

**HAZMO
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2024**

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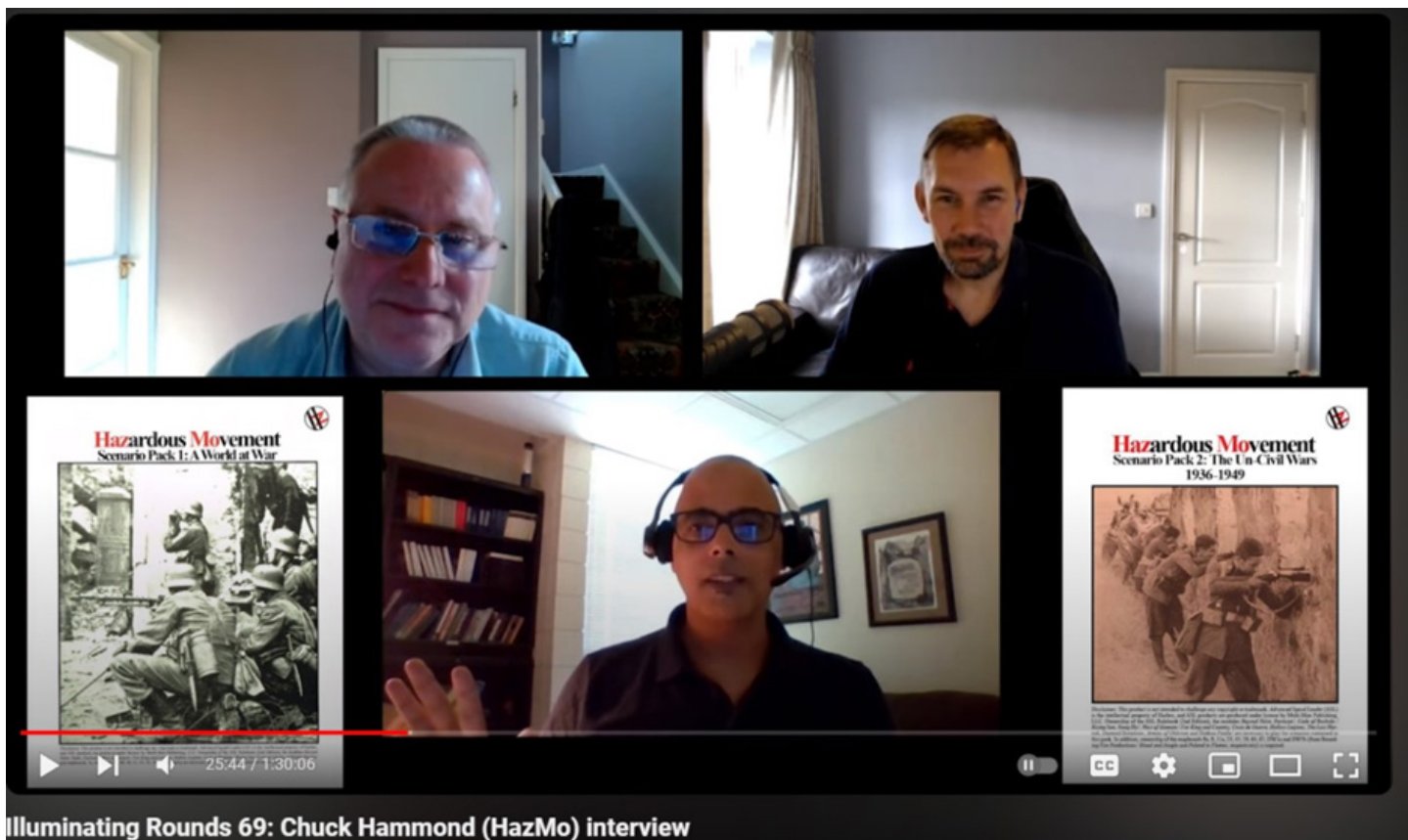
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Chuck Hammond
Letter from the Editor, 2024

Dear Fellow ASLers:

Well, another year has passed and the hobby continues to grow! ASL tournaments are recording record attendance, the (primary) ASL Facebook page now boasts over 7,600 members, **MMP** and **TPPs** are coming out with a dizzying array of new products and – best of all – there appears to be an increasing number of players who have taken it upon themselves to teach others The Game, a development which warms even this old grognard’s withered, jaded heart!

In that vein, this issue of the **Hazmo Horizon** promises to be one of the best yet – boy, have I got some content for you! As is our tradition, **HH** kicks off with “**The Grumpy Grognard**,” an annual feature made possible by the fact that one of the hobby’s best players – Hazmo’s own **Chad Cummins** – would gladly junk a number of common ASL rules he finds unworkable, counterproductive or just plain annoying in practice. This year, he takes his well-worn hatchet to foxholes in ASL with a concise hit piece entitled, appropriately enough, “**Digging Your Own Grave**.” Check out his reasoning – he may just win you over to his side!



Above: Yours truly (bottom center) during an interview on the scintillating, titillating Illuminating Rounds podcast, produced by the inimitable, invincible Martin Barker and Dave Ramsey!

As longtime players are well aware, ASL is not just a hobby. There are a number of hobbies-within-the-hobby, and foremost among them would have to be counter storage. On this subject, **Jon Kay** has treated us to a *master* tutorial – replete with images – entitled “**Come for the ASL. Stay for the Counter Storage.**” For those who do not yet know him, Jon is a regular on the ASL tournament circuit, and his kit is the stuff of legend! I came away from his article thinking that maybe my OCD is a gift and not a curse (as I have been led to believe by so many over the years!). Not only is the piece expertly written, but it’s full of Jon’s trademark wit (dry as a bone, or your money back!), so it’s as entertaining as it is enlightening!

Next up is **Joe Leoce**, who lets us in on some real ASL-insider lore: the founding and development of one of the premier tournaments in the hobby: Albany (aka The New York State ASL Championships). His excellent contribution, “**Albany: A Retrospective**,” takes us back many years, before Albany boasted players coming from other regions of the country, and then players coming from other regions of the world! In so doing, Joe pays tribute to others in the hobby who have made this great event possible, including **Steve “Gor-Gor” Pleva** and our dear friend, the late **Gary Trezza**. Highly recommended reading, especially if you have been to the Albany tournament or plan to attend this storied event in the future!

Following these fine articles, readers can catch their breath as they peruse this year’s free scenario, “**Fontenay by Day**” (**DB113**). Originally published in **Dispatches from the Bunker**, this scenario depicts a bitter fight between the British and the SS about a month after D-Day. After reading about the rules for Creeping Barrage (E12.7), I’d really wanted to portray an battle that featured this formidable employment of artillery and once I’d read the history of the see-saw **Battle of Fontenay-le-Pesnel**, I knew I’d found the perfect action upon which to base my scenario. Once I’d playtested it sufficiently against Chad Cummins, I submitted it for publication. The reception was very positive – the scenario was even included in the **Canadian ASL Open** (CASLO) and **ASL Open** tournaments and led me to muse that perhaps, one day, I might want to design a few more scenarios of my own (a good 7 years before Hazmo was launched).

