

A SPECIAL
FEATURE

THE MAKING OF "GLORY"

On a windswept Georgia island, Hollywood recreates a black Union regiment's ordeal by fire. When the cutting is done, we may see one of the most authentic Civil War films ever made.

By C. PETER JORGENSEN

Four years ago, Hollywood movie producer Freddie Fields and screenwriter Kevin Jarre were in Boston, Massachusetts, on business. As they walked through Boston Common and ascended the granite steps leading to Beacon Street, they happened to glance to the left. Something caught their attention.

It was a huge, bronze bas-relief of a white Civil War officer on horseback leading a regiment of black soldiers. "We both felt the same thing," says Fields, "perhaps there was a movie here. The monument was impressive."

The sculpture was a memorial to Colonel Robert Gould Shaw of Boston and his men of the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry — the first volunteer regiment of black Northerners in the Civil War. Completed in 1897 by sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens, the bas-relief won critical acclaim for its expression of movement.

"We researched Shaw and the

54th Massachusetts and found this wonderful, unknown story of the Civil War," Fields says. Since then, he adds, "getting this movie made has become a four-year passion for me."

The movie Fields refers to is *Glory*, starring Matthew Broderick as Colonel Shaw, and featuring Denzel Washington and Morgan Freeman in supporting roles. The Tri-Star Pictures release will be distributed by Columbia Pictures, Tri-Star's parent company, and will open in New York City and Los Angeles this Christmas. Other principal cities will see the film in February 1990.

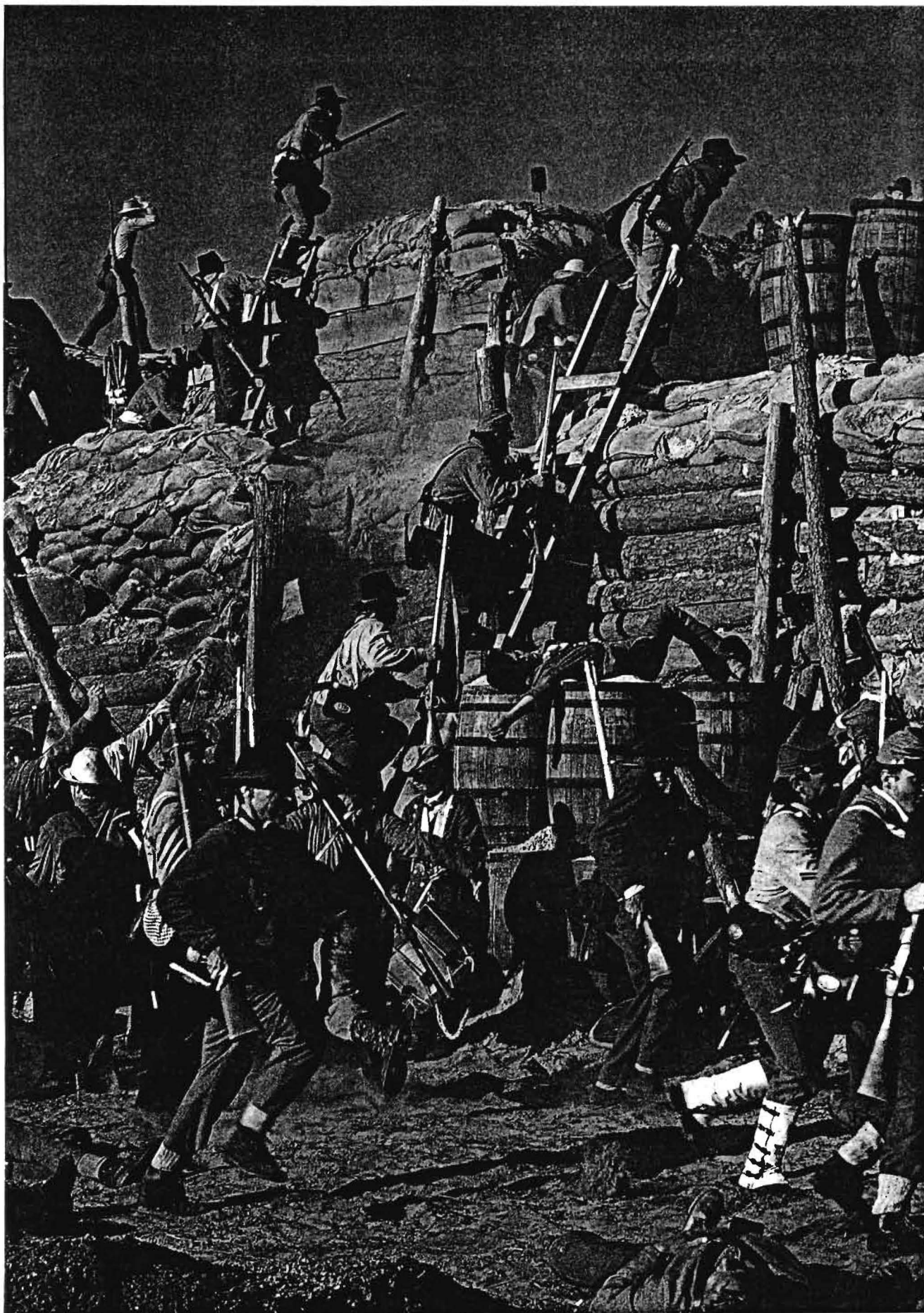
Glory is the story of Shaw and the 54th and the fight for Fort Wagner, a Confederate battery on an island offshore from Charleston, South Carolina. There, on July 18, 1863, Shaw led the 54th in its first real combat — the first major test of black troops in battle. The men performed heroically, and 272 of them lost their lives, but the regiment was repulsed when reinforcements failed

