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## Admiral H. Kent Hewitt, U.S. Navy Part II: High Command

John H. Clagett

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*In December 1939, H. Kent Hewitt reached a milestone for which he had prepared most of his adult life, selection for promotion to the rank of rear admiral. His role in the round-the-world cruise of the Great White Fleet, his adventures in revolutionary Cuba, his much enjoyed days in command of the Indianapolis were all behind him. Ahead lay the challenges of the greatest naval war in history. This, the second of a two-part series, reviews Hewitt's final preparations for his role in the conflict and describes his unqualified success in one of the first major counter-offensives made by the Allies in World War II—the amphibious attack on French Morocco.*

## ADMIRAL H. KENT HEWITT, U.S. NAVY

### PART II-HIGH COMMAND

by

Professor John H. Clagett

Admiral Hewitt's new flagship, the *Erie*, had been especially designed for service in the tropics with the Special Service Squadron. Rated as a gunboat and with competent and appropriate armament and excellent communications facilities, she had comfortable flag quarters, broad teak decks, and was air-conditioned throughout.

Once calls were made and received ashore and his wife Floride settled in comfortable housing, Hewitt took the *Erie* and the destroyer *Tattnall* to Ecuador, where Ecuadorian officials and scientists would be embarked for a joint Ecuadorian-American reconnaissance of the Galapagos Islands. This was an important mission because of their strategic location for defense of the Panama Canal. Of this mission, Admiral Hewitt wrote:

The trip up the fairly deep river to Guayaquil was interesting with

the strong current carrying down the branches of trees and other objects apparently washed from the shores. Anchoring off the city, close to shore, was easy, as the ship never swung. . . . On the short run to the Galapagos, we had the chance to become thoroughly acquainted with our guests and to establish a most cordial relationship. The senior of these, the Chief of the Ecuadorian Army, Colonel Urrutia, was an excellent officer of Indian extraction who had undergone training with the Italian cavalry. . . . Here again my slight knowledge of Spanish came in well, and we got along famously.\*

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\*H.K. Hewitt, "Memoirs," unpublished manuscript. Unmarked quotations used herein originated from this source.

Admiral Hewitt was fascinated by the fantastic islands. The mission explored their harbors and areas carefully before returning to Guayaquil. There Hewitt found orders for him to attend the inauguration of the new President in Quito. The trip to the high mountain capital was a memorable one; he took his senior officers and his band in a self-propelled railway car through indescribable views, with a 2-hour sumptuous luncheon stop at Rio Bambo. Hewitt attended all of the ceremonies in the next 3 days wearing his rear admiral's full dress uniforms for the first, and one of the last, times. Twice during his stay, he went horseback riding outside the city with "my friend, Colonel Urrutia." Admiral Hewitt's capacity for making friends was as effortless and effective as his own warm smile.

For the return voyage to Panama, it was necessary to refuel the *Tattnall* at a Peruvian port in the Gulf of Guayaquil. Hewitt radioed Lima for permission, which was at once received. Concerning this affair, Hewitt wrote:

When next I saw the skipper of the *Tattnall* he was open-mouthed in astonishment. He had had the "red carpet" rolled out for him. The entire place had been put at his disposal. It seemed that my old Peruvian friend and shipmate of the *Missouri* and Around the World Days, Carlos Rotalde, now a Vice Admiral and Peruvian Minister of Marine, had thought that I was coming in. Thus nothing was too good for the *Tattnall*. I had hoped to go to Callao later and renew our old acquaintance, but it was not to be.

As late as 1971 Admiral Hewitt received a letter from Admiral Rotalde, concluding with a toast that pleased him very much—a traditional phrase in Spanish wishing for him money, health, and time to enjoy them.

Three months after Hewitt assumed his command, the Special Service Squad-

ron was disbanded, and Hewitt was ordered to command Cruiser Division 8. While he might have been somewhat disturbed—with Mrs. Hewitt more so—at the sudden disruption of an interesting and most pleasant tour of duty, Admiral Hewitt was more than delighted with this superb command of four new, six-inch-gun cruisers. No other assignment could have suited him more fully.

In early November, Admiral Hewitt relieved Rear Adm. Ford A. Todd aboard the *Philadelphia* at San Pedro. The remaining three cruisers of his division, the *Brooklyn*, *Savannah*, and *Nashville* were in Hawaii with the fleet. The *Philadelphia* proceeded at once to Mare Island Navy Yard where she was to have some alterations made involving additional antiaircraft guns and ready ammunition stowage. While at the yard, she received orders to strip ship for wartime conditions. All nonessentials, especially inflammable materials, were sent ashore—carpets, furniture not strictly required, curtains, and all uniforms except service dress. Admiral Hewitt's elegant new full dress uniforms were sent ashore to remain there. Even paint was scraped off inner portions of the ship in order to reduce fire hazard. Stripped of all luxury and much of her comfort, the *Philadelphia* joined the fleet shortly before Christmas 1940. Mrs. Hewitt sailed for Hawaii with the Matson Line, and she and Admiral Hewitt spent "a very pleasant Christmas in the famous old Halekulani Hotel, on the beach at Waikiki." It would be their last Christmas together for a long time.

In those days the Navy was a close-knit family in which all senior officers knew each other. Hewitt knew all four of his captains well. His immediate superior was Rear Adm. Husband E. Kimmel, Commander Cruisers, Battleforce; the Fleet Commander in Chief as Admiral "Joe" Richardson. The Christmas pause was early ended, and the fleet was at once immersed in a heavy program of training under war conditions. All ships

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were kept at a maximum state of readiness, full up with fuel, ammunition, and provisions. No large ships ever put to sea without an antisubmarine escort of destroyers, and ships ran darkened at night. They never anchored outside of Pearl Harbor, the only harbor in the Islands not open to submarine attack. Admiral Hewitt wrote:

I am glad to be able to testify here that no one could have been more indefatigable than Admiral Kimmel in getting his cruisers ready to face what all felt sure was coming. We never knew what he was going to spring on us next. He was liable to come suddenly aboard any ship of his command and hold any emergency or casualty drill that came into his head. For instance, with the ship at battle stations, he might . . . pull the power switch to a turret, and see how long it took to get it in operation again with jury rigged connections. One time, in particular, with my ships moored alongside each other in a nest, he directed me to sound General Quarters, and then to see how long it took to get up 100 rounds to each gun. . . . I called his attention to the regulation that only dummy or target practice ammunition could be used for a drill. He ordered me to go ahead, nevertheless, which we did, to learn many valuable lessons. We found bottlenecks in the ammunition supply, magazine stowage arrangements which needed altering, and changes in crew assignments necessary for maximum efficiency. . . . When Admiral Kimmel later was censured by the Bureau of Ordnance for violating its regulations, his only comment was "I don't give a damn—I found out what I wanted to know". . . .

Admiral Richardson, Commander in

Chief Pacific Fleet, now recommended

most strongly that the main body of the fleet be withdrawn from Hawaii to the West Coast. He felt that Hawaii was too exposed to attack, especially from the air; furthermore in the event of war the fleet would have to draw its Reserve personnel, ammunition, supplies, and equipment from the mainland. President Roosevelt believed that the presence of the entire Pacific Fleet in that advanced position would act as a prime deterrent to Japanese aggression. Admiral Richardson refused to alter his stand, and on 1 February 1941, he was detached, relieved by Admiral Kimmel, who became as energetic in readying the fleet for war as he had been with his cruisers. Admiral Hewitt wrote:

At the exchange of command ceremonies, after bidding farewell to Admiral Richardson, I shook hands with Admiral Kimmel, congratulated him, and wished him the best of luck. Looking me in the eye he replied, "Well, Hewitt, I'm going to need it." Never shall I forget that; much as he deserved the best, his luck could not have been worse.

In the spring of 1941, the Pacific Fleet was acutely conscious of the possibility of a Japanese air attack on it while at anchor in Pearl Harbor. An Air Defense Board, headed by Rear Adm. P.N.L. Bellinger, commander of the Naval Air Force based on Oahu, prophetically suggested that an enemy carrier attack could be delivered shortly after dawn from the northward in a 60-degree sector between 330 degrees and 030 degrees. Assuming a high-speed run during the night, they said the attacking force could, at dusk the previous evening, be as far out as some five or six hundred miles. The only American planes with sufficient range to meet such a threat were the Navy patrol planes, and there were only enough to cover this particularly dangerous sector for portions of the time.

Admiral Hewitt wrote:

With the international situation constantly growing more grave, I became concerned about the presence of my wife in the Islands, and endeavored to persuade her to return to the Mainland. She would have none of it. However, since occasionally some ships would vanish into the unknown, I finally made her promise that if I did not turn up in a reasonable time after I was expected, she would take ship.

In early May, Hewitt commanded a high-speed task force which transported a detachment of marines to Midway Island. The force returned to Hawaii without incident, but a few days later, on 19 May 1941, the fleet went to sea for maneuvers, to last 10 or 11 days. Hewitt's flagship, *Philadelphia*, was to depart for overhaul at Mare Island after the maneuvers so, before leaving port, Hewitt shifted his flag to the *Savannah*. At the end of the first day's exercises, under conditions ensuring complete secrecy, *Savannah*, *Mississippi*, and a number of destroyers were ordered to leave the fleet, steam on such and such a course until out of sight, at which time ComCruDiv 8 was to open a second sealed envelope.

