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VIGILANCE FORCE: AMERICA'S HEROES OF WWII

BY CHARLES RICE AND MIKE LAFFERTY

Interview with Christian Thomason, a.k.a. Old Glory, done for Newstime special Man of the Century Issue asked how he got his famous name.

"I was born in Fort Wayne, Indiana, in 1925. One of the first mutants on record, or so they tell me. I was inducted into the US Army- Air Corps on January 17th 1938, 3 days after my 13th birthday, and was sent to the Tuskegee Superhuman Testing and Training Range, we called it the "STT".

The Germans had their Eugenics Brigade already of course, and they were having a grand old time high-stepping around Europe. Britain only had the Sword and the Stone at that time, and they had managed to send the Jerries scurrying home with their tails between their legs after the Battle of Britain, but no one else in Europe had anything like those Eugenics scientists, and they turned the tide of battle after battle, Hitler always yammering on about his "Master Race".

But our intelligence boys told us the Germans didn't make these "Urbarmenschen", they were just finding them, training them, and using their science to juice 'em up. So, the Army started rounding up anyone with unusual abilities. Hell we were all happy to join, and were aching to get in on the action. We knew the score. I was the first, but it wasn't long before I was joined by others. Over the course of that



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year I was joined by Raymont "Freight Train" Jefferson, they drafted him after his performance in the state football finals, kid broke 11 tackles, and 3 legs, on his way to the end zone for the winning touchdown. Turns out Raymont could pick up cars as well as tacklers. One of those kids he busted up never did walk right again, damn shame, but Raymont did right by him, sent him part of his check every month till the day he died in that... well that's a different story I guess. I always loved to watch Ray run though".

"Then there was Fred Wilson, who army intelligence had picked up at a local circus, he had this act see, he'd let folks drive over radios with a car, then have those radios up and running again in 30 seconds or less. Called himself "Captain Miracle", and I guess the Army liked it, cause they used that for his code name too.

And me? Well I was given my code name by FDR himself. It was December 8th 1939, and with everything else he had going, the President wanted to come down and have a look at us, make sure we were REALLY ready to stand up to the likes of Donnerschlag and Götterdämmerung.

I was doing combat flying exercises, and I saw him first. Me and the boys had worked out a signal for him bein' there, so we wouldn't be cutting up when he got there. We didn't want him thinking we weren't ready, we wanted to get in there and start pulling America's weight.

So anyway, I saw him and snatched up the flag off the top of the PX and buzzed the boys on the ground with it, but I guess I wasn't fast enough. Roosevelt saw me, and said to his wife, "Well if Old Glory's flying with us I guess we'll be all right after all".

Old Glory. I liked that just fine. Those army boys had been wanting to call me the "Human Flamethrower" or some such nonsense. But Old Glory... well... let's just say no one argued with Roosevelt. Except maybe Mrs. Roosevelt."

Introduction

For centuries meta-humans have used their abilities to aid causes that inspired them. St. Francis of the Flaming Sword, regarded by many historians as the first mutant, used his abilities of flight and fire projection on behalf of the knights of the First Crusade in 1095.

America's first meta-human appeared during her first war, when the Minuteman used a small time-altering device to appear and disappear at will, serving as the ultimate scout for General Washington. The Minuteman appeared again during the Civil War, fighting against fellow Americans, for the Union Army.

During WWI, meta-humans fought for several nations. Nautilus fought for America, protecting her ships from German U-Boats, sinking at least 15 over the course of the war. Excalibur served Great Britain, wielding the magic sword of legend and exposing a German plot to bring Mexico into the war in an attack against the United States. Russia was served by Hammer and Sickle, peasant twins who championed their country, and later Communism. Finally there was Le Verdun, a mysterious French hero who appeared, healed thousands of wounded French soldiers in a single day after a terrible battle and then disappeared just as mysteriously.

Notably, no heroes fought for Germany during WWI. After the war, with its humiliating end at Versailles, many within Germany blamed this lack of meta-human support for the German defeat. Thus, as he rose to power, Hitler was as keen on making sure that Germany had powerful meta-humans as he was on making sure Germany had a powerful air force and navy.

What made Germany's force of meta-humans unique however, and what has heralded in the beginning of the modern meta-human age was the number of meta-humans Germany employed. Whereas the heroes of WWI had been lone figures of mystery and romance, WWII saw Germany employ over half a dozen meta-hu-

mans, trained to function together as a team. The sum being greater than the whole, this team, the Kampfgruppe Eugenik, or Eugenics Brigade, proved frighteningly effective during the early campaigns of the war. It was clear the other nations of the world would need to respond.

