

HALL BROTHERS ENTERTAINMENT PRESENTS MEMORIAL DAY 2011

The Runner  
By Phillip Hall

The bullets ripped past his helmet and tugged at his shirt. Maize sprinted as fast as his legs would carry him. He could hear the Nazi soldiers laughing from across the field as they fired on him. He clutched his rifle close to his chest and focused on running. He knew if he was going to survive he'd have to make it into the trees ahead. Then he heard the noise many soldiers feared. It was the sound of the Nazi MG-42 machine gun opening up. It spewed death from its barrel, especially for anyone unlucky enough to be out in the open like Maize was now.

"Oh hell," Maize said.

The bullets hit the ground around him and he could see chunks of dirt flying everywhere. He knew if he could only make it another twenty yards he'd be safe. Right as he approached the trees the MG-42 stopped firing. In that instant a group of GI's sprang from the trees and rushed past Maize. They were heading across the open field and directly at the machine gun nest.

"You're going the wrong way Maize! The action is this way," Sgt. Hacker shouted as he sprinted past him.

Maize tried to slow down and change directions but tripped and landed face first on the ground. He got to his knees and located his rifle. He was getting ready to sprint after his unit when he heard someone approaching through the trees.

"Who goes there?" Maize challenged.

"Maize it's me. I've been hearing the gunfire but couldn't find you guys," Grider said.

Grider came to the edge of the clearing and saw for the first time what was going on. He grabbed Maize and hauled him into the trees.

"What's the matter with you Grider?" Maize asked.

"They'll never make it all the way across that field in time," Grider said.

"We've gotta do something!" Maize shouted out.

Grider took off sprinting as fast as he could across the field. He pulled out a grenade and held it tightly. He'd been made platoon runner because of his speed and willingness to get up and go when all others were pinned down.

"It only takes them seven or eight seconds to change that barrel out on the gun and it's already been a few since they quit firing! You're never gonna make it in time!" Maize yelled out.

"Watch me!" Grider replied as he sprinted away.

Faster and faster he ran until he had finally overtaken Sgt. Hacker. The sergeant did a double take as Grider sped by.

The Nazi's were pinned down by the GI's fire as they advanced but they knew as soon as the machine gun was back up it'd put an end to the assault.

Grider pushed himself harder and had passed a few more GIs when he saw the last man ahead. He could see the machine gunners locking the new barrel in and reloading a belt of ammo. He locked eyes with the gunner and saw a smile come across the man's lips.

"You die!" The Nazi shouted.

Grider pulled the pin on the grenade then ran faster than he ever had. He approached the machine gunners nest that was slightly dug into the ground. He jumped head first over gun and two stunned Nazi's below, dropping the grenade as he sailed over.

"Not today I won't!" Grider yelled out.

He landed hard on the other side and rolled till he came to a painful stop. He glanced over his shoulder and saw the two men trying to scramble out of the gunners nest when the grenade went off. The two men flew into the air as smoke and dirt followed. They came down hard not far from Grider. He sat up and shook his head only to be greeted by the barrel of a Nazi rifle. He looked up to see three men above him with murder in their eyes. He smiled back at them and knew if it was his time to go that he'd given his all for his country and for his family back home.

"Do it," Grider said in a stubborn tone.

Just then three shots rang out and each of the Nazi's fell to the ground dead. Grider turned around to see Maize and Sgt. Hacker holding their just fired rifles.

"Thanks," Grider said.

He pulled himself to his feet and looked around to see all the others from his squad as well. He was relieved that no one had gotten caught in front of that machine gun. Sgt. Hacker stepped around the smoking remains of the machine gun nest.

"Grider you are either the stupidest or most courageous infantryman I've ever known. The only one that even comes close is your buddy Maize over there and that's just cause he follows you around most of the time. Still I'm happy you showed up when you did or most of us would be gone," Sgt. Hacker said.

"I just did what needed to be done, sir," Grider replied.

"Did what needed to be done, huh?" Sgt. Hacker looked back to the others in the squad. "The guy dives head first over a Nazi machine gun nest, drops a grenade on them and he's just doing what needs to be done. I'm telling you boys, you better take notes because Grider's either going in an early grave or going home a hero. Either way they'll be telling stories about him fifty years from now."

"Actually sergeant, they should take note of all the other GIs that have given their lives before us. There isn't anything I can do that compares to their sacrifices. So give them the praise and I'll just take some more ammo," Grider said.

Maize laughed and soon the rest of the squad joined in.