In “**A Fresh Look at the A30 Challenger in ASL**,” **Tom Rodwell** advances a compelling argument for the reissuance of the A30 Challenger counter in ASL, with some significant changes in armor rating and mechanical reliability. He bases his view in large part on research gleaned from P.M. Knight’s *A30 Challenger Tank: A Technical History* (2015) and shows, quite convincingly, that the counter we’ve come to know is in dire need of an update. While I have not yet had the good fortune of meeting Tom in person, I was very impressed by the brief bio he included with his submission, particularly by the fact that he has served in the **British Army** and “works as a senior conflict and stabilisation adviser in the **British government’s**

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.” His picture suggests every bit of the International-Man-of-Mystery he is, and I look forward to discussing everything from ASL to geopolitics with him one day (over a civilized pint of ale, of course)!

The final contribution comes from no other than **Sebi Caltabiano**, of **Advancing Fire** fame. Sebi, a native of Rome, begins by pointing out, quite correctly, that players have different reasons for playing ASL. Some enjoy the competitive aspect, while for others the appeal lies in researching and recreating the history in which the game is embedded. Sebi counts himself very much among the latter group, and details for us the history of how **AF** came to be, its past and future projects, and some of the other figures who played important roles in the emergence of this unique TPP, such as **Paolo Cariolato** (“the best Italian player”), **Luca Martini** (“a true enthusiast of the Eastern front and Stalingrad in particular”), **Ulric Schwela** (“a very attentive and shrewd player”) and the historian **Christopher Lawrence**. Fascinating stuff! And I can’t compliment Sebi’s command of the English language enough: his writing flows really well, and his vocabulary is, quite honestly, better than that of many native speakers. I wish I could speak Italian that well!

This issue finishes out with a brief look at **Hazardous Movement’s** approach to the hobby.

We hope you enjoy this issue very much, and that you will consider contributing to a future issue of the *Hazmo Horizon*. Without your articles, there’s no content, and without content, no newsletter.

Finally, feel free to drop me a note at hazardousmovement@yahoo.com with any questions, comments or feedback.

Yours sincerely,
Chuck Hammond

THE GRUMPY GROGNARD



Chad Cummins

Digging Your Own Grave – Foxholes in ASL

What's the first thing an infantryman does when he's deployed to a fixed position? Ahhhh, yes --- dig, dig dig! He takes the spade in his hands not for exercise, but because he knows that hole in the ground could save his arse when the bullets start flying and those shells start exploding. But – in ASL – you have to really think long and hard about deploying your units in foxholes, because once you're in, it's not so easy to get out . . . at least not in good order.

The fix is easy: you should be able to exit a foxhole to an adjacent hex at 1 + COT without having to face fire in the hex you are leaving – especially since a foxhole is not considered a separate location. Yes, yes – I know it's a game, but I would love to see greater consistency in the foxhole rules.

For instance: why can I exit a foxhole in the route phase without being interdicted, but in every other phase I'm putting myself in harm's way in the hex I'm trying to vacate. After all, we let our cardboard heroes move from shellhole to shellhole without any issue (1 + COT sound familiar?), so why not from foxhole to foxhole?

So – when I see those OB-given foxholes, I don't even bother to pull the counters in most cases, truth be told. They end up trapping my boys and just give cover to the advancing enemy. It's time to tweak that rule, and make those holes in the ground much more appealing!

Come for the ASL. Stay for the Counter Storage:



Jon Kay

A complete and compact (if possibly obsessive-seeming) storage system for Advanced Squad Leader components

When I think of the ideal Advanced Squad Leader game experience, it typically involves a big well-lit open space in the basement of a split-level American home. There's a big table in the middle of the room, and the walls are lined with bookshelves, each neatly arranged with dozens of well-marked plastic boxes bearing labels such as "Allied Minors," "Russian AFVs," "Finns." and so forth.

What's the best way to organize ASL counters in this kind of space? The answer is: *Who cares?* In such an environment, you have essentially *unlimited* storage available to you. So it doesn't really matter how you store your counters, so long as you can find them easily. You can even spread small bowls around the playing surface, each full of commonly used counters, such as Prep Fire and DM. It's a world without limits, so go nuts: You have all the space in the world.

But for a lot of us, that's not how we play ASL.

In my case, I really only play ASL at tournaments. Yes, I have a basement, but I never use it for playing ASL. Instead, I use it for organizing my ASL counters in *anticipation* of playing ASL.

I started this article off by describing the ideal ASL gaming environment. But here's what my own very much non-ideal environment looks like: I arrive in, say, Cleveland or Albany for a tournament—usually late in the week, after many of the other players have arrived. The best tables (which, for me, are the ones on the periphery, since they allow you to throw all your junk up against the wall, and still have it within arm's reach) have already been taken. So the only table space I can find to dump my stuff on is an interior table—and even then, I might get only half of it, as the other half has already been claimed. This would mean I'd have only, say, a six-foot by three-foot chunk of table space for all my stuff.

Needless to say, that's not enough for everything—so I stash all my boards at some random spot against a wall, or perhaps put them up in my hotel room. But even then, that still leaves me with all my counters. Where do *they* go? On the ground—where they can be kicked and (heaven forbid) *knocked* over? Or do I put my Raacos along the wall, along with the boards... There's usually enough space for this, but who wants to traipse back and

forth across the room every time the need arises for a new type of counter during gameplay?

This kind of experience (and the associated anxiety) is what convinced me to use my 3-D printer to get all of my ASL counters into a single Raaco RAA136242 four-drawer storage unit—a project I first described on my *Let's Get Board* substack in [April 2023](#). Since then, I've refined my kit, so that I can now get all of the counters into just three of the Raaco's four drawers. I now use the fourth drawer for the ASL rules, vehicle notes, charts, dice, thread, and all other necessary game components. The idea here is that, once you have the maps you need for a game, everything else, soup to nuts, sits in a single Raaco unit that fits on a small tournament gaming surface.

Before going further, I will say that all of the 3-D printed components described below were self-designed (or, in one case, adapted from a design supplied from another 3-D printing enthusiast). I employed an entry-level CR-6 SE 3-D printer that I got used on Kijiji for about C\$225. All told, the depicted components took about two rolls of plastic filament to produce—so about \$50 in materials. If you're interested in printing some or all of these components yourself, please message me through the *Contact Information* tab at linktr.ee/jonkay, and I will send you the STL files. Those files—and a 3-D printer—are all you will need to produce all of these components yourself.

One other thing I will add is this: While the STL files I supply to you can be used to print the depicted components without any extra work on your part (except the use of [slicing software](#), which adapts generic STL data into printable files whose parameters correspond to the technical specifics of your machine), it does pay to invest a little time in learning how the technology works. By using a free 3-D design program such as [Tinkercad](#), you'll be able to adapt my STL files in any way you wish, say by making them wider or taller. You'll also be able to design your own components—including trays that fit into non-Raaco boxes.

It's a fun hobby. And while I originally got into it in order to print ASL storage components, I have since branched out into all sorts of other projects, including storage trays for my [18XX](#) hex tiles. (If you get serious about the

3-D printing hobby, I recommend a software package called [Shapr](#), which is not cheap, but really amazing.) And I am interested to see what other 3-D storage ideas other ASL enthusiasts will come up with.



Okay, let's move on to the actual set. The image above shows what Box 1 looks like in my kit. This is where I keep every *nationality-specific* half-inch counter (i.e. all nation-specific counters except for the 5/8-inch Guns and Vehicles). As you can see, the counters are organized into seven-cell-by-five-cell cassette trays, which are 15mm high and stacked three to the drawer. (The internal depth of a standard Raaco drawer is 45mm. Do the math, and you'll see that there are 24 cassette trays, i.e. three layers of eight trays).

