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# The Round Tablette

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Tuesday, 11 October 2022

36:02 Volume 36 Number 2

Published by WWII History Round Table

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[www.mn-ww2roundtable.org](http://www.mn-ww2roundtable.org)

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## Welcome to the first October session of the Dr. Harold C. Deutsch World War II History Round Table.

Tonight's speaker is Stephen Moore, author of *Blood and Fury*, who will discuss the heroics of tankers in the 3rd ("Spearhead") Armored Division. He will be supported by many veteran interviews of Jed Henry who had family in the unit.

The Great War quickly devolved into a stalemate in the trenches as barbed wire, machine guns, and massed artillery produced deadlock. The British and the French almost simultaneously began developing tanks in 1915-16 as a way for infantry to regain maneuverability. World War I tanks were cumbersome, slow moving, and often broke down on the battlefield, but they did provide a shield for advancing infantry against the unrelenting destruction of "no man's land".

The British first fielded tanks in 1916 at the Battle of Flers-Courcelette, having begun development of "Landships" the previous year. All the belligerents showed considerable interest in developing tanks, and the French were the most successful at fielding large numbers of moderately effective armored fighting vehicles. The American tank brigade, organized and led by Capt. George Patton, utilized French light tanks in combat in the St. Mihiel Offensive.

The British developed the most complete armored warfare doctrine – initially embedded in J. F. C. Fuller's "Plan 1919" for an armored offensive strike behind German lines to destroy headquarters and logistics links. Unfortunately, Fuller and his supporters were so offensive in advancing their theories of warfare that the British army establishment rejected tanks and relegated them to assisting infantry, the cavalry generals proving the most recalcitrant.

In the United States, the National Defense Act of 1920 placed tanks under the infantry board, though the cavalry board managed to acquire armored cars for reconnaissance. Only after the fall of France did the army constitute a separate armored force (10 July 1940) and begin organizing armored divisions. The French were nearly as slow in developing armored units, with their first "light mechanized division" coming operational in 1938. They did not form heavy armored formations until 1940.

Not allowed tanks by the Versailles Treaty, the Germans conspired with the evil Communists in Soviet Russia to develop tanks, paratroop operations ("vertical envelopment"), and aircraft, with appropriate tactical and operational doctrine. German theorists like Heinz Guderian took up the doctrinal mantle from Fuller, envisioning slashing combined arms movements into the enemy rear. Ironically, much of Soviet doctrine and capability were of German origin.

Regardless of doctrine, theorists sought weapons systems that would avoid the Great War stalemate and re-establish offensive capabilities. Their desires drove improved Tank designs during the inter-war years in tandem with the development of the automotive industry with better suspension systems, engines, transmissions, but the inherent conflict persisted between firepower and armor proved elusive. Coming late to the party, the US developers were hindered by limited funds and infantry branch hostility. Like aircraft designers, they got enough funding for prototypes but never a purchase order. Still, when the world went back to war, American designers had models like the "Stuart" M3 light tank (37 mm main gun) that could be mass produced.

The British, the Soviet Union, the United States, and France produced a large number of tanks before and during the war, but as the war dragged on the other three powers were eclipsed by the growing industrial output of the United States. As the United States began to operate at its full potential, US tanks, especially the M4 –Sherman were distributed to the British, the Soviet Union, and China to fight the Axis. While not the best tank in the world, (many argue that was the Soviet's T-34) the United States mass production techniques made the Sherman so ubiquitous that its faults did not matter, in an attritional war numbers matter.

Many argue that the Germans made better tanks – they were and still are craftsmen, but their production system was more "boutique" with enormous amounts of hand assembly and finishing. The result was first rate products but not as many as they were going to need for mechanized warfare. Quantity has a quality all its own in modern warfare. For all the historical "hoopla" about the German *Blitzkrieg*, the German army began the war dependency on horses and became utterly dependent upon the oat-burners. American Sherman tanks may not have been as good as the German "Tigers" but there were so many more of them.

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**If you are a veteran, or know a veteran, of one of these campaigns – contact Don Patton at cell 612-867-5144 or [coldpatton@yahoo.com](mailto:coldpatton@yahoo.com)**

While they did not have as many tanks, the Germans did have the advantage early on in doctrine. The Germans believed in rapid deployment of tanks with infantry in lightly armored vehicles, along with air support, this combined-arms system became what is known by all as *blitzkrieg*. In order for this all to work each tank, vehicle, and airplane were supplied with radios, which made the flexibility on the battlefield possible. During the Battle for France in 1940, none of the French tanks had radios installed. By 1943, all tanks had radios installed.

