and he ran the mess hall, which was open to officers and enlisted men, like his family restaurant in Boston. He brought in supplies of fresh food from the Marine base at Quantico.¹⁴⁷ All the

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ David Kenney, telephone interview with the author, 11 April 2005.

¹⁴¹ Joseph J. Tully, telephone interview with the author, 23 March 2005.

¹⁴² Col. Sherman I. Strong to Deputy Director, Administrative Services, 14 June 1945, subject: Capt. Howard E. Manning, and the formal letter from Strong to C.O., Hq. & Hq. Detachment, OSS, 14 June 1945, both in OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 132, Box 10, National Archives II.

¹⁴³ Betty Bullard Manning, widow of Howard Manning, telephone interview with the author, 4 March 2005.

¹⁴⁴ Roger L. Belanger, telephone interview with the author, 11 April 2005.

¹⁴⁵ Obie L. Etheridge, telephone interview with the author, 14 January 2008. The episode was also remembered by Joseph Tully, telephone interview with the author, 17 January 2008. Neither recalled the officer’s name or position.

¹⁴⁶ Lostfogel and Putnam by Joseph J. Tully, interview with the author, 23 March 2005.

¹⁴⁷ R. Dean Cortright, W9IRY, “Early Days of Area C,” in Ranney and Ranney, eds., *The OSS CommVet Papers*, 2nd ed., 10.

veterans of Area C agreed: “We ate very well,” as staffer Joseph Tully remembered. “We had two of the best cooks in the Army...our own bakery, etc., fresh donuts, fresh Danish every morning.”¹⁴⁸ “The food was out of this world,” said trainee Marvin S. Flisser. “It was the best food you could get....We got everything fresh. We didn’t get powdered eggs. We got everything we wanted like in the best restaurant. They had all kinds of chops and steaks. On top of which, there was one area, one corner of the mess hall, where there were refrigerators, big, huge refrigerators, complete with all kinds of food for us to use.... When we came back at night [from field exercises], we were free to go into that kitchen and help ourselves. And we all did, making salami and all kinds of sandwiches and coffee. They had it all set out. There were people doing guard duty, and there was food for them [too]. The only thing we had to do was clean up after ourselves. The word from the captain was, he never wanted to hear anybody say that they were hungry....This was not regular Army fare. We used to call it the ‘silver foxhole.’ We all put on a lot of weight.”¹⁴⁹

Civilian and Military Instructors Teaching Commo Recruits

The instructional staff at Area C was divided into two groups. The communications instructors were initially mainly civilians, hired to teach Morse Code, OSS ciphers, and the operation and maintenance of transmitting and receiving equipment. Numbers varied, but at one point there were nine civilian instructors, three officers, and five enlisted men. The paramilitary instructors, were all uniformed personnel, half a dozen officers and a similar number of enlisted men, assigned to teach weaponry, close-combat, and field craft.¹⁵⁰ By August 1943, the beginning of a peak period of training when there were 210 students at Area C, the cadre numbered 84 to keep the camp running and the instructional staff numbered 27 civilian and military men.¹⁵¹

Captain Paul M. McClellan was the Chief Instructor, who administered the instructional program, at least in the latter part of 1943 and all of 1944. The instructors dealt with him, not Major Jenkins. A married officer, McClellan lived in Manassas, but he had his own office across from the mess hall.¹⁵² A Lieutenant Lethgo, who called

¹⁴⁸ Joseph J. Tully, telephone interview with the author, 23 March 2005; similarly Arthur F. Reinhardt, interview with the author at Prince William Forest Park, 14 December 2004.

¹⁴⁹ Marvin S. Flisser, telephone interview with the author, 27 January 2005.

¹⁵⁰ Table of Organization, “Area C,” two typed pages, undated, from the National Archives, copies in White Binder, “OSS,” Park Archives, Prince William Forest Park, Triangle, Va.

¹⁵¹ Daily Morning Report 23 August 1943, in Major [Frederick] Willis to General Donovan, 25 August 1943, OSS Records (RG 226), Director’s Office Records, Microfilm M 1642, Reel 42, Frame 1330. By November 1943, the Communications School at Area C had 220 CB trainees, plus 12 students from other branches, a total of 232 students. Lt. Col. H.L. Robinson to Major Teilart, 17 November 1943, subject: Report on Training Areas, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 146, Box 162, Folder 1757, National Archives II.

¹⁵² Timothy Marsh, telephone interview with the author, 18 January 2006.

himself the oldest lieutenant in the U.S. Army, was one of the few military officers who taught communications. Several enlisted men helped out.¹⁵³ The majority of instructors in radio operation and maintenance and International Morse Code work were civilians not military personnel. They were contractual employees of the Communications Branch of the OSS.

John Balsamo a civilian instructor there for much of the war, became a legend among Commo recruits. He was extremely fast and accurate at Morse Code. He could send or receive 40 words a minute. For comparison, the Communications Branch tried to get members of other branches up to six words per minute, and its own operators to around 15 or 20 words per minute. Balsamo had worked as a telegrapher on Wall Street and, as one CB trainee recalled, “He emphasized, that if he had made one mistake, it might have cost millions of dollars. So he really stressed accuracy in our transmission and reception.”¹⁵⁴ The code room building was where the Morse Code training took place indoors, there were also field exercises outdoors. The trainees would file into the room. Balsamo liked to take roll call at extraordinarily high speed, say up to 40 words a minute, Arthur (“Art”) F. Reinhardt, one of the trainees, remembered. “So you had to know your code and acknowledge it. He was going so fast that he couldn’t catch everybody raising their hands. That was a little game he played.”¹⁵⁵