Some nations, such as Sweden, require only half a tray. Others, such as Russia and Germany, require two. But in all cases, getting everything to fit means stacking them in neat columns (you can get about 13 counters high

in one of these 15mm trays—so a maximum of 455 counters per tray, or 10,920 counters per drawer). It also means that you need a suction tool to get the counters in and out.

Unless you have the right personality for this kind of project, what I'm describing may feel too delicate and fiddly for you. Perhaps you'd prefer to spread your counters out over multiple Raaco cases, and so not have to go through the organizational ordeal I'm describing.

But if you don't mind the fiddliness, the space efficiency is fantastic. Like I said, I can get every nation-specific half-inch counter into a single Raaco drawer—major powers, minor powers, Japan, China, Korea, Finns, Swedes, you name it. And I even have a few trays left over (see the bottom right corner of the photo above) in case MMP comes out with, oh I don't know, like a South American module or something.

One detail I will add here is that in the case of nations whose half-inch counters require two trays—U.S., Germany, and Russia, most notably—I try to make sure that all of the counters required for *in-game* use are in one tray. I.e. hero counters, leaders, and different squad/half-squad types that may be required on an ad-hoc basis due to battle hardening or ELR failure. The idea here is to minimize on-table clutter during actual game play. Better to have only one tray required (per side) for gameplay than two. (Once play starts, all of the trays I no longer need to access during the game go back in the Raaco.)

Drawers #2 and #3 are for AFVs. I'd originally [organized](#) my AFVs in trays that have a 9-by-13 cell layout, but found that the tolerances were too small: If a counter wasn't properly clipped, or had expanded due to moisture, it got stuck. So now I use an 8-by-12 layout, which is slightly less efficient, but more robust and easy to use. These trays each cover half of a Raaco box interior surface, and stack six to a box (being only 7.5mm in height) and each cell stores four counters. So in theory, you can get 12 of these trays in a drawer—for a total of 1,152 cells, or 4,608 counters.

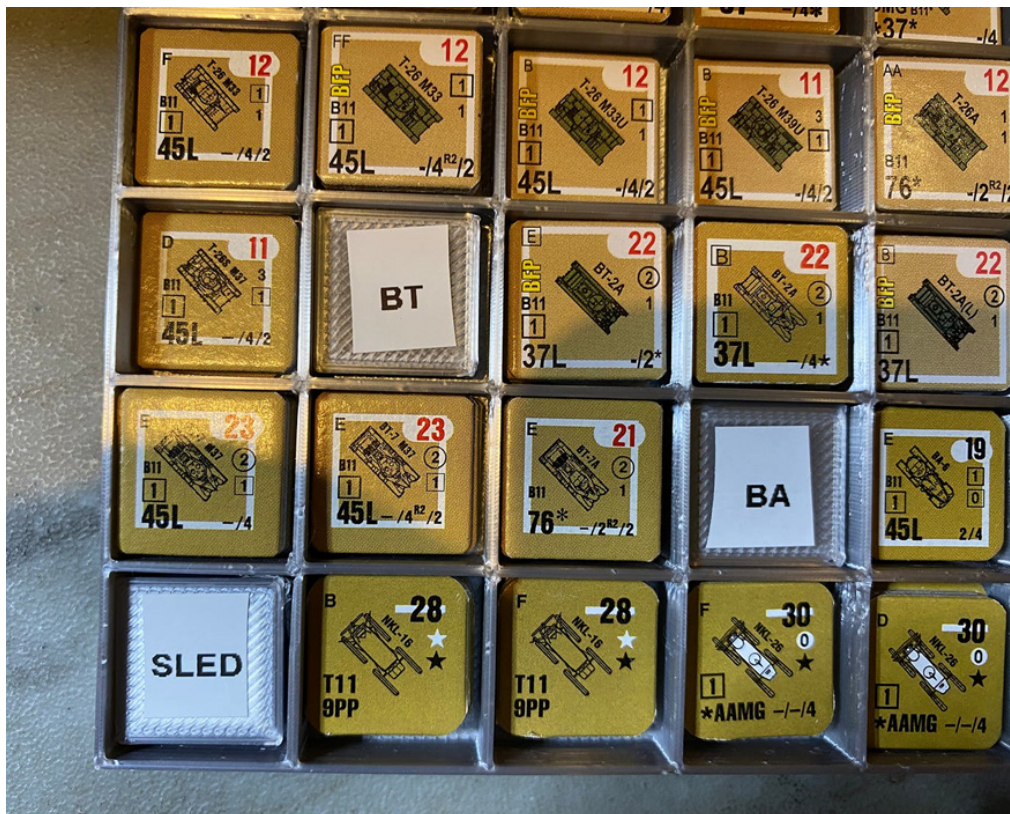
The four-counter capacity of each of the cells is more than enough for most AFV types, though in some cases, more than one cell is necessary. E.g. T-34s get several cells, since it isn't unusual to have five or more of



them in the same scenario. The same is true for the commonly used German halftracks. The idea here is to use as many cells as you need for each vehicle type.

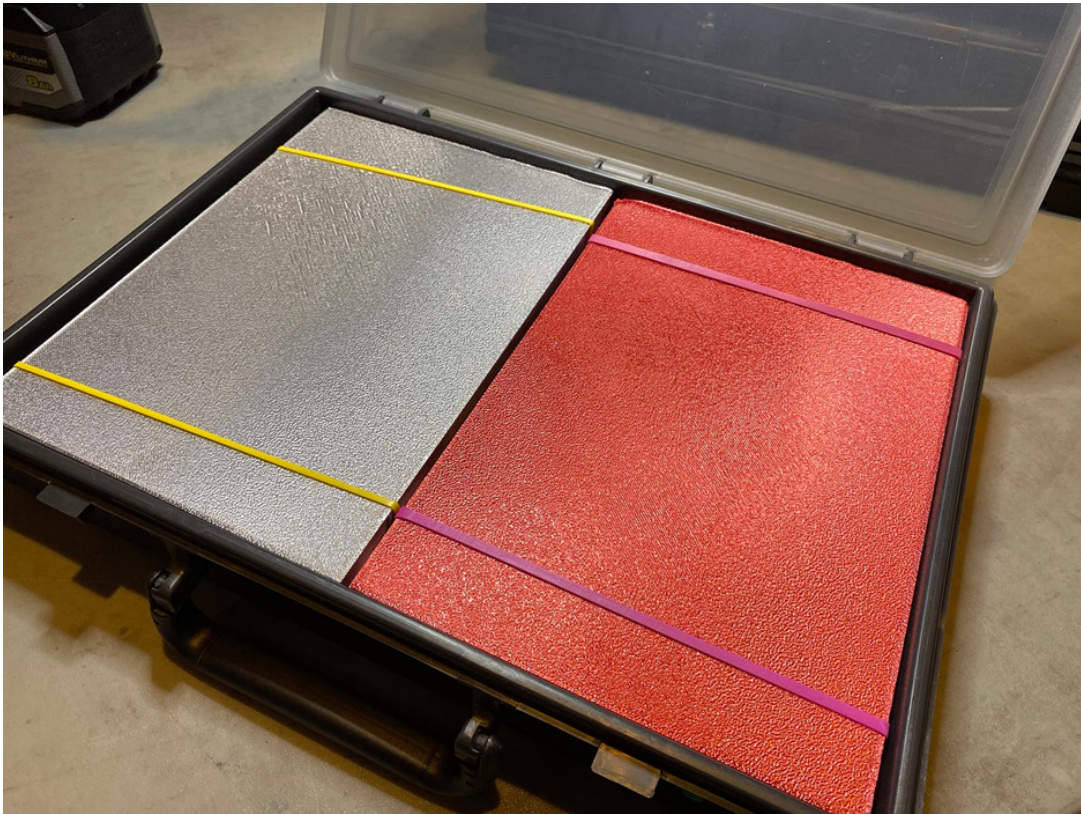


As you can see, I also 3-D printed little plastic blocks that fit neatly in the cells, which can be used as label guides for the various types of AFVs (e.g. BT, BA, and Sled-type Russian vehicles, as in the image below). These blocks can be moved around if you reorganize your vehicles.



