

Chapter 12

D-Day and a Celebration

June 6, 1944 – At last the invasion! Rome falls and more parcels arrive. Our anniversary program is a huge success. Mr. Söderberg, of the Swedish YMCA, gave us a very heartening talk.

The fact that we had the celebration on the date of the invasion absolutely confused the German sentries. They were sure that we had news of it. I remember *Hauptman* Merck questioning me very closely as to why we picked that date, and I assured him that it was just another day. I knew the invasion had occurred, from the announcement over the canary. The Germans made no mention of it, but they doubled to guard around the compound and there were some anxious discussions among the groups of Germans one could see on the other side of the wire.¹

June 7, 1944 – Morale is tops and everyone is giving the Germans hell. We have promised Louflier and Knorr that when the war is over they will be sent to the salt mines. *Zu die salz minne!* Louflier was such a clown and such a dummy that he actually believed it. Knorr was much sharper and crafty of wit

¹ Lt. Col. Maynard W. Files – Merck was very nice. A good soldier but a Nazi. He observed our acts of rank over his.

and had enough self-confidence to face this possibility as a real soldier. While I had my arguments with Knorr, I still have to admit he was a pretty good soldier.

June 8, 1944 – Still much ribbing with the Germans. They say that our First Armored Division had been wiped out. I told them to go back and pack for the salt mines. We are getting the canary twice a day. I believe that some Germans are actually glad that the invasion has started. The officiousness of the Germans is picking up. Dr. Marti, the International Red Cross representative, was here to take pictures and Col. Drake flatly said “No.” Marti left in a huff and said he would never do anything more for the POW. He said the U.S. had too much money.

June 9, 1944 – *Lord Haw Haw* is sure bleeding. Our POW camp was rigged for loud speakers. Often the Germans would play Wagner and many of the classics. Any propaganda for their side was immediately beamed to the POWs. *Lord Haw Haw* was our special diet. To really understand the entry for this day one should look at the cartoons contained in my scrapbook which depict how the Germans pictured us as a bunch of barbaric gangsters.

June 10, 1944 – The German *Wehrmacht* announces that they will push the invasion force into the sea.

June 11, 1944 – We received 500 parcels from Spangenberg. I go down to the station with Schopert. Got in a hot argument with the *Bahnhofmeister*. Schopert took my side and ordered him back into the railroad station. Schopert is a good man.



Figure 12-1 German newspaper wartime propaganda cartoons depicting allies as barbaric gangsters. The first one roughly translates to "Everyone wants to possess it and then like a lemon." The second translates to "Not the Rothschild has already understood" referring to the Jewish Rothschild banking family.

June 12, 1944 – The German can openers have completely broken down and the German system of opening each can is really in a fouled-up condition. They have to issue parcels over two days, and Col. Drake insists that it all be done in one day. A good hot argument has started on this. Drake's position is that if they would go back to the old system of merely putting a nail hole in each can we would receive our parcels as per schedule. Their new order of fully opening each can is an act of harassment upon helpless POWs. This is a very delicate situation for the Germans, for if they press too hard they realize that Drake can make quite a mountain out of this molehill. If they do not press hard enough they will have to issue the cans

as they did in the past, which gives us some opportunity to store food for possible escapes.

Schopert has been transferred out again. Believe it or not, we immediately requested that he be transferred back. *Oberst* Schneider has said that he will do what he can to have Schopert returned.

June 13, 1944 – The Swedish YMCA has sent us a curtain. (I faintly recall that we had quite an argument with the Germans, but insisted that this curtain be passed through for the use of our little theater.)

June 14, 1944 – Had a red-hot argument with Knorr today relative to a knife taken from Amon Carter. I am finally getting Knorr down to where he will not start an argument with me. I believe that I have been able to get the best of him even though we may lose an argument now and then. (As I recall, we got the knife back but lost the curtain.) I will have to let Drake get the curtain back for us.

June 15, 1944 – Our canary needs a transformer. This was purchased for cigarettes from the Germans. If you can soften one of these goons you can buy almost anything. Of course, the German takes his life in his hands when he deals with us.

June 16, 1944 – We have a central cooking unit which cooks the German issue of potatoes, millet, cabbage and turnips. Today we worked out a deal to have gravy, by having each mess contribute 1 teaspoonful of dried milk.

June 17, 1944 – The garden space has been broken up and assigned by messes. My mess is to take care of the beets. By dropping a hint that there is a tunnel in that area we got a platoon in here digging it up! They seem to bite on that every time.²

² This was one of Captain Lumpkin's favorite stories. When the camp started work on a garden, they found the ground extremely hard to work with the



Figure 12-2 From left to right: 1st Lt. LeRoy Ihrle, Captain Tony Lumpkin, 1st Lt. Henry Haynes, and 1st Lt. Amon Carter Jr. in the "Parcel Hut" at Oflag

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Harnisher, the student of theology – and a dim wit if there ever was one, – has left for officers' school. I do not believe he will ever make it.

June 18, 1944 – Most of the day spent reading and playing baseball.

June 19, 1944 – Go to the station today for parcels. Some Polish kids quickly consumed a piece of a "D" bar which was offered to them. Willie Kricks was one of my guards. We

garden tools they had. They simply started a rumor that there was a tunnel in the area, and the Germans brought in a platoon to dig up the soil looking for a tunnel and, therefore, loosen the dirt for their garden.