In fact, American President Franklin Roosevelt considered Germany's team a crisis, stating in an early memo that America needed an "emergency response" to the Eugenics Brigade. Thus, but Executive Order, the United States Headquarters for Emergency Response, or U.S.H.E.R. was created.

At first this "agency" consisted of a single man, a meta-human hero of Prohibition: Deuce. This still-busting vigilante had caught the imagination of America and Franklin Roosevelt had appointed him "National Crime Overseer", with national jurisdiction to help combat the rising tide of organized crime. It was this man that the President charged with finding and training America's response to the Eugenics Brigade.

Unlike Prohibition, this time Deuce would not be working alone. He would have the full support of the United States government behind him. His first task was to set up the Superhuman Testing and Training range, located at Maxwell Air Force Base in Tuskegee, Alabama. While many of America's top scientists tried to create a training program for unique individuals who were more than human, Deuce hit the road, tracking down leads of unusual activity looking for meta-humans to fight for America. At their strongest, Vigilance Force would contain eight members: Captain Miracle, Deuce, Freight Train, Hornet, Marauder, Minuteman, Old Glory and Talon.

TEAM ATTRIBUTES

ICONS provides rules for team play. If you choose to use these rules, suggested qualities and challenges for Vigilance Force are provided here.

TEAM QUALITIES

American super soldier force
Finely honed teamwork

TEAM CHALLENGES

Enemy: Axis super soldiers
Personal: Captain Miracle tends to draw ire of the brass down upon the team.
Social: Face some domestic discrimination because of the large number of mutants on their team.

TEAM RESOURCES

Tuskegee Superhuman Testing and Training Range (aka the STT)
Allied military transportation anywhere they need to go.

VIGILANCE FORCE

Captain Miracle a.k.a. Fred Williamson (45 pts)

Prowess 3
Coordination 3
Strength 3
Intellect 6
Awareness 4
Willpower 4

Stamina 7
Determination 3

Specialties
Science (Engineering) Master
Stealth

Powers
Wizardsy (Gadgets) 6
Flight (Jet Pack)
Blast (Electron Blaster)
Invulnerability (Electricity Shield)

Qualities

Anti-social teen genius
Often at loggerheads with the Brass
Best Friend: Old Glory

Challenges

Social: arrogant and anti-social
Enemy: Axis Super Soldiers

Deuce a.k.a. Dr. Cameron Forster (49 pts)

Prowess 5
Coordination 6
Strength 6
Intellect 4
Awareness 5
Willpower 4

Stamina 10

Determination: 1

Specialties

Athletics
Criminology
Martial Arts Master
Science Expert (Chemistry)

Powers

Blinding 4 (Burst) (Device Smoke Grenade)
Blast 4 (Explosion) (Device Concussion Grenade)
Paralysis 4 (Device: Paralysis Gas Gun)

Qualities

Identity: Wealthy socialite
Connections: dozens of contacts in American underworld
Believes justice must be done no matter what

Challenges

Enemy: Axis Super Soldiers

Background:

Cameron Forster was born into wealth. At a young age, his parents died and Cameron was raised by his uncle, wealthy nightclub owner Howard Forster, who encouraged the young man to pursue the hobbies of the idle rich: philanthro-

py and perhaps the occasional polo match.

Cameron had higher ambitions, though no sense of purpose, and set out to see the world immediately after graduating medical school. When his airship crashed while going over the Himalayas, the boy and his entire party was presumed dead. When he returned to Chicago over a year later, everyone could tell there was something different about Cameron. He saw the world through different eyes.

To this day he doesn't talk about what he experienced there but as he looked around Chicago, he saw a different city, one controlled by gangs using the hand grenade and the pistol to extend the control of their illegal enterprises. Using the eastern martial arts and exotic chemistry lore he had learned in the Himalayas, Forster adopted a new identity, Deuce, using the Deuce of Spades as his calling card in a one-man war against the city's crime lords, including, eventually, his own uncle.

His exploits did not go unnoticed and Franklin Roosevelt appointed Deuce to the position of Federal Crime Czar, intending him to take on the Mafia nationwide. However this was not to be, for as the world edged ever-closer to global war and Hitler's Kampfgruppe Eugenik rampaged through Europe, Deuce was given a new mission by the President: locate Americans with meta-human abilities and mold them into a fighting force capable of defending America if war proved inevitable.