to follow. Sergeant William H. Carney of the 54th managed to save the regimental flag from capture during the retreat, and because of his deed he became the first black to receive the Medal of Honor.

Shaw was shot dead as he waved his sword to urge his men over the wall. The Confederates stripped him of his uniform and buried him with his troops in a mass grave. When word of the charge and Shaw's fate reached home, the Northern public was outraged, and black soldiers flocked to join the Union army. By the war's end, almost 180,000 blacks would enlist in the Federal forces; more than 33,000 of them would die in the line of duty.

The 54th Massachusetts earned a place in history at Fort Wagner, notes Fields: "It's a major moment of African-American heritage, unknown, overlooked or suppressed in history . . . a story of American heroism, of black and white men brought together in a common objective, winning the war.

"It is a story of how a black regi-



Confederates on film. Fort Wagner's defenders rush to the ramparts.

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**Reenactors turn
film stars. College
students and
D.C.-area
professionals charge
in *Glory*.**

ment and its white officers challenged history, racism and the fortunes of war, not only to win the respect of the Union Army but also to help defeat the South . . . and I feel the time is right to tell the story."

Fields was certainly qualified for the job of transforming the 54th's story into a cinematic production. A 30-year veteran of the motion picture industry, and a former president of MGM/United Artists Films, Fields has numerous films to his credit. He oversaw production of *Rocky III*, *Octopussy*, *Wargames*, *A Christmas Story* and others. On his own he has produced *Looking for Mr. Goodbar*, starring Diane Keaton, *American Gigolo*, starring Richard Gere, *Victory*, with Sylvester Stallone and Michael Caine, and *Poltergeist II*.

One of Fields' first acts as producer of *Glory* was to recruit director Edward Zwick, best known for his television series *thirtysomething*. Zwick has won several Emmys, but *Glory* is his first historical feature.

Says Fields, "When I met Ed Zwick it was one of those instantaneous things where you just click. We both saw the same film when discussing *Glory*. He brought tremendous talent, energy and enthusiasm to the production."

Other important talent came to the project in the form of the cast, which Fields selected himself. Twenty-six-year-old Broderick was given the lead role. The young actor has appeared in several Broadway productions and in films including *War Games*, *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* and *Biloxi Blues*. To Washington went the part of Trip, a runaway slave who hates Confederates and joins the 54th for vengeance. Freeman was cast as John Rawlins, a gravedigger at the September 1862 Battle of Antietam, Maryland, who joins the 54th and works his way up from private to sergeant major.

Both Washington and Freeman have been nominated for Academy Awards in other films, Washington



PHOTO BY C. PETER JORGENSEN

for his portrayal of Steven Biko in *Cry Freedom*, and Freeman for his role in *Street Smart*. Washington appeared in the television series, *St. Elsewhere*, for a number of years. His film credits include *A Soldier's Story* and *The Mighty Quinn*. Freeman plays the lead role of New Jersey high school principal Joe Clark in the recent film release, *Lean on Me*.

Also appearing in *Glory* is Jane Alexander, in the part of Colonel Shaw's mother, a staunch abolitionist who urges her son to accept command of the 54th. Alexander, an Emmy and Tony award winner, was nominated for Oscars for her roles in *All The President's Men*, *Kramer vs. Kramer*, *The Great White Hope* and *Night Crossing*. Cary Elwes, who debuted in Marek Kaniewska's *Another Country* and appeared in Rob Reiner's *The Princess Bride*, plays Major Cabot Forbes, friend and confidante to Shaw.

