

"OPERATION IVORY SOAP" – WHEN THE GRAND HOTEL WENT TO WAR



1944-1945

In the Alabama heat it was much cooler giving ship orientation briefing outside the shade.

Headquarters and quarters for personnel attending the AAF, Mobile Air Service Command, Marine Training School.

- During World War II in 1944, the Main Building of the Hotel became the Headquarters for a military operation called "Ivory Soap".
- It was rumored that the Hotel would close due to restrictions on gasoline and tire rationing. The then owner of the Hotel, Mr. E.A. Roberts, donated use of the Hotel to Colonel Matthew Thompson for \$1.00 as his donation to the war effort. Mr. Roberts originally wanted to charge nothing.
- Colonel Matthew Thompson was the Commanding Officer and his office and sleeping quarters was located in what is now Suite 1108.



- The code name **"Ivory Soap"** was chosen because **"It Floats"** – appropriately selected as a reference to the floating aircraft depot repair maintenance shops that were located on the 24 specially modified auxiliary ships that the soldiers housed at the Grand Hotel would soon serve on. Approximately 5,000 men from the Army, Navy and Merchant Marines completed two week training sessions between July and November in 1944. The men were housed in the Main Building of the hotel.