In some cases, it's possible to get a whole nation's vehicle/Gun mix into a single 8x12 tray. But in the case of Germany and UK, it takes three trays. And the United States and Russia each require two trays. In order to keep these trays bundled together, I printed out open-face boxes of 15mm height (for stacks of two trays) and 22.5mm height (for stacks of three), which allow me to securely bundle a single nation's AFVs together in a brick-like elastic-bound stack. The downside here is that the extra space requirements for these bundling boxes mean that I can only get 10 trays (two stacks of five layers) into a Raaco drawer instead of 12.

So that brings us to the fourth drawer. I custom-printed that red side tray on the right to the precise dimensions permitted by the ASL rules/vehicle-notes/charts stack that takes up 80% of the drawer. (I have the STL file for that side box, too, if anyone wants it.) Here's a picture of that one.



“But wait,” you say. “What about status counters? First fire? Turrets? Fortifications? Boats? Planes? *Bridges?!?*” Where are *those*?

The answer is that they are on top of the Raaco, in a series of trapezoidal boxes that fit neatly into the cavities that tile the top of your Raaco unit. (See image, below.) The blue trapezoids are for half-inch counters. The grey ones are for 5/8” counters. (There’s also an extra grey box without internal dividers, which houses some of my smaller gameplay accessories.) Some of these are two layers deep (as illustrated in the photos that follow), with a thin tray below covered by a larger tray-and-cover above.

All of these come with fitted covers. So if you hit me up for STL files, don’t forget that in the case of these trapezoidal boxes, the STL file will include two structures—one for the box and one for the cover.

In all cases, my design/usage philosophy is that on-table clutter should be minimized, so I tried to get all of the most commonly used counters into the same trays, while relegating obscure and seldom-used counters to other boxes. Ideally, using this system, you should be able to get through a whole scenario with only about a half dozen small counter trays on the table—one each for the personnel of the two sides in question (as described above), and one or two each for status counters, smoke, acquisition and such.











Is this system right for you? If you've read this far, I'd say, yeah, probably. If it weren't for you, you'd have stopped reading a long time ago.

And just in case you're wondering: Yes, the feeling of getting all of these counters into such a small space is immensely satisfying (again, for a certain kind of personality). Think of it as the ultimate form of solitaire play.

Albany: A Retrospective



Joe Leoce

Hello Hazmo Horizon-ers,

Hi, I'm Joe Leoce and there's something you should know about me; I'm a Founder, not a Tournament Director. There's a difference! Let me explain.

22 or so years ago, I was a "man without a country"; a New Yorker playing ASL in tournaments everywhere BUT New York. The reason? New York did NOT have its own ASL Tournament! "That's impossible!" many thought or said. Sadly, they were wrong.

After a try with an ASL event at Dan Dolan's Mountain Wars in northern New Jersey, which I was disappointed in for a number of reasons, I began to give serious thought to a New York State ASL Championship.

I was a fair (though enthusiastic) player. I usually had losing records at regional tournaments (Atlanticon, Avaloncon, The Nor'Easter, Winter Offensive). I had a scenario I designed in the system (CH 97, Final Crisis

At Blackpool...yes, Critical Hit, which was almost “critical” to the chances that my scenario would be played - it was in playtest form with Schwerpunkt when CH published it.)

I didn't play many scenarios yearly (15-20.)

My main impetus for desiring a New York Tournament was so that I'd have another place to play (though I did feel strongly there not being a NY ASL tournament was a crime)!

I briefly considered a New York City location, but quickly eliminated it from consideration due to the logistical problems it would present...the cost of hotel game space, hotel rooms, food, parking, etc. Interestingly, the aircraft carrier Intrepid was a consideration for a while. I learned that there had been a scale-modeling event there once, with WW2 vehicles and aircraft prominently featured. But despite the venue being an advertising client/prospect of mine as a NY radio station ad salesman, the lack of interest on their part and associated costs eliminated it as a real possibility.

I started to look for a central location that could draw players from New York City, all parts of New York State, New Jersey and New England. I never really considered Canada, Maryland...never dreaming that Southern, Midwestern and Western US states and even Europe might one day supply attendees.

I drew imaginary lines between my primary locations on a Northern US map and Albany showed up pretty close to the exact center. I never really researched highways, thruways, and parkways to determine the ease of driving there, but lucked out that Albany was at the intersection of a number of major routes like the NY Thruway and Route 90. I decided that the Tournament would be in Albany.

I never had any intention of driving to Albany from Staten Island, NY to find a Hotel. I began my research online and tried to narrow down my choices to a manageable handful. I started making phone calls. Some hotels were just wrong from the get-go. Some tried to convince me that they were right for my game space needs. Some were simply too expensive. Some had no availability for the dates I had my sights fixed upon: the first weekend in December.



Paul Sidhu preparing to play the championship round at Albany 2022 versus Michael Halstrup-Leth of Denmark. The scenario: HazMo28: “Righteous Red Scythe”

I picked the date with 2 things in mind: it must be as far as possible from the dates of other well-established ASL Tournaments and be after Thanksgiving but before the Christmas and Chanukah Holidays. My goal was to allow players to celebrate the holidays completely while giving them the maximum number of “shopping days till Christmas.” Our dates are always somewhere around 11/30-12/5.

I hit paydirt, defined as the perfect combination of a large, comfortable, well-lit gaming space, affordable pricing for the game room and guest rooms, with easy travel to and from and many dining choices in and around the hotel in a Best Western Hotel at 1228 Western Avenue. The gaming space was big: actually 2 rooms that – while a bit unorthodox in shape, with some wider and narrower parts – was well-suited for our purposes. While I

didn't ask at the time, the tables the hotel had were seamless and perfect for gaming. Was I lucky!

(On a related note: We had 12 straight years at this Hotel with things running like clockwork. In year 13, I contacted the Hotel to ask a question about something that I can't recall. The manager said "When your event is happening, the Hotel will have been converted to a Senior Citizen's Home". "What?" I said. When were you planning on telling me this – a week before our tournament?" Luckily, the owner had 2 other Hotels in Albany and we were able to relocate to another. Whew! I have fantasized about our players retiring to that home and spending every waking moment playing ASL together. Wouldn't that be great!)

