CANSOFCOM PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CENTRE

# ESCAPE AND EVASION IN THE FIRST AND SECOND WORLD WARS

## CANADIAN STORIES

DR. NATHAN M. GREENFIELD

# THE CANSOFCOM PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CENTRE

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# FOREWORD

The latest monograph in the Canadian Special Operations Forces Command (CANSOFCOM) Professional Development Centre (PDC) series deals with escape and evasion from hostile forces. Importantly, it carries on the PDC series' intent of providing interesting professional development material that will assist individuals in the Command, as well as those external to it, to learn more about human behaviour, special operations and military theory and practice.

As such, *Escape and Evasion in the First and Second World Wars: Canadian Stories*, written by military historian Nathan M. Greenfield, an author of several books on the subject, is a welcome addition to the series. In this monograph, Greenfield recounts the adventures, trials and tribulations of Canadian service personnel who were captured by the enemy in the First and Second World Wars. His accounts highlight many timeless lessons that should be of value to all military personnel who may find themselves captured by, or attempting to evade, enemy forces.

As always, I hope you find this publication informative and of value to your operational role. In addition, it is intended to spark discussion, reflection and debate. Please do not hesitate to contact the PDC should you have comments or topics that you would like to see addressed as part of the CANSOFCOM monograph series.

Dr. Emily Spencer
Series Editor and Director of Education & Research
CANSOFCOM PDC

[German] Notice:

*Owing to the evasions recently done, we beg to inform prisoners of war of the following facts. Until present time, all prisoners who were evaded, have been catched. The French Sergt. Major George Clerque, speaking a good German and being in connection in Germany with some people being able to favorise his evasion, has been retaken. The Company says again in personal interests of the prisoners, that any evasion give place to serious punition (minima) fortnight of rigorous imprisonment after they go in the "Strafbaracke" for an indeterminate time.*

--Giessen [Prisoner of War Camp], the 19th of July 1915

# INTRODUCTION

*Aut cum scuto, aut in scuto*
(Come home with your shield – or on it)

The cry of the Spartan mother

"You can train a soldier to fight and you can train a soldier to accept death," Private Jack Poolton,[1] who had survived the cauldron of Dieppe in August 1942, wrote "but there is no way to prepare a soldier to be taken prisoner."[2] "No soldier," more than one of the veterans of Hong Kong and the war in Europe whom I have interviewed told me, "goes into battle with a white flag in his pocket." Indeed, to save the lives of the wounded threatened by the tide rising up the strand before Dieppe, Sergeant-Major Lucien Dumais tied a "yellowed rag" to his rifle's bayonet and surrendered under what decades later he called, "the colour of cowardice," an unduly harsh judgement as we will see.[3]

In the First World War, the French soldiers in German prisoner-of-war (POW) camps called the effect of surrender *le cafard,* "the cockroach," for the disgrace of surrendering "crawled round in the brain, round, and round and round."[4] However, as the following stories make clear, as much as these men may have at times repented of the feeling of having "sold liberty for life,"[5] their escape attempts and, for evaders, their continued evasion, showed their "mettle," as Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI) Private Edward Edwards, captured at Polygon Wood in May 1915, put it.[6]

Notably, escaping was more than just a psychological act, it was a political and military act that showed that these men, volunteer serviceman all, remained unconquered. It "levelled the score against the hated enemy" and proved that though they may have been off the chessboard, they were still men at war.[7]

Private Mervin Simmons, captured at Mont Sorrel in 1916, like other First World War escapers, did not have access to the M.I.9-designed escape kit that men of the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF), such as Flight Office Norman Reid, who was shot down over Yugoslavia in 1944, did. Nor had Simmons and his comrades been trained in escape and evasion. However, once these men were in prison camps, and thus beyond the mistreatment of soldiers at the front and behind the lines, and the emotional turmoil of being captured had lessened, they were not totally disarmed. Thanks to Winston Churchill's bestselling, *London to Ladysmith via Pretoria* (1900), Baroness Emma Orczy's bestselling novel *The Scarlet Pimpernel* (1905) and even Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *Sherlock Holmes* series, the Kaiser's reluctant guests were imbued with the mythos of escaping.

Orczy's hero, an English nobleman who undertakes missions in Revolutionary France, was, in fact, something of an M.I.9 agent *avant la lettre*. What mattered to the POWs who mention him, however, was his use of stealth and disguises. The novel opens with the Pimpernel disguised as a carter smuggling a dozen French aristocrats – hidden in his wagon – out of Paris. The key to their escape was a boy whose "smallpox" kept the guards at the gate at a safe distance.

Of similar inspiration, Churchill's narrative of his escape during the Boer War begins on the night of 12 December 1899. The future cigar-chomping prime minister took advantage of a moment when his jailor stepped away to light his pipe to climb the wall of a school where he was being held. After realizing that he had stowed away on a train heading for a collier region, the then subaltern Churchill jumped from the train and hid in a nearby wood. A few days later, concerned that his supply of chocolate would soon give out, Churchill risked his freedom by revealing himself to a farmer. The farmer turned out to be an Englishman named

Mr. Howard. After four days of hiding the soldier/journalist, Howard led Churchill onto a train bound for Delago Bay. Either Churchill, or Howard, ensured that as Churchill climbed into a hole amongst bales of wood chips, he had a filled water bottle – something more than a few escapers forgot, their pain measured by parched throats and worse.

Other historical stories, now long gone from our schools, contributed to both generations of soldiers' understanding of stealth. In history class, they learned that agents directed by Elizabeth I's spymaster ferreted out Catholic recusants and Jesuits hiding in "priest holes." And, they learned that during the English Civil War of the 1640s, Royalist gentry hid the future King Charles II behind walls of manor houses, in an oak tree and in plain sight as a servant. Given his unusual height of six feet, to make this last ruse work, the Prince of Wales affected a most unroyal stoop. Three centuries later, more than a few Canadian evaders who were taller than the norm in France followed suit.

Inspiration was also taken from popular literature. Unlike his fictional biographer, Dr. Watson, Sherlock Holmes had not been a soldier. Nevertheless, Conan Doyle's stories served as something of a school for escapers. Holmes' explanation of how he could tell that Watson had been a military doctor in Afghanistan showed how small details could be put together to reveal a person's background. Holmes explained that the "tint of his skin," as opposed to his fair wrists, and the "stiff and unnatural manner" in which he held his wounded left arm led him to formulate his deductions.[8]

Thanks to M.I.9, during the Second World War men like Wing Commander Stewart Cowan, who was shot down on in July 1943, had both a formal understanding of escape and evasion and escape kits. At the beginning of the war, M.I.9 looked back to the memoirs written by First World War escapers and found many

lessons, among the most important being how pliable German guards were when presented with chocolate and/or soap. For example, in November 1916, a little of both bought Major John C. Thorn, who had been captured at Ypres, the crêpe needed to finish the blouse that was part of his widow's disguise. Twenty-five years later, chocolate and soap suborned "goons" who supplied not only civilian clothing and camera equipment but also radio tubes that allowed the POWs to stay in contact with London.