The second envelope, which had been enclosed in the first received from a destroyer signaling "Important Mail on Board" ordered Hewitt to take command of Task Force 7, composed of four groups of which he already had the first; the other three were to be similarly detached at 1 or 2 day intervals. Each group was to proceed independently to the Panama Canal, preserving strict radio silence and avoiding all contact with other shipping; they were to transit the canal at night, concealing the ships' identity and holding no communication with the shore. Each group was to report to the Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet.

Task Force 7 included in all Cruiser

Division 8, Battleship Division 3, and 13 destroyers, a sizable force.

New orders received during the transit of the canal sent the groups to Guantanamo for a rendezvous. Hewitt had a few days in that familiar bay and the pleasure of meeting again his old friend Raymond Spruance. They would not meet again for a long time, since Admiral Spruance's wartime services were to be in the Pacific.

President Roosevelt had declared a state of national emergency, and Hewitt kept his fleet at wartime readiness on its voyage north. It dispersed on the way, with the cruisers ordered to Boston. Almost at once, the *Nashville* was detached, to participate in the movement of marines to Iceland. On 17 June Hewitt sent his two remaining cruisers into Boston and anchored the *Savannah* off the Cape Cod Canal to meet the Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet, Adm. Ernest J. King, aboard his flagship *Augusta*, for an early morning conference. At this time, since he was the senior cruiser division commander in the Atlantic, Hewitt was also Commander, Cruisers, Atlantic Fleet. After the conference, the *Savannah* proceeded to the Charleston Navy Yard. Across the dock from her lay H.M.S. *Rodney*, fresh from sinking the *Bismarck*.

The captain of the *Rodney* called promptly on Admiral Hewitt. When Hewitt returned the call, he found that the British officer's cabin was still furnished with personal items, pictures, rugs, and ornaments, even though the ship had just been in combat. The British Navy retained the amenities aboard its vessels, believing that the aid to morale more than counterbalanced the slight increase in inflammable material. The U.S. Navy stripped its vessels down until the wardrooms looked like unfinished garages. There is something to be said for the British viewpoint.

When official business permitted, Admiral Hewitt called his daughter Floride, in Brooklyn, to her great

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surprise. She surprised him as well; when he asked if she had heard from her mother, she replied that Mrs. Hewitt was right there with her. When Admiral Hewitt failed to return with the fleet, she had acted at once, in accordance with her promise. The family had a complete and happy reunion, with Mary Kent coming up from Connecticut.

Admiral Hewitt sailed from Boston on 25 June 1941 with cruisers *Savannah* and *Philadelphia*, escorted by DD's *Wilson* and *Lang* on the first of the Neutrality Patrols that President Roosevelt had ordered conducted in the Neutrality Zone. The force reached Bermuda on 8 July. There Admiral Hewitt was joined by Comdr. Leo Bachman, as Operations Officer and Flag Lieutenant. Admiral Bachman says:

When Admiral Hewitt, then Captain Hewitt, was ordered as Head of the Department of Mathematics, I had been an instructor for the year before . . . One of the first impressions I had of Captain Hewitt was his accessibility and his understanding, as well as his complete willingness to consider new ideas. After a number of talks, he recommended certain changes that I had suggested and with which he heartily agreed. These were put into effect, and I am sure the teaching of mathematics at the Academy was improved thereby. . . . Ordered as his Operations Officer and Flag Lieutenant in CruDiv 8 . . . I finally caught the *Savannah* in Bermuda . . . I joined the Admiral there and I dug in at once on the details of the Neutrality Patrol, which he commanded at the time . . . One matter I recall about this period was the way Admiral Hewitt very rapidly cemented excellent relations with the British governor at Bermuda, and with naval and military officers stationed there.\*

During the second Neutrality Patrol, the 16th of July through the 25th, a German raider was reported with a British cruiser in pursuit. Bachman says that Admiral Hewitt took station just over the horizon from the British cruiser and was fully prepared to join in battle with the German raider, if it should be found, since it was within the limits of the Neutrality Zone.

From 1 August through the 3rd, a major amphibious exercise was scheduled on the North Carolina coast, near New River; an amphibious brigade consisting of Marine and Army troops was to be landed. Admiral King ordered that all available flag officers should witness the exercise, in view of the type of war that probably lay ahead. Hewitt proceeded westward with his current task group, *Savannah*, escort carrier *Long Island*, and two destroyers. He had himself catapulted aloft in the *Savannah's* float plane in order to observe the landing itself. He wrote:

After the beach landing was completed, I joined General Smith in his headquarters ashore to observe the purely military part of the exercise. It was all most interesting and rewarding. And while I was certain of the future probability of such operations, I little realized what was to be my own close connection with them.

On 20 September Admiral Hewitt received orders to take the *Savannah* to Argentina, Newfoundland, one of the bases newly received from Britain in exchange for the 50 destroyers. There Hewitt was to take command of Task Group 14.3, already assembling in that port. His duty would be to escort convoys bound for England. The tempo of the war was speeding up, and step-by-step the Navy was moving closer to war, actual if not declared. Task Group 14.3 consisted of the carrier *Yorktown*, the

\*Conversation with Rear Adm. Leo Bachman, U.S. Navy (Ret.).

battleship *New Mexico*, the heavy cruiser *Quincy*, the *Savannah*, and 12 destroyers.

On 1 October the group sailed east with its first convoy, exchanging it for another at the Mid-Ocean Meeting Point (MOMP) and returning to base without incident. *Quincy* cracked a frame in heavy weather and was replaced by *Philadelphia* so that Admiral Hewitt was enabled to sail in his own flagship for the first time since the preceding May on a very important convoy mission. The group convoyed a large, fast cargo convoy to MOMP; there it took over a convoy carrying a British armored division bound for the mideast by way of Halifax and the Cape of Good Hope. On the next convoy, the task group carried a Canadian armored division to MOMP; it was to replace the British division in the home islands. On its return it was ordered to a new base, Casco Bay, Me. The *Philadelphia* touched a rock on the way through the narrow entrance, and she had to go to Boston for drydocking. This mishap occurred in late November; she was still there on the fateful day, 7 December 1941.

On the Sunday of the Pearl Harbor attack, Admiral and Mrs. Hewitt were lunching with old friends in a Boston suburb; the staff duty officer had the phone number. But their host unexpectedly took them out to a restaurant. When they returned to the house they found a police car, a telephone repair truck, and an official Navy car waiting. Hewitt wrote:

The policeman asked if I was Admiral Hewitt, then informed me that I was to call my flagship immediately. The telephone truck had been sent to investigate the failure of the number to answer. Dashing into the house, I picked up the phone and called the flagship's number. The telephone operator recognized the ship's number immediately and said, "Oh are you Admiral Hewitt? It's

terrible! They've bombed Pearl Harbor. The Japs have bombed Pearl Harbor!" That is the way I learned we were at war.

Five hard months of constant convoy service followed against the ravages of extremely severe weather—a more constant enemy than the Germans. The task group's bases were *Argentia* and *Iceland*.

In February, Admiral King established the Amphibious Force, Atlantic Fleet. It was realized that the assumption of the offensive against both the Axis powers and Japan would involve major landings in the face of enemy opposition, and therefore the responsibility for the training and planning for these operations would evolve on a commander having no other duty. Rear Adm. Roland E. Brainard was assigned to this command. Brainard established his headquarters in a small building in the Hampton Roads Naval Base and began his immense task.

On 20 April Admiral Bristol, in command of *Argentia*, Newfoundland, and the base at *Iceland* and responsible for the safe passage of all convoys, died of a heart attack. Admiral Brainard was ordered to take his place. At that time Hewitt was returning from *Iceland* escorting a westbound convoy. He received dispatch orders detaching him upon arrival in port from command of Cruisers Atlantic Fleet and Cruiser Division 8 and directing him to proceed to Hampton Roads and assume command of the amphibious force.

Admiral Hewitt arrived in New York Navy Yard early in the morning; at 0830 he turned over his command to Rear Adm. Lyal Davidson. He hated to leave his cruisers, his fine flagship, and his loyal staff, but he was buoyed by his belief that even more interesting work lay ahead. Accompanied only by Leo Bachman, his flag secretary, he drove to Floyd Bennett Field and took off immediately for the Naval Air Station, Hampton Roads. By noon he was in

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command of the Amphibious Force, Atlantic Fleet.

The new ComPhibLant found plenty to do. He had only a very small staff, and the headquarters building, shared with the base force, had barely desk room for even that small number. The prospect was formidable. Amphibious operations are extremely complex, and they require the meshing of two quite diverse services, the Army and Navy. To complicate matters, the Marine division which had been assigned to the force and was already trained was transferred to the Pacific shortly after Hewitt's arrival, followed shortly by Gen. Holland Smith, USMC, who had been assisting Admiral Brainard in setting up the amphibious force. The 9th Army Division was assigned to the force to replace the Marines. Of the task ahead, Hewitt wrote:

... An efficient and successful amphibious operation, however, involves more than the mere loading of troops on a transport, embarking them and their equipment in landing craft, and setting them ashore on a selected beach. It includes the proper loading of transports so that weapons, equipment, and supplies may be unloaded in the order required (combat loading). It involves the naval gunfire and its control needed to support the landing and the first advance inland to secure a beach head. It includes a Joint Organization on the assault beach, where naval responsibility ends and army responsibility takes over; a Navy Beachmaster to handle the beaching and retraction of landing craft, to repair and salvage craft that have been stranded or disabled, to maintain communications seaward, and to take care of casualties and return them to ships; and an Army Shore Party Commander to prepare beach exits and route traffic

forward, to unload craft and dispose of their cargoes, to maintain communications forward to the front line, and to receive and turn over to the Navy casualties to be returned seaward. There also had to be joint training for navy radio and signal personnel and army signal corps crews, because communications systems of the two services differed considerably, and they had to be brought into harmony.