The characters of Forbes, Trip and Rawlins are based loosely on actual members of the 54th, but are fictional. They were developed to support the main theme of Shaw's leadership of a regiment of widely diverse men.

Screenwriter Jarre grounded his

script in intensive research. His investigation of Shaw and the 54th turned up a multitude of original sources, including more than 180 letters the colonel wrote to his mother, sister and a girl back home. Jarre also studied the books *A Brave Black Regiment - History Of The Fifty-fourth Regiment Of Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry* (1891), by the 54th's Captain Luis F. Emilio, *One Gallant Rush* (1965), by Peter Burchard, and *Lay This Laurel* (1973), by Lincoln Kirstein, a story of the Saint-Gaudens monument.

Once the draft screenplay was in Fields' hands, *Glory* underwent an extensive development process. Despite his years in the movie business, Fields had never produced a big historical picture and he wanted to do it right. "We knew we had a terrific story," he explains, "but then you had to get into the authenticity, including how did people act and relate to each other in that period of time."

Enter Ray Herbeck, Jr. A few years ago Herbeck, a Civil War reenactor, was working for a small Hollywood trade magazine when a director asked him where he could get soldiers for the television mini-series *North-South Part I*. Herbeck summoned his reenactor friends for help. By the time Fields and Zwick began looking for authentic troops,

Herbeck had supplied more than 1,700 men for *North-South Part II*, and hundreds of soldiers for CBS' *Sam Houston, The Legend of Texas*, and *The Alamo, The Price of Freedom*, a special film for I-MAX theaters around the country. Fields hired Herbeck as associate producer and historical/technical coordinator, and gave him a sizeable budget to ensure authenticity.

Civil War reenacting has changed dramatically in the past 10 years. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, anyone with gray chinos and a black powder rifle could play Confederate soldier at a reenactment. No more. Today, the emphasis is on absolute historical accuracy. Camps are laid out and run according to the book. Men are drilled over and over in the manual of arms, and *Hardee's Tactics* is their bible. Uniforms are copies of originals. Men carry precise reproductions of the weapons carried by the units they represent. In the best units, insignia, hat styles and clothing colors are carefully copied.

Such organization and dedication to historical integrity among reenactors has made it possible to produce events like the 125th anniversary reenactment of the Battle of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, in 1988, which drew some 12,000 participants. It has also provided a trained and disciplined Civil War army for the movies. Herbeck specializes in mobilizing that army for producers.

Unlike other movies Herbeck had worked on, however, *Glory* presented a special problem. Herbeck knew a great many knowledgeable, capable reenactors. But only two of them were black — Mark Edwards, 4th United States Colored Troops, of Baltimore, Maryland, and Ronnie Nichols of the 1st Arkansas Regiment of African Descent. Edwards had a handful of troops, but Nichols was a one-man regiment.

To find the black soldiers he needed, Herbeck would have to rely on methods similar to those used to raise regiments during the Civil War. He began telephoning reenactors across the United States. Then, six months before shooting was to start, he called on Brian Pohanka and Jack Thompson of Virginia, Tim Kindred of Maine, Dr. Greg Urwin at the University of Central Arkansas, Terry Leavey of the Ar-

izona Reenactors Association and others, asking them to recruit and train black reenactors.

Pohanka and Thompson enlisted the aid of National Park Service Ranger Bill Gwaltney, who is black, in their recruiting effort. Gwaltney was then on temporary assignment at the Frederick Douglass National Historic Site in Washington, D.C., and his location prompted an idea. There was a natural connection: Frederick Douglass, leading black orator of the abolitionist period and founder of an anti-slavery newspaper, was one of the strongest voices urging President Abraham Lincoln to allow black troops to fight for their own independence. And his son, Lewis H. Douglass, served as a sergeant in the 54th Massachusetts.

The three recruiters arranged an 1860s-style abolitionist rally in a large white tent on the lawn of the Douglass homestead. A local gospel choir and a brass band playing period instruments got the recruiting drive off to a start. Mark Edwards and members of the 4th U.S. Colored Troops from Baltimore also attended.

The rally seemed to work, and in the end 42 men joined Company B of the 54th. Most of them were black professionals from the Washington metropolitan area, interested in contributing to a movie about black history and in bringing blacks into Civil War reenacting.