Though it is beyond the scope of this monograph, it is important to note that planning to escape had an important psychological effect. For young men, especially after the chaos of battle and emotional shock of surrender, being "in the bag" and cooped up behind barbed wire was a psychological trial. "If you have never had the experience you never can imagine what it is like to get up in the morning to face a long empty day with nothing to do except what you do yourself," RAF Warrant Officer A. J. Barker recalled.[9] Similarly, decades after being shot down RCAF Pilot Officer Andrew Cox remembered the depression that gripped him during the winter of 1944-1945. "I would stand on the parade during roll call, snow pelting into my face and a biting, arctic wind blowing through by unbuttoned vest, not feeling the cold, just wishing that my life would end." Had it not been for "Pip" Wright, who buttoned up the Haligonian's collar, Cox might have gotten his wish.[10]

What the stories that follow demonstrate is how Canadians in both world wars understood their legal requirement under the King's Regulations to remain men at war, a status recognized by the relevant international covenants, and one that put them at odds with German Military Law. These stories, which are about ingenuity and daring, are also about what Australians dubbed "mateship" between prisoners who elected to become escapers and thus had to rely on each other. Perforce evaders were forced to rely on men,

women and even children, they had never met, likely would never see again but who risked their lives to help the Allied soldiers.

Not long before he died this past winter, Bomb Aimer Ian MacDonald had the great pleasure of speaking on the phone with Madam Chauney, one of the many men and women in Picardy who hid him after he was shot down on the night of 14/15 April 1943. When MacDonald's interpreter asked Madam Chauney why she risked so much for this fellow from beyond the sea, she replied simply, "It was the right thing to do."

# CHAPTER ONE
## THE LEGAL CONTEXT

*There is still a fucking war on. We are all British. The Jerries are the enemy, not us. It is our duty to try to escape, and it is your duty to try to help us. And remember one thing, this war will be over some day, and we are going to fucking well win it. After that, there'll be a fucking reckoning!*

British Corporal John Donaldson (Pilot officer Andrew Carswell's escape partner) to a group of British POWs at an *Arbeitskommando* (work detail) who in 1943 did not want to help the two escape.

The words, *"Für Sie der Krieg ist vorbei,"* (for you the war is over) were rather too hopeful.[11] For, neither legally nor morally in the eyes of the uniformed servicemen considered in this monograph, did capture by hostile forces mean that the "war was over." Far from being "demobbed" (i.e. demobilized) and out from under the *King's Regulations*, they now came under two additional legal codes: German Military Law, and, for those captured during the First World War the Hague Convention of 1909, and those captured during the Second World War the Geneva Convention of 1929.[12]

Unlike both the *King's Regulations* and the international covenants, both of which recognize that POWs remain men at war, and, by implication that they would try to escape, German Military law viewed escape as insubordination at best and something akin to mutiny at worst. This chapter sketches the essential aspects of the legal regimens POWs found themselves under in both world wars.

Each POW knew it was his duty to try to escape from captivity. The 1907 *Manual of Military Law* stipulated that anyone taken prisoner would be subject to a Court of Inquiry.[13] Even after eight

months of war and scores of articles about thousands of British, French and Russian soldiers being taken prisoner, the opprobrium of surrender was still great. When in May 1915, Boer War veteran Colonel F. Scudamore (retired) learned that his son, Major Thomas, had been captured at Ypres, Scudamore refused to answer any of his son's letters until he was assured that he had, in fact, been captured unconscious. Indeed, the dishonour of capture was so great that the British Red Cross actually reported that *every* Canadian and British soldier captured at Ypres had been captured unconscious. (Major Thomas was notably one of the few who actually was unconscious when captured.)

The *King's Regulations* were understandably silent on what POWs could expect from the "detaining power." Borrowing from the Article 74 of US General Orders 100, which established the first modern law of war in 1863 during the American Civil War, both the Hague Convention and its successor, the Geneva Convention, held that as soon as a uniformed serviceman surrendered, he became a prisoner of the belligerent government and not of the individual soldier or police who had captured him. Following what has been called "Lincoln's Code," diplomats signed covenants that held that prisoners must be treated humanely and that their personal effects belonged to them.[14] Since they were not criminals, POWs could not be held in regular prisons. In return, POWs were required to provide their true name and rank.

At times, the Germans followed the treaties in such a way as to accord POWs something approaching civil status. For example, in opposition to the Hague Treaty after being captured at Mount Sorrel in June 1916, Private Jack Evans was jabbed with a bayonet, denied water and given soup with dog meat in it, and made to stand at attention in the cold of a coal mine after refusing to work. Evans was surprised that after hearing of the abuse he had suffered at the foreman's hand, the county court in Dortmund acquitted

him of breaking the civilian foreman's jaw with a coal lamp. Evans also won the appeal. Neither court, however, did anything about the fact that the Hague Treaty banned working in such places as coal mines or the fact that Evans was, essentially, a slave labourer.

Nearly a quarter of a century later, Pilot Officer Kingsley Brown, who jumped out of a burning Spitfire fighter aircraft in July 1942, and his escape partner, a British airman named Joe Ricks, found themselves standing before the *Kommandant* of *Stalag* VIII-B charged with *Namentausch* (name exchanging). Given the days they had spent trying to convince the *Kommandant* that they were, indeed, Brown and Ricks (who had "swapped over," that is, exchanged names and identities with two other POWs so that they could volunteer for an *Arbeitskommando* from which they hoped to escape), when the *Kommandant* finally accepted that they were, indeed, Brown and Ricks, he had few legal options but to court martial them. Brown, however, objected, and to both their and the *Kommandant's* surprise, Berlin agreed that because Brown and Ricks were Air Force officers and "under the personal protection of *Reichsmarschall* Hermann Göring," the *Wehrmacht* POW camp officers did not have the jurisdiction to try them.[15]

Both the Hague Treaty and the Geneva Convention stated that POWs were "subject to the laws, regulations and orders in force in the army of the State in whose power they are."[16] When combined with the orders *Kommandants* issued against trying to escape, the clause's second sentence, "Any act of insubordination justified the adoption towards them of such measures of severity as may be considered necessary," turned escaping into an act tantamount to mutiny against German martial law.[17] In the First World War, re-captured escapers faced *Strafe* (punishment) sentences that normally consisted of up to two weeks in small cells on a diet of bread and water. Some men, however, faced fists, cudgels and horse-whips. At least one Canadian was held in a lightless cell for two

long weeks and was almost blind when released. Over the course of the war, more than 500 British POWs, including an unknown number of Canadian POWs, died following beatings or shootings.[18]

Brown's and Ricks' sentence when they were transferred to *Stalag Luft* III was shortened by the eleven days they had already served at *Stalag* VIII-B. The New Year's beer they enjoyed, compliments of Göring was unusual. More commonly recaptured escapers served *Strafe* sentences of two to three weeks. However, some men who were returned to *Wehrmacht*-run camps (according to the Reich's organizational chart, the *Wehrmacht*, *Luftwaffe* and *Kriegsmarine* each ran camps for POWs in the coordinate Allied Service), were beaten and, as their forefathers had been, made to stand at attention with the butt of a rifle being slammed into the base of any hapless soldier who moved.