Now that I had a location, I needed a tournament. I had no experience in organizing one, just attending. Luckily...VERY luckily...I had a friend who played a lot of ASL, who knew just about everyone around the US who played from attending numerous tournaments, and who was interested and excited about joining me in creating a NY tournament...Gary Trezza. "Excited" may be the wrong word. EXCITABLE is more accurate (some might use other more extreme adjectives in describing Gary).

We were more acquaintances than friends. Gary wasn't the kind who you felt close to or who got close to others, though this proved to be an illusion (one that I believe he enjoyed perpetrating). We had played each other a few times. He came to my house 10 days after 9/11 for a small tournament hatched by Mike Puccio we called DUDECON and I went to his Melville, Long Island basement for a game amidst his multiple campaign-game clutter. We also both attended the Nor'Easter Tournament, New England's finest.

As most know about me ('cause I've stated it many times), I have no interest in on-site tournament directing. I'm happy negotiating hotel deals, creating the 1st-place diorama trophy, working with my local "trophy guy" creating 2nd-4th place plaques, making an occasional extra trophy for a mini or special award, coming up with ideas for anniversary giveaways, Tournament t-shirts, etc., but I'm not interested in working on opponent match-ups, rankings and the like. I just want to play.

For whatever reason, Gary *enjoyed* being a TD. He was into creating a scenario list and was good at it. He played so much that he had experience with a lot of scenarios. He'd play scenarios he was unfamiliar with to playtest them for Albany. He would gather intelligence about scenarios under consideration from his many ASL contacts.

Speaking of contacts, Gary made lots of contacts with the goal of driving up interest in this new tournament. He'd challenge players ("you're not as good as you think you are!") He'd promote premier matchups ("So-and-so says he'll kick your ass!") He'd invite players to come...from distant US cities and even Europe. He was involved in some form of communication about and for Albany EVERY DAY!

Gary came up with the scenario list. We then gathered the stuff we'd need to manage the tournament; tri-fold board to display current games, players looking for a match and the win-loss record. Post-it sheets and red and green dots for housekeeping.

I forget the details of registration from more than 20 years ago and I forget the specifics of how we got the word out and how things progressed toward our first Friday start ever, but when the day arrived, I believe we ended up with about 27 players. We thought that was pretty good.

One of the things Gary liked doing was warning against slow play and the dreaded adjudication. He took glee in menacing the room, coming near and calling out the time and impending danger to those who were not close to finishing but close to his steel-eyed scrutiny and ultimate decision. (Adjudication can be fun...for some.)

Gary looked a lot like Benito Mussolini.

One year, I took advantage of this in two ways. I had found a 1/6 Mussolini bust on some website. It was great. I also found a T-shirt place and had printed in Italian "Perdi il giudizio"...you lose the adjudication". With great fanfare, I stopped the players for an announcement. I said that I had a bust of Gary made to honor his contributions to Albany. I then produced the Mussolini bust and presented him with the T-shirt and told the crowd "You don't want to see him in front of you wearing this!" It was great fun!

I don't remember exactly when the Albany raffle began. I know that I gave away Armchair General magazines in the first year or two. I was a subscriber and asked the publisher to send 25 or so free copies. I discovered early on that, if you ask, you get (most times)! I started an annual reach-out that picks up speed around May, asking book publishers, authors, game publishers and game retailers for donations.

I met Ken Smith one year (at Winter Offensive, I think) and was privileged to see one of his original paintings of ASL box art in person. I started buying prints from him for the raffle – usually a “buy one/ get one” deal – and began arranging to buy the #1 prints of his work for the Albany raffle. The raffle grew over the years and became a big deal. Every year I start out feeling like I won't be able to come up with enough stuff for the upcoming year, but somehow I've been able to.

I could go on forever but will end my tome here. I want to personally thank Gary Trezza, who sadly passed away in 2021. Albany would not exist without him! I also want to Thank Steve Pleva, who came on board as an “every other year” TD and then took the reins from Gary and put his indelible stamp on ALBANY with his PBS bidding system and the conversion of the raffle to a computerized model which greatly reduced the time it takes from actually playing ASL. He will be stepping down as TD in 2024...BUT... will now be a player at Albany. We'll also help out with TD stuff as we transition to our new TD, Mike Puccio (Pooooooch!!!!!!)

I'd like to thank all the Albany supporters/ sponsors over the years who donate and/ or discount their products for our raffle: The ASL game and scenario publishers, the military book publishers, the ASL and military themed game and product retailers, the authors who have donated their books (some autographed), the Albany attendees who donate books and games all help make this event extra special.

I'd like to thank Advancing Fire for releasing some of their games at the Albany Tournament and a special thank you to Chuck Hammond, Chad Cummins and Hazardous Movement, who have released 2 of their 4 current scenario packs at Albany and will release their upcoming 5th pack at this year's tournament.

Finally, I want to say a BIG thank you to all the players who have attended and/or will attend Albany going forward. Like I said in the beginning of this article, I didn't TD it for you, but I did FOUND it for you!

- Joe Leoce

Post-script from Joe:

A lesson from Mountain Wars: ASL can be dangerous to your health! While driving to Mountain Wars one year, I turned a corner and there on the side of the road was a HUGE Black Bear. It was eating stuff that drivers were throwing to it. That night, I was playing a game that I was losing but had miraculously turned around. As the last turn was ending, I saw a wry smile on my opponent's face. I won, satisfying the VC. "You lose!" announced my opponent, with obvious glee. I had unknowingly exceeded a CVP cap. I went outside, surrounded by deep woods, and paced furiously, muttering to myself and totally lost in thought. I went back inside for some time and only then remembered that huge bear. I wouldn't have even noticed him in my state. Whew!

FONTENAY BY DAY



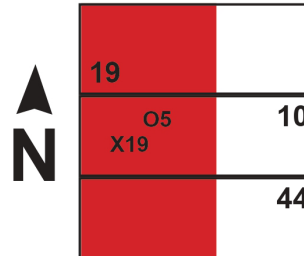
DB 113 (scenario originally appeared in Issue 38 of *Dispatches from the Bunker*)

Scenario Design: *Chuck Hammond*



FONTENAY-LE-PESNEL, FRANCE. 25 June, 1944. At 0415 hours on the morning of 25 June, Operation MARTLET commenced with a heavy artillery bombardment just ahead of the start line of the 49th Division. At 0500 this bombardment lifted and started to creep forward. Soon, a thick ground mist had developed, severely hindering the visibility of the advancing troops. Meanwhile, the 11th Royal Scots Fusiliers of 147th Infantry Brigade eventually pushed forward through the mist and began attacking Fontenay-le-Pesnel.

BOARD ORIENTATION:



(Only hexrows A-T on board 19 and N-GG on Boards 10 and 44 are in play)

PATH TO VICTORY: The British win at Game End by amassing 18VP. The British receive VP for Control of Stone Buildings on board 10: each Building Controlled is worth VP equal to the number of hexes it occupies; a rubbled Stone Building Location is still considered part of its original building for purposes of Building Control and VC.

PARITY:

- ☞ Add one DC to the German at-start OB.
- ☞ German reinforcements enter on turn 5 instead of turn 4.