Hewitt's War College training, his wide experiences, and his cool mathematical mind enabled him to cope with the increasing flood of problems and plans. Schools of all types were hastily put in operation, the Little Creek base was established and enlarged, and other stations and training areas rapidly obtained and put into use. He largely took over the staff of his predecessor, with the addition of Commander Bachman who was made Intelligence Officer; Bachman's replacement as Flag Secretary was Lt. Comdr. Julian Boit, USNR, an Academy graduate who had temporarily returned to civil life. Hewitt chose Lt. Benjamin H. Griswold, USNR, as his Flag Lieutenant and Aide.

Other important members of the staff were Comdr. Stephen R. Edson, the Supply Officer; Lt. Comdr. H.R. Brookman, USNR, Engineering and Personnel; and, perhaps most important of all, Comdr. R.A.J. English, USN, Planning. Most of the staff officers remained with Hewitt throughout the war. Commander, later Captain, English, is widely considered to have been one of the great planners of the time. It pained Admiral Hewitt that English and Bachman made very real sacrifices in their own careers to remain with him. Both of them probably would have reached flag rank in active service had they not agreed to remain on his staff. The fact that they did so is a significant indication of the loyalty that Admiral Hewitt



was always able to command from his subordinates, of whatever rank.

In the matter of his staff, Hewitt made another important contribution to command organizations in World War II. He wrote:

A strictly naval staff was not enough. The joint training, and the planning for operations in which both Army and Navy were concerned, really required a naval-military staff. Upon my application to the War Department, several able Army officers were assigned to me, several of whom had had the advantage of a course at the Naval War College, and others who, with the First Army Division, had participated in the amphibious exercises of the previous fall. With these, I organized, I believe, what was the first Joint Staff, with a Navy Division headed by my naval chief of staff, and an Army Division headed by Colonel E.S. Johnson, as my army chief of staff. . . . The Navy division was organized along General Staff lines, N-1 for Personnel, N-2 for Intelligence, N-3 for Operations, and so on. On matters pertaining particularly to their own services, the two divisions operated separately, under my direction. On joint matters, however, they operated jointly, with the respective sections N-2 and G-2, for instance, and N-3 and G-3 linked together. It seemed to work well with little or no friction.

On a busy day early in June, Hewitt received orders from Admiral King to drop whatever he was doing, fly to Washington, and report to Admiral King at the Navy Department. Admiral Hewitt was busily involved on a landing beach in rumpled khakis when the message reached him. He was driven at once to the airfield where a plane was waiting. A Navy car whisked him from

Andrews Field to the Navy Department, and he reported feeling very disheveled in khaki shirt and trousers, dusty and stained from the beach, among all the smartly uniformed staff officers. King received him at once and told him he had a British naval officer he wanted him to meet and that they would lunch together in the Commander in Chief's mess.

When King took Hewitt into the mess, the latter saw a tall, young, and very handsome man in the uniform of a British vice admiral. This was Vice Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, who had recently been made commander of the British Combined Operations—the British equivalent of the Amphibious Force, Atlantic. After introducing them, King said, "Here's your admiral. Take him with you."

Admiral Mountbatten then told Hewitt that he wanted him to come to England for a few weeks and that he would show him all developments, organizations, and material that the British had worked out for amphibious operations. Hewitt accepted eagerly; he was sure he could learn a great deal from the British who had been mounting actual amphibious landings, though on a relatively small scale. Mountbatten was leaving the next day; it was arranged that Hewitt would follow him very shortly.

On the morning of 18 June 1942, Hewitt departed from Baltimore in a British Overseas Airways flying boat; with him were Bachman and the staff gunnery officer. Just before departure they had been informed that it would be necessary for them to wear civilian clothes since they were to make a stop in neutral Ireland. This occasioned difficulties. Admiral Hewitt finally "got hold of an old dark blue suit which, made years before, fitted me rather closely." The trip was a long one then, requiring an overnight stop, with a second stop in Ireland. Admiral Hewitt had been forced to sleep in his suit,

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further adding to its not very happy appearance. They disembarked in Poole, England, and took a train to London. The luggage had been handled separately, and the admiral was unable to get at his uniforms. He wrote:

As we drew into Waterloo Station and were leaving our car, I noted a group of people on the platform in uniform. As I stepped out of the train, in my rumpled and all too small suit, I was greeted by an exceedingly smart looking British Vice Admiral, Lord Louis, a British Rear Admiral, a US Brigadier General, the US Naval Attache, and assorted aides and orderlies. It was a pleasant, but under the circumstances, a somewhat embarrassing welcome.

He could not help but reflect on that day, many years before, when he had led a parade through the streets of London and sat at the head table of the Lord Mayor's banquet dressed in a vastly oversized full dress coat, hastily borrowed from a classmate.

Once more "suitably clad" and comfortable in uniform, Hewitt began an intensive, 2-weeks' tour of British facilities and operations. Every possible help and direction was given him by his British hosts, and Admiral Mountbatten led the way in making his stay as valuable as possible and pleasant as well. He was given full access to all material, even the worked-up, top-secret plans for the Dieppe raid; he also attended the full dress rehearsal for this operation.

Back in the United States rehearsals for such operations inevitably carried a faint feeling of make-believe; here it was obviously the real thing. Across that narrow channel lay Hitler's armies, as Napoleon's had lain nearly a century and a half earlier. All driving was blacked out; the cities were blacked out; and the wail of air raid sirens, even the occasional thud of bombs falling, kept the actual ugly fact of the war ever at

hand. At one of the conferences, Hewitt met General Eisenhower for the first time and was very impressed by him. He also met Brig. Gen. Mark Clark, whom he had encountered years before at Fort Lewis. He was to have many subsequent dealings with General Clark, not always wholly amicable.

Of one experience, Hewitt wrote: . . . We visited . . . the H.M.S. *Tasajera*, the prototype of all tank landing ships, the later well known LST. This was what was called a Maracaibo type oiler, a shallow draft tanker designed to carry raw petroleum from Lake Maracaibo to the refineries at Aruba. This craft had been converted by the installation of a deck to carry tanks, large bow doors, and a ramp which could be let down on the beach. We witnessed a demonstration of its capabilities from the bridge and the tank deck. Then, since we ourselves were due to land, I was invited to go ashore in a tank, an invitation which I accepted with pleasure. Going down the ramp, hanging onto the tank turret, I was amazed to see three side boys to starboard, three to port, and a boatswain's mate with his pipe. I am willing to wager that I was the first, and very likely the last, admiral ever to be piped over the side in a tank.

Admiral Mountbatten said of Hewitt's activities during these weeks, He immediately enchanted everybody by his enthusiasm, and his desire to fit in with us. He listened to everything. If a young lieutenant commander knew more than him about the job, he'd say, come on, tell me all about it. As a consequence, everybody went out of his way to help him. Another thing I talked over with Admiral Hewitt. I told him he should demand that the Navy authorize

the equipping of a headquarters ship, such as the one I had just had put into service. It has an operations room which holds the air commander, sea commander, and land commander, with their staffs, and plenty of communications equipment. This ship has guns to defend itself against air attack, but it is not a combat ship. If you are in a cruiser, for instance and naval opposition develops, your cruiser must hasten away to the sea battle, and you lose command of the situation. I believe that Admiral Hewitt was convinced from the beginning.\*

Admiral Hewitt, in fact, had much to do with the adoption of such a headquarters ship in the U.S. Navy. In his later operations in the Mediterranean, he was the first American admiral to employ such a vessel and found it essential in the proper supervising of the immensely complicated invasions that he commanded.

Admiral Mountbatten continued: You know, a remarkable thing about Hewitt, and one that impressed me very much, was his attitude toward me. I was only a captain, halfway down the captain's list, when I was taken out of my term, and made an honorary Vice Admiral, honorary Lieutenant General, and honorary Air Vice Marshall and put in command of combined operations. I was much younger than the senior officers around me... From what you say I am fourteen years younger than Hewitt, and yet in my relations with him he exhibited always the most perfect friendliness, confidence, and respect. Many officers, American and British,

somewhat resented my position, but not so with Hewitt.\*

At a conference at Combined Operations headquarters in London, arrangements were made for close liaison between PhibLant and Combined Operations, including full exchange of information and also of personnel. British officers with experience in previous landing operations were detailed to the U.S. Navy Department, and thence to Hewitt's Hampton Roads staff. When Admiral Hewitt arrived again at Hampton Roads on 4 July, he felt, with great justification, that it had been a most instructive and valuable 2 weeks.

Admiral Mountbatten said, "After that last series of conferences and agreements about exchange of personnel, Admiral Hewitt went back again to the states, where he in fact did miracles in setting up his organization. He made history..."\*\*

In this brief article, space does not allow treatment of the background of major strategic decisions then being fought out between England and the United States, but shortly after Hewitt's return to Hampton Roads, he received secret information that landings in north Africa were to be considered possible. He at once started planning for such an operation. The difficulties facing him and his planners were awesome. The invading force would have to cross 3,000 miles of open ocean, reach the destination at the right time, land 35,000 troops, supply them, reinforce them, and furnish air cover and offshore gunfire. In the summer of 1942, the United States could not even protect the shipping off its east coast against deadly and effective submarine attacks. Furthermore, the weather, always treacherous, had to be sufficiently calm

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\*Interview with Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, Royal Navy.

\*\*Ibid.

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\*Interview with Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, Royal Navy.