Those escapers caught by the *Schutzstaffel* (*SS*), such as Pilot Officer Andrew Carswell who was shot down in January 1943 and recaptured after his second escape attempt in 1944, were treated very differently. Ignoring the identity disks Carswell and his escape partner Mac had provided, an *SS* officer kicked the two repeatedly as they were pushed down a hall to a cell in *Gestapo*-run Stettin. Over the same days that *SS-Standartenführer* Kurt Meyer's men were murdering 48 Canadian POWs in Normandy, *SS* guards forced Carswell and Mac, who had been fed only watery soup, to crawl on the parade ground – and when they did not crawl fast enough, kicked and beat them, and forced them to perform long stretches of calisthenics. Even when they were being hustled down a windowless hallway for a transfer to an officer charged with returning them to *Stalag Luft* III, the *SS* guard fondled his submachine in such a way that Carswell silently prayed, "Please God, don't let it end here."[19]

Almost all evaders were captured out of uniform and until the Germans could verify the men's identities, evaders could be considered spies and thus could be executed. Most, in fact, were relatively quickly transferred into *Luftwaffe* hands and sent to *Dulag Luft*, the processing camp near Frankfurt. For some, like Bomb Aimer Ian MacDonald and his navigator "Parky" Parkinson, capture occurred near the Spanish border after six weeks on the run. Capture began with the terror of having *SS* guns pointed at his head as he lay prone on the ground. Six equally terrifying weeks in Fresnes Prison in Paris before being sent to *Dulag Luft*, the processing camp near Frankfurt, followed.

Similarly, shot down on D-Day +2, the first part of wireless operator Edward Carter-Edwards' story parallels much of MacDonald's account. However, instead of being sent to *Dulag Luft*, just before the liberation of Paris, Carter-Edwards and another 126 Allied Airmen, including 26 other Canadians, were shoved onto the last train out of Paris that took them to Buchenwald Concentration Camp where, for 100 days, they breathed human smoke. They owed their lives to the strange legal structure and personality struggles of Nazi Germany. Once Göring found out the Air Force prisoners were in Heinrich Himmler's *SS* empire, the *Reichsmarschall* sent a *Luftwaffe* detachment to collect the men and bring them to *Stalag Luft* III, a prison he controlled.

None of the men whose stories are told below belonged to the Judge Advocate General's Office. In both world wars, however, they knew that the *King's Regulations* required them to try to escape. On each of their escape attempts Carswell and his British escape partner had to remind British POWs at the two different *Arbeitskommando* that their duty overrode their fears of losing their rather cushy jobs. Carswell had some sympathy, however, for the men he met in April 1943 who had been prisoners since 1940 and contented themselves with urinating into some of the barrels of beer destined for the *SS*.

These same memoirs make clear that in addition to being psychologically important, preparation for escapes was seen as a military act that forced the Germans to keep up their guard and, thus, commit important resources to countering the POWs' efforts. In fact, one of the reasons Hitler demanded retribution for the Great Escape was that 70,000 troops had to be mobilized to deal with it.

In both wars, the POWs had a clear understanding both of Germany's international obligations and their duty to try to escape. The denial of decent food – animal eye balls were seen in soup during the Second World War, while in the First World War men reconstructed a dachshund from bones found in soup – struck at these men's concept of fair play and of how honourable service men should be treated. Moreover, while the Germans did not interfere much with the provision of mail, they violated their international agreements when they imposed collective punishment and stopped the distribution of Red Cross and other food parcels. In both wars, Berlin claimed, contrary to both international law and Red Cross agreements, that the calories contained in Red Cross parcels counted as part of Germany's requirement to provide POWs with food similar to that of nearby garrison troops. Notably, recaptured escapers and captured evaders understood that Germany had the right to hold them outside the normal POW archipelago until their identities could be established. The beatings some received were more than painful. They struck at these men's view of themselves as free men who had voluntarily attested into a duly constituted army.[20]

# CHAPTER TWO
## FIRST WORLD WAR: PREPARING FOR ESCAPES

> The Poles, to escape, always storm the wire, the French disguise themselves, usually as nuns or whatever, but the British [and, hence, the Canadians] always dig.[21]

Escape and evasion training did not exist during the First World War. Nor did the intrepid men discussed in this chapter have access to any of the kind of gadgets, such as saws secreted in bootlaces, silk maps or blankets imprinted with the pattern of a civilian overcoat that showed up only *after* being washed in cold water, developed under the guidance of Clayton Hutton, the model for James Bond's "Q" (i.e. Quartermaster). Instead, men like Major Thorn and Private Frank MacDonald, who was also captured at Sanctuary Wood in June 1916, were on their own in developing the ways and means of fulfilling the injunction to try to escape printed on the last page of their pay books.

These POWs can be thought of as latter-day Robinson Crusoes, who, as soon as they could after being cast upon a foreign island, began scheming to escape. Indeed, as the French scholar, Robert d'Harcourt wrote in his memoir of his years in a POW camp, "Upon arriving in a camp, a prisoner's first care is to get to know his enclosure."[22] The British penchant for digging noted above is borne out in the stories below. Like Crusoe, the POWs used every piece of flotsam and jetsam they could find in the camp (or bribe guards to bring in) to create the means to escape. The grappling hook that allowed Captain Scudamore to climb the wall and escape started out as a fireplace poker that had vanished into another officer's peg leg.

The *sine qua non* of escaping was a compass. It ensured that escapers did not have to rely on celestial navigation, which was often impossible on cloud covered long winter nights that were best for escaping. Moreover, since most escapers did not speak German and did not have access to civilian clothes, they planned to travel only at night and hide during the day. In fact, having a compass was so important that on the third day of their escape on 7 September 1916, after realizing that Private Burk Tustin had dropped his compass, the luminescent dial of which meant it could be used in the dark, he and his British escape partner, Second-Lieutenant Herbert Tustin, spent hours doubling back through hedges and fields in hopes of finding the compass, which they did.

Despite prohibitions on the men having them, compasses were obtained. The one that fell out of Simmons' shaving stick arrived secreted in a can of cheese by his brother.[23] The Simmons in Canada had deciphered his brother's message, hidden in the flap of a letter, asking for a compass. Tustin's came courtesy of a senior French officer in Rennbahn POW camp who agreed to provide it while saying, "Zey will coase me 3 marks.... If you have not ze money, you shall pay me *après la guerre*."[24]

Double-edged Gillette razor blades also provided compasses, though not because they were engineered to. A compass needle could be fashioned out of a diamond shaped piece of a blade that had had its temper taken out of it over an open flame and then been re-tempered, and placed next to a magnet. Gramophone needles made perfect spindles. Private David O'Brien, who had forged his mother's signature so he could enlist in 1914 and had been captured at Sanctuary Wood in June 1916, acquired his compass in the prisoner's time-honoured way. The diversion of fats to munitions industry resulted in soap becoming all but unattainable in Germany. This shortage allowed O'Brien to bribe a guard with a small bar of Castile Soap in exchange for a compass and a revolver.[25]

The next challenge was maps. Not surprisingly, the Germans searched incoming parcels assiduously for maps, which explains why some escapers had to make due with jury-rigged ones. The map Private Simmons and his escape partner Lance-Corporal Thomas used during their early 1916 escape came from the brush of a fellow Canadian POW who, as he painted pictures for Germans, asked seemingly innocent questions about the local geography. Even those maps, such as Corporal McMullan, a survivor of Mount Sorrel, bought from a guard with some soap, often lacked important information such as the location of bridges, train tracks or routes through marshes. In late 1916, the lack of a map cost Private Frank MacDonald and his escape partner their freedom, for after crawling into neutral Holland, they crawled back into Germany.