Among the recruits were William Bradley and his son, Rodney, from Woodbridge, Virginia, direct de-

scendants of Isom Ampey, a member of the 54th who fought at Fort Wagner. Bradley's great-great-granduncle was Isom's brother, Thomas R. Ampey — the color bearer who was killed just as the 54th reached the wall. It was from Thomas Ampey's dying hands that Sergeant Carney grabbed the flag and went on to win the Medal of Honor.

Bradley, a retired Army major who won a battlefield commission in Vietnam during the 1968 Tet Offensive, has 48 letters written home by his great-great-grandfather during the Civil War. One, sent from Morris Island, tells in great detail of the circumstances of Thomas Ampey's death.

One major difference between the black recruits of *Glory* and the soldiers of the Civil War was that the movie troops were required to purchase their own equipment. In an effort to minimize this seeming obstacle, Herbeck arranged with C. & D. Jarnagin Co. of Corinth, Mississippi, to provide complete uniforms, Enfield musket reproductions and leather accoutrements to the black reenactors for \$600 — two thirds of the normal retail cost.

Eventually, Herbeck's efforts succeeded. On March 23, 1989, more than 125 trained and equipped black reenactors reported to Georgia for the filming of the Fort Wagner battle scenes. In addition to the 42 men from the Washington area, 13 came from the University of Central Arkansas. A number of others came



Proud extras, father and son, William and Rodney Bradley, descendants of a 54th veteran.

PHOTO BY C. PETER JORGENSEN

from Ohio State University, recruited through a history department program there. Several more were provided by the Arizona Reenactors Association, which actively seeks film and commercial productions that need 19th-century extras and stuntmen.

Upon their arrival, the black reenactors were met by Dr. Ray Giron of McIntosh, Florida, and Dale Fetzer of Bear, Delaware. Giron, coordinator of the annual reenactment of the 1864 Battle of Olustee, and Fetzer, director of the non-profit consulting firm, Historic Impressions, Inc., were hired by Herbeck as assistant technical advisors. They provided expertise in period military matters during the planning of the shoot. Then, during the filming, Fetzer was responsible for the black reenactors, while Giron was in charge of the white Union reenactors and all Confederate troops. In addition to daily consultation with Herbeck and the set decoration staff, Fetzer portrayed Lieutenant Colonel Edward Hallowell of the 54th, and Giron played a variety of roles.

Fetzer speaks highly of productions designer Norman Garwood and set decorator Garrett Lewis, both former Academy Award nominees. "Their stuff is brilliant," says Fetzer. "This undoubtedly is the most authentic Civil War film ever made, in terms of its detail."

Garwood had amassed "every Civil War photo book I'd ever seen," Fetzer adds, "and everything in a scene was documented by period photographs." More than 125 different army forms, muster rolls, ordnance reports, order books and the like were reproduced so that, in every shot, the proper papers would be on the desks and in the background.

In 1863, a Zouave regiment, the 76th Pennsylvania, served as headquarters guard for Major General George C. Strong on Morris Island. "So," says Fetzer, "we duplicated a scene right out of Miller's *Photographic History of the Civil War*, with Zouaves around General Strong's camp."

Glory was shot almost entirely on location in Georgia. Beginning in late February, three weeks of filming

took place in and around Savannah, where set designers brought 19th-century Boston back to life. An old Georgia Central Railroad roundhouse became the 54th's training camp at Readville (mistakenly pronounced "Redville" in the film), a section of Boston that still exists. Interior scenes of Colonel Shaw's Boston home were filmed at the Hugh W. Mercer House, one of Savannah's elegantly restored mansions. And an elaborate set was erected on River Street, designed to resemble Boston townhouses.

The 54th's parade through the streets of Boston *en route* to the war was reenacted on the River Street set. More than 1,000 Savannah-area residents served as extras in the crowd, and about 100 black soldiers from nearby Fort Stewart were hired to don Civil War uniforms and join the parade. "They knew how to march and they really looked sharp," Fetzer comments. "It was just a matter of getting them to adapt to carry the rifle according to the Civil War manual." Some of the black reenactors were present for the filming around Savannah.

When the original 54th arrived in the South, it was ordered to assist in a raid on Darien, Georgia. Shaw was shocked and angered when a unit of "contraband" troops (former slaves) was allowed to loot the town and burn it down. This episode appears in *Glory*, too — a major set was constructed at the Georgia Central roundhouse near Savannah, and then burned to recreate the raid.