The Communications Branch had sought experienced, federally-certified radio operators from radio schools and businesses, and hired them to teach at Area C. Many of them were also “ham” radio operators. A group of the civilian instructors at Area C came from Coyne Radio School in Chicago. Timothy Marsh was one of them. “Like a lot of rural, southern boys, I went north during the war,” Marsh recalled. In 1941, 20 years old and newly married, he moved to Chicago from rural Lincoln County in southern Tennessee. After graduating from Coyne, he worked as a civilian radio operator for the Army Signal Corps. In November 1943, his old instructor from Coyne, William Barlow, who was working as a civilian for the OSS Communications Branch, recruited Marsh for the CB’s new Training Area M at Camp McDowell near Napierville, Illinois. A month later, Marsh and a dozen other civilians and one career military man, Corporal Ray Cook, were reassigned to Area C. Barlow was already there. At Area C, the civilian instructors were bunked together six to a cabin; the military instructors as well as the cadre had their own facilities. Marsh, who spent a year between December 1943 and December 1944 teaching radio operation at Area C, recalled that “the military [the cadre] as a whole did not mix with us. Of course, we all shared the mess hall.”¹⁵⁶ The civilians worked as instructors and so did Corporal Cook, who also served as secretary to the director of the

¹⁵³ On Lieutenant Lethgo’s comment, Joseph J. Tully, telephone interview with the author, 23 March 2005. Lethgo is listed on the Area C instructional staff for March 1943 in “Schools and Training Branch, Monthly Report, March 1943,” p. 2, Appendix III, Part Two of the History [of Schools and Training Branch], OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 158, Folder 1722, National Archives II

¹⁵⁴ Arthur F. Reinhardt, interview with the author at Prince William Forest Park, 14 December 2004.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Timothy Marsh, telephone interview with the author, 18 January 2006.

Communications School, Captain McClellan. Marsh, who could by that time send and receive more than 20 to 25 words a minute, worked alongside John Balsamo, helping to get students up to speed. That was in the morning, in the afternoon he worked in the “radio shop,” one of the old barracks, fixing radios that needed repair. Having had training in transmitters, Marsh also filled in part-time with the transmitters, including the main transmitter for Area C. It had overseas circuits and a huge diamond-shaped antenna reaching far up into the air and aimed at Europe.¹⁵⁷

Among the military instructors for communications was 1st Lieutenant James F. Ranney from Akron, Ohio. After two years of college, Ranney, an amateur HAM radio operator, became an engineer at a radio station in Youngstown. When he was drafted, the Army sent him to Officers’ Candidate School at the Signal Corps School, Fort Monmouth, New Jersey. In the spring of 1943, when he graduated as a second lieutenant, he was recruited by the OSS, and he served as an instructor at Area C from August 1943 to January 1944. He emphasized the demanding nature of clandestine traffic. The dots and dashes of Morse code came in using OSS’s secret code, in five-letter groups. “It was in letters or numbers without obvious meaning,” he recalled. “That puts an extra strain on the operator, because he can’t make any guesses. If it was in plain language and you miss a letter, you can guess it from the context, but you have to be perfect in the code groups.”¹⁵⁸ In 1944, Ranney was sent to OSS base stations in Cairo, Egypt, then Bari and Caserta in Italy. He was part of an OSS communications team at those base stations that helped to maintain agent communications circuits to missions in Northern Italy, Yugoslavia and Albania. When the European war ended, he volunteered for the Far East and served at an OSS base Chihkiang, China until the Japanese surrender.¹⁵⁹

Recruiting Radio Operators for the OSS

OSS faced a formidable challenge in obtaining and training hundreds of radio operators to maintain the clandestine communications network that Donovan’s agency was establishing around the world. Commercial radio schools took an academic year or more to prepare operators. Major Garland H. Williams at SO had recognized the problem early in 1942 of how to get large numbers of radio operators in the OSS without spending many months, even a year, training them. The answer he said was to recruit people who already had extensive experience as a radio operator. “In such cases the training will consist of special instruction in the use of the equipment used in this service. The training period in such instances may well be of [comparatively] short duration.”¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ James F., Ranney, telephone interview with the author, 8 January 2005.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., see also James F. Ranney, W4KFR, “OSS radio station DMX—Bari Italy,” OSS radio station JCYX—Cairo, Egypt,” and “OSS Radio Station WLUR—Chihkiang, China,” in Ranney and Ranney, eds., *The OSS CommVet Papers*, 2nd ed., 29-34.

¹⁶⁰ Maj. Garland H. Williams, “Training,” p. 3, n.d. [c. February or March 1942], in OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136 Box 161, Folder 1754, National Archives II.

The new Communications Branch agreed. It sought individuals who already had experience in the operation and maintenance of short-wave radios.¹⁶¹ It would be even more preferable if they were also familiar with wireless telegraphy—the sending and receiving of messages in the dots and dashes of International Morse code. One source of such individuals was amateur radio operators. These “hams” were licensed by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), which regulated the airwaves in the public interest and which certified such operators and provided each of them with a call sign, a brief combination of letters and numbers that identified them, as they sent and received messages on the Citizens Band spectrum of radio frequencies. There were thousands of licensed amateur radio operators in the United States. Another source were the tens of thousands of others who had varying degrees of experience with radio operation and maintenance, and sometimes Morse code telegraphy, from training in the Boy Scouts, amateur clubs, commercial radio schools as well as the telegraph and radio industries. Another source was the military, trained radio operators in the Signal Corps of the U.S. Army or Army Air Forces, or as radiomen in the U.S. Navy or Coast Guard.¹⁶²