Freight Train a.k.a. Raymont Jefferson (45 pts)

Prowess 5
Coordination 5
Strength 7
Intellect 3
Awareness 3
Willpower 3

Stamina 10

Determination 3

Specialties

Athletics

Powers

Super-speed 7
Invulnerability 4

Qualities

Impulsive
Gregarious and Outgoing.

Challenges

Enemy: Axis Super Soldiers
Personal: abiding guilt over football players he injured when his powers manifested

Background: *Status Report #27: Dr. Cameron Forster to President Roosevelt*

Mr. President, our core group of three has really gelled with the addition of Raymont Freeman, discovered during a high school football game when his mutant abilities surfaced, causing the injuries of three boys on the opposing team. Freeman, who has taken the code name "Freight Train" can run at speeds of 100 mph for extended periods, and possesses superhuman strength, speed and endurance.

You should have seen them attack the combat range today, Sir. Exercise involved the three meta-human STT (superhuman testing and training) subjects against "C" Company, strength 100 men. Vigilance Force achieved victory in 4 minutes, 39 seconds. Commander of "C" Company estimates that in a live fire setting his casualties would have been 70% or higher.

Hornet a.k.a. Dr. Clair Starling (44 pts)

Prowess 3
Coordination 6
Strength 4
Intellect 3
Awareness 4
Willpower 4

Stamina 8
Determination 3

Specialties

Athletics

Science (Biology) Master

Powers

Shrinking 8 (+3 to Defense and to Attack vs Normal sized targets)
Animal Control 8 (insects) (use stats for Swarm found in Stock Characters section of ICONS)

Qualities

Top scientist transformed by lab experiment

Challenges

Enemy: Axis Super Soldiers
Weakness: Trauma induced fear of needles

Background: *Follow-up investigator's report from Groom Lake RE: "The Atrocity Incident"*

Previous report mistaken concerning complete loss of life among project scientists. One scientist found alive, the team entomologist, who was experimenting with modified insect strains as a possible biological weapon. Mutagen explosion mixed with Dr. Starling's experiments, mutating both her and the entire ant colony she was working with.

Subject was found unconscious, at extreme small size. Medical procedures to wake subject and allow her to resume normal size were very traumatic, perhaps resulting in permanent psychological damage.

The Insects also mutated and seem to exhibit above normal intelligence and respond to Dr. Starling as though she were some sort of "super-queen". Insects seem to be aggressively attempting to expand control over neighboring colonies, suggest confinement or extermination of mutated ants rather than allowing them to spread into the wild. Dr. Starling seems to have an affinity for these creatures though, so she might resist extermination.

Following intensive therapy and testing of abilities, it is recommended subject be transferred to Tuskegee Institute for combat and covert ops training.

Marauder a.k.a. Sgt. Max Morley (46 pts)

Prowess 5

Coordination 7
Strength 7
Intellect 3
Awareness 6
Willpower 5

Stamina 12
Determination 2

Specialties
Athletics Expert
Martial Arts
Military

Powers
Supersenses 2 - Scent and Vision
Invulnerability 7

Qualities
Mutated Feral Super Soldier

Challenges
Enemy: Axis Super soldiers
Social: short tempered, prone to rage

Background: *Initial Report from Groom Lake RE: "The Atrocity Incident"*

So far only one subject has been found alive, test subject Max Morley, United States Marine Corps.

Subject appears to be nearly impervious to every type of injury. Though dazed, he was able to give a detailed account of the lab explosion and subsequent transformation of several test subjects into, in Sgt. Morley's words "atrocities".

Recommend immediate recall of Vigilance Force from Europe until this situation can be dealt with.

Minuteman a.k.a. Samuel Mason (58 pts)

Prowess 4
Coordination 6
Strength 7
Intellect 4
Awareness 3

Willpower 4

Stamina 11
Determination 1

Specialities
Aerial Combat
Stealth

Powers
Blast 6 (Device: Minuteman Battlesuit)
Invulnerable 6 (Device: Minuteman Battlesuit)
Flight 4 (Device: Minuteman Battlesuit)
Time Control 6 (Device: Minuteman Battlesuit)
Super-Speed
Paralysis

Qualities
Epithet: Mechanized Master of Time!

Challenges
Enemy: Axis super soldiers

Background: *From the private journal of Samuel Mason*

For generations my brothers and sisters have protected this Republic. For every war, one of us has stepped forward to accept the mantle of the Minuteman, using the enchanted clock-work mechanism that allowed us to speed up or slow down time. Ezekiel Mason served as a special agent for General Washington during the Revolutionary War, and Janine Mason served as a scout for the North during the Civil War.