Making *Glory* on location was a complicated affair. Housing and feeding a cast of more than 500 was in itself a logistical challenge. And filming a movie set in the 1800s required constant vigilance against jet planes flying overhead, the modern trains that ran adjacent to one set, and curious boaters who visited the Fort Wagner site.

The dramatic battle scenes portraying the assault on Fort Wagner would be shot on Jekyll Island, a state-owned resort off the Georgia coast at Brunswick. The island was perfect for the movie; it had 10 motels, about 600 private homes, many on the short-term rental market, a large campground, four golf courses, tennis courts, an historic village and nine miles of white,

sandy beaches.

The production staff took over a large portion of one motel for offices, film labs and editing suites. At another it housed many extras and technical people. The 500 reenactors — black and white Union troops and their Confederate counterparts — took up half the campground.

Fort Wagner was reconstructed on a remote section of beach under strict guidelines set down by the Jekyll Island Authority and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. It took more than \$500,000 and three months to build a three-sided facade representing the 30-foot-high fort. The original fort was made by soldiers from palmetto logs, sod and sand. Constructing the reproduction required two huge cranes, tens of truckloads of timber and plywood, and tons of blown-on sand.

When finished, the movie fort sported four reproduction 32-pounder seacoast cannon, whose fiberglass barrels were fitted with short lengths of seamless steel tubing so they could fire realistic charges. The massive wooden gun carriages were exact to the smallest detail. Other ordnance on the new Fort Wagner included an original 24-pounder flank defense howitzer and a number of field guns. The reconstructed stronghold was protected on one side by a water-filled ditch and *chevaux de frise*, horizontal logs bristling with sharp stakes.

The Fort Wagner set instantly became a tourist attraction, until access was restricted during the weeks of actual filming. Looking at the fort from the beach, one island resident remarked, "With forts like that, I don't know how we lost the war."

To augment the black reenactors, the movie company hired about 200 men from Savannah. Some were literally off the streets, three identifying themselves as homeless. Of those 200 blacks, 70 were specially trained for three weeks by reenactor Matt Murdzak of Atlanta, a former Army officer who served as captain of the 54th's Company A. Forty of those men made it through the training and became the "camera company," the one to which the principal actors were assigned.

Herbeck explains that the idea was to have a company of constant

faces as background for the stars (though a lot of faces changed in Company A as the weeks of long days and nights wore on). The other hired blacks from Savannah were used for general background extras, while the black reenactors, who were well-schooled in marching and the manual of arms, were foreground troops in major scenes.

The 1863 attack on Fort Wagner began at dusk and lasted into the night, and this bit of history set the schedule for filming. The men were bused to the fort site about noon each day. They ate lunch and rehearsed, and shooting began near dusk. The attack was filmed in stages, night by night. Some takes lasted only 30 seconds or less. Usually, shooting went on until midnight or 1:00 A.M. Several nights it continued to 4:00 A.M. or later, and the men were back on the set around noon the next day. For their efforts, the reenactors received \$50 per day; the black extras got \$35.

Special effects abounded during the Wagner shoot. The fort's big guns were equipped with a hydraulic piston system designed to make them recoil from their simu-



Left: The men of Matthew Broderick's 54th Massachusetts on Jekyll Island. Below: Union troops move on reconstructed Fort Wagner at dusk.

lated blasts. Pyrotechnic charges exploded in the night sky. Black stuntmen flew through the air, as if they had been thrown back by exploding shells — in reality they were propelled by special effects devices. In the moat before the fort, mannequins floated like corpses.

Conditions on Jekyll Island were less than ideal. Wind-blown sand was a frequent problem during filming. More than once, sudden thundershowers soaked crew, stars, reenactors and extras alike. The reenactors and extras began their stay on the island sharing Civil War-style accommodations: tents. The Savannah recruits, however, lasted only two nights in camp before de-

manding to be moved to motels. The reenactors stayed in the field the entire three weeks.

"The whole experience was one of the most physically exhausting and psychologically challenging things I've ever done," says Brian Pohanka. The days were very long, he recalls, and the men got little sleep for three straight weeks. But for him, he says, reenacting became real, as he gained more understanding of how difficult it was 125 years ago to cope with wear and tear on uniforms and equipment, weather, personality clashes, cleaning guns in the field, uncertain food and long hours.

"Only by pulling on every oar to-



MERRICK MORTON, COURTESY TRISTAR PICTURES



gether were we able to keep the whole thing afloat," says Pohanka. Several times he sat with his men of Company B to give them a pep talk on the importance of what they were doing, of how they were promoting public recognition of blacks' contributions to the Union war effort and to American history.