Beginning in January 1943, the Communications Branch made recruiting capable instructors and interested and able students a major priority. Competition for trained radio and electronics personnel was intense in the wartime buildup among the armed forces, the OSS, and commercial agencies, but the OSS proved quite successful in obtaining men with experience or proclivities for radio and code work from civilian and military sources. Volunteers with experience were interviewed, many at the Signal Corps School at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, but less than half of those interviewed were accepted for a task which often demanded not only skill but ingenuity, stability and courage.¹⁶³ The Communications Branch sought not just men with radio and Morse code experience, but individuals who were familiar with one of 22 foreign languages from Arabic to Swedish, and also had demonstrated particular initiative. As Donovan explained to the General Staff, “OSS communications men in the field require a higher degree of self-reliance than those assigned to a normal military operation, due to the autonomous nature of each mission.”¹⁶⁴ Nearly 700 officers and enlisted men were recruited in 1943, and 220 of

¹⁶¹ Short-waves are electromagnetic radio waves whose frequencies range from about 3 to 25 megahertz (MHz), or 3 to 25 millions of cycles of waves per second. This is roughly similar to the high-frequency (actually super high frequency, SHF) band or range. It is, much higher than the normal AM commercial radio station band, which is medium frequency (MF) and ranges from 540 to 1,800 kilohertz (kHz), thousands of cycles per second. When short waves strike certain layers of the ionosphere, they are usually reflected back to earth. Through such “bouncing” off the ionosphere, such short waves of high frequency radio transmission can be sent and received at long distances. To direct them to specific places over such distances requires a combination of transmission power, appropriate antenna, skillful manipulation of the antenna and good fortune with atmospheric conditions.

¹⁶² Lt. Col. H.L. Robinson, “Schools and Training,” October 1943, in OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 158, Folder 1723, National Archives II.

¹⁶³ OSS, *War Report of the O.S.S.*, 136.

¹⁶⁴ William J. Donovan to Assistant Chief of Staff (G-1 [personnel]), 19 June 1943, subject: request for priority to procure communications personnel from the Signal Corps, OSS Records (RG 226), Director’s Office Records, microfilm 1642, Reel 42, Frame 1319, National Archives II.

those enlisted men were familiar with a foreign language, and thus might become radio operators in SO or OG teams used behind enemy lines.

Area C was already overcrowded by August 1943, and future requirements for additional communications personnel had expanded beyond its capacity.¹⁶⁵ Headquarters recognized that the OSS role overseas was accelerating rapidly and would require a dramatic increase in trained communications personnel. Over the winter of 1943-1944, a total of 400 communications operators and technicians would need to be trained for base stations and mobile unit, a figure wholly aside from the training of agent operators and Direction-Finding teams. Consequently, the branch increased its recruiting drive, acquired another training facility, Area M at Camp McDowell, Illinois, which would operate over the winter, and expanded communications training schools overseas.¹⁶⁶

One of the most successful recruiters was Major Peter G.S. Mero, a former investment executive from Chicago. Energetic, engaging, handsome, fluent in several languages, but all inflected by his strong Hungarian accent, Mero helped design the training program at Area C and also obtain recruits for it. Later he was dispatched overseas, and from late 1943 to 1945, he was the chief communications officer first for North Africa and then for Italy. He was responsible for communications personnel and equipment as well as preparing radio, code plans, and frequency allotments for all OSS missions in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations.¹⁶⁷ More than one OSS Communications veteran (or CommVet, as they called themselves) remembered being recruited by the dynamic Major Mero. W. Scudder Georgia, Jr., who along with Frank V. Huston and James Herbert, were new naval officers and radio instructors in Chicago in 1943, when Mero gave them a pep talk about joining the OSS. Georgia remembered Mero's "dedicated and passionate eloquence as he described the wonders which would befall us 'out there' if we joined up." Georgia began to daydream about a glamorous Hollywood version of the Far East. "I heard the words 'OSS' reverberating like a distantly struck gong. After that the room became silent and I sort of remember turning to Frank and saying with eyelids still at half mast: 'OSS? Why not?' Upon hearing that innocent question, the room reverberated as Major Mero slapped the conference table with the flat of his palm and sternly announced: 'Ah, vot I want is man vid gutts.' Frank,

¹⁶⁵ The morning report for 24 August showed nearly 350 persons at Area C (a station complement of 87, 27 instructors, 210 trainees, plus 3 officers and 24 graduates awaiting orders). Daily Morning Report, Communications School, Detachment "C," 14 August 1943, OSS Records (RG 226), Washington Director's Office Records, microfilm 1642, Reel 42, Frame 1334, National Archives II.

¹⁶⁶ Major [Frederick] Willis to Officers of the Communications Branch, 23 August 1943, subject: raising our sights on equipment and manpower, OSS Records (RG 226), Director's Office Records, microfilm, 1642, Reel 42, Frames 1330-1332, National Archives II.

¹⁶⁷ Information on major, later lieutenant colonel, Peter G.S. Mero derived from several sources, including Communications Branch veterans Arthur Reinhardt, Great Falls, Va., email to the author, 23 September 2005; Peter M.F. Sichel, email to the author, 20 September 2005; Allen Richter, telephone interview with the author, 16 March 2007; SO veteran, Albert Materazzi, email to the author, 19 September 2005; the obituary of Mero's widow, Sarah M. Sabow Mero, Brenda Warner Rotzoll, "Sarah M. Mero: Handled Secret WWII Transmissions," *Chicago Sun-Times*, 25 November 2003; and various first-hand references in James J. Ranney and Arthur L. Ranney, eds., *The OSS CommVet Papers*, 2nd ed. (Covington, Ky.: James F. Ranney, 2002).

never one to falter at drawing to an inside straight, nodded as he also said: ‘Why not?’ The next thing we knew, we had signed a bunch of papers and were shaking hands all ‘round. We had joined up!’¹⁶⁸ After a stint at Area C, the three friends found themselves in the Mediterranean Theater: Frank Huston working out of Bari, Italy, managing training and the message center there as well as helping to run guns to Tito’s partisans in Yugoslavia, and Georgia Scudder, eventually also working out of Bari and then on a small island near Corfu, where he trained agent-operators for German occupied Greece and helped keep their equipment repaired.¹⁶⁹