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off the north African coast to allow the landings to proceed.

Hewitt was given the official go ahead for Torch on 25 July 1942 at a conference with the high command in Washington. The British were to land in Algeria, inside the Mediterranean, and the Americans, in a Western Task Force, were to occupy French Morocco. U.S. Army leaders had favored a limited invasion of France in 1942, but the British, who realized the difficulties and lack of readiness as the American officers did not, were opposed. Admiral Hewitt and his staff in ComPhibLant saw it much as the British did and were greatly relieved at the final decision to undertake the north African alternative.

Hewitt and his staff, on 15 September, were able to move into the Hotel Nansemond at Ocean View, close to Little Creek; at last he had sufficient room for his rapidly growing staff and for the immensely complex planning activities. At that time a target date of 8 November was set for the Torch landings. The admiral and his staff went at the job full tilt. Hewitt worked constantly to amalgamate the naval-military portions of his command into one smoothly acting unit. He tried to instill the conviction that no matter what uniform a man wore, he was a member of one team, working toward one objective. He illustrated this by having the guard of honor at his Nansemond headquarters composed of alternate files of soldiers and sailors. Hewitt had met Patton, who was to command the Army forces, in mid-August. He urged Patton to establish headquarters near him where they and their staffs could have the daily contact Hewitt considered so important in joint planning, but Patton felt it necessary for him to be at the War Department. Thus began the gradual meshing of two very different characters that eventually resulted in a warm friendship between them. Things were not always easy in these early days. Patton was brash and flamboyant;

Hewitt was quiet and reserved, gentle in speech and manner. For a while Patton thought Hewitt to be "torpid" while Hewitt considered Patton to be needlessly stubborn in not bringing his staff to Little Creek so that the Torch training could have been done more completely and cooperatively.

One difficult problem lay in the many uncertainties involved. Not until very nearly the end of the preparation period was it known what naval units would be available. A number of the transports reached the area just in time for final rehearsals and had little or no other training. By the time the U.S.S. *Nansemond*—as the staff called the hotel—had been "commissioned," the general features of the plan were taking shape. The mission assigned to the Western Naval Task Force was "To establish the Western Task Force on beachheads ashore near Mehidia, Fedhala, and Safi, and to support subsequent coastal operations in order to capture Casablanca as a base for further military operations." The plan was based on the assumption that the French forces would resist, though it was devoutly hoped that they would not. The strong fixed defenses of Casablanca, the presence of French naval forces in the port, and the absence of suitable landing beaches ruled out any direct attack on that city. Fedhala, a small port up the coast at the extreme range of the Casablanca batteries, had practicable beaches and only minor defenses. It was chosen as the site of the main landing.

The only air support available to the Western Task Force and Western Naval Task Force would be naval air, brought along with the invasion forces. The early seizure of an airfield was considered essential. A good airfield existed at Port Lyautey on the Sebou River, some 80 miles up the coast from Casablanca. Not only was it an airfield, but also a French naval seaplane base, since the winding of the river permitted smooth landings in

almost any wind. There were good beaches on both sides of the Sebou River mouth, at Mehidia, and the fixed defenses there were minor. Port Lyautey would be the objective for the Northern Attack Group.

The relatively small tank landing craft (LCT) carried by the assault transports and supply ships could handle only light tanks. General Patton considered the 54 medium tanks of General Harmon's 2d Armored Division to be essential for the successful land attack on Casablanca. Though hundreds of the big LST were then under construction—based on the prototype Hewitt had seen in England—none were available for the Torch landings. The small phosphate port of Safi, about 160 miles south of Casablanca, had a dock which could accommodate an ex-Key West-Havana car ferry which was seaworthy and capable of carrying the medium tanks. But there were no practicable beaches except inside the protective breakwater, so that an attack there presented a special problem which required a special solution.

Two World War I destroyers were to effect an initial surprise landing at Safi by dashing through the breakwater entrance in darkness and going alongside the docks to land their companies of especially trained rangers. Their masts and stacks were cut down so that they were low in the water, giving a minimum of silhouette. They were equipped with scaling ladders adjusted to the known height of the Safi docks at the state of the tide at H-hour of D-day, a provision certainly indicative of the minute care with which the planning was done. A third destroyer, similarly altered, was to charge into the Sebou River at Port Lyautey and seize the airfield.

Admiral Hewitt wrote:

The task of establishing the Western Task Force ashore in Morocco included not only its landing at the selected points, but the

safeguarding of its movements to those areas against any enemy attack, submarine, surface, or air. Axis submarine or raider attacks might be expected at any point during the passage. At Casablanca, and also at Dakar, there were substantial French light forces and a number of submarines which had to be guarded against if the French decided to resist. Also there were two new partially completed battleships of unknown mobility, the *Jean Bart* at Casablanca and the *Richelieu* at Dakar, which might be brought into play. The French also had a considerable number of air units at a nearby field whose opposition might have to be combatted. To meet these threats required more than the cruisers, old battleships, and destroyers which were to be assigned to the various attack groups to furnish gunfire support and raider and submarine protection. Accordingly two additional groups were formed: a Support Group consisting of the new battleship *Massachusetts* and the heavy cruisers *Wichita* and *Tuscaloosa*; and an Air Group consisting of the carrier *Ranger* and four auxiliary carriers. Each Group would have a antisubmarine screen of destroyers. The former was to be commanded by Rear Admiral R.C. Giffen, and the latter of Rear Admiral E.D. McWhorter, both classmates and old friends upon whom I knew I could count for anything. In fact, I knew all my principal subordinates well and had the utmost confidence in them—a most comforting thought.

The Western Naval Task Force was designated Task Force 34. To the group was added five submarines, providing a beacon submarine for each of the three landing areas, one to observe

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Casablanca, and one to watch Dakar for any reaction by the French forces there. The cruiser *Augusta*, which had been the flagship of the Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet, was the only available cruiser with even nearly enough accommodation and communication facilities for Hewitt and his staff. She was also assigned to Task Force 34. Attack transports presented a very real problem. Hewitt wrote:

Not until very late was it possible to determine just how many would be available, and some reported barely in time for the final rehearsal. Except for the Coast Guard manned transports and the older naval transports, the training of transport crews and boat crews left much to be desired, but the date set for the landing, November 8th, was a must. We had to do the best we could with what we had.

This last was a personal motto with Admiral Hewitt, an article of his faith.

The Army, putting no faith in naval gunfire support, demanded a Zero Hour of midnight. The Navy estimated that it would require 4 hours between anchoring and the beaching of the first waves, and since that would require the transports to come in sight of land before dark, Hewitt was able to defer Zero Hour to 0400 for the Western Task Force, even though President Roosevelt would broadcast in French a message to the French in north Africa at midnight, requesting their cooperation, and the landings in Algeria would take place at that hour. The delay in approaching the coast was considered well worth the risk.

With the addition of five naval oil tankers, five fast minelayers and several minesweepers, the Western Naval Task Force was complete. It included a fleet of about 100 vessels: 3 battleships, 3 heavy and 4 light cruisers, 1 fleet and 4 converted carriers, 38 destroyers, 23 assault transports, and 6 assault supply

ships. With the exception of the Covering Group and the Air Group, which were to sortie from other points, the ships of Task Force 34 were gradually assembled in Hampton Roads for loading, final rehearsals, and training in Chesapeake Bay. In order to give ample leeway for setting deceptive courses and to allow for bad weather and breakdowns, a departure date of 24 October was selected. Thus Admiral Hewitt was following his invariable custom of allowing "velvet" in the carrying out of any schedule.

The major shipping of the Western Naval Task Force in Hampton Roads, proceeding out of the swept channel in single file, as it would have to do, would make a column some 30 miles long. In order to reduce submarine danger, Hewitt divided the force into two detachments, the advance, under Rear Adm. Monroe Kelly composed of the Port Lyautey and Safi groups, departing on 23 October 1942, with a rendezvous set for later. In view of the submarine menace, it was not practicable to let the advance detachment proceed at slow speed, so it was initially to take a southerly course, as if destined for the West Indies. To promote this deception, the Haitian Government was very secretly asked for permission to hold amphibious exercises in the Gulf of Gonaives, in the hopes that there might be some leak of information in Port au Prince. Since radio silence would be strictly observed, rendezvous and alternative rendezvous were set for the advance detachment, the Covering Group, and the Air Group.

Admiral Hewitt received orders on 21 October directing him to report at the White House at 1100 the following day. He obeyed and found General Patton arriving at the same hour, brought in by a separate entrance so that waiting reporters would not see the two officers together. President Roosevelt spoke warmly of the *Indianapolis* cruise. Hewitt wrote: "Then the

President, leaning back in his chair, with his cigarette and holder in hand, said, 'Well, gentlemen! What have you got on your minds?' Whew! As if we didn't have plenty!'" Plans were discussed at some length, then the President sent them off with a handshake and a God-speed. By midafternoon Hewitt was back at his desk at the *Nansemond* tying up some loose ends.

During these hectic days, Mrs. Hewitt had been keeping the little suite at the Hotel Chamberlain, Old Point Comfort, as she always had kept Hewitt's quarters, a comfortable and peaceful home. That evening, knowing only that her husband had been to Washington, knowing nothing of the impending invasion, Mrs. Hewitt saw her husband, who had been sitting in a lounge chair reading the newspaper, topple suddenly from the chair to the floor. She screamed, and then the admiral was sitting there, laughing. "I guess I just dropped off," he said. "This has been a long day." of the incident he wrote:

Thoroughly alarmed, my good wife marshalled me into bed and, despite all my protests, insisted on calling up my medical officer, who in response came dashing across the Roads in my barge to see me. After giving me numerous tests and finding that my eyes and other portions of my anatomy reacted properly, he merely prescribed more sleep.