And now, as this nation faces perhaps its greatest test, I have been called to prove myself worthy of this great legacy and have been entrusted with the enchanted timepiece. But desperate times call for desperate measures and my brothers feel that even our weapon through the ages will not be enough. Instead of the handheld timepiece we have used in the past, the clock-work mechanism has been built into the chest plate of a mighty suit of armor, brought back by my secret society (the Brotherhood of the Hour-glass) from the far future. May it prove sufficient to protect this great republic.

Old Glory a.k.a. Christian Thomason (57 pts)

Prowess: 4
Strength: 5
Coordination: 4
Willpower: 6
Awareness: 4
Intellect: 5

Specialties:

Leadership Master
Military

Stamina: 11

Powers

Elemental Control (Fire) 7
 Blast
 Force Field
 Create Fire
Flight 4

Determination 1

Qualities:

Epithet: High flying patriotic matchstick hero!
Motivation: Proving his value in the field.

Challenges:

Weakness (Enemy): The Nazi super Feuerfest has sworn to destroy him
Weakness (Personal): His best friend Captain Miracle often gets them both in trouble with the brass

Background: *Status Report #1: Dr. Cameron Forster to President Franklin Roosevelt*

Mr. President, for my first "find" I have to say, with three more like this one we will send Hitler's "master race" straight to hell so fast they won't know what hit 'em. I heard about the boy, Christian Thomason, on the radio of all places. Supposedly he had walked right through an enormous forest fire unharmed, parting the fire before him. Since this is the sort of bunk I investigate now, I went and talked to the firemen directly and their stories lined up right in a row. So I brought the boy back to Tuskegee and by

the time we got there I was half convinced that he was just a regular kid, a little skinny, with a good mind and strong character but nothing too unusual.

Then the docs started working on him. They started slow, heating pieces of metal to a level that should have been uncomfortable and placing them on his skin. It took awhile before he even felt it and when he did, he would just give the metal this sort of look and it would cool right down. They also checked his heart rate, it was off the charts. He should have been having a heart attack every 30 seconds and he moves like a cat. The boy is 13 and if this whole war thing never happens, we should just put him in the cockpit and make him a test pilot.

But today, well, all I can say sir is you need to come and see this for yourself. Today the boy lit up like a roman candle, complete spontaneous immolation. But he's fine. In fact, he seemed to like it, especially when he took off like a rocket. He can heat objects as easily as he can cool them, causing them to burst into flame with a look, or just projecting fire from his hands.

And the soldiers, they love this kid. At first I thought he was like the camp mascot, but it's more than that. They're following him. At 13. If I keep this "talent search" going for 20 years I will never find another one like him. He's a national treasure.

Agent Liberator (58 pts)

Prowess 7
Coordination 7
Strength 7
Intellect 6
Awareness 4
Willpower 4

Stamina 11

Determination 3

Specialties

Weapons (Guns)
Weapons (Throwing - Grenades)
Military
Leadership

Powers

Reflection 6 - (Device: Shield)
Blast 5 (Explosion) -(Device: Grenades)
Blast 4 - (Device: .45 caliber sidearm)
Invulnerability 4

Qualities

Epithet : The Super-powered Leatherneck
Catchphrase : Who wants to live forever?
Motivation : Fighting Nazis

Challenges

Enemy : Nazi super-soldiers
Personal : Super-soldier serum makes him prone to rage

Background:

John Coleman was recruited as test subject for the American super-soldier program upon finishing Marine basic training based on his outstanding physical conditions and mental acuity. Working from notes stolen from Nazi scientists, the Allies tried frantically to decipher the secret formula behind the German's Ubermensch program. Unfortunately, the results of the experiments were tragically unpredictable and Coleman was the only American who ever survived the transformation.

Unfortunately for Coleman, the Super

Soldier program was overseen by the US Army. So, although he is now technically under the Army chain of command, he never misses the chance to remind the brass and the public at large that he's a Marine through and through.



Talon a.k.a. Dr. Jonathan Swiftriver (41 pts)

Prowess 5
Coordination 7
Strength 5
Intellect 3
Awareness 6
Willpower 4

Stamina 9
Determination 3

Specialties

Martial Arts
Stealth
Weapons (blades)

Powers

Animal Control 6 (wolf and eagle from ICONS stock character section as are suggested as animal companions)
Super Senses 2 (Sight and Scent)

Qualities

Never surrenders

Challenges

Enemy: Axis Super Soldiers

Background: *Status Report #84: Dr. Cameron Forster to President Roosevelt*

I keep saying this but I never believed it was possible. We got reports of a "boy raised by wolves" tramping around the Yukon. Well the locals were partially right anyway. Turns out he's a man, a medicine man of all things and he wasn't raised by them so much as prefers their company to the two-legged animal.