Of the reenactors, Fields says "They were unbelievable, extraordinarily dedicated, enthusiastic and hard-working people. We had three inches of snow in Savannah one day; they took the snow, the rain, hot days, cold nights and they lived the war, and it comes through on the

film."

To help insure historical authenticity among the troops and on the sets, Herbeck relied heavily on 32 reenactors he had hired to work as his full-time assistants for three months. A 10-member crew of reenactors who had worked with him on other films doubled as set dressing hands, placing artillery and equipment wherever needed and insuring historical integrity. Other reenactors served as permanent officers of the 54th, and as the Confederates manning the fort. Several switched uniforms daily, depending on what was needed. Dr. Carl

Luthin and his 7th Illinois Cavalry, a unit that appears prominently at all large reenactments, provided the horses for officers, artillery, cavalrymen, wagons and other rolling stock.

At first, says Herbeck, his biggest job was getting the movie people to understand that the reenactors weren't unorganized extras who needed to be herded around like cattle. The whole brigade, black and white, functioned like a military unit. The men were organized into companies, regiments and battalions, and daily life was one of military regimen. They marched wherever they went.

Fetzer says, "Our biggest accomplishment was that the staff of the 54th created a regiment under the same or similar circumstances that faced a Civil War colonel. He had volunteers, draftees, a mishmash of competence, people who wanted to be there and people who didn't. There were long periods of boredom followed by periods of intense excitement and danger as men charged up hill with fixed bayonets as explosives blew up around them.

"It all comes across in the film," says Fetzer. "This was a very realistic army taking the field."

Right: Producer Freddie Fields' Federals go into battle. Above: The film's star regiment endures shell fire on Jekyll Island's beach.



MERRICK MORTON, COURTESY TRI-STAR PICTURES

During the Jekyll Island filming, CBS news anchor Dan Rather visited the set with the crew of *48 Hours*, the network magazine show that is based on a two-day shoot of something happening in American life. The nationwide one-hour program, which aired in May, centered on the men of Company A and the movie's objective of getting the black soldiers' story across to the American public.

Glory includes scenes of Shaw's earlier service in the Civil War, as captain of the 2d Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry during the Battle of Antietam. Those scenes were shot at McDonough, Georgia, a rural area south of Atlanta. There, set designers constructed a replica of the Dunker Church at Antietam, and about 500 more white reenactors were brought in. The Antietam battle scenes were augmented with several minutes of film shot at the 125th anniversary reenactment of the Battle of Gettysburg last year. Fields and Zwick both shouldered camera tripods and carried equipment around at the reenactment to help keep filming costs down.

Additional filming was done at the February 1989 reenactment of the Battle of Olustee, Florida, in which some of the black reenactors recruited for *Glory* participated. That footage may not appear in the film's final cut, however.

The reenactors and Herbeck's staff of technical consultants agree *Glory* will present the most accurate screen portrayal yet of the Civil War



PHOTO BY LINDA FETZER

Morgan Freeman, cap in hand, and bloodied members of the 54th, wait on the passage of their drummers.

soldier. But there have been criticisms that the story strays from history. Most of the principal supporting characters are fictional. Sergeant Carney's heroic rescue of the flag is not re-created, and Frederick Douglass' son, Lewis, is not portrayed.

Fields rejects such criticism. "The objective," he argues, "was to make an entertaining film first. Social messages and history can be very boring, but if you put them in an entertaining film, people will learn some history and take away a message."

Glory is not a documentary; this Fields admits readily. "You can get bogged down when dealing in history," he says. "Our objective was to make a highly entertaining and exciting war movie filled with action and character."

Early tests of the film have brought favorable reactions. A very early cut with temporary sound and special effects dubs was screened be-

fore a movie theater audience this summer in Pasadena, California. The audience cheered, and rated it highly on a survey.

Actor Morgan Freeman is confident that *Glory* — and its underlying message — will be well received. "I have no doubt that this is going to be one of the major films of 1990," he says.

"Black men have fought and died in every conflict this nation was involved in," he says, "from the Revolutionary War onward. Black regiments are not typical Hollywood subjects, but I feel the country is ready to embrace the corrections of history this film represents.

"This is the kind of picture that gives legitimacy to the history of people of color and tells us who we are." ■

C. Peter Jorgensen is the editor and publisher of The Civil War News. He is a resident of Arlington, Massachusetts.



***Glory's* 54th Massachusetts in action on the beach in front of Freddie Fields' film crew.**

PHOTO BY LINDA FETZER