A conference of about 150 of the leading military and naval officers to be involved in Torch took place in Norfolk on 23 October just before the sailing of the Advanced Detachment. Of this conference Samuel Eliot Morison wrote:

So well had secrecy been maintained that, for most of those present, this was the first indication of the objective; and the great majority of the officers on board the Western Naval Task Force never knew where they were bound until after they had

cleared the Virginia Capes. . . . At this shore conference, Admiral Hewitt gave a calm and reasoned statement of Operation TORCH and its purposes. . . . General Patton, commanding the embarked Army troops, delivered a typical "blood and guts" oration. He exhorted the Navy to remember Farragut, but predicted that all the elaborate landing plans would break down in the first five minutes, after which the Army would take over and win through. "Never in history," said he, "has the Navy landed an Army at the planned time and place. If you land us anywhere within fifty miles of Fedhala and within one week of D-Day I will go ahead and win."\*

Admiral Hewitt only smiled gently, and later said "Knowing General Patton as I do know him, I realize that that was said just for effect. He didn't really believe it at all."\*\*

On that same day, Hewitt moved aboard the *Augusta*, with his staff, accompanied by Patton and his staff. As he did so, he "gave a great sigh of relief." The interminable, frustrating days of planning, of careworn thought, of attempting to foresee the unforeseeable, were nearly over. He was where he most dearly loved to be, aboard ship, loose threads nearly gathered in, and with a great undertaking before him.

The Center Group sailed on 24 October. Admiral Hewitt wrote:

As we passed out of the channel, we felt well protected, for the air overhead was well filled with Navy patrol planes and a guardian blimp, and our destroyers were all around us. By nightfall we were

\*Samuel Eliot Morison, *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1954), vol. IX, p. 41.

\*\*Interview with Admiral H. Kent Hewitt, U.S. Navy.

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well on our way to the Northeastward—the first deception course, toward England—in five parallel columns of large ships, the *Augusta* leading the center one, and the cruisers of my old Cruiser Division 8 heading the other four. We were off to a new adventure; the plans had been made and were in process of execution, and one could only pray for the best.

Dusk fell, and then night came, and the ships faded to dark blurs in the darkness. No lights showed, no radio signals were made, no TBS phones taken from the racks. In silence and in darkness the Center Attack Group moved toward its destiny.

Two problems had developed on the day of departure. The transport *Barry Lee* had broken down, requiring the substitution of the U.S.S. *Calvert*. Since the *Lee* was combat loaded, the transfer was no simple matter. Hewitt was forced to leave the *Calvert* behind with an escort of two destroyers and necessary rendezvous instructions. The other was a hitch in the transportation of aviation gasoline for the Army planes that would be based at the Port Lyautey airfield. The task demanded a vessel of light draft that could navigate the Sebou River. The SS *Contessa* had been chartered for the job, but when her crew discovered that she was to carry aviation gas to an unspecified destination, most of them jumped ship. She was delayed while a new crew was recruited from the sailor occupants of Norfolk's jails. She would sail alone, some days later.

Hewitt had worked out a careful routine for his force. As darkness fell, destroyers in the rear of the screen dropped astern to drive down any submarine that might be trailing, and after dark a change of the base course was made. All signals were made by flag, before dark, prescribing all course changes for the night with times of execution. The changes were then automatically made at the given time with

no signal other than a whistle blast by column leaders. Screening destroyers always acted as shepherds for lagging ships. All combatant vessels had radar, which proved of inestimable value. Admiral Hewitt was uneasy the first night, for each course change carried the possibility of major disaster. He was much relieved when all went well, and when dawn came the serried ranks of the formation showed clear and plain in the grey light.

Admiral Hewitt had carefully planned various courses in order to confuse the enemy as to his destination. The Advance Detachment had departed Norfolk on a course that would have taken them to the Caribbean, off Haiti. The Center Group headed for England. The Covering Group sailed from Portland, Me., on a course that would have joined the Advance Group in the Caribbean. The Air Group sailed from Bermuda on a course for England. On 31 October, the entire Western Naval Task Force changed course to one heading for Dakar; then, on 2 November, changed course for Gibraltar. It was not until 7 November that courses clearly leading to the objectives were steered.

On the afternoon of 26 October, contact was made with the Covering Group, as scheduled, approaching from the northward. It maneuvered to take station some 15 miles in advance of the main body, with the cruiser *Brooklyn* stationed halfway between to maintain contact and relay signals. Before dark on the same day, Admiral Kelly's Advance Detachment was sighted on the horizon to southward. It took station 15 miles astern and joined the disposition after daylight of the 27th. The Advance Detachment was formed in four columns, with the Northern Group ships on the left and the Southern Group ships on the right. By their opening out and moving up with two columns on each side of the main body, the Task Force disposition, as then formed, had nine columns abreast, in



logical order, with the vessels for Mehidia-Port Lyautey to the northward, those for Fedhala in the center, and those for Safi on the right. This was in accordance with Hewitt's careful plans. When the time came for the various attack groups to peel off for their assigned areas, the Northern Attack Force would change course to the northward; the Southern Attack Force could head south; and the Center Attack Group would simply maintain course. Since this maneuver might be performed in darkness by prearranged times, the arrangement represented one more of the thoughtful advanced decisions made by Hewitt and his planners and demonstrates well the effect of the admiral's precise and mathematical mind.

At 10:00 a.m. on 28 October, the Air Group was sighted on the starboard bow. The carriers took station astern of the main body, where they could readily maneuver to launch and recover planes. They at once established a daylight patrol. On 29 October, the *Calvert* and her two attendant destroyers joined, and the formation was now complete, much to Admiral Hewitt's satisfaction.

During the voyage, General Patton spent some time reading the Koran. He wanted to be thoroughly acquainted with the Moslem religion and customs so that neither he nor his troops would do anything to antagonize the native Berber population. He visited the flag bridge frequently, and with each day the acquaintance between Hewitt and Patton grew toward liking. Admiral Hewitt was a reserved man; he was warm and friendly but tending to be slow in reaching intimacy. It remained "Admiral" and "General" all through the voyage. By the invasion of Sicily, it was "George" and "Kent."

On 30 and 31 October, the Task Force fueled at sea successfully; there were no casualties. It also would be necessary to top off the destroyers

shortly before the landing in order to ensure that they would have sufficient fuel for high-speed steaming and combat of unknown duration. Several submarine contacts were made on 2 November; some of these contacts probably were authentic, and a German shore station was heard broadcasting what the Americans knew to be a contact report. It looked as if the Task Force had been spotted. During the night, Hewitt made several very radical changes of course, which left the Task Force heading northeast at dawn, on a base course for Gibraltar.

Hewitt had planned to start the topping off of fuel tanks on 3 November, but the weather, hitherto reasonably good, turned rough, with the convoy wallowing in the trough of a moderate swell from the North Atlantic. The weather worsened the next day, and fueling had again to be postponed. The 5th of November was another stormy day, but on the 6th the weather moderated, and the Task Force was able to refuel. Admiral Hewitt was vastly relieved, but before him now loomed one of the most trying periods of his career.

All weather reports were now receiving the most careful attention. In order to effect timely arrival in their assigned areas, the attack groups would have to begin breaking off shortly after daylight on 7 November. Therefore, the decision as to whether to carry out the attack as planned on 8 November had to be made early in the morning of the 7th. All night long Hewitt and Patton studied the incoming weather reports, while Lt. Comdr. Robert Steere, Hewitt's meteorological officer, worked on his weather charts. Admiral Hewitt had total responsibility for making the decision.

Many factors had to be weighed. An attempted landing through heavy seas might spell disaster, an entire failure, undue loss of life. On the other hand, delay would undoubtedly mean loss of

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surprise, serious exposure to gathering submarines as the Task Force cruised the coast waiting favorable weather, lowering of fuel supplies, and finally perhaps entire abandonment in favor of the alternate, much less desirable plan, of landing somewhere inside the Strait of Gibraltar. Admiral Hewitt wrote: "Army weather predictions were entirely unfavorable. The Navy report was slightly more optimistic, but not too encouraging. Mr. Steere was of the opinion that the landing would be practicable. Furthermore, he felt that the conditions would be much less suitable on the following day, the 9th."

The decision was a difficult one, and suspense grew heavy in flag plot, where Hewitt's staff awaited his word. In the end, he said simply, "Gentlemen, we will execute Plan One, as scheduled. Be prepared to make that signal to the Task Force at first daylight." He wrote: "I decided to go ahead, and General Patton concurred. Divine Providence was with me, and it was one of the most important decisions of my life. Conditions for 60 days after the 8th were highly dangerous."