Similarly, Burk and Tustin's escape came close to being discovered when, on 8 August 1916, a German guard unexpectedly entered their hut while Tustin was studying the map. Neither the papers Tustin hurriedly pulled over the map nor his answer "I am reading" to the question "*Was machen Sie*?" (what are you doing?) were enough to put the guard off. Surprisingly, Tustin's answer "Geography," to the question "*Was lesen Sie*?" (what are you reading?) did, presumably because the guard was proud of Germany's land mass.[26]

Since the Germans ordered that a yellow-brown strip be sewn into the POWs' pants and that a bull's eye be sewn into inveterate escapers shirts or coats, most escapers tried to procure a civilian or, at least, passable *faux* civilian clothes. In the shoe factory in which he worked, O'Brien made good use of his ability to lie, honed during the numerous times the military police had gathered him up from unauthorized leave in London. He stuffed a *Fräulein* so full of lies that she brought him food, a civilian suit, a shirt and a cap. This last item was essential in a time when men rarely went outside without some sort of hat.[27]

In late 1915, as part of his plan to escape, Simmons arranged for a friend in the storeroom to pass him two new overcoats. So that the guards transporting Simmons and his escape partner to Celle Lager (near Hanover) did not notice the absence of the required yellow-orange stripe, Simmons pulled off a feat worthy of the wardrobe master at a London music hall. Using a mixture that included cocoa he painted stripes on his and his escape partner's coats. As bits and pieces flaked off, Simmons reproached himself for not using sugar to make the "paint" adhere better, but the guards on the train never noticed.

Thorn was one of the few escapers who planned to travel during the day. He disguised himself in "widow's weeds" (i.e. mourning clothes). Accordingly, he needed a mourning hat, gloves, coat, skirt, wig and corset to ensure that the coat advertised his womanly shape. A "tame" sentry accepted Thorn's explanation that he wanted "to have some fun with the officers" and supplied the corset at the cost of some soap and money.[28] A Belgian, drafted to work in Germany, brought Thorn a swatch of long hair, which when sewn on to a cap made a convincing wig. Two other POWs helped Thorn fashion the hat, the body of which was held up with stolen chicken wire. More soap and money convinced another guard to smuggle in crêpe used to finish the hat and form his blouse's collar. A moment of *léger-de-main* with the coat belonging to a woman who worked in the camp produced the pattern for a "tight-fitting" lady's coat.[29] A cape became a "fairly decent skirt."[30]

Other escapes required more technical work. As his Canadian comrades were practicing for the assault on Vimy Ridge, Private G. Scott, who had been captured at Ypres, used a screw driver he had made (by ever-so-slowly rubbing a piece of metal against his cell's concrete floor) to remove the screws holding the bars of his cell in Giessen in place. A few months later, at Auguste Victoria camp Private Evans noticed the bars were held in by soft mortar that could

be chipped away. (Ironically, the second part of this POW camp's name commemorated the same Victoria (of the House of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha) who had been Queen of Canada when Evans was born.) To cover his labours, Evans hummed, "It's a Long Way to Tipperary" very loudly. In October 1917, at the same time as Lenin's Bolsheviks were taking over Russia and McMullan's Fourth Canadian Mounted Rifles were losing 291 men at Passchendaele, McMullan discovered a tunnel that led to a room where the screws holding the bars in place were easily removed.

Tunnelling also required technical expertise. The famous opening of "The Cremation of Sam McGee" (1907), "*There are strange things done in the midnight sun"* meant something special to the Canadians who, at camps near Cologne, at Fort Zorndorf or Holzminden, moiled for the *"gold"* of their freedom.[31] Evans dug two tunnels. The first, through which he escaped in early 1917, began with prying up floorboards beneath a bunk. Using a shovel smuggled out of the mine they worked in, Evans and other men dug through soft sand that they then packed under their bunks. Evans's description of hammering through the stone wall that formed the barrack's foundation as "no pink-tea job" understates the long hours chipping away at, and breathing dust from, cement in an unventilated tunnel by candlelight. Presumably Evans and his comrades worked naked so that the Germans would not see the telltale signs of dirt and cement dust.[32] Once through the wall, the tunnel continued another fifteen feet before surfacing well beyond the wire and the sentry's beat.

Evans started his second tunnel, shortly after he served a 12-day punishment sentence for the escape through the first tunnel. It began in a different part of his barracks. On the appointed night, he and the other would-be escapers (suitably equipped with a good stock of food) awaited the moment when the lead man would open the tunnel. Just as he was about to, a sentry, whose

beat had been changed that day, stepped onto the ground above the shaft and fell into it. As he recovered and the alarm sounded, Evans and the other men scrambled out of the tunnel and into their bunks. (The next day the Germans demanded the tunnellers give themselves up for a punishment sentence. Three men who had not been part of the escape attempt drew the short straws and were given seven-day *Strafe* sentences.)

The most technologically sophisticated tunnel of the First World War, through which 29 POWs escaped from Holzminden in May 1918, was designed by Major William Coloquhoun. The PPCLI Major, who was the first Canadian officer to be captured (in February 1915), also helped Thorn escape in 1917 by sprinkling cayenne pepper into the shoes he left behind so that tracking dogs could not get a scent.

Almost as impressive as Coloquhon's tunnel was the one Thorn worked on at Fort Zorndorf in early 1916. Thorn and several other Canadians began the tunnel by using a jackknife to cut through the two-inch wooden floor. In addition, pieces of iron wrenched from a bed-frame were used to scrape through the hut's cement foundation. Hiding the spoil was easier at Fort Zorndorf than it was elsewhere because there was space under the flooring where the sand could be packed.

Fresh air, however, became an issue. Several days of digging took the tunnel too far from the head of the shaft for air to circulate. Since the waste water pipe the tunnel was following was larger than the volume of water running through it, they punched holes in the top of the pipe so that it would carry provide fresh air down into the tunnel. Later, when the tunnel reached beyond the pipe, using condensed milk tins, paper and home brewed glue, the POWs produced more piping. A Rube Goldberg propeller set-up provided the pressure to push air down the pipe.

To remove the spoil efficiently from the ever-lengthening tunnel, Thorn's group rigged up a pulley-system. Bags made from stolen mattress coverings rotated into and out of the tunnel for 12 hours a day, dragging up 200 sacks of spoil. Another rope served as a signalling system.

Unfortunately, their labour went for naught. After a new POW, whom the Vigilance Committee had not trusted, mysteriously disappeared, the guards came into the hut and found the tunnel. The POWs took some heart that their four months of labour was not completely wasted. It took the Germans a month of hard labour to dig up the tunnel and fill it with broken glass and sand.

A century on, the efforts to make a decent looking wig or dig a tunnel that would not collapse under a sentry's weight have something of the air of a British boys school or stories published in *The Boy's Own Annual.* However, as the POWs' memoirs make clear, these efforts were deadly serious.