Commo recruits came to OSS from a variety of backgrounds and through various means. Frank Huston had learned radio operation in the Coast Guard in the 1930s and was recruited from the Navy by Peter Mero. Roger L. Belanger came from a small town near South Portland, Maine, joined the Army at 18 in February 1943 and was trained as a radio operator by the Army Air Corps, from which the OSS recruited him because of his skill with radios and his fluency in French. After training at Area C from September to November 1943, he was sent to England on the *Queen Elizabeth* and worked outside of London at an OSS base station that handled radio traffic for the D-Day invasion. He returned to the United States and then in January 1945 to Area C, where he trained operators for duty in the Far East.¹⁷⁰ Edward E. Nicholas, Jr. from Rock Island, Illinois, was studying electrical engineering at the University of Illinois when he joined an Army Signal Corps program that sent him to the University of Chicago to study advanced microwave design. Recruited by OSS, Corporal Nicholas spent nearly three months training at Area C in the summer of 1943. Shipped to the Mediterranean he worked a transmitter in Algeria and then in Corsica and Italy before volunteering in January 1945 for a sub-base assignment, which turned out to be Tirana, Albania, where with a little 50-watt transmitter he communicated between field agents and the Bari base station.¹⁷¹ Vincent L. Gonzalez, Jr. was born in Havana, Cuba in 1918 and came to New York City with his family around 1930. After high school, he worked as a runner, got married, and when classified 1A by his draft board, joined the merchant marine, where he obtained his commercial telegraph license from the FCC in December 1943. Soon he was recruited by the OSS, given basic training, and as a telegrapher also fluent in Spanish was assigned as a clerk to the American Embassy in Spain a neutral nation but filled with intrigue and also an escape route for downed fliers. That was his cover for espionage while in Madrid, where he remained until the war ended.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁸ W. Scudder Georgia, Jr., KD3P, “It’s All Greek to Me and Other Stories,” in Ranney and Ranney, eds., *The OSS CommVet Papers*, 2nd ed., 151. The meeting was probably in late June 1943.

¹⁶⁹ Steven Huston, son of Frank V. Huston, telephone interview with the author 24 September 2005; and Maj. C.A. Porter to Lt. Frank Huston, 22 February 1944, subject: message center, Bari, copy provided by Steven Huston to the author, 14 October 2005; W. Scudder Georgia, Jr., KD3P, “It’s All Greek to Me and Other Stories,” in Ranney & Ranney, eds., *The OSS CommVet Papers*, 151-164.

¹⁷⁰ Roger L. Belanger, telephone interview with the author, 11 April 2005.

¹⁷¹ “Ed Nicholas, Jr., WB4TJJ,” in *XBLCD: Newsletter of the OSS CommVets*, VI.6 (March-April 1995), 1; and Army personnel record of Edward E. Nicholas, Jr. Ned Nicholas, son of Edward N. Nicholas, Jr., telephone interview 17 July 2005 and letter and packet to the author, 18 July 2005.

¹⁷² “Vincent L. Gonzalez, Jr., W2JHU,” Ranney & Ranney, eds., *The OSS CommVet Papers*, 2nd ed., 195.

OSS Communications Branch recruited Spiro Cappony from U.S. Navy. The son of Greek immigrants, Cappony was born and raised in Gary, Indiana. He attended Michigan State College but dropped out in 1943 at age 20 to join the Navy. After boot camp, he was sent to naval radio communications school being held at Miami University in Ohio. Skilled in telegraphy and fluent in Greek, Seaman Cappony was recruited by OSS to serve as a radioman in Special Operations missions in Greece. Cappony learned OSS communications equipment and procedures at Area C. Then underwent paramilitary training at Area B. After additional training in North Africa and the Middle East, Cappony, as will be seen in a subsequent chapter, accompanied a team of Greek Americans to destroy bridges and railroads in Greece in spring and summer 1944 to prevent German troops there from reaching France to opposed the Allied landings.¹⁷³

Raised on a family farm near Buffalo, Arthur (“Art”) Reinhardt had learned Morse code as a Boy Scout. After graduating from high school in 1943 and joining the Army Air Corps, he was sent to communications school in Scott Field, Illinois. When he finished second or third in a class of 1,500, the OSS recruited him for the Communications Branch, and from June to August 1944, Reinhardt spent ten weeks training at Area C. After graduation, he and his 23 classmates were sent to China. Serving as a radio operator in forward substations, he received, transmitted and decoded radio messages to and from OSS Secret Intelligence teams and Special Operations teams behind Japanese lines to the OSS main base station in Kunming. His substation in Suich’uan survived regular bombing attacks by enemy planes and was eventually overrun by the Japanese Army in December 1944. Reinhardt was then assigned as a radio operator/cryptographer for a field intelligence team, communicating from the field to a sub-base at Ch’angt’ing. Later, in June 1945 he was sent to a sub-base south of Shanghai, which received information about Japanese ship movements from a host of coast-watchers and transmitted it to Admiral William F. (“Bull”) Halsey’s fleet in the western Pacific. The information proved extremely valuable, enabling the U.S. Navy, for example, to locate and destroy all 26 Japanese ships in one major convoy.¹⁷⁴

Curriculum at Communications School

Communications School at Area C involved ten to twelve weeks of course work for Commo Branch trainees, depending on their degree of skill and previous experience. A ten-week course included 490 hours of instruction and practice, most of it in communications but with some paramilitary training also included.¹⁷⁵ Most of the

¹⁷³ Spyridon George Kapponis (Spiro Cappony), telephone interviews with the author, 16 September and 4 October 2006, plus material in Spiro Cappony, packet to the author, 31 October 2006.