Admiral Mountbatten said of this decision:

This was one of the great acts, one of the great decisions, that Admiral Hewitt made, one of the important decisions of the war. I remember the time very well. We and the British Chiefs of Staff were very worried about the weather reports we were getting. Things were unstable where he had to land. It wasn't only the wind blowing that day, but it was the swell that was being raised, which might quite well make it impossible to land. I distinctly remember saying I hope to God Admiral Hewitt will have the guts to go through with it. . . . He must take a risk. It was asking a great deal of the man, you know; it could have been a disaster. But he

took the decision, which required not just judgment, but an enormous amount of intelligence, rather like the decisions Eisenhower had to make both for Sicily and for D Day in Normandy. It was a brave decision, the decision of a commander. . . . I understand that Hewitt always said that he was a lucky man, that this was a lucky decision. But as President Lincoln said, "give me generals who are lucky." You can have a certain measure of good luck and a certain measure of bad luck. But the people who have a reputation for good luck are the people who seize the chance. That's what Hewitt did. He was a really great man, a very modest man, and his very modesty has prevented his being recognized properly in his own country.\*

At 0700 the next morning, 7 November, the flag signal "Proceed on service assigned" was directed to the Commander of the Southern Attack Group in the *Philadelphia*. Admiral Davison immediately took command of his ships and moved off to the southward for Safi, joined by the auxiliary carrier *Santee* for air support. Shortly thereafter the seaplane tender *Barnegat* was sighted, and at 0800 the little *Contessa* hove into view, after a lonely and very dangerous voyage, with her load of aviation gas and bombs. At 1300 Hewitt detached the Covering Group to take stations assigned; a little later the Air Group was also detached, with *Sangemon* staying with the Northern Group to supply air support. The great convoy, the greatest concentration of force ever to sail from the New World to the Old, was breaking up to undertake its various tasks. They had come thus far in security. Many of the men and some of the ships would die in the week ahead.

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\*Interview with Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, Royal Navy.

At 1300 the Northern Group was detached, and Admiral Kelly directed its course for the mouth of the Sebou River. At the same time, command of the Center Group was turned over to Captain Emmett, who from that time on exercised tactical command of the group. Therefore Admiral Hewitt, the Task Force Commander, rode in a ship under the command of Captain Emmett, who would control even the flagship's movements unless the demands of the overall operation required that Admiral Hewitt give other orders.

The African coast was picked up on radar as the Center Attack Group approached in the darkness; just before midnight, coastal navigation lights were sighted—they had been turned on for a French coastal convoy, clearest evidence that surprise was complete. The transports reached the disembarkation area slightly before schedule, a few minutes before midnight. There was a swell, but by now little wind and no rough seas. The beacon submarines had been sighted, no adverse reports had been received, and landing craft were being hoisted out and loaded. The appointed beach was only 7 miles away, and all was quiet. Broadcasts of President Roosevelt's message announcing the landings were intercepted from Washington and London. For better or worse, the operation was underway.

"During the morning watch off Fedhala, 8 November, all was quiet on shore," Admiral Hewitt wrote.

In fact no sounds other than that of slow running, circling landing craft and the voice of Captain Emmett over the TBS giving orders to his transports were heard in the transport area. Reports did not reach me until later, but all the other groups had arrived at their stations exactly on time. Our eminent naval historian, Professor Samuel E. Morison remarks, "So closely was the timetable executed that the Northern

Attack Group arrived at its planned position off Mehidia at 2400, the Southern Attack Group made Safi at 2345, and the Center Group was at Fedhala at 2353. For precision planning and faultless execution, this on the minute arrival of a large, complicated task force after a voyage of 4500 miles merits the highest praise." These are kind words, but the planning was easy. Past experience had indicated the desirability of always having ample "velvet" to reach a destination on time, regardless of weather, etc. Credit for faultless execution belongs to the various group commanders.

The details of the landings in Morocco are so complex and have been so thoroughly covered by historians that this brief article will limit itself to the events in which Admiral Hewitt participated or those in which as Task Force Commander he was intimately concerned.

Hewitt was hoping, without conviction, that when the French ashore heard Roosevelt's broadcast, as well as the broadcast news of the British-American landings in Algeria, they would decide not to resist and show the requested signal—the searchlights on shore to be turned on and elevated to the vertical; this would mean that there would be no resistance and the Americans would be received as friends. All of the American units were under strict orders not to fire unless fired upon or other positive signs of hostile reaction ashore were shown. In each case an immediate report was to be made via the chain of command, and there would be no general engagement except by order of the commander of the particular attack group concerned. To expedite such reports and orders, resort had been had to American baseball terminology. "Batter up!" over TBS meant "I am being fired on." "Play Ball!" from a commander was the order for the unit addressed to go into action.

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The first wave of boats started for the shore at about 0415, but they did not land until 0505, a little under an hour late. As they approached the beach, a searching light was turned on from the Point Blandin battery and immediately turned upward. The hoped for signal? No! It was at once brought down to the water's edge, picking up the advancing boat waves. Then Hewitt heard the sound of machinegun fire, apparently from the shore, immediately followed by a stream of tracer fire from an American scout boat directed toward the searchlight, which went out. Gunfire support destroyers lay well inshore, clear of the boat lanes; the cruiser *Brooklyn* was on station to cover the Chergui battery on the left flank, with the *Augusta* on the right, toward Casablanca. The smaller vessels of the screen were maintaining an active patrol of the flanks and seaward side of the transport area.

At about 0600 faint outlines of the shore began to appear in the early morning twilight. Dawn was followed by flashes of gunfire from the shore batteries. By this time there had been many reports of "Batter up!" With the gunfire support vessels under fire, Admiral Hewitt gave the order "Play Ball!" and the action became general. Within a short time the shore battery was silenced, at least temporarily. Cruisers launched observation planes. One of the shore battery shells had struck destroyer *Murphy* in the engine room, killing three men, the first naval casualties of the Center Attack landings.

By 0800 firing had died down; shortly thereafter French planes strafed the Fedhala beaches. Little damage was done. Fighters, torpedo bombers, and scouting planes were in the air from the Air Support Group. AA fire against them demonstrated that the resistance did exist, and they worked over the submarines in Casablanca Harbor as well as the French airfields.

Admiral Giffen and his Covering

Group were in action against the Table d'Aoukasha battery to the northeast of Casablanca and against the battleship *Jean Bart*, which, though immobile alongside a dock, had one turret with four 15-inch guns operational, along with excellent fire control equipment. Another opponent was the modern El Hank battery of 8-inch guns to the southwest of the harbor entrance.

Hewitt received reports of all these actions promptly, but information from the north and south was slow in coming. At last he was informed that at Safi, in the south, everything had proceeded according to plan. *Cole* and *Bernadou* had landed their Rangers on the docks; other elements had landed on small beaches, one inside the harbor, one at the entrance, and one to the southward. Surprise had been complete and resistance negligible. The *Lakehurst* was soon disembarking the 30 medium tanks upon which General Patton had insisted. In the north things had not gone quite so well. There had been confusion, though the troops were landed at or near the proper beaches. Surf conditions were bad, and many boats were stranded and disabled. Strong resistance was encountered on shore; French troops, including the redoubtable Foreign Legion, fought hard and well.

An ancient fort, the Kasba, was manned by a strong detachment of the Foreign Legion. General Truscott, not wholly trusting the accuracy of naval gunfire, elected to carry the Kasba by storm, causing loss of time and considerable casualties. It was only on D+2 that the *Dallas* made her way up the Sebou River to land troops at the airfield. She was aided by a French pilot who had been smuggled to the United States in order to join the Torch convey.

At Fedhala, as soon as it became light enough and the shore batteries had been largely silenced, the transports moved in closer to the beach to reduce

the boat run and anchored. The mine-layers proceeded to lay a minefield beyond torpedo range on the left or northeast flank of the transport area, and the vessels of the screen continued their active patrol of the other two sides.

Hewitt had learned to ask himself what he should want to know were he in his superior's shoes. He therefore directed Captain Bachman, his Intelligence Officer, to prepare and transmit a situation report every 2 hours to the Supreme Allied Commander at Gibraltar. The admiral continued this action throughout the course of the next few days.

At 0800 a Higgins boat was swung out by the *Augusta's* aircraft recovery crane and lowered to the port rail; this was the means whereby General Patton was to join his troops ashore. While his gear was being loaded into it, Hewitt received a report from an observation plane that a number of French destroyers were steaming close along the coast, under cover of a smokescreen, and heading for the Fedhala transport area. Since the immobile transports would soon be in torpedo range, he had to act at once. The *Augusta*, *Brooklyn*, and the two nearest destroyers swung into action. Racing toward the enemy, the cruisers opened fire upon their unseen targets with bearings and ranges given them by their observation planes. The first blast of the *Augusta's* after 8-inch turret completely wrecked the landing craft and it had to be cut away, contents and all.

The courageous French destroyers were soon forced back toward the harbor, but not without serious losses. During this action and subsequent ones during the day, the two cruisers had to dodge torpedoes several times. The *Augusta* finally landed General Patton, about 3 hours late. Instead of being annoyed at the delay, he had stood beside Hewitt on the bridge and watched the action with keen interest.

The incident emphasized the undesirability of joint command being exercised from a combatant flagship.

Admiral Hewitt wrote:

Before the day was over, my subsequent good friend, *Contre Amiral Gervais de la Fond*, the commander of the French light forces, made repeated, skillful, courageous attempts to torpedo the Fedhala transports, in the course of which practically his entire command was either sunk, beached, or otherwise disabled, including the gallant little admiral himself, who was wounded.

In the harbor, the *Jean Bart* was apparently out of action, still afire as the result of bomb hits and 16-inch shellfire from the *Massachusetts*.

Resistance at Safi having ended and the Covering Group having expended considerable main battery ammunition, the *New York*, which had done little firing, was ordered up from the Southern Group as a reinforcement. Little happened on 9 November from a naval point of view, except that unloading was continued from transports now anchored well inshore, but with fewer landing boats. Fedhala Harbor could be used instead of the open beach for discharging the landing craft. It was well, for a very heavy surf was now breaking. Admiral Hewitt shuddered as he looked at the 12- to 15-foot high combers smashing into white fury on the beaches. If the Task Force had been delayed just 1 day, the attack would have been virtually impossible. Indeed, it would be 60 days before surf conditions on Moroccan beaches would be as favorable as they were on 8 November.