While looking to solve a specific battlefield problem, the British designers revolutionized warfare. Tanks brought offensive capabilities back to the battlefield and continue to do so in the present day. The development of the combined-arms doctrine changed the tactical level of warfare on a multi-dimensional view. While not eradicating war itself, the tank made it a more complicated endeavor.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Armored Division, our subject tonight, began combat operations in France (9 July 1944, under First US Army), and ended the war as part of Ninth US Army. A “triangular” division built around two armored regiments and a mechanized infantry regiment, with organic artillery support, it embodied the army’s tactical doctrine that tanks worked best with infantry support, since tanks alone were vulnerable to infantry and infantry alone was just vulnerable. Equipped with attached anti-tank destroyer units to protect the Shermans from waiting German tanks, and their own maintenance, ordnance, and medical units, the division was a potent fighting unit capable of great speed and firepower. Using that firepower and speed effectively was the story of the 3<sup>rd</sup> AD.

#### FURTHER READINGS:

Stephen L. Moore, *Blood and Fury: The World War II Story of Tank Sergeant Lafayette “War Daddy” Pool* (New York: Random House, Calipho, 2022).

Dennis Showalter, *Hitler’s Panzers: The Lightning Attacks that Revolutionized Warfare* (New York: Berkley, 2009).

Adam Makos, *Spearhead: An American Tank Gunner, His Enemy, and a Collision of Lives in World War II* (New York: Random House, 2019).

Stephen Zaloga, *Panzerfaust vs. Sherman: European Theater 1944-1945* (Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing, 2019).

#### Announcements:

Twin Cities Civil War Round Table – 18 Oct.

2022 – *Free Boys Kidnapped into slavery* – [www.tccwrt.com](http://www.tccwrt.com) - [info@tccwrt.com](mailto:info@tccwrt.com)

St. Croix Valley Civil War Round Table – 27 Oct. 2022 – *Gray Cloud Island Veterans* –

715-386-1268 - [rossandhaines@comcast.net](mailto:rossandhaines@comcast.net)

Military History Book Club, Har Mar Barnes & Noble - TBD - [sdaubenspeck52@gmail.com](mailto:sdaubenspeck52@gmail.com)

Minnesota Military Museum, Camp Ripley, 15000 Hwy 115, Little Falls, MN 56345 - 320-616-6050 -

<http://www.mnmilitarymuseum.org/>

Minnesota Air Guard Museum - 612-713-2523 -

[www.mnangmuseum.org](http://www.mnangmuseum.org)

8th AF Historical Society of MN, KC Hall  
Bloomington, 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesdays at 1130 -

<https://www.8thmn.org>.

Friends of Ft. Snelling - [www.fortsnelling.org](http://www.fortsnelling.org)

World Without Genocide - 651-695-7621 -

<http://www.worldwithoutgenocide.org/>

Fagen Fighters WWII Museum, Granite Falls, MN - Air show – TBA - 320-564-6644 -

<http://www.fagenfighterswwiimuseum.org>.

Wings of the North Airshow - Eden Prairie – TBA - 952-746-6100 - [www.wotn.org](http://www.wotn.org)

Alliance Française 612-332-0436 - [www.afmnp.org](http://www.afmnp.org)

Selim Center for Lifelong Learning, UST,

<https://www.stthomas.edu/selimcenter/>

Western Naval Historical Association

[info@wnha.net](mailto:info@wnha.net)

Honor Flight - Jerry Kyser - 651-338-2717 -

[crazyjerry45@hotmail.com](mailto:crazyjerry45@hotmail.com)

CAF - Commemorative Air Force - 651-455-6942 -

[www.cafmn.org](http://www.cafmn.org)

**We need volunteers to drive our veterans to and from meetings. Please contact Don Patton at cell 612-867-5144 or [coldpatton@yahoo.com](mailto:coldpatton@yahoo.com)**

#### Round Table Schedule 2022–2023

##### 2022

24 Oct. Operation Torch

8 Nov. Deutsch Lecture: Bretton Woods

13 Dec. Corps of Engineers

##### 2023

10 Jan. Hitler & Stalin Collaborate

14 Feb. Marshall and Stimson

14 Mar. Navies of World War II

28 Mar. Patton & Victory in North Africa

11 Apr. New Guinea – Buna

9 May 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force in Europe

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**We would greatly appreciate your supporting the HCDWW2RT.**



**M3 Stuart light tank, Fort Knox, 1942**



**M4A1, Red Beach, Sicily, 10 July 1943**