TURN PROGRESSION

☞ GERMAN Sets Up First	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	END
☞ BRITISH Moves First								



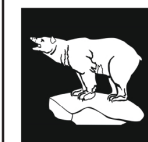
Elements of *Bataillon III, 26. SS-Panzer-Grenadier-Regiment, 12. SS-Panzer Division* [ELR: 5] set up on/south of hexrow T on boards 10 and 44 and hexrow N on board 19. (SAN: 4)

80mm Bn Mtr

10-2	9-1	8-0	8-3-8	6-5-8	3-3-8	2-2-8	Pak 38	Pak 40	Trench	Foxhole	Minefield
2	2	7	2	2	2	2	AT M10	AT M8	2	7	12 Factors
HMG	MMG	LMG	PSK	DC	Radio	?	50L	75L	Fortified Building Location	MPh/RRPh	
3	2	3	2	8	8	8			3	2	

Elements of *SS-Panzer Division 12* enter on Turn 4 on the south edge.

8-0	6-5-8	LMG	75LL
1	3-8	1	15
1	3-8	1	6



Elements of the *Royal Scots Fusiliers and 8th Armoured Brigade* [ELR: 4] enter on/after turn 1 on the north edge. All, some or none may enter each turn. (SAN:2)

Air Support enters on turn 6. (see SP5)

9-2	9-1	8-1	8-0	7-0	4-5-8	2-4-8	Churchill V	Sherman II(a)	3 44FB
2	2	2	2	2	15	3	8-1	95*	13
HMG	MMG	LMG	MTR	PIAT	FT	DC	1	1	1
2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2/4	2/4	12

SCENARIO PARAMETERS:

1. EC are Moist, with no wind at start. Kindling is NA. There is a +2 LV Hindrance (E3.1) in effect for Turn 1 only.

2. Place Overlay X19 on 10 Y5-Y4 and Overlay O5 on 10R7-Q8. All Hedges are Bocage (B9.5). The black bars in the Rowhouses do not exist, treat them instead as Open Ground; while large enough to allow LOS, these spaces are not sufficiently large to allow Vehicular Bypass Movement (D2.3); all hexes of the former "Rowhouses" are Single Story Houses (B23.21). Trenches "connect" directly to ADJACENT Ground Level Building/Rubble Locations in the manner of *Red Barricades* Cellars (see RB SSR 6).

3. The British receive a Pre-Registered Hex (C1.73) and a 120mm (HE only) Creeping Barrage (E12.7) directed by an Offboard Observer (C1.63) located at Level 3 on any north-edge hex. The British player selects this hex before all setup. This OBA module is convertible (E12.771) and is limited to three Fire Missions.

4. German 8-3-8/3-3-8 MMC are Assault Engineers (H1.22). The Germans may Fortify up to three Building Locations [EXC: *Tunnel exchange is N/A*]. The Germans may also use any OB-given DC (see parity) as Set DC (A23.7). The Germans receive one module of 80mm Battalion Mortar OBA (HE and Smoke); this OBA module becomes available on German Player Turn 2 and is limited to two Fire Missions. The Observer may set up using HIP. In addition, the Germans may set up one Squad-Equivalent (and any SMC/SW that sets up with it) using HIP.

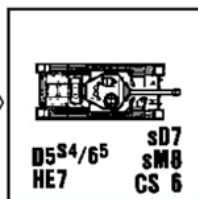
5. The British receive Air Support in the form of two American '44 FB with Bombs that arrive on Turn 6.

EPILOGUE: The village was strongly defended by the 3rd Battalion, SS-Panzer Grenadier Regiment 26. (12th SS Hitler Youth Panzer Division). Following heavy, inconclusive fighting that raged throughout the morning, the British were eventually forced to withdraw to the northern outskirts of the village and await reinforcements.

A Fresh Look at the A30 Challenger in ASL



Tom Rodwell



21. (A30) Challenger: Originally intended for long-range tank-vs-tank combat in the desert, the Challenger featured a lengthened Cromwell hull and chassis, with the hull center section widened to accommodate the large turret needed to carry a 17pdr. Unfortunately, the Cromwell was basically unsuitable for such a powerful gun, and numerous problems and delays were encountered during development. Many of the Challenger's deficiencies were never fully rectified, and concern about this led directly to the concept of the Sherman Firefly. Even after being put into production, the Challenger was still not considered truly battle-worthy—but its potent armament was needed in combat, so it was issued to the Cromwell-equipped armored recon regiments of the 7th, 11th, Guards, and 1st Polish Armoured Divisions, in which it was used in the same manner as the Firefly. 200 Challengers were built.

† RF is 1.6 in 8/44, 1.5 in 9/44, and 1.4 thereafter.

See also [British Vehicle Notes J, Z](#).



Having recently read P.M. Knight's 2015 *A30 Challenger Tank: A Technical History*, I realise that there are two substantial issues with how the A30 Challenger is depicted in ASL. These are quite material and – ideally – should be addressed with reissued counters (in the same way that the turret traverse issue was resolved).

The first is the armour rating. This is relatively straightforward. The counter shows the A30 Challenger as it was initially produced, namely the first 34 vehicles (T271901 – T271940) produced between March and June 1944. It does not, however, show that the Challenger was then quite substantially up armoured. The next 75 vehicles (T271941 – T272000), which were produced between July and October 1944, had a 102mm cast turret armour, increasing the protection from 63mm to 102mm. This would give these mid-production run Challengers an armour factor of 8 in a square. The remaining 92 Challengers produced between November 1944 and August 1945 (T271001 – T272100) had applique armour added to the hull front along with the 102mm cast front turret, including applique armour on the turret. This would give the late-production run A30 Challengers an armour factor of 11. On this basis one counter would represent the early production run, two counters the mid-production run and three the late production run.

Also worth noting that the addition of the up armoured cast turret nose and the applique armour to both the turret and hull front made no difference to the speed or performance of the A30 Challenger. The RAC noted on 29th August 1944 that:

“Throughout the first 1000 miles of the trial [Field Trial 1399] the performance and mechanical reliability was very satisfactory, the cross country speeds were higher than those recorded in the original Challenger Acceptance Trials report in F.T.1255., no major defects were experienced during the trials... ..The extra weight of the vehicle caused by the addition of applique armour means that the dynamic forces on the suspension when travelling over rough ground will be increased. The trial has shown that suspension components are capable of withstanding the additional load without suffering undue harm. Skilful driving will ensure complete reliability.”



2.51 MECHANICAL RELIABILITY: Each time an AFV having a red MP allotment expends a MP to start (or makes a successful Motion attempt; 2.401), its owner must make a DR; if a 12 is rolled, the AFV has suffered a mechanical breakdown and is immobilized.⁵ If the owning player forgets to make this DR, the opposing player can thereafter call for it to be made at any time during that MP as the AFV expends any MP. An AFV that suffers a Mechanical Reliability Immobilization is subject to Defensive First Fire (since it has expended a MP to start), but not as a moving target unless it had already entered a new hex/hexside during that MP or started that MP in Motion.

5.2.51 MECHANICAL RELIABILITY: While most AFV could be expected to function normally within the time span of an average ASL scenario, others were inherently more susceptible to frequent and unexpected mechanical failures usually due to overstressed/poor quality components or an unsound design. Such unreliable AFV should be at some risk of breakdown regardless of the scenario's length or the speed at which they are moving. This phenomenon is obviously exaggerated within the limited time frame of an ASL scenario to compensate for the very presence of such vehicles—this unreliability manifesting itself most often in the failure of such vehicles to even reach the battlefield due to breakdowns en route. A more realistic rule would be to simply make a dr at the start of a scenario which a vehicle with poor mechanical reliability would have to pass in order to be included in the scenario. The drawback to such a system is that play balance can be destroyed before the game even begins.