The night of 9-10 November was spent again by the *Brooklyn* and *Augusta* underway inside the minefield and destroyer screen, anxiously maintaining station near the transports, since news of the landing would certainly bring German submarines into the area. Admiral Michelier, commanding all

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French forces in Morocco, having rejected all negotiations for an armistice, the American forces landed at Fedhala and Safi were closing in on Casablanca from both directions. General Harmon's armored forces advancing from Safi were refueled on the way by some of Admiral Davison's landing craft, which, towed by the *Cole* and *Bernadou*, followed them along the coast.

On the morning of 10 November, General Patton came off for a conference with Hewitt in the *Augusta*. The general was so fatigued and so loaded with equipment that Hewitt and Captain Hutchins had to kneel on the deck and literally reach down and haul him aboard from the cargo net. Hewitt wrote:

As we walked up to my cabin, I noted that the General did seem pretty well worn out; so, . . . I sent my orderly to summon the ship's medical officer. When he arrived, I said, "Doctor, I think the General is very tired; I wish you would prescribe for him." And, I added, "you might prescribe for me too." Forever after, General Patton claimed that I had saved his life on that occasion.

General Patton had just left the ship when an observation plane reported that several small enemy vessels offshore were apparently firing into American troops advancing from Fedhala. *Augusta*, *Brooklyn*, and their two supporting destroyers headed once more down the coast at flank speed. Hewitt was surprised, for he had thought that all of the light forces in Casablanca were out of the fight. The attackers were only two small corvettes and were soon driven back into port, but not before Hewitt received a surprise of another sort. He wrote:

As we came down the coast to close the range, our proximity to the *Jean Bart* caused us no concern, for we knew that she had received hits from the *Massa-*

*chusetts* and had been heavily bombed. The remaining turret had not been moved since the 8th, according to reports from the air. Suddenly two huge orange splashes rose, so close alongside the bridge of the *Augusta* that I and others on the flag bridge were dowsed with the spray. It was no place for the *Augusta* to be. We promptly rang up full speed, put the rudder full right, made smoke, and zig-zagged away, but not before we had been near-missed and straddled several times more by the *Jean Bart's* two gun salvos. The French gunnery was excellent. It was a close call. Later I was to learn the French side of that episode from a rugged Breton, who as her captain had been responsible for sneaking that half-completed ship out from under the noses of the Germans when France fell and who, promoted to Contre-Amiral was in command of the Casablanca defenses at the time of the landing. This was Pierre Jean Ronarc'h, a gruff man with a keen sense of humor who became a very good friend. Said he "On Sunday, the 9th, the *Massachusetts* made a hit on the barbette which jammed the turret in train. The crew, after working diligently for thirty-six hours, finally got it free. I ordered it left trained as it was. So it was, when you ran down the coast on Tuesday after our little corvettes, the gunnery control officer sat up in the top beckoning and saying, 'Come a little closer! Come a little closer!' and you came!"

In the early evening of 10 November Hewitt issued the orders for the naval participation in the final assault on Casablanca, the bombing and bombardment of targets selected by the Army. Naval planes, the batteries of the *Augusta*, *New York*, and *Cleveland* at

long range, and of four destroyers closer in, all were to commence action at 0715 on 11 November. Shortly after midnight, Patton sent word that Casablanca might capitulate at any time and that the Navy should be prepared to suspend hostilities at short notice. With deepest pleasure, Hewitt passed the word to his forces and ordered that they were to cancel the proposed bombardment upon the receipt of the word "Cease-Fire" in plain language. He wrote:

By 0700, the bombardment vessels were on station with their guns loaded and elevated, and bombing planes were in the air proceeding toward their targets. But at that very moment the welcome word arrived from shore, and the "Cease Fire" was broadcast to all stations. It was in the nick of time, for fingers were already on firing keys and bomb releases. Down came the guns, and back went the bombers to their carriers. Fittingly, it was the 24th anniversary of the Armistice Day of World War I. That date now for me has a double significance.

During the morning Hewitt was informed that there would be an armistice conference with French officials that day at the Hotel Miramar in Fedhala. General Nogues, the Governor General, and others would not arrive until afternoon, but Admiral Michelier was to lunch with General Patton at a Fedhala restaurant—the hotel's kitchen having been put out of commission by a destroyer shell intended for the Batterie du Port. Hewitt's presence was requested. He got ashore at about 1230 and found about a dozen men assembled at a pleasant "brasserie"—General Patton and Admiral Michelier, with leading members of their staffs. Two American officers fluent in French were brought as interpreters but turned out to be unnecessary since most of the French officers spoke

excellent English. Of this conference, Admiral Hewitt wrote:

I was a little uncertain how to approach Admiral Michelier, whom I found to be a fine looking man of medium height. The desire to establish friendly relations was uppermost in my mind; so I put out my hand, which he took, and I said that we had come as friends and old allies, and that it was with the greatest regret that we were forced to fire on the "tricolour." He looked me in the eye, and said, "Admiral, you had your orders and you carried them out. I had mine and I carried them out. Now, I am ready to cooperate in every way possible." I am happy to testify that he kept this promise faithfully.

Admirals Michelier and Hewitt became good friends, maintaining that friendship and a friendly correspondence until Admiral Hewitt's death.

The later conference at the Miramar was more formal and certainly stiffer. General Nogues was received with all the honors due his rank. General Patton, having succeeded to the overall command after establishing his headquarters ashore, presided. General Nogues, pending receipt of awaited orders from Admiral Darlan, would make no formal agreement other than the cease-fire then in effect, and a release of prisoners by both sides. Patton concurred, in order to avoid loss of French prestige with the native Berber population and to take advantage of the services of the French military in preserving order. This was a wise decision. The Governor General sought permission to take disciplinary action against certain subordinates who, he claimed, had been guilty of not obeying orders. This was refused by General Patton who had been informed that General Bethouart, one of the French officials secretly advised of Torch in advance, had been placed under arrest by General Nogues early in

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the morning of 8 November for attempting to isolate the Governor and forestall resistance to the landing. Hewitt and Patton gained the impression that Nogues was one of those who had become firmly convinced of the ultimate victory of the Axis and was afraid to offend the Nazis. Hewitt returned to his ship at 1700.

There was no thought of moving the Center Group transports into Casablanca harbor on 11 November. Hewitt still had little or no information about the readiness of the harbor to take any such ships. The move would have been difficult in the darkness, since the harbor was, in Admiral Michelier's words, "a cemetery"; further, it would have interrupted the landing of supplies of provisions and fuel, which were still being urgently demanded by the Army. Further, the presence of the transports in the harbor would have interfered with the reception of the D+5 followup convoy, due within about 36 hours, by daylight of 13 November. Had there been a chance of taking any vessel into harbor that night, Hewitt would have taken the *Augusta*, not only to safeguard her but because it would have expedited arrangements for future operations of the port.

Admiral Hewitt wrote:

There had been indications of gathering submarines . . . The situation was naturally a source of worry, but not unexpected. The transports were now anchored close in, one flank supposedly protected by an anti-submarine mine field, with other approaches covered by what was thought to be an adequate patrolling screen, composed of every available vessel that was suitable. After dark, the two cruisers were anchored for their protection in inner berths . . .

Darkness closed in early on that evening of November 11th . . . With some of my staff, I

was on the flag bridge apprehensively looking at the blaze of light from now illuminated Casablanca, the glare of which was certainly silhouetting my ships from seaward. Hardly had I drafted a message to the Army requesting that they be turned off, when there was the boom of an underwater explosion nearby.

The transport *Joseph Hewes*, the tanker *Winooski*, and the destroyer *Hambleton* were all torpedoed from seaward, on their port sides. The *Hewes* sank in a short time, her captain going down with his ship. Her troops had been landed and part of her cargo. The *Winooski* was hit in an empty fuel tank, and was not much inconvenienced thereby. The destroyer was hit in an engine room and fireroom and lost 20 men. She survived.

Hewitt sent Captain Mitchell, his operations officer, in to Casablanca to survey the port and see what vessels might enter the next day. After a sleepless night, Hewitt called a conference aboard the *Augusta* to discuss procedure. He wrote:

Three courses of action seemed to be open: (a) Move all ships possible into Casablanca; (b) continue unloading during daylight at Fedhala, getting ships underway at dark and taking them to sea; (c) continue the unloading at Fedhala day and night. Course (a) was discarded by me because it would mean delaying the entry of the D+5 convoy . . . When the Army first proposed this timing, we had strongly demurred, stating our conviction that we would hardly guarantee the readiness of Casablanca harbor before D+10. But the Army had insisted, maintaining that the arrival of troops and equipment carried by the convoy was a *must* by D+5. We had agreed only with misgivings. It now seemed preferable to me to



risk transports close in to shore from which the troops had been disembarked and the cargo partially landed than it was to expose ships fully loaded with men and material, cruising up and down well off shore, to the mercies of a gathering submarine pack. . . .

It was a difficult decision I had to make, one for which I accepted full responsibility, and one which, based on the existing premises and knowledge I then had, I would make unchanged again today. Influenced by a desire to insure the safe and timely arrival of the following convoy, to avoid interruption in the delivery of supplies and munitions to General Patton's forces, and to expose only partially discharged ships to the major risk, I decided with reluctance to adopt course (c). I ordered Captain Emmett to continue unloading day and night; but at the first sign of further trouble to take his ships promptly to sea.

