

Major General Maurice Rose: World War II's Greatest Forgotten Commander

by **Steven L. Ossad and
Don R. Marsh**

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IT WAS APPROPRIATE that Maurice Rose was ultimately placed in command of the 3rd Armored Division during World War II. Under his extraordinarily aggressive leadership, it earned the nickname he had given it, "Spearhead," in a series of battles and offensives that contributed significantly to the U.S. Army's advance across Nazi-occupied France, including Mons in September 1944, the Hürtgen Forest in October and the Battle of the Bulge in December. March 1945 saw the climax, as elements of the division

507th Heavy Tank Battalion. As he and his two companions raised their hands in surrender, a German tank commander suddenly opened fire with his submachine gun, killing Rose. His two subordinates made a break for it and eventually made their way back to Allied lines.

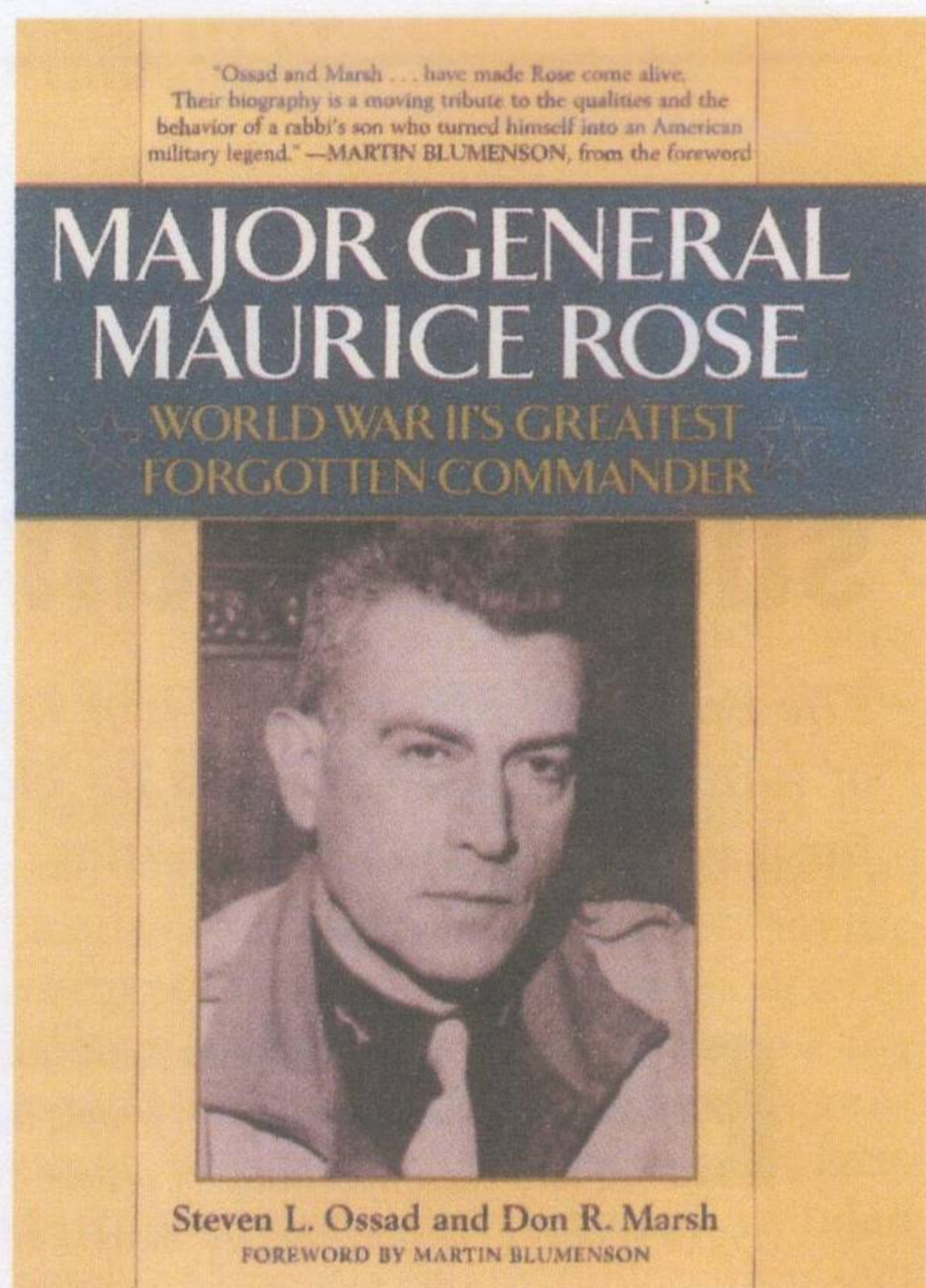
Rose's command of the Spearhead Division was also appropriate largely because the achievements of his fighting career, from North Africa to Sicily, from Normandy to Germany, stand out like spearheads—but little is known about him in between. *Major General Maurice Rose* represents, first and foremost, marvelous research by writer Steven L. Ossad and one of Rose's soldiers, Don R. Marsh. They had to gather information from a paucity of official documents, newspaper clippings and a lot of impressions from veterans and family members who were still available to flesh out the gaps. Their success in that enterprise has produced an excellent account of one of the U.S. Army's worthiest officers in Europe.

The author's presentation of Rose's story is somewhat uneven, clearly colored by the understandable affection that veteran Marsh has for his own commander. Most of the time the narrative moves along with compelling immediacy. On several occasions, however, the reader may weary of the constant reminders the authors feel compelled to give on what a manly, courageous and dynamic hero Rose was—a straight recounting of his actual deeds makes that clear enough.

In addition to a detailed examination of Rose's death, the authors deal with the most contradictory aspect of his career. The son of a Jewish rabbi, Rose converted to Christianity during World War I. After his death, however, the Jewish community in his home state of Colorado viewed him as a Jewish hero, raised funds for a non-sectarian hospital to be named after him and tried to have a Star of David placed on his grave. His grave was ultimately marked by a cross, but the pain that the controversy regarding his religious identity caused both his immediate Jewish family and his Protestant wife and children left its tragic mark.

One thing that cannot be disputed is that Rose was an outstanding U.S. Army division commander and a kindred spirit to Lt. Gen. George S. Patton Jr. and Maj. Gen. J. Lawton "Lightning Joe" Collins. *Major General Maurice Rose* pays overdue homage to what he and his troops achieved—and the research that made it possible stands as an equally impressive achievement.

Jon Guttman



rolled across Germany from Marburg to Paderborn, a distance of about 90 miles, in one day—a record advance for an American division in the face of enemy opposition that still stands. On the night of March 30, however, Rose, always prone to lead from the front, was cut off when his forward elements suffered a sudden reversal by Tiger tanks of the Germans'