Would be escapers knew that at any moment their efforts might be thwarted. However, for men who had known the terror of battle and the trauma of surrender, whatever fears they may have had were small beer. Indeed, in the odd calculus of a POW camp, in its own way, even discovery was its own type of victory. It demonstrated to their captors that for months they had failed to discover the escape plan. Perhaps even more importantly, discovery caused the Germans to commit even more resources to ferreting out escape plans.

The ingenuity of men who made their own compasses and chipped through concrete, and made systems to bring fresh air into tunnels should not surprise us. These men were hunters and fisherman and lived at a time when every man was expected to know how to use a screwdriver, hammer and, also, to sew.

Even less should we be surprised by their drive to escape. Duty demanded it. Equally importantly, they were driven by the desire to retrieve what for them were their reputations, which they believed were sullied by having been captured.

# CHAPTER THREE
## FIELDCRAFT, FOOD AND FREEDOM IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR

Even with little sleep, men vowed
to keep fighting behind the lines.

Private Frank C. MacDonald

Escaping from a POW camp, work farm or labour camp differed greatly from battle, for at some point, even trench raiders revealed themselves, either by taking prisoners or throwing bombs. By contrast, escapers sought to vanish. Many did not speak German and those who did usually spoke it poorly. Even those who had worked next to Germans on farms, in mines or in factories knew that they had a poor grasp of the human intelligence needed to blend in with Germans going about their day-to-day lives. Realizing this gap, most escapers eschewed towns and cities, and, even though they would have travelled faster on them, railroads. Instead, most men relied on fieldcraft skills, which suggests that the British officer who told MacDonald that the Canadians' "eagerness to get away" was partially fuelled by the fact that they were "more or less used to the open," was equally close to the truth as he was to colonial stereotypes.[33] As evidenced by his many praises of Private Burk, Second-Lieutenant Tustin certainly felt they owed their escape to the skills Burk, who grew up near Algonquin Park, had honed in Canada.

However, even the finest fieldcraft skills could not compensate for the absence of a warm jacket on cold nights or keep the escapers dry when it rained or after they had trudged through marshes. Good fieldcraft skills combined with their military training

produced the ability to observe a sentry's beat, the layout of a camp and which clump of bushes was thick enough to hide in during the day. Equally important was how escaped Canadians could supplement the small amount of food they took with them from the camps by foraging.

Escaping required the same *sang-froid* J. Harvey Douglas displayed on 2 June 1916, after the Germans overran his position at Mount Sorrel. His filthy state, the large wound through which bone protruded and blood flowed, helped the lieutenant who still hoped to get back to Canadian lines, "feign death whenever a Hun passed close" to him.[34] During the long years of captivity during which he saw his 17th and 18th birthdays pass, O'Brien recalled that despite the "terror of expecting to be captured or shot," all that kept him going through the "dark tiresome nights" was "thought of freedom and release from horrors of captivity."[35]

In the First World War, only one Canadian escaped from a POW camp by crawling through a tunnel. Much more common were escapes like Private Simmons' and Private Edward Edwards' from a work farm, at which after years of weak POW camp soup, they revelled in dinners of soup, potatoes, bread and coffee, To draw as little attention to himself as possible on the mid-1916 day they planned to escape, Simmons spent the day assiduously pulling weeds. At dusk, he and Edwards ambled out of the farmhouse ostensibly for a smoke. A quick turn of a corner put them on a shaded lane, made all the darker by a storm cloud blowing in from the west. For his part when he escaped dressed in the clothes the trusting girl had brought him, O'Brien slipped out of the factory and, after hiding until dark, nervously walked through the town to some bush beyond which was an open field.

A number of other escapes highlight similar audacity. For instance, to lessen the suspicions of the workers already looking at them

"a little queerly" as they grabbed the first punch cards they could reach after exiting a mine and shoved them into the time clock, Private Evans and his escape partner (dressed in civilian clothes they had stolen in the change room) followed the crowd to a stand and bought a couple of bottles of lemonade.[36] In 1917, the afternoon before he was to receive a *Strafe* sentence for having been caught with Belgian money, Thorn and a British officer walked right past not only the guards but also Holzminden's infamous English-speaking *Kommandant*, Karl Niemeyer, carrying water jugs in which were secreted both civilian clothes and provisions. In a final example, Scudamore did not have to worry that his ill-fitting clothes would grab unwanted attention because he was concealed within a wicker box being carried onto a truck bound for Dresden where help awaited.

For some, outwitting the Germans required knowing both their camps' layouts and their guards' routines. On 3 October 1914, Simmons and Bromley almost cancelled their escape from the boarding house where they were billeted while working on a farm because the creaking of the floorboards told them that the guard was awake and "restless."[37] Presumably he had been disturbed by the day-shift that came in and the night-shift of workers in a nearby mine going out. When his sleep came, however, it was sound, for just as Simmons slipped out a window (from which they had little trouble pushing the barbed wire that had been poorly affixed with plaster), the wind caught the hinged window and "slammed it noisily against the wall."[38] Others had similar experiences. For example, on the night of their escape, through the passageway they had cleared, McMullan and Private Hart tiptoed over two sleeping guards and waited out the anxious moments after the trap door fell closed, sounding to McMullan like "the explosion of a sixty-pounder."[39]

For a few moments on the morning of 1 November 1916, after seeing the placement of a new guard box where he had planned to cut through the wire, Private MacDonald's heart sank; he thought that the days ahead would not change in what he called "Stony Mountain" (the infamous penitentiary in Manitoba, which, clearly, the German censor did not understand). Then MacDonald's heart lifted, for he noted the workman had neglected to re-fasten the wire that had been cut to move the as-yet-unmanned box into the Auguste-Victoria camp.

The next day, hidden by the smoke from cooking fires, MacDonald and "Wallie" made their move. Clearing the wire took longer than expected because it snagged Wallie, but he broke free and made it into the *Kokerei* compound moments before a sentry was due to walk by. There were too many civilian workers milling around the gate for them to risk walking through it. Instead, they snuck around the coke oven and then hid behind a pile of bricks from where they dug under the fence. Fed by his anger at the degradation he felt at being kept constantly hungry and the hard labour at the *Kokerei,* (MacDonald's task being to push a cart loaded with tons of coal away from the mine face and then use his back to push the car over to dump out the coal), MacDonald risked escaping even though he believed that "when a prisoner is caught by the guards of his own camp he is never taken back, but killed on the spot as an example to his comrades."[40]

MacDonald's subsequent failure did not deter him. On his next escape, in January 1917, he knew just where the one-eyed guard's blind side was, which allowed the escapers to slip into a party of civilians workers exiting the camp. Distracted, no doubt by the fact that his "lust for freedom" was about to be satiated, MacDonald failed to notice that his steps brought him face to face with the factory's manager and three foremen, who, mercifully, did not notice the shabbily dressed POW.[41]

Despite his ill fortune, Thorn's powers of observation were in fact excellent. In 1917, looking through the bars on the window of the cell in which he was serving a punishment sentence at Osnabrück for his second escape attempt (which ended 25 miles shy of the Dutch border), he noted that a would-be escaper could hide behind the clumps of bushes inside the wire and that the wire was poorly fixed to the gate.