¹⁷⁴ Arthur F. Reinhardt, interview with the author at Prince William Forest Park, 14 December 2004, and additional information in Arthur F. Reinhardt, email to the author, 24 February 2007.

¹⁷⁵ As described by the Communications Branch in October 1943, the Communications School curriculum for OSS radio operators and technicians included the following totals during ten weeks of training: Introduction and training objectives 1 hour; proficiency tests (code aptitude test) 3 hours; physical training

trainees at Area C were already quite familiar with radio work and Morse code. There are two radio methods of transmitting energy or electronic messages—one is by voice, the other by telegraphic signals referred to as CW, for the continuous wave generated in those days by a vacuum tube. The main training at the Communications School involved the quick and accurate use of wireless telegraphy, International Morse (CW) Code. Instructors sought to get the trainees up to around 20 words per minute, accurately sending and receiving those dots and dashes. In the Code Room building, students would practice sending and receiving messages from each other or the instructor. They would also transcribe messages from taped transmissions operating at faster and faster speeds.

OSS had a variety of radio equipment, and students had to learn how to use and maintain these transmitters and receivers, their power sources, and their antennae. OSS special equipment included the SSTR-1, a small portable field wireless set that could fit into a “suitcase” with AC generated by batteries or a hand crank; the SCR299/399, a larger mobile unit mounted in the back of an Army truck with a gasoline-powered AC generator in a small trailer, and major base station transmitters and receivers with their independence power sources and enormous antennae.¹⁷⁶

Most of the operating practice was done off the air, simply in the classroom, but to achieve greater realism, the Communications School wanted to have its trainees practice on the air, that is communicating with wireless radio telegraphy between the field and the base. Peter Mero, one of the most energetic recruiters and entrepreneurs in the Communications Branch, obtained from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) specific frequencies for use in OSS training, as well as a call sign, XBLCD, so that FCC monitors could recognize traffic as being from the OSS Communications School.¹⁷⁷

Instructors like James Ranney and Timothy Marsh took the trainees out into isolated rural areas so that they could practice communicating from the field with the base station at Area C. Ranney would go the motor pool at Area C, and gas up a customized version of the standard 2 ½ ton (“deuce and a half”) Army truck. Inside the back was a 500 to 600 watt transmitter and two or three operators’ positions, each with a sending key and receiver. An antenna emerged above the truck’s cab, and a small trailer containing a five- or ten-kilowatt, 120-volt portable generator was towed behind. “We would go out usually in the vicinity of Fredericksburg, twenty-five miles or so from the camp, and find a good place to park,” Ranney said. “We would send the [signal] traffic

60 hours; weapons (pistol and M1 rifle) 32 hours; dismounted drill 60 hours; International Morse Code, receiving and sending—including code, table nets, procedure, visual communications (wigwag and blinker), general security and transmission security—114 hours; radio material: including fundamentals of electricity, receiver and transmitter—96 hours; cryptography, including cryptographic security—22 hours; camouflage—2 hours; hygiene and camp sanitation—4 hours; practical communications work (watches in base station, 8 hour shifts; watches in mobile sub-base, 8 hour shifts; field work with special field equipment)—96 hours. Course total: 490 hours of instruction and practice in ten weeks. *Mobilization Training Program: Mobilization Training Programs for Officers and Enlisted Personnel Required for Special Overseas Assignments* (Washington, D.C.: Office of Strategic Services, n.d. [January 1944?]), 9-10, pamphlet in OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 146, Box 223, Folder 3106, National Archives II.

¹⁷⁶ OSS, *War Report of the O.S.S.*, 136-140.

¹⁷⁷ R. Dean Cortright, W9IRY, “Early Days of Area C,” in Ranney and Ranney, eds., *The OSS CommVet Papers*, 2nd ed., 9.

back and forth between the base and our unit.” “Generally we were stopped when we were transmitting, but sometimes, just for fun, we would fire up the generator on the run, and they would send back to camp while we were on the road. That was good practice, because then you would run into fading and dead spots and so forth.”¹⁷⁸

Codes and Ciphers

Codes and ciphers were essential to maintaining the security of OSS communications, and trainees had to learn and practice them. The OSS defined a code as a method of concealing a message in such an agreed upon way as to make it appear innocent. For example: “No news received for ages, are you well?” might be agreed upon to mean “keep on with the plan as arranged.” A cipher was a way of converting a message into symbols which did not appear innocent but which had no meaning to a person not possessing the key. As an example, the “playfair” substitution cipher, first used in World War I, combined relative security with great simplicity. It was based on a grid 5 by 5 containing 25 cells. A key word containing at least eight different letters was memorized and then used as the key to unscrambling the letters in the boxes.¹⁷⁹

The Communications School spent 22 hours on cryptography out of the 490 hours of instruction in the ten-week course at Area C for radio operators and technicians of the Communications Branch. OSS also trained some men and women specifically as cryptologists, code and cipher clerks they were called, who would work at base stations. The cryptologists, men and women, received their training at the Signal Center at OSS Headquarters in Washington. Male cipher clerks were subsequently sent to Area C for weapons and other paramilitary training before being sent overseas. One of those male cryptologists was Gail F. Donnalley, who had earned a merit badge in radio communications as a Boy Scout in Lisbon, Ohio. In his sophomore year at Ohio Wesleyan University, he was recruited by OSS and trained in ciphers in Washington. He spent ten days receiving paramilitary training at Area C in October 1943. Sent abroad, Technical Sergeant Donnalley worked at cryptology at OSS bases stations in Cairo, Egypt and then Bari and Caserta, Italy between January 1944 and July 1945.¹⁸⁰

Another cryptologist who took paramilitary training at Area C was John W. Brunner from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Brunner had a gift for languages. As a child, he was already reading well before he went to kindergarten. Later, he was studying classical Greek and Latin at College, when he was drafted at 19 in 1943. The Army sent him to study Chinese at Berkeley, but less than a year later, he and the other top student in the class were recruited by the OSS and trained as cryptologists. “They decided that people skilled in languages could learn coding most quickly,” Brunner said. After cipher

¹⁷⁸ James F. Ranney, telephone interview with the author, 8 January 2005; Timothy Marsh, telephone interview with the author, 18 January 2006.

