



Honoring a Patriot

By Captain Darrin W. Haas

Major General Hugh Barbee Mott, former Adjutant General of Tennessee and a hero at Remagen Bridge during World War II, devoted his life to the service of his state and country. He was an inspiration to all Soldiers, epitomizing courage, dedication, and bravery.

Born in Nashville, Tennessee, on 14 August 1920, Mott graduated from East Nashville High School in 1939, where he got his first taste of the military as a captain in the Reserve Officer Training Corps. He later attended the Marion Military Institute in Marion, Alabama, a preparatory school for all the military service academies, where he focused on attending West Point.

Mott was quickly recognized as a diligent young man, and after attending Marion Institute, the legendary General Bob Neyland elected him for a temporary job as a rodman with the United States Corps of Engineers. Mott worked on the Wolf Creek Dam from August 1940 until January 1941, while applying for entry into West Point. As war swept through Europe, young Mott gained employment at the Vultee Aircraft plant in January 1941. He worked 70 hours a week as the company raced to build dive bombers the Allies would desperately need.

Once the United States entered the war, Mott enlisted as a private in the Army on 1 November 1942. He reported to Fort Eustis, Virginia, for basic training and specialized in antiaircraft

artillery. He was promoted to corporal before shipping out to Camp Davis, North Carolina, on 1 March 1943 to attend Artillery Officer Candidate School.

Quickly completing Officer Candidate School, Corporal Mott was commissioned a second lieutenant on 3 June 1943. He remained as an instructor at the facility until 10 February 1944, when he transferred to the Engineer Branch and attended Engineer Basic Officer School at Fort Belvoir, Virginia.

Second Lieutenant Mott completed engineering school on 24 March 1944 and was assigned as a platoon leader in the 9th Armored Division Engineer Battalion at Camp Polk, Louisiana. As a combat engineer, Mott and his company were responsible for working directly with combat troops in numerous capacities—from construction and repair of roads and bridges, to the demolition and deployment of mines, explosives, and assorted booby traps.

Mott and the 9th Armored Division deployed for Europe on 20 August 1944 to take part in the liberation of France, landing at the beach in Normandy on 9 October 1944. Through October, he moved east across France, engaging in fierce combat in the Battle of the Bulge. The Germans eventually lost ground and retreated into Germany, destroying bridges and crossing over the Rhine River to halt the American advance.

On 7 March 1945, the 9th Armored Division and now First Lieutenant Mott, who was promoted in February, arrived at the town of Remagen en route to Sinzig. Surprisingly, the Ludendorff railroad bridge across the Rhine River was still intact. As German troops were still retreating across the bridge, Colonel Leonard E. Engeman, Commander of the 14th Tank Battalion, ordered that the bridge be taken intact. He deployed his troops to attack and secure the site, soon learning that the bridge was rigged with explosives and scheduled to be destroyed within minutes.

Colonel Engeman ordered Mott, with the help of two of Mott's most reliable Soldiers—Sergeant Eugene Dorland and Staff Sergeant John Reynolds—to prevent the destruction of the bridge, which had already been weakened by German soldiers through a series of explosive charges, artillery, and mortar fire. After receiving the order to proceed, First Lieutenant Mott heroically and under fire led his team to the bridge. The Germans had blown a huge crater in the approach to the bridge, prohibiting the use of tanks, but giving some cover for the small team.

After a quick visual reconnaissance from the crater, Mott and his team raced across the entire length of the bridge,

cutting the wires leading to a multitude of explosive charges, all the while under intense fire from snipers, machine guns, and 20-millimeter guns. As the teams were cutting various wires to the explosives, Mott witnessed a tremendous explosion on the far side of the bridge. He thought he might be too late, but the explosion was a minor blast that caused only some structural damage on the far side.

The team continued its mission, with Mott discovering four packages of TNT weighing 30 pounds each, as well as one 600-pound charge rigged to explode. The team disabled the charges and threw them into the river. Sergeant Dorland discovered the main cable to the explosives, but could not cut it with his pliers. Without hesitating, he shot the cable with his carbine, completely severing the line.