The second issue is the red MP allotment. This is frankly rather odd. The A30 Challenger had the same superlative Rolls-Royce Meteor engine and Merritt-Brown transmission and gearbox as the very reliable A27M Cromwell (reported by Royal Armoured Crews as being automotively more reliable than the Sherman) and the A34 Comet (as well as the early marks of the A41 Centurion), so it's obviously not an issue with the powerplant. This suggests that it is either something to do with the idler and the tendency to throw tracks or with the longer length to width ratio introduced by the additional road wheel. However, the idler was rapidly fixed in the field by the DGAFV with the introduction of the Gibbs idler. The Challenger was briefly withdrawn from combat in late November / December 1944 to make the necessary modifications and returned to active service by the end of the month. More importantly, exactly the same issue affected the A34 Comet in March 1945, which is not penalised, so it doesn't seem that it relates to the idler.

This leaves the length-to-width ratio. Here, David Fletcher does comment unfavourably and suggest that it made the vehicle difficult to steer. It was certainly heavier to steer, requiring more pressure on the steering tillers but not to the extent that it was more than an average driver could manage. In fact, wartime trials with both the A27M Cromwell and the A30 Challenger show the latter as being more stable over rough ground because of the additional length. It would seem, therefore, that the red MP allotment is largely unwarranted or, at most, should only apply to the initial production run of 34 vehicles (once counter), which saw service in Normandy in July and August 1944. A 30th November 1944 Field Trial report (FT 1503) said the following:

“In order to lighten the duty on the steering brakes which is occasioned by the unfavourable length to width ration of Challenger, a modification to the suspension design was proposed by D.D.R.A.C. (Tech) whereby check straps were fitted to restrain the rebound movement of Nos. 1 and 6 wheels to 2” above the normal static position... ..The fitment of the check straps does not reduce the steering brake duty nor affect turning circles... ..An improvement in steering is apparent on road running with the check straps fitted, less lever effect being required to steer the machine.”

In the end, however, the benefit was not deemed sufficient, and the straps were not adopted, mainly because they would have reduced reliability improved a problem which was not sufficiently severe to warrant the remedial action.

The A30 Challenger has been a much-maligned AFV. Its long and troubled gestation was consistent with nearly all British wartime AFVs but, unlike many of those produced earlier in the war, by the time it got into service in July 1944 it was an effective and largely trouble-free vehicle. The remaining issues with the front idler were resolved and the tank was up armoured. It seems to have been relatively well-liked by its crews in the armoured reconnaissance regiments of the British armoured divisions. In particular, having a 17pdr armed vehicle which could keep up with the A27 Cromwell was welcome, as was its gun's ability to take on late war German armour, especially when using APDS. It seems to have performed well in combat and the Deputy Director-General of Armoured Fighting Vehicles at the Ministry of Supply wrote the following in his 7th May 1945 report, “Report on Visit to Armoured Formations 21 Army Group, 10th April – 21st April 1945”:

“After a period of unpopularity, mainly due to trouble with its front idlers, the Challenger is now generally popular. One or two instances of this tank withstanding an attack by Faustpatrone [Panzerfausts] without damage has given it a reputation for immunity which is probably not justified. No further trouble has been experienced with idlers, all tanks being equipped with the new type. Of the twelve Challengers in 8th Hussars, Armoured Reconnaissance Regiment, 7th Armoured Division, two causes of

mechanical trouble have occurred.”

It's worth ending with a quotation from the Royal Armoured Corps Half-Yearly Progress Report No.11 of 30th June 1945, which expressed a general satisfaction with the A30 Challenger:

“Although the period under review has seen the end of the German war, there is little to add to the information given in the last report about the performance of RAC equipments. The CHALLENGER appeared in limited numbers and was never considered more than a ‘stop gap’ equipment, but as such it came up to expectations once the serious difficulties were encountered initially with the front idler wheels had been rectified.”



About the author:

Tom works as a senior conflict and stabilisation adviser in the British government's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. He has worked as an analyst in Emerging Markets and previously served in the British Army. He lives in rural West Sussex with his wife, teenage children and three cats.

Tom started playing Squad Leader back in 1981 and graduated to ASL when it was published in 1985. He played until graduating university and joining the army. There was then a long hiatus until he took up playing ASL again in 2016. He relearned the rules via ASLSK, benefitting both from Jay Richardson's invaluable ASLSK tutorials along with the generous help and guidance from a number of players on VASL.

Advancing Fire: Past, Present and Future

Sebi Caltabiano

ASL is a system that can be approached in very different ways. There are those who play it in a competitive way – as if it were chess – and compete in tournaments. And then there are those who appreciate more the side of historical re-enactment, the didactic side to understand the dynamics of tactics in the conflicts of the years 1930-1950, and partly also for the more modern ones, or a little more ancient. When I was young, for me ASL was like a “democratic” and portable way of playing 3D simulations. I had always been fascinated by these landscapes of complex three-dimensional models and how they immersed you in the realities they represented. But they had a lot of problems, so they were still chimeras. The problems were the time and enormous resources that had to be expended to build them, the fact that they were not transportable and the fact that a single landscape in the end was “historical” only for a battle. With ASL the battlefield issue was solved. You combined sub-maps, or better, you bought a historical module, and you took the hills of the Ardennes and the factories of Stalingrad wherever you wanted. Terrific!

The idea of Advancing Fire was born around the end of 2017, three years after I separated from my partner and came back to live alone. My new home was an old apartment where my parents lived, and in their basement I found the old ASL boxes, partly gnawed by mice and moisture. Towards the end of 2017, after several games on VASL, I realized that I had the amount of free time and stimuli needed to try to build what I realized I wanted: push ASL even further towards realism and simulation, through the creation of new historical modules, based on military events never treated, at least that way. In that initial phase there was an extremely important dialogue with the best Italian ASL player, Paolo Cariolato, whom I jokingly call the “Company’s Guru” for his wisdom and knowledge of ASL and its world, down to the smallest seemingly insignificant details. Paolo is a very strong “competitive” player, he won some seasons of VASLeague, for example, but I know that part of him is, above all, very oriented towards the historical, reenacting and simulatory aspects of wargames, as well as being a connoisseur

of political-military events. Paolo made a big initial contribution towards Advancing Fire being born, his stimulus was very important. With him I discussed the idea of making one or more games with both an “operational” and an ASL part and it was he who suggested the concepts on which to base the first two modules, *Operation Brevity* in 1941 in North Africa and the actions following the American landing at Gela in 1943 in Sicily. Two nice modules came out, *Brevity Assault* and *Biazza Ridge*, only the first with the operational component though. Released together in 2020, these modules only had a few small problems with the printer, which wasn’t optimal. That’s why we’re going to re-issue them. *Brevity Assault* will be reprinted probably between this year and next year in an enhanced version that will be called “Brevity - Battleaxe” that will include the CG related to Operation Battleaxe, new operational counters, probably new ASL counters and new historical maps. The reprint of *Biazza Ridge* is still being studied.



Sebi (upper left) being interviewed along with Ulric Schwela on the excellent “2 Half-Squads” ASL podcast.