¹⁷⁹ “Codes and Ciphers,” typed lecture, September 1943, included in “Syllabus of Lectures,” February 1944, binder, in OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 158, Folder 1717, National Archives II.

¹⁸⁰ Gail F. Donnalley, telephone interview with the author, 30 April 2005.

training, he was sent to Area C for a week of weapons instruction in October 1944. Sent to India by ship, and flown across the Himalaya Mountains to China, Brunner served in Kunming, working in the main OSS base station message center, coding and decoding, messages to and from Washington. The code room was considered so secret, that only a few authorized personnel were allowed to enter. “We were told that even if General Donovan arrived, he would have the permission of the officer in charge to enter. We should not let him in without the captain’s permission.” After Japan’s surrender, he worked in Shanghai and then Tientsin doing interpretation as a linguist in Chinese for counter-intelligence and secret intelligence branches until his discharge in March 1946.¹⁸¹

OSS’s code and cipher systems evolved over time, and they were taught on a more elementary basis to all the Communications Branch trainees studying at Area C. The cryptography course at Area C, as one student radio/base station operator remembered “was two fold. One was the encryption and decryption, [the other was] how you set the message up, so the recipient would know how to break it. In other words, you have to encrypt it and send it, and the recipient has to receive and decode it. It is very, very procedurally oriented. You have to do it in a very precise way.”¹⁸² In early 1944, the students at Area C were learning what was called “double-transposition.” You chose a word, a code word. Using that word and depending on how the letters of the alphabet showed up, that would be number one. You made a matrix, lining them up one way and then the other way. The recipient on the other end, who knew what the code word was, would go through the reverse process to decipher it. It was a very laborious process. But the double-transposition system was cumbersome and also not very difficult for experts to break.

Consequently, in late 1944, OSS switched to the One-Time-Pad (OTP) as the main coding system in the field. It was based on a random key text and the Vigenère cipher, which encrypted an alphabetic text based a triad.¹⁸³ The triad included a key letter, the plain text letter and the cipher text letter. The operators learned to memorize 676 combinations.¹⁸⁴ Using a conversion chart on the back of a One-Time-Pad codebook, the key letter was read along one margin while the clear/plain text letter was read on the intersecting margin. The cipher text letter was where the two letters intersected. In the One-Time-Pad, each page contained a key which was used only once and then destroyed. The technique was comparatively quick, simple, and practically unbreakable because of the one-time use feature. According to OSS cryptographer John W. Brunner, a skilled cryptographer using a One-Time-Pad could encode or decode brief messages more quickly than on the electric code machines.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸¹ John W. Brunner, telephone interview with the author, 21 March 2005.

¹⁸² Arthur Reinhardt, interview with the author at Prince William Forest Park, 14 December 2004.

¹⁸³ David Kahn, *The Codebreakers: The Story of Secret Writing* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999). The man popularly if unfairly, credited with devising it is Blaise de Vigenère (Veez-ih-nair) in France in the 1580s.

¹⁸⁴ Arthur Reinhardt, “Deciphering the Commo Branch,” *OSS Society Newsletter* (Fall 2006): 6; and Arthur Reinhardt, interview with the author at Prince William Forest Park, 14 December 2004.

¹⁸⁵ John W. Brunner, *OSS Weapons*, 2nd ed. (Williamstown, N.J.: Phillips Pub., 2005), 240-43, which includes photographs of One-Time-Pads and training charts.

During his training in encoding as well as code-breaking before he went to China, Brunner had sent to the Message Center directly under Donovan's office in October 1944. It was an exciting place, he recalled. "They showed us the famous machine that made the One-Time-Pad. It was the only machine at that time that could do that. It was impossible [for a person] to make the key to the code books. The key had to be a completely random set of letters. But the only way to make them was to hire a couple of hundred women and set them down at typewriters and have them type randomly. There was no way that they could produce enough code books for general use. But then a guy in OSS invented a way to produce random letters. With this machine, they could produce enormous numbers of code books. They did, and they distributed them to all the OSS bases around the world. It was an unbreakable code system. We were trained in it. All the field offices got code books and stopped using the old double-transposition system, which was easy to break, and switched to the new one."¹⁸⁶

Long Distance Final Field Exercise

Radio operator training at Area C concluded with a field exercise in which trainees spent a week communicating with the base station in Prince William Forest Park from a distant, remote location under adverse conditions.¹⁸⁷ The ubiquitous Peter Mero had obtained the remote facility, located nearly 300 miles away on an isolated coast near Wilmington, North Carolina.¹⁸⁸ Marvin S. Flisser, a Brooklyn College graduate, who trained at Area C during the winter of 1943-1944, remembered the week-long trip to North Carolina. They took their food and other supplies with them. After setting up the equipment, they sought to make the long-distance contact with Area C the first night. "Nighttime is a very difficult time to get message through," Flisser explained. "Up in the sky there is something called the heavy-side layer, which billows. It goes up and down and sideways. You have to be able to catch it at the proper time, so that the skip of your message would hit it and bounce down and get to where you want. You had to position yourself to get your message through, and I always got my message through."¹⁸⁹

Getting the messages through—whether from agents behind enemy lines or to headquarters in Washington—was what the "Commo" operators had to learn how to do, even under the most difficult circumstances. Some 1,500 communications personnel received their training at Area C during the war. Although many of them worked as fixed station operators at base or sub-base stations, many served as operators in the field with

¹⁸⁶ John W. Brunner, telephone interview by the author, 21 March 2005.