Hewitt then took the *Augusta* into port. The sight of the French guncrews standing by their weapons was a rather "tricky" one, but all was well. The American cruiser moored alongside the phosphate pier, just inside the entrance. The harbor was indeed a cemetery, with wrecked and sunken vessels everywhere.

Admiral Michelier was a vice admiral; Hewitt a rear admiral. On the afternoon of 12 November, Hewitt sent his flag lieutenant to the Admiralty to inquire when it would be convenient for Admiral Michelier to receive his official call. He received word that he would be welcome at 5:00 p.m. the next day. In the meantime, through the French admiral's Chief of Staff, Hewitt set in motion the strenuous activities of the French, with American assistance, to clear a maximum number of berths to receive the D+5 convoy the next day.

At about 1800, 12 November while it was still daylight, three of the transports at Fedhala, the *Edward Rutledge*, the *Hugh L. Scott*, and the *Tasker H. Bliss* were torpedoed. The first two sank within a short time, but the *Bliss*, on fire, hung on until after midnight. It was a daylight attack, successful in spite of the minefield and surface and air patrols. . . . Later it was learned that this attack was the work of a skillful U-boat commander who had sneaked down from the northeast so close to shore that he had passed safely inside the antisubmarine minefield.

In accordance with his orders, Captain Emmett promptly got the surviving vessels of his force underway and took them to sea. There was no question now but that those Center Group ships would have to be brought into Casablanca the next morning for final unloading instead of the D+5 convoy due at the same time. Orders had to be radioed to Rear Admiral Bryant, in U.S.S. *Arkansas*, to cruise with his convoy well offshore out of sight of land until further orders.

Some question has been raised as to the wisdom of Admiral Hewitt's decision to retain the Center Force transports at Fedhala instead of taking them into the harbor. His reasons have been given. This decision was not unlike the far greater one made earlier, to continue with Plan One, in spite of reported bad weather on the beaches. That bold decision turned out well, and Hewitt received deservedly high praise for making it. Had a fiasco, with heavy losses, resulted, he would have been heavily criticized. Had the similarly bold decision to accept the risks attendant on leaving the vessels unloading day and night in Fedhala Roads been successful, he would have received more praise. It was a typical, well-considered Hewitt decision, wrong in retrospect, perhaps, but proper at the time. It was not only typical in its boldness, but in the implicit confidence that Hewitt always

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placed in the efficiency and effectiveness of the subordinate commanders and forces under him.

The 12th of November was not a happy day for Admiral Hewitt. Shortly after the torpedoing, a British destroyer arrived carrying Rear Admiral Bieri and some Army members of Eisenhower's staff, seeking information as to the situation in Morocco. None of Hewitt's carefully prepared, semihourly situation reports had been received by the Supreme Allied Commander. Patton came out, and the ensuing conference lasted until midnight. Admiral Hewitt was keenly conscious of the sad news—the sinking of three transports—that had greeted the newcomers, but they were elated by the complete success of the Western Task Force in completing its mission with such relatively light losses. It was excellent news that they would be taking back to Eisenhower. Hewitt was still saddened by the loss of his transports and nearly a hundred officers and men. He wrote: "At about 0200, with the flames of the burning *Bliss* being quenched as she finally went under, the visitors departed for Gibraltar to report the latest sad news. Our attention was then turned to the plight of the survivors. There was no rest for the weary."

The 13th of November was a busy day. Five transports found space inside the harbor, and *Augusta* shifted to an anchorage that occupied no unloading space. By extended efforts, the minefield was completed, closing off the avenue through which the U-boat had come the previous evening. No ships were ever again successfully attacked inside this field nor subsequently in similar fields off Oran, Sicily, or Salerno.

Hewitt made his formal call on Admiral Michelier at 5 in the afternoon. It was a pleasant occasion. Everything was very correct and formal. Major caliber shells had been mounted on each side of the main entrance through which

he passed; he was informed that they were unexploded shells from the *Massachusetts*, put in place in honor of the occasion. Truly a French touch, Admiral Hewitt commented. Admiral Michelier was very friendly and helpful. On the following day, he called on Hewitt aboard the *Augusta*, and in every way assisted the American forces.

On 14 November, D+6, some elements of the Western Naval Task Force started on their way home. Task Force 34, the great long-range, history-making invasion force, was dissolving, its mission completely and successfully accomplished. The followup convoy, UGF-2, arrived early on the 18th off the port. Its entry and berthing were not completed until well after dark. It was something of a satisfaction to Hewitt to note that this was D+10, the date for which he had originally argued.

The 19th of November was devoted to picking up loose ends. Admiral Hall and his staff moved ashore to establish the Moroccan Sea Frontier and the Naval Operating Base, Casablanca. Hewitt went to Patton's headquarters, now established in Casablanca, for a meeting with General Eisenhower, who had flown down from Gibraltar. Hewitt had decided to return independently with the *Augusta*, depending on high speed, zigzagging, and the avoidance of usual convoy routes. Thus all available destroyers could be used to screen returning transports.

*Augusta* sailed from Casablanca on 20 November, screened by two destroyers that would return to port when the cruiser was well out of sight of land. Admiral Hewitt was a happy man as he saw the coast of Africa fade into the haze and disappear. He had made history; he had justified his long training, his flag rank, the privileges that went with the level of decisionmaking upon which he lived. Twenty-seven days earlier his Task Force 34 had sortied from Norfolk. In that 27 days, he had made a major contribution to victory in

Europe. Now he was on his way home, his cares behind him.

Admiral Hewitt wrote describing two sources of his contentment:

The following two dispatches . . . were sources of great satisfaction and pride, both to me and the splendid officers and men who were primarily responsible for the successful accomplishment of the task assigned. I quote, "FOR ADMIRAL HEWITT FROM EISENHOWER X WITH SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF YOUR TASK UNDER ALLIED HEADQUARTERS AND YOUR RETURN TO NORMAL AMERICAN COMMAND, I WANT TO EXPRESS MY GRATEFUL APPRECIATION OF THE SPLENDID SERVICES YOU AND THE FORCES UNDER YOUR COMMAND HAVE RENDERED X I AM MAKING IMMEDIATE OFFICIAL REPORT TO WASHINGTON THIS EFFECT BUT IN THE MEANTIME I HOPE IT IS PROPER FOR A SOLDIER TO SAY TO A SAILOR QUOTE WELL DONE UNQUOTE."

And this from General Eisenhower's supreme naval commander, Admiral of the Fleet Sir Andrew B. Cunningham, R.N. to the Commander of the Western Naval Task Force: "ON DEPARTURE OF WNTF I SEND YOU MY CONGRATULATIONS ON A FINE JOB WELL DONE X THE PROBLEMS FACED WERE IN MANY WAYS THE MOST DIFFICULT AND I HAVE ADMIRERD THE ENERGY AND RESOLUTION WITH WHICH YOU AND ALL UNDER YOUR COMMAND HAVE TACKLED THEM X I SEND VERY GOOD WISHES TO YOUR FORCE FOR SPEEDY PASSAGE AND GOOD LAND-FALL."

Hewitt returned home to find himself a vice admiral and a hero, yet a hero always ready to give credit to others. The three returning convoys under admiral Davison, Admiral Kelly, and Captain Emmett all reached home port safely. Of this Hewitt wrote: "All of these officers, as well as Admiral Giffen and Admiral McWhorter, had performed splendidly. The mission of the Western Naval Task Force had been completed. Now it was time to return to the duty of ComPhibLant."

But not for long. Three months later Hewitt was ordered as Commander Naval Forces Northwest African Waters. This cumbersome title was soon changed to Commander 8th Fleet. In that position H. Kent Hewitt went on to successes greater and more perfect in their execution than Torch, that torch that gave hope to a discouraged world during the terrible year of 1942.

Later, in 1943 at Sicily, Salerno, and in 1944 in southern France, Admiral Hewitt repeatedly proved himself to be one of the great planners and commanders of World War II. On 16 August 1945, he assumed command of U.S.

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## BIOGRAPHIC SUMMARY



Professor John H. Clagett graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy and in World War II served in the U.S.S. *Lexington* and various motor torpedo boat squadrons; as a result of enemy action at

Guadalcanal, he was physically retired in 1946. He subsequently served as a Foreign Service officer with the U.S. Embassy in Oslo, Norway (1946-49) and in 1950 entered Yale Graduate School where he received his doctorate in 1955. Professor Clagett is the author of numerous books—many on naval matters—and a number of articles and short stories and is currently serving as professor of English at Middlebury College, Vermont.

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Naval Forces, Europe, and of the 12th Fleet. Relieved early from that important and well earned assignment on account of "ill health," he returned to the United States to pass two special physicals, without difficulty. He then served as Naval Representative on the United Nations Military Staff Committee. On 1 March 1949, H. Kent Hewitt retired from the Navy, after 46 years of service. He bought a lovely old house in Orwell, Vt., and divided his time between the "Foretop," as he named it, and Annapolis. Later he spent much of his time in Newport after Carvel Hall was torn down. He lived a

quiet modest life in retirement, giving little hint of his past accomplishments. Middlebury College gave him an honorary degree in 1949; in 1964 he and Mrs. Hewitt were guests of the French Government and President de Gaulle at the 20th anniversary of the invasion of Southern France, but mostly he was the quiet, genial, and beloved elderly gentleman who lived in the white house on the hill in Orwell. He and Mrs. Hewitt were very happy together, but H. Kent Hewitt never forgot his first and greatest love, the Navy and the sea. And he always maintained against any attack or criticism the "Honor of his Cloth."