Keen observation skills were also important for Tustin's and Burke's escape. Tustin had hit on the idea of escaping from Rennbahn's *Lazarette*. To gain entrance he and Burk, wearing special shirts stuffed with cans of food and chocolate bars, approached the *Lazarette* with their arms filled with books. The guard refused them entrance until Tustin convinced him that one of the men they were going to visit might not last until morning. Once in the building, they hid until near 2000 hours. They had planned to make their escape at 1955 hours, five minutes before the camp's lights came on. On 5 September, however, the lights came on at 1955 hours – five minutes early. Since they had already missed the last *Appell* (other men having covered for them), they decided to go ahead with their escape. As friends in the *Lazarette* watched, the moment the sentry's back was turned they made a "swift and silent dash along the building and round the corner."[42] Then, within sight of the window of the German officer's room, Tustin watched as, as per their plan, Burk ran to a concrete post from which he could hoist himself over the wire. For Tustin it seemed an eternity and at last he could no longer stand the strain, and ran to the fence and began climbing the barbed wire. His jacket and clothes snagged in the barbs, and, more importantly, so did several of his fingers. He managed to drag himself over the fence, however, and soon was running to where he knew Burk was hiding.

Escaping required not just the opportunity but also strength, which, because of poor rations, was often absent. While the Canadians were not, as some French POWs were, reduced to eating grass, many Canadians suffered from debilitating hunger; some believed the Germans engineered this partial famine to keep them from escaping. More than one POW tells of saving the bones from the watery soup and being able to reconstruct the skeleton of a dog. Especially reviled was the "sandstorm" porridge, made from cornmeal better fit for fodder than humans. With the taste of the hard, sour, saw-dust augmented, black German bread still in his mouth, MacDonald was able to slip a message by a censor with a question: "I say, dad, have you seen my old school chum, *W.E.R. Starving*? I haven't heard anything of him for a long time."[43] The ever-present gnawing at their stomach explains the joy that came through when Simmons wrote that at a work farm from which he escaped in late 1915 he had "soup – the real thing – made from meat, with plenty of vegetables . . . and lots of potatoes, boiled in their skins, and fried."[44]

To ensure that the Red Cross cans of bully beef, cheese, fruit and butter, would not fuel escapes, the cans were sequestered by the camp's quartermaster who issued receipts that could then be redeemed for them one or two at a time. By 1917, partially because of the need for tin and partially to prevent the stockpiling of provisions, the Germans opened the cans and dumped the contents into prisoners' bowls creating a mound of edible slop. The same procedure was followed during the Second World War.

Sleight-of-hand either by the parcel's recipient or a POW working in the stores ensured that some escapers, such as McMullan on his second attempt in October 1917, escaped with something more substantial than Oxo cubes, soda crackers and chocolate, items the Germans did not sequester. McMullan planned for the stash to last him and his escape partner three days. It lasted only two.

Yet, neither his hatred of Germans, nor hunger pangs, pushed aside his compassion for an old grandmotherly-looking woman gathering wood in the half-light of dawn. "I suppose her sons are all off to war and she has to chop up that wood herself," he said to his escape partner while wondering what, besides the few vegetables around, she would cook for breakfast.[45] Within hours of this reverie, the escapers were reduced to eating wheat, uncooked oats and straw.

A few months before McMullan's escape, Evans and a soldier named Nick escaped carrying only ten French biscuits and approximately a kilogram of soda biscuits. Though portable and somewhat filling, the biscuits would turn to mush if they became wet. Keeping their supply dry, therefore, was so important that instead of swimming the narrow River Lippe, the escapers spent precious minutes searching for wood to make a raft on which to place the cloth wrapped biscuits. Burk and Tustin, who, to their later hunger, had lost many of their cans of bully beef after falling down an embankment, had protected their French biscuits and chocolate in cloth that proved to be waterproof as they crossed a swollen river.

Almost every Canadian escaper was forced to forage. In August 1916, Edwards, for example, ate raw potatoes, carrots, turnips and apples. On his second escape attempt, Evans survived on three or four small potatoes a day. MacDonald did not, of course, know the numbers, but during the winter of 1916/17 food shortages caused by both poor harvests and the British blockade had caused troops near Posen to drop 15 per cent of their weight and children in Munich to be between two and three and a half kilograms (kg) lighter than before the war.[46] However, MacDonald had seen Russian POWs so malnourished that their "skin hung over their bones in horrible yellow wrinkles" and he had seen the envy in the guard's eyes when he unwrapped a piece of Canadian cake.[47]

On his successful attempt in mid-1917, days of hunger pushed MacDonald to dig up the seed potatoes on which, he knew, rested that family's hopes to avoid their own hunger in the coming winter. Burk and Tustin ate apples but found that raw turnip was almost impossible to swallow, especially since by the eighth day after their escape they had exhausted their supply of water.

On his first escape attempt, after days on short rations, Simmons found that hunger "sharpened" his mind and gave him "a view of things that will never come when the stomach is full," including, oddly for a Presbyterian, the observation that the "Catholics are right about having people come fasting to mass, for this is the time to get spiritual truths over to them!"[48] During the first part of his third escape attempt, however, the few oats he had access to left no strength for philosophizing. After several days without food in May 1917, Evans and his escape partner could barely stagger onwards.

Water, however, was even more important than food. Water was so critical that after clambering out a window, when Scott realized he had forgotten his water bottle, he waited precious moments so that it could be thrown down to him. Even as they went hungry, Evans and his partner slaked their burning thirst one night by sucking water from their rain soaked hats. A few nights later, their desperate need for water prompted them to ignore a lecture from basic training and risk drinking from a muddy puddle.

In the wood in which Thorn and a British major hid after they walked out of Holzminden, they "found a flowing stream of pure spring water, and after a good wash filled our water bottles and cigarette tins [in which they also stored water]."[49] Thorn's choice of words when he added that using a "Tommy cooker" and some beef cubes, they soon brewed up "a delicious drink of beef tea," underscores another point about water."[50] When brewed into tea,

it not only provided much needed calories and protein, it provided a psychological boost because it tasted of home.

Elation describes the escapers' emotions when they secured milk. MacDonald's first taste of that "splendid drink" came on the hoof.[51] Simmons recalled the two-man operation that in August 1917 gave him his first taste of milk in more than two years: "Ted stood at her head, and spoke kind words to her and rubbed her nose, while I filled our tin again and again."[52] A few nights later, Simmons wondered whether another farmer whose cows they had milked by moonlight would think them "bewitched" when he found them dry in the morning.[53] The night of 3 September 1917, was even better. For not only had the man who walked by them on the road ignored the stripes sewn into their pants but, beside the road, at convenient intervals were milk pails awaiting pickup. The Canadians revelled in drinking the cream that had risen to the top, an unexpected accompaniment to the burnt potatoes and raw apples that constituted their general provisions.