¹⁸⁷ OSS, *War Report of the O.S.S.*, 136.

¹⁸⁸ R. Dean Cortright, W9IRY, "Early Days of Area C," in Ranney and Ranney, eds., *The OSS CommVet Papers*, 2nd ed., 9; Marvin S. Flisser, telephone interview with the author, 27 January 2005.

¹⁸⁹ Marvin S. Flisser, telephone interview with the author, 27 January 2005.

Special Operations, Operational Groups, or Secret Intelligence teams. As one Communications veteran later wrote, “Commo underpinned everything OSS did.”¹⁹⁰

Other Uses of Area C

Area C was sometimes used by the Communications Branch or other OSS branches in special ways. When these had little to or nothing to do with communications, it was generally in the final year of the war when other areas, like A, B, D, and E, had been closed and F and RTU-11 (“The Farm”) were unavailable. Since the Army required basic military training, including weapons training, for any military personnel sent overseas, the OSS in 1944 created a four-week basic training course to satisfy that requirement. It was taught mainly at Area A-2, but a similar basic training course was offered at Area C in 1944.¹⁹¹

Although Camp C-4 was the main training area for the Communications School, an Incoming Holding and Training School at Area C was in Camp C-1. Beginning in April 1945, a preliminary training program for SO and OG personnel going to the Far East was established there.¹⁹² Captain William (“Bill”) McCarthy was in charge of C-1 at the time. A wiry, rugged, friendly officer from Newark, New Jersey and a graduate of Fordham University, McCarthy was, according to his company clerk, Corporal Joseph J. Tully, from Philadelphia, easy to get along with and also a good baseball player.¹⁹³

Area C-1 in the spring of 1945 was being used as a facility for housing returning veterans from Europe and the Mediterranean and also for training OSS troops who were going to the Far East. Ninety cocky new paratroop officers who had been recruited by OSS to lead Chinese Operational Groups being trained in China arrived at C-1 in June. “We tried to keep all the paratroop officers from destroying the place,” Tully remembered. “They horsed around a lot. They came out of [parachute school at Fort] Benning, and a lot of guys were still sowing their oats.”¹⁹⁴

In a number of instances, Area C was used to train foreigners, primarily in radio and code work, although sometimes in paramilitary skills as well. In the fall of 1942, more than a dozen Thai students at American universities who had volunteered with Donovan’s organization and already undergone paramilitary training at Areas B and A,

¹⁹⁰ Arthur Reinhardt, “Deciphering the Common Branch,” *OSS Society Newsletter*, Fall 2006, 6.

¹⁹¹ Lt. Col. H.L. Robinson, chief, schools and training branch, to director OSS, 15 May 1944, subject: Basic Training for Military Enlisted Personnel destined for Overseas Service, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 153, National Archives II.

¹⁹² “History of the Schools and Training Branch, Office of Strategic Services,” history prepared 1945, but not declassified until 1980s, published as Cassidy, ed., *History of the Schools & Training Branch*, 23, 142.

¹⁹³ Joseph J. Tully, telephone interview with the author, 23 March 2005.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

were given training in radio operation and code work at Area C-4.¹⁹⁵ Radio training for some foreign recruits continued during the war at Area C. One of the instructors, Robert L. (“Bob”) Scriven, who had worked for an Iowa radio company before being trained as a radioman first by the Navy and then by the OSS, was frustrated that most of the foreign students failed the examination on the OSS “suitcase” radio transmitter/receiver, the SSTR-1. Consequently, he suggested that a training film be made to explain the equipment visually. His idea was accepted, and he participated in front and behind the camera in preparing the film, which was given high praise in 1944 by Communications Branch chief Lawrence W. Lowman, who had been a vice President at CBS.¹⁹⁶

For the Far East, OSS trained a number of Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans (the Nisei), Korean and Thai Americans. Of course, overseas, OSS recruited a number of indigenous agents—from India, Burma, Thailand, Indochina and Chinese and Koreans from China. John W. Brunner, who served as a cryptologist in China, recalled that “we used a lot of Chinese, Thais and Japanese Americans, Nisei. We used a lot of Nisei in OSS, but I never saw any of them in training. The radio [operations] people did use Asians: Thais and Chinese. But the Nisei, Japanese speakers, were too valuable to use for radio [operations] work. They were used as translators.”¹⁹⁷

Communications instructor Timothy Marsh recalled training foreigners at Area C in wireless telegraph operation. “We did train them in how to use the little ‘suitcase’ transmitter/receiver. Most of them were Asians. We knew what was going on. They were being trained to be dropped behind enemy lines.”¹⁹⁸ A number of Koreans were trained at Area C, particularly in 1945, as the United States began to prepare for the final resistance of the Japanese armed forces in the Far East. Roger L. Balenger returned to the Communications School after serving in England. His main assignment was to train Koreans for radio and coding/decoding operations. He spent six months with them. They studied radio operations in groups of five. Usually only one of them spoke any English, and he translated for the rest of them. Balenger recalled a near disaster when they took a paramilitary course at Area C. During hand grenade practice, one of them threw a grenade, but it bounced off a nearby tree and back into the trench. Fortunately, one of the other Koreans threw it out before it exploded.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁵ Kenneth H. Baker to Lt. Col. Lane Rehm, 18 November 1942, subject: report on trainees at present date, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 146, Box 223, Folder 3106, National Archives II. Dean Courtright remembered a few Thais being trained as agent-operators at C in late 1942; R. Dean Cortright, W9IRY, “Early Days of Area C,” in Ranney and Ranney, eds., *The OSS CommVet Papers*, 2nd ed., 9.