The next work turned out to be a battle considered mythological during my adolescence, and that had in the meantime received much attention from numerous historians, and so was very well documented: Prokhorovka. This game, released in 2021, had a great participation of a dear friend and enthusiastic ASL player such as Luca Martini, a true enthusiast of the

Eastern front and Stalingrad in particular. It was Luca who supported the subject, engaged in dialogue with Christopher Lawrence, the author of the well-known book, and discussed with me many aspects of the simulation. And with *Prokhorovka!* for the first time Advancing Fire availed itself of help in playtest and design by Ulric Schwela, a very attentive and shrewd player, also adhering to the idea of including as much realism as possible in the game. The realization of *Prokhorovka!* was really very pleasant, even if tiring. In particular, it was very fascinating to fight that battle on the table understanding the dynamics provided by the terrain, the composition of the opposing forces and the objectives that were proposed. Very interesting. With *Prokhorovka!* we have also started the collaboration with at least one historian or popularizer for each HASL game we produce, in this case with Christopher Lawrence, because we think that these types of games can precisely be an excellent didactic support to the works of military history.

After *Prokhorovka!*, we put some games in the pipeline, first of all *Orsogna*, but also a simulation on the events in September 1943 in Rome, and we collaborated a little on a future project of Ulric on the Battle of the Blue Hills in Estonia in 1944. We produced in 2022 a package of scenarios by our friend Enrico Catanzaro, also an experienced player of ASL. Enrico has studied a very interesting balance method for his Tournament Director's Pack scenarios, which are absolutely worth playing. We started collaborating on graphics with Carl Nogueira's Yankee ASL projects.

Currently, we've come out with the HASL game of *Orsogna*, a historical simulation of fighting in Italy in one of the most important stages, namely the winter 1943-44, period in which the battle of Ortona, the landing at Anzio, the Battle of the Rapido river and the early stages of the battle of Cassino are to be mentioned. The battle sees as protagonist the powerful 2nd New Zealand Division, homologous to an armored division, and on the other side a great variety of German troops, including the famous "Grüne Teufel" paratroopers widely used to plug the holes on the Italian front. In this case we had fun making a map with an Italian town of medieval origins and to devise some new rules to make the fighting in that type of environment realistic. Very interesting also in this case was the help that the simulation

provides in understanding the tactical dynamics of the battle as a whole.

In the future, we would like to increase the collaboration with other designers for our creations. We are currently working on a simulation of fighting in Hungary in 1945 near Lake Balaton as well as other things already mentioned.

This is our history, we enjoyed telling you about it, and we hope that our work on the ASL system has been and will meet with approval and provide inspiration for further developments for others!

Cheers.

Sebi Caltabiano



The HazMo Philosophy

Chuck Hammond

Since the establishment of Hazardous Movement in May of 2021, I have been interviewed on four different podcasts, and each time was asked some version of the same question, namely: “What’s different about Hazmo?” And it’s a fair question, given the number of past and current Third Party Producers (TPPs) out there, each of which with its own unique approach to the hobby. I cannot, of course, speak for other groups – I can only speak for my own (and for my experience as a longtime ASL consumer). With that fact in mind, I’d just like to provide some insight into what it is Hazmo seeks to offer its patrons and the ASL community at large.

1) Fun

It might sound funny to begin simply with the elementary, absolutely fundamental concept of “fun,” but it really is Job #1, as far as we’re concerned. After all, if the scenario isn’t fun, what’s the point? To this end, we seek to provide a lot of variety, ETO and PTO, Germans, Russians, Japanese, Americans, Free French, Italians, British, Thai, Moroccans, Filipinos, Spanish Fascists, Spanish Socialists, Chinese GMD, Chinese Communists, Yugoslavians . . . you name it! In this way, players’ knowledge of the rules is consistently challenged and monotony avoided. We also try to make the OBs substantial, to include many weapons that otherwise would just gather dust in your counter tray, so that players will have an incentive to play either side. Finally, replay value is extremely important to us. If there is only “one way to play” either side, the scenario is, at best, “one-and-done.” We aim to create scenarios that not only make players want to switch sides, but to take the same side and play it differently!

2) Thorough Playtesting

This one is close to our hearts. Experienced players can usually tell when a scenario hasn’t been sufficiently playtested . . . by which we mean playtested by experienced players. It is simply not enough to have intermediate players test the product. It’s a complex game, after all, so inevitably they’re going to miss a lot. It’s just the nature of the beast. For that reason, our playtesters have, on average, 20-35 years of playing experience. It doesn’t mean mistakes will never be made. But what it does mean is they’re not going to miss a lot. And the proof is in the pudding. Our packs – which consist of 10 scenarios, each with lots of moving parts – will generally generate two or three errata each, give or take. The playtesting also ensures, of course, that each side has a chance. It doesn’t mean that every scenario will turn out 50-50 (though most will), but we won’t produce any scenarios in which one side has no realistic chance of winning. We all know what that’s like.

3) Customer Service

I will say that I do not know of another TPP that offers Hazmo's level of customer service. It used to irk me in the old days when you had a question about a scenario and had to wait six months to a year for a response from the producer (assuming the producer bothered to respond at all). As Hazmo players know, they can just send me an email, and I'll respond to their questions, usually within 24 hours. Similarly, if a customer orders a product, that's also going out within 24 hours, and pre-orders go out on or before the promised date of shipment. It's what we would want as consumers, so we make sure to offer that level of service to our players.

4) Promotion of ASL

Let's get one thing straight: none of us is quitting our day job to make scenario packs (as much as we might fantasize about doing so!). None of us is getting rich off of the hobby, so why are we in it? Well, most of us are over 50, we are "no longer the youngest" (as the Germans put it so diplomatically), but we are invested in the continuance of the hobby that has played such a pivotal role in our lives. And when I say "pivotal" I don't just mean as a recreational pursuit. Heck, I credit SL / ASL for making me a teenager who was more literate than his peers, since the SL / ASL rulebook assumed a better-than-average vocabulary, and I desperately wanted to play, so if that meant looking up the occasional word or two, I was more than prepared to do so! I also met my lifelong best friend through SL / ASL (I refer here to Chad Cummins, of course!). I've met other people through the hobby, as well, people whom I will always consider dear friends. I taught my two sons, Tray and Deion, to play, and ASL provides us with an activity we can all enjoy while discussing other aspects of their lives, since – as an old guy – I usually don't play their video games. And when I was writing my dissertation – which is hell, don't let anyone tell you otherwise – ASL provided a welcome relief from the stress of writing and self-recrimination (for not having written enough that day). For these and other reasons, I would very much like to see the hobby survive me / us, so Hazmo offers a considerable amount of free content, including the newsletter you're reading

right now. In addition, we offer a free scenario from each of our packs, so that players can share in our enjoyment, even if they don't have the means to purchase the packs (we've all been there ourselves). In closing, I'd also like to mention the fact that, when we were growing up, World War II veterans were everywhere. I have so many precious memories of talking to men who were as old as I am now, who opened up to me and shared their experiences with some random punk kid who – for whatever reason – was deeply interested in what was for most the decisive event of their lives. ASL keeps their memory and the real sacrifices that they made for their countries alive in some small, but real way. For all these reasons, the promotion of the hobby is and will always remain etched in our collective memory.



Hazardous Movement

Scenario Pack 5

Firestarter



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