American B-17 heavy bombers take off from an airfield in Britain, October 19, 1942. The B-17 was nicknamed the "Flying Fortress" because of its many machine-gun mounts. Photo: Planet News Archive/SSPL/Getty Images

The third in a four-part series

At the beginning of World War II, the United States produced a huge number of tanks, weapons, ships and trucks. These would only be useful, though, if brave men could be found to use them in battle. That didn’t seem to be a problem in the United States. After the Japanese attack on American naval base Pearl Harbor, recruitment centers across the nation were swamped with volunteers. Even so, by 1943 Washington
had begun enlisting all males between 18 and 40. That is called the draft. By 1945, about 16 million Americans had served in the military.

The war continued on. On one side were the Allied powers — United States, Britain, France and the Soviet Union. On the other, the Axis — Germany, Italy and Japan. As millions of new people joined the armed forces, separation and longing became common feelings. Songs of the time had names like "Till We Meet Again" and "I'll Be Seeing You, in All the Old Familiar Places." This reflected the feelings of loneliness that were felt in every town and by almost every family. Eventually, most soldiers and Marines were shipped overseas.

**American Troops On The Way**

Before going overseas, men would stay for a few days in the port towns of New York City and San Francisco. They drank and laughed and pretended to be confident and happy.

The next step was to board a ship. Quarters were tight, pleasures were few and danger was always around. In the Atlantic Ocean, German submarines lurked beneath the surface. The most common way to get to Europe was in a group of about 50 or 60 similar ships. These ships were protected by many small, fast ships called destroyers. Luckily, the Allied navies figured out how to beat the Nazi submarines before most American soldiers crossed the ocean. Only 8,000 men were lost out of 4 million who made the journey.

**Allied Forces Gain Ground Against Germany And Japan**

By late 1942, the tide had turned against the Axis. In June, the U.S. Navy won its greatest victory ever in the Battle of Midway. There, an outnumbered American force inflicted devastating losses on the then-superior Japanese fleet. After the Battle of Midway, the Japanese were no longer able to attack. It was just a matter of time before Japan's forces were crushed.

The German army was another matter. It had superbly trained soldiers, sophisticated weapons and brilliant tactical leaders. Only an enormous sacrifice by many nations could bring it down. But it happened. In the fall of 1942, Britain attacked German forces in Africa. Americans trapped thousands of Nazi soldiers there. And in perhaps the most devastating battle of all time, between August 1942 and February 1943, the Soviet Army annihilated the German troops that had conquered France. Thereafter, Hitler's troops were rarely able to attack.
Allies Prepare For Invasion Of Normandy

U.S. General George C. Marshall was considered one of the most important Army generals on the Allied side. In 1943, he made a suggestion to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. He told FDR that Dwight D. Eisenhower should be put in charge of the fight in Europe.

Eisenhower had been an unknown man from Kansas serving in the Army. It fell to him to take charge of the greatest invasion in history. His good judgment, hard work and dedication had been recognized early. During the war, he was quickly promoted. By 1944, Eisenhower was in charge of all American and Allied ground, sea and air forces in Europe. His mission was to attack the Nazi Atlantic Wall. This was a network of German forts along the northwestern coast of Europe. It was designed to kill anyone foolish enough to come out of the water.

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Quiz

1. Based on information in the article, which of the following statements is TRUE?
   (A) The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor inspired many volunteers to enlist in the military.
   (B) The Axis powers were those who fought with Britain and the Allies fought with Germany.
   (C) The Battle of Midway was won easily by a superior American naval fleet.
   (D) The invasion of Normandy was a simple process led by George C. Marshall.

2. According to the article, how did most American soldiers get to Europe?
   (A) They flew in planes from cities such as San Francisco and New York.
   (B) They traveled on small and fast ships called destroyers.
   (C) They crossed beneath the ocean in large submarines.
   (D) They moved in large groups of similar ships that had little space.

3. What was the relationship between British forces in Africa and Soviet forces in Europe?
   (A) Their assistance to the United States led to the defeat of Japan at the Battle ofMidway.
   (B) Their combined efforts caused Germany to lose most of its soldiers and become unable to attack.
   (C) Soviet forces were able to defeat German troops quickly so that the Soviets could help Britain in Africa.
   (D) British forces caused Germany to send extra troops to Africa so that the Soviets could win.

4. Which sentence from the section "Allies Prepare For Invasion Of Normandy" BEST supports the idea that the Army recognized Eisenhower's good judgment and hard work?
   (A) He told FDR that Dwight D. Eisenhower should be put in charge of the fight in Europe.
   (B) Eisenhower had been an unknown man from Kansas serving in the Army.
   (C) By 1944, Eisenhower was in charge of all American and Allied ground, sea and air forces in Europe.
   (D) This was a network of German forts along the western coast of Europe.