¹⁹⁶ “R.L. (Bob) Scriven, K5WFL,” in Ranney and Ranney, eds., *The OSS CommVet Papers*, 2nd ed., 212; Col. Lawrence Lowman, chief, CB, to Lt. Kellogg, 16 May 1944, subject: production of communications film, SSTR-1, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 90, Box 18, Folder 244, National Archives II.

¹⁹⁷ John W. Brunner, telephone interview with the author, 21 March 2005.

¹⁹⁸ Timothy Marsh, telephone interview with the author, 18 January 2006.

¹⁹⁹ Roger L. Belanger, telephone interview with the author, 11 April 2005.

In July 1945, a special group of Koreans for Secret Intelligence Branch were trained at C-1.²⁰⁰ The contingent included about 30 to 50 Korean officers—captains, majors, colonels. They were known only by their Anglicized code names, such as Peter, Sam, and Joe. “Half of them could not speak English,” Joseph Tully remembered. “We got those who could, and they explained to the others.” The Koreans were trained in close order drill, pistol and rifle firing, the use of the bayonet, close combat, radio operation, and field exercises. They were at C-1 for about two months.²⁰¹ Years later, the last C.O. at Area C, Howard Manning, then a successful lawyer in Raleigh, North Carolina, told his wife that among one of the groups at Area C that had been trained to be infiltrated behind enemy lines was Korean. Seven of those trainees, he said, later became members of the cabinet of the Republic of Korea.²⁰²

Both Donovan’s new organization and the training process evolved along with the U.S. participation in the war. To be effective, the training system would also need constant tuning to the changing needs and circumstances occurring in the field overseas. The great difficulty was that Donovan’s organization had little or no experience at what it was doing at the same time that it was obtaining recruits and instructors and building its training system. The recruits, at least initially, were being trained without their, or often their branches, knowing yet what their mission would be. Later, as it gained experience in the field, the OSS had difficulty in bringing knowledge from the war zones back to the training program in a timely and integrated manner.²⁰³ The OSS was not alone in this; the U.S. Army faced similar difficulties in bringing its training programs in line with experience gained in the battlefield.²⁰⁴

In contrast to OSS, British SOE by 1943 had three years experience in training and in putting agents behind enemy lines. One of the American SO training officers was dispatched that year to evaluate instruction at SOE schools in Britain. He was so greatly impressed that he reported that “The training any prospective SO agent has received in

²⁰⁰ “History of the Schools and Training Branch, Office of Strategic Services,” history prepared in 1945, but not declassified until 1980s, published as Cassidy, ed., *History of the Schools & Training Branch*, 142.

²⁰¹ Joseph J. Tully, telephone interview with the author, 23 March 2005.

²⁰² Betty Bullard Manning, widow of Howard Manning, telephone interview with the author, 4 March 2005.

²⁰³ As late as autumn 1943, some OG students complained that the guerrilla warfare lectures at Area F were often given by senior officers who had never seen such operations or combat and were simply teaching it from the manual. One of the students, Robert Farley, who been in combat with the International Brigade in the Spanish Civil War, was outspoken in his criticism, contending that from what he had seen and experienced in Spain, some of the instructors’ assertions about guerrilla warfare were erroneous. William B. Dreux, *No Bridges Blown* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1971), 13-15.

²⁰⁴ See Theodore A. Wilson, *Building Warriors: Selection and Training of U.S. Ground Combat Troops in World War II* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, forthcoming, 2009).

our Washington [area] schools prior to his arrival in this theater is entirely inadequate and no trainees should be considered for field operations until they have had further training in this theater, which in many cases will involve a period of three months.”²⁰⁵ Special Operations Branch accepted his recommendation, but concluded that “a short training course in the United States would, at the very least, serve as a process for weeding out undesirable personnel.”²⁰⁶ Years later, comparing the training he received at OSS Areas F and B in 1943 and in Britain’s Brock Hall in early 1944, before being sent behind enemy lines in France and then China, OG Sergeant Ellsworth (“Al”) Johnson made two important observations. One was that the British instruction was almost one on one, one instructor giving personal attention to no more than a couple of students, whereas the Americans were trained in groups, whether in the classroom or outdoors. His other point was that the British instructors, unlike the Americans at least in 1943, had actual experience. “The American instructors would suggest to you what might happen. The British knew what might happen and told you. They had experience. They knew what they were doing.”²⁰⁷

OSS operational training continued through the end of the war to include assessment and preliminary training in the camps in the United States, but with additional and intensified training in OSS training camps established in overseas theaters around the world. Even then, the OSS training system was a process of trial and error, much uncertainty and considerable bureaucratic infighting between the operational branches, such as Special Operations, Secret Intelligence, and Maritime Unit that ran their own schools, and the Schools and Training Branch that sought to coordinate and centralize the training program of the OSS.

²⁰⁵ Report by Capt. John Tyson to Col. Charles Vanderblue, chief, SO Branch, 30 July 1943, *History of the London Office of the OSS, 1942-1945: War Diary*, SO Branch, OSS London, Vol. 9: Training, iii-iv, quoted in Charles H. Briscoe, “Major Herbert R. Brucker: SF Pioneer, Part III: SOE Training & ‘Team Hermit’ into France,” *Veritas: Journal of Army Special Operations History* 3:1 (2007): 72.

²⁰⁶ *History of the London Office of the OSS, 1942-1945: War Diary*, SO Branch, OSS London, Vol. 9: Training, viii, quoted in *ibid.*

²⁰⁷ Ellsworth (“Al”) Johnson, telephone interview with the author, 27 June 2008.

