Welcome to the April session of the Dr. Harold C. Deutsch World War II History Round Table. Tonight’s speaker is Harvey Ferguson author of The Last Cavalryman: The Life of General Lucian K. Truscott, Jr. along with veterans who served in Truscott’s commands. They will reveal what happened in Italy and France under a commander often rated as the greatest field commander of World War II.

In military history it is often the top level commanders that get all fame and glory. In some cases this is by design (as with the publicity seeking General Douglas McArthur), and some others due to a flamboyant personality (like General George Patton). Further, certain campaigns and operations attract more attention from historians than others. The career of Lucian Truscott was one of a dedicated military professional whose major accomplishments often were overshadowed by more famous US battles in Europe. He took part in the invasion of southern France, a secondary operation following D-Day. Even before this, he was part of the disappointing Anzio landing, and after France, he returned to the long, tedious, thankless advance through northern Italy. Throughout his World War II experience other generals received the headlines while General Truscott fulfilled his difficult duties.

Like other officers of his generation, Truscott served in an army that went from horse cavalry to mechanized divisions. Truscott began his career as an era was ending. While other US officers served in France in 1918, he was with the horse cavalry on the Mexican border chasing Pancho Villa. After the war he remained in the cavalry and attended the US Army Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. He became acquainted with George Patton who introduced him to ideas on armored warfare.

When World War II began, he was assigned to Fort Lewis in Washington State on the staff of IX Corps. By early 1942, he was an army liaison officer to the British and advocated the formation of American “commando” units. Soon after, Captain William O. Darby was given charge of company A, 1st Ranger Battalion and he began recruiting from the 34th Infantry Division (ID) (some 80% of European Theater of Operations rangers came out of the 34th ID). Five officers and 44 men were the first American ground combat troops in action in Europe against Nazi forces during the August 1942 Dieppe Raid, and Truscott was an observer on board the command ship. After the Dieppe Raid, Truscott became part of the major battles in the Mediterranean. He served under Patton and commanded the 60th Infantry Regiment in OPERATION TORCH landing at Mehdia and Port Lyautey in Morocco.

He led the 3rd ID in OPERATION HUSKY, the invasion of Sicily, and in OPERATION SHINGLE, the Anzio landing, a hard fought battle that resulted from the failure to push inland and seize ground (Maj. Gen. John Lucas chose to consolidate his beachhead instead). Allied forces were almost pushed back into the sea. Truscott soon replaced Lucas as commander of the VI Corps. He continued to fight up the boot of Italy until VI Corps was re-assigned to Southern France.

As part of OPERATION DRAGOON, Truscott was assigned to Lt. Gen. Alexander Patch’s 7th Army which consisted of the US VI Corps (US 3rd, 36th, and 45th Infantry Divisions and French 1st Armored), along with The First French Army, composed of 7 divisions from the Army of Africa under General Jean de Latre de Tassigny. After the initial landings in the south, Truscott and the other commanders moved quickly out of the beachhead wanting to prevent another Anzio disaster. Opposing the Allied forces was the Wehrmacht’s Army Group G, commanded by Lt. Gen. Johannes Blaskowitz, a cobbled together force of older veterans and undermanned units, with the only one Army, the 19th under the command of Gen. Fredrich Wiese. The Germans were thinly spread along the coast. American and French forces were able to quickly take the ports of Toulon and Marseilles, then VI Corps moved north, linking up with other DRAGOON units. Throughout their north advance, logistics and supplies, particularly fuel, would be a constant problem. The rapid retreat of the Wehrmacht’s Nineteenth Army resulted in swift gains for the DRAGOON forces and they dashed northward to take Lyon. Within a month of the initial
landings Patch’s 7th Army advanced almost 400 miles up the Rhone River Valley to link up with the Third Army to create a solid wall of Allied forces from Antwerp to the Swiss border.

In September 1944, Truscott was given command of the Fifteenth Army, which was a new unit and was mostly an administrative post. In December 1944, he was re-assigned to the Fifth Army and sent back to Italy, where he remained until the end of the war.

A coda to his career, was his work in the newly formed Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). In 1951, he was given a cover appointment as “Special Consultant to the U.S. Commissioner and took charge of CIA operations in Europe. In 1953, President Eisenhower appointed him Deputy Director for Coordination – in charge of all CIA operations; serving until he retired in 1958.

**FURTHER READINGS:**

**Announcements:**
Twin Cities Civil War Round Table - 15 May 2018 – Thaddeus Lowe’s Aeronauts- www.tccwrt.com - info@tccwrt.com
St. Croix Valley Civil War Round Table - 23 Apr. 2018 – Civil War Fort Snelling - 715-386-1268 - rossandhaines@comcast.net
Civil War Symposium - TBA Apr. 2019 - info@tccwrt.com
Minnesota Air Guard Museum - www.mnangmuseum.org 612-713-2523
Friends of Ft. Snelling, www.fortsnelling.org
Military History Book Club, Har Mar Barnes & Noble: - Junger, *Storm of Steel*
- 27 Apr. 2018 - sdubmepseck52@gmail.com
Honor Flight - Jerry Kyser - crazyjerry45@hotmail.com 651-338-2717
CAF - Comemorative Air Force - www.cafminn.org 651-455-6942

We need volunteers to drive our veterans to and from meetings. Please contact Don Patton at cell 612-867-5144 or coldpatton@yahoo.com

**Round Table Schedule 2018**
10 May Marshall Plan: Saving Victory

MG Truscott, CG VI Corps and GEN Alexander, CIC AAI at Anzio, 4 March 1944

From Atkinson, *Guns at Last Light.*