Took us 18 days to track him down. Scratch that, we didn't ever track him down and I don't think we ever would have. He knew we were in his woods long before we had the slightest inkling we were close. Luckily he found us curious and came to see what we wanted.

Further reports on the extent of his abilities are forthcoming, but he seems to be able to communicate and form psychic bonds with

higher animals, especially mammals and birds. Reflexes and senses are also well into the superhuman range. Further testing might be difficult. John has an aversion to authority and half the time he's off base, with no one having any knowledge of his whereabouts. But when we need him, he's always there.

Sea Bee (46 pts)

Prowess 5
Coordination 7
Strength 7
Intellect 4
Awareness 6
Willpower 4

Stamina 11
Determination 2

Specialities

Underwater Combat Master

Powers

Aquatic 7
Invulnerability 3

Qualities

Half Human/Half Atlantean.
Raised by adopted father on a US Navy ship

Challenges

Enemy: Axis super soldiers
Social: Considered a freak in Atlantis, a novelty on land. At home in neither world
Enemy: British hero, the Atlantean Nautilus

Background:

John Dawes (Atlantean name: Lagnar) was the product of a union between a shipwrecked US Navy sailor (Captain Mitchell Dawes) and the Atlantean princess (Hralnar) who rescued him certain death. After finding him adrift on wreckage in the North Atlantic, the Atlantean noble Hralnar swam Dawes to the Iceland coast and nursed him back to health in an abandoned lighthouse.



Three years after Dawes was rescued, he was shocked one night when Hralnar appeared on the deck of his destroyer and delivered him their son. She had hidden the child, because inter-breeding with humans was punishable by death in Atlantis. Now, she could hide him now more. She needed him to care for the boy, lest it be discovered and put to death.

Dawes received special permission from the US Navy to raise his child on his ship and his son grew up among sailors, while being schooled by his father. John (as his father named him) was enthusiastically accepted by the crew as a sort of ship's mascot.

After Captain Dawes was assigned to the Naval Construction Battalion in 1952, John went with him. When Deuce approached him about joining Vigilance Force as a super soldier, he naturally choose the nickname of his father's construction battalion as his code name.

Raised at sea, Sea Bee has never known a normal life but has a natural charisma and undeniable spirit.. He is enthusiastic but a bit rough around the edges. He gets along with almost everyone, except, naturally, for Axis forces or, unfortunately, Atlanteans who regard him as a freak of nature (although if anyone guessed at his true lineage, it would be a major scandal in Atlantean society.)

Nautilus, the Atlantean member of the British super team the Crown Guard, treats Sea Bee with a barely concealed disdain.



ADVENTURE HOOK: THE ATROCITY INCIDENT

On January 7th, 1942 the Groom Lake Meta-human Research facility experienced a major disaster, killing 40 of the 50 geneticists and test subjects working at the facility and transforming the other 10 into meta-humans. Only two of those transformed would remain mentally intact, joining the Vigilance Force as Hornet and Marauder. The other eight were transformed into horrible creatures dubbed "atrocities" by the first soldiers to arrive at the scene to investigate. Eventually the full roster of Vigilance Force was recalled from operations in Europe and the Pacific to capture the eight escaped atrocities.

Seven of the eight creatures are transformed into lesser creatures, called Verhexte by German eugenicists after the racist slang term for mutants: a jinx. The statistics for these jinxes are included below for convenience. The eighth creature becomes The Atrocity, detailed below.

Verhexte (43 pts)

Prowess 7
Coordination 8
Strength 7
Intellect 1
Awareness 2
Willpower 2

Stamina 9
Determination 1

Specialties
Athletics

Powers
Invulnerability 5
Strike 5 (Slashing)
Regeneration 5

Qualities
Feral mutated menace

Challenges

Social : Inhuman. Cannot relate or speak.
Weakness : Driven mad by rage

Atrocity (50 pts)

Prowess 7
Coordination 8
Strength 7
Intellect 1
Awareness 2
Willpower 2

Stamina 9
Determination 1

Specialties
Athletics

Powers
Invulnerability 5
Strike 5 (Slashing)
Regeneration 5
Growth 7 (Strength increases to 8 and Invulnerability goes to 10 while Defense gets a -2)

Qualities
Feral mutated menace

Challenges
Social : Inhuman. Cannot relate or speak.
Weakness : Driven mad by rage

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