Despite Burk's bravado, he was unable to milk the cow they came to on the fourth night after his and Tustin's escape. Pushed by the "dry, salty flavour" torturing their mouths, soon after failing to get the milk, they knelt at a stagnant pool that was "overgrown with slimy scum and stank abominably."[54] They took the precaution, however, of not swallowing the stagnant water but only washing their mouths with it. A short while later, they came upon a stream of clear water, in which they "fairly wallowed, drinking and bathing [their] faces" before filling their water bottles.[55]

Knowing that the stripe on their pants, their haggard appearance and less-than-obvious reason for being on this road or in that village would tip off observant authorities, most escapers travelled at night and hid during the day. Their experience as outdoorsmen combined with their military training gave them an eye for the

terrain. Evans's memoir of his 1917 escape that ended in Holland has the laconic air of a War Diary as he records that one day they had "good cover" and two days later "fair cover," which kept them hidden from the patrols and others on the road.[56] On an earlier attempt, he and his escape partner had hoped to be able to dig a shelter in the bank of a creek. However, the clay was too heavy, and they had to content themselves with covering themselves with "a few old leaves". Evans's judgement about this cover may have been too harsh, for it secreted Evans and his escape partner from women working in the field nearby and people who passed close by on the road.[57] No doubt on that cold January night in 1917 MacDonald's escape partner was thankful for the Canadian's knowledge of how to scrape snow from under a tree to create a protected space in which they could huddle together for warmth.

On their first day after escaping, Tustin had good reason to be thankful for Burk's backwoods Canadian experience. At his urging, they took shelter in a ditch where they could lie covered with branches and bracken. The covering hid them from hunters' dogs and, later villagers picnicking nearby. On their second night, Burk cut branches from the underpart of a hedge into which they crawled before covering them with bags of oats, branches and some rotting materials. Though the rain that soon fell came in, they were not seen by the men reaping a nearby field or, later, children playing close by, though Tustin thought the jig was up when a boy stepped on the branch on top of the escaper's leg such that he could feel the boy's weight.

However good their eye for the terrain might be, the escapers often had to choose cover in the indistinct nautical twilight. Thus McMullan's surprise when the light of day revealed that the "good sized bush" he and his escape partner had settled down in was, in fact, only a few feet away from a path.[58] The next morning, they did not take cover until later (when they heard the sound of a

wagon), so McMullan could see that the nearby bushes would not shield them. Instead, they climbed down into the ditch. The early morning mist of 28 August 1918, prevented Edwards from seeing that just above the hedge he and Simmons had crawled into was the edge of a sloping roof. Following the appearance of a shepherd leading his sheep they decided to stay put until nightfall.

A few days before MacDonald and his escape partner crawled into and out of Holland, they found themselves hiding in "a bit of scrub" listening first to a yelping dog coming closer.[59] A moment later, through the darkness, they could see a man carrying a gun peering into the bush. They owed their freedom both to the rabbit that fortuitously jumped out of its hole and started running – followed by the hound – and their ability to remain still. For, as Evans explained why *he* had not been seen by two German soldiers looking for him and his escape partner who were only partially covered by leaves, "as anyone who has been out in No Man's Land knows, it's sometimes mighty hard to spot anything when it doesn't move," even under the garish light of starshell.[60]

Similarly, the clump of trees Simmons and Edwards quickly stepped into in September 1915, after a dog started barking at them, was dark enough that since they "froze", the stationmaster who came to see what the ruckus was all about could not see them.[61] The poetic nature of his observation, which likely belongs to Simmons's amanuensis, the suffragist and novelist, Nellie McClung, should not prevent us from grasping their experience as they heard only a "silence [that] was like the silence of death."[62] Later, he and Edwards counted on the rain and darkness to cloak them as they crept through a village. During the daylight hours, they lay in ditch hoping that since it was beneath an overhang of heather and that only the smallest part of their faces projected above the stagnant water, they would be safe. The next day, though the forest near Delmenhorst hid them, it did not protect them against a heavy

rain nor, since it was a farmed forest, could they find waste wood with which to light a fire.

On 13 September 1916, their eighth day after escaping, Burk and Tustin, who a few days earlier had waited with baited breath as a dog approached their hiding place beneath some bushes, took shelter in a barn. Unsure of whether they had already crossed into neutral Holland, they burrowed into a barley haystack. Burk's field craft wisdom told him that they were safest tunnelling into it slantwise by pulling out sheaves that they could then pull over them. About a quarter of an hour later, time measured partially by the fact that barley provided little protection from the cold wind, they heard men speaking German enter the barn and then the sounds of work, which was interspersed with gunfire from the distance. As the minutes passed, it became clear that the men were taking down the haystack on the other side of the barn, which made both escapers fear that their haystack would be next. At one point, the sound of working was replaced by a dog's "yapping bark," which, as it continued, told them that it either had picked up their scent or could sense their minute movements.[63] Tustin credited their not being found to Burk's plan for how they burrowed into the haystack, for despite the dog's barking, probably thinking he had caught the scent of a rat, the men did not pause from their taking down of the other haystack to investigate.

The Promised Land lay to the north, in Holland, Denmark or, via ship, from Bremen, to Sweden or Norway. Those without compasses were as dependent as were the American slaves who escaped to Canada on the Underground Railroad following the "Drinking Gourd" (Big Dipper) that pointed to the North Star. Even those with compasses had to correct for a predictable anomaly; in most of Germany, magnetic north was 17° off true north. Ignoring this error could mean the difference between finding an unguarded marsh or walking into a well-patrolled border area.

Even though, by 1916, Germany teemed with hundreds of thousands of dragooned foreign workers, one of the great differences between the escapers in the two world wars was that with the exception of Major Peter Anderson, whose story we will see in the next chapter, during the First World War, escapers largely avoided villages, towns and cities. As quickly as they could after leaving the farm where they had eaten so well, Simmons and his partner headed for a small wood and, once through it, headed for a three-foot deep ditch. They did not stop until they found a place where the ditch itself was covered by heather.

Edwards' hatred of the Germans extended from the men who captured him at Polygon Wood in May of 1915 to the other *Feldgrauen* (a nickname derived from the German soldiers' gray uniforms) who used Canadian dead to plug holes in the parapet. The German women who insulted, hit and spat at the Canadian POWs as they were marched from the railhead to Giessen POW camp, acts which violated the Hague Convention, only added to his hate. Accordingly, during his January 1916 escape attempt, Edwards recalled, "We watched the sky at night for the glow that might indicate the size of the community ahead, and aided by close observation of railroads [which were indicated on their map] and the quality of the wagon roads . . . . were able to form fairly accurate estimates of where we were and which places to avoid."[64] In August of that same year, Edwards's escape partner felt safer in a spruce thicket than in Bremen. He explained, "its stores, its eating-places, its baths, should be a welcome sight to wayfaring men who have been living on oats and turnips, but not for us, to whom a city meant only capture."[65]

On their first escape attempt, pushed by thirst, McMullan and Hart risked going into Recklinghausen to find a fountain. As they reached its outskirts they thought they had beaten the odds until, a few moments after a man looked strangely at them, they were

set upon by Russian wolfhounds. On their next attempt, McMullan and Hart rounded a bend and found that once again they had stumbled on a large town. Had there not been people standing nearby, they would have doubled back and searched for a way around the town. To his horror, the road led to a crowded trolley station.

Scared that someone would notice the red stripes on their trousers, the escapers acted like impatient commuters and pushed their way through the crowd. McMullan saw sentries guarding a POW camp in the town and memories of the "black cell" in Friedrichsfeld, where he had served his punishment sentence for his first escape, flooded back.[66] When a sentry seemed to eye them, he expected to be arrested. Later, he realized that the stark arc light that he worried illuminated them cast shadows that hid them.

MacDonald's second escape in January 1917 began under the light of a full moon, which lit the horsemen looking for them and – more providentially – a deep furrow into which he and his escape partner hid. Later that night, the moon provided enough light for the escapers to find the materials to construct a raft to cross the River Lippe. A year earlier after running from a village after some lights came on, Edwards and Simmons almost welcomed the nights during which they fought their way "through dark forests, into and out of sloppy ditches, over fields and through thorny hedges."[67] The inky dark nights may have kept the escapers hidden, but as they found as they moved through an old peat bog, holes filled with black water "merged so naturally into the prevailing darkness" that the escapers kept falling into them.[68] Tustin and Burk were worried that the bog they slugged through on their way to Holland might suck them under.

Lacking the odoriferous whale oil that men at the Front swathed on their feet to ward off trench foot, the escapers took what

measures they could. In October 1916, as soon as Simmons and Edwards had secreted themselves in some thick bush, Simmons put on his dry socks and spread those he had just taken off to dry. Simmons soon learned that one way to keep the skin on their wet feet from peeling was to take their boots off and rub their feet to increase circulation and dry them.

As Edwards and Simmons neared Holland in late August 1917, swimming rivers and canals without having the time to let their feet dry had left them "badly peeled."[69] A few days closer to Holland, not even the stomach-filling bulk of a baked potato was enough to counter the pain, which caused faintness, from Edwards' badly swollen feet. The century since McMullan recalled how he felt after lying for hours in a ditch as it "rain[ed] pitchforks" and became an open sewer has not lessened the power of his words: "[W]e were in splendid shape. *'Aber nicht'* (But not) as the Huns say. Besides being wet, I was going to say drowned – and slimy with mud, every joint seemed stiff and it was a weary and mighty low-spirited pair that started out as soon as it became dark and the regular traffic on the road stopped."[70] It is worth noting how stiff McMullan and Hart must have been, for, like millions of others, they had stood in water on cold nights on the Western Front and were not yet 23 years old.

A few nights later, pushed by the miserable experience of being wet and now in agony from the effect of the damp and the cold on the arm wound he had suffered at Mount Sorrel, McMullan ignored Hart's wishes and found "comfort" in a small amount of tobacco he pushed into his pipe and furtively lit under his coat.[71] Thorn too ignored the danger of a match or smell of tobacco giving away their game. "It is remarkable," he wrote while recalling his seventh night after escaping from Holzminden, "that no matter how hungry or thirsty a man is he will always be comforted by a cigarette or a pipe of tobacco."[72]

Every escaper had to find ways to cross rivers and canals. Some built rafts, every minute spent doing so being not just a measure of time but of the diminishing distance between themselves and the possibility of guards seeing them. Others, like MacDonald and his first escape partner, who were shot at as they stood on a pier jutting into the River Lippe, had to act quickly. They stole aboard a barge and cut its moorings, letting the strong current carry the barge across the river.[73] McMullan and Hart crossed the same river using more traditional infantry skills. After crawling close enough to determine where the watchmen were, they advanced in the lee of three parked steamrollers until they were close enough to dash across a bridge unseen.[74]

Knowing that their violation of German military law risked "black punishment" escapers lived on a knife-edge. As they did in battle, they drew on what Lord Moran in his seminal work *Anatomy of Courage*, explained was a bank of courage, which he concluded, ultimately, is finite.[75] The comic aspects of some incidents appear to have added to the men's stock of courage. The fortuitous appearance of the rabbit that saved MacDonald is one. So was the time in January of 1917, while he was hiding in among some stunted pines, MacDonald and his escape partner suddenly heard men storming through the field in front of them banging pans and blowing horns, while men on the flanks carried shot guns. Surprise, then fear, gave way to relief and a certain mirth when, the Rainy River, Ontario-born Canadian realized that the men were so focused on their rabbit drive that they missed seeing the smoke from the escaper's fire twenty yards away.

The strain caused by having to go back and find Burk's luminescent compass almost broke Burk and Tustin's fellowship a short while after having found it when Tustin realized they had gone off course. Burk, whose ability at cursing belied national stereotypes, exploded: "You ***** fool, you! Why the ****** hell have you

got us into this mess? I left the route to you; it was your blasted job."[76] Tustin's response, "You damned swine" and other words he did not record in his memoir, was followed by both men clenching their fists.[77] They likely would have come to blows, however, just before Tustin raised his fist, he saw lights, which the two realized came from an organized search party and thus reminded them of who their real enemy was.[78] In other cases, cold, exhaustion, lack of food also made keeping control of their emotions difficult: in some ways, more difficult than had they been in battle because they were isolated from the command structure and leadership of non-commissioned officers (NCOs).

Clarity of thought was also important, in early September 1916, in a small wood near the River Ems. Edwards and Simmons, both clad in ragged, soaked uniforms, their hair matted, were startled by a farmer carrying a double-barrelled shotgun. They "bore the farmer no ill will," but they were soldiers and they lifted their cudgels. Over the next few moments, a "'horrid film' unspooled, images of 'fifteen months' torture of mind and body, blood-covered faces of our murdered comrades of the regiment, the cries of the patient Russians [being tortured] behind the trees, and our own slow and deadly starvation and planned mistreatment."[79] This is the only known case of Canadian escapers killing a German during their escape, although Tustin and Burk had also armed themselves with cudgels cut from trees.

According to Simmons, before a battle, soldiers "[n]ever dreamed of being captured."[80] By contrast, from the jungle telegraph in the camps, escapers knew that the odds were against them. For some, recapture verged on comic opera. Scudamore's escape ended when, for reasons he never learned, the box he was in was unloaded from the truck bound for Dresden. After the lock was wrenched off, he was "tipped out on to the ground."[81] The Canadian who hid in a laundry basket did not have to worry about

his body language in public. Ironically, his escape was terminated when the laundry basket containing his escape partner was placed upside down, which, after a while, caused the man to squirm, alerting the guards that something was amiss.

Thorn's plan to travel as a widow with "her" hunchbacked son collapsed when a girl in the railroad ticket office alerted the stationmaster that the woman who had accompanied the hunchback whom the guards had arrested a few moments earlier had just re-entered the station. Thorn's disguise passed muster, however. Instead of being summarily arrested, the officer in charge brought in two women to search the mysterious widow, prompting the bashful Canadian to exclaim, "*Ich bin ein britischer Offizier, nicht eine Frau*" (I am a British officer not a woman) adding with a tone of mortification, "For God's sake don't let those women search me."[82]

For others, recapture reactivated the emotional storm of having been captured on the battlefield. On his second escape attempt, Thorn and his partner were captured after walking more than 300 km in nine days. A mere 40 km from Holland they let their guard down for a few moments as they exited a hiding place. The startling words, *"Halt! Hoch die Hände!"* were followed in equal measure by fear of the ferocious soldiers with rifles and the vanishing of their "dreams of beefsteak, under-done, and whiskeys and sodas."[83]

Only 700 metres from Dutch soil, O'Brien, thinking a guard had spotted him and his partner wiggling their way toward freedom, "