As the final charges were being disabled, an infantry platoon arrived to secure the bridge. Mott called for his platoon to be brought up to begin repairs on the structure in order to move tanks across. He heroically led his platoon, under heavy sniper and machine gun fire, to patch the gaping hole in the bridge planking. They worked frantically on their hands and knees to repair the damaged bridge, eventually allowing tanks to cross and ensuring the Allies an eastern foothold on the Rhine.



Mott became Commanding General of the 30th Armored Division in April 1968.

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The skill, speed, and boldness of the team’s successful mission won resounding congratulations and praise from high-ranking military officials. General Dwight D. Eisenhower was reported to be jubilant. General Omar N. Bradley said, “...this bold advance, characterized by able willingness to chance great risks for great rewards, speeds the day when our full forces can come to grips with the enemy.”

For this heroic act, First Lieutenant Hugh B. Mott was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, the commendation citing his “unhesitating action and cool courage” amid intense enemy fire aimed directly at him. Sergeant Eugene Dorland and Staff Sergeant John Reynolds were also awarded the Distinguished Service Cross. Officials at the time said the war was probably shortened by about six months due to the team’s action, perhaps preventing 5,000 to 10,000 Allied casualties.

After the battle at Remagen Bridge, Mott continued to fiercely engage the German Army, pressing into Germany; fighting in the capture of Limberg, Frankfurt, and Leipzig; and heading into Czechoslovakia just before V-E Day. At the end of World War II, he was assigned to the Engineer Battalion of the 90th Infantry Division. He served in the Army of Occupation as a platoon leader and company commander until returning to the United States in 1946. He was separated from active military service on 9 June 1946 and entered the Reserves with the rank of captain.

Mott returned home to Tennessee after the war as a highly decorated Soldier and greatly admired individual and was soon called on to run for public office. He won election to the Tennessee House of Representatives in 1948 and served until 1951.

After three years in the Reserves, Captain Mott decided to join the Tennessee Army National Guard. On 15 March 1949, he was assigned as operations and training officer of the 173d Armored Group in Jackson, Tennessee. He quickly rose through the ranks and was promoted to brigadier general on 28 April 1964. He became the Commanding General of the 30th Armored Division in April 1968.

From 4-14 April 1968, Brigadier General Mott commanded Task Force Bravo, a force of more than 3,300 Guardsmen, during civil disturbances in Nashville following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King. Miraculously, without loss of life, Mott

led Guardsmen, city police, and State Troopers into Tennessee’s A & I University dormitories while under sniper fire. He searched and confiscated weapons and tools used previously to set fire to the Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps building.

Mott earned his second star on 28 June 1968, and on 1 December 1968, Major General Mott was named Adjutant General for the State of Tennessee by Governor Buford Ellington. He simultaneously acted as Commander of the 30th Armored Division until February 1969. Mott worked tirelessly as Adjutant General, a post he would hold until 26 May 1971, during a period of intense civil unrest. He was released from the Tennessee Army National Guard on 31 May 1971 and worked for the National Guard Directorate until retiring from the Tennessee National Guard in November 1975.

In tribute to Major General Mott, the United States Army Engineer School, located at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, named the Bachelor Officer’s Quarters building “Mott Hall” in his honor. The building showcases a portrait of Mott with an impressive display of his World War II exploits.

Major General Hugh B. Mott died in June 2005 at the age of 84, after spending more than 33 years in the service of his country. Tennessee Guardsmen remember Mott as a courageous patriot who always led from the front. His commitment to duty as a Soldier, public servant, and human being illustrated his impeccable character, limitless courage, and stalwart commitment to his country, Tennessee, and his fellow man.

Note: The Tennessee National Guard recently broke ground on the new Mott Armory at the Tennessee National Guard State Headquarters in Nashville.



Captain Haas, the Command Historian for the Tennessee Army National Guard, is Commander of the 269th Military Police Company. He previously commanded Detachment 1, 267th Military Police Company, and deployed to Iraq as platoon leader of the 267th. He has been mobilized for Hurricane Katrina relief, Galatin tornado relief, and a southwest border mission and spent five years as a United States Navy rescue swimmer. He holds a bachelor’s in history from the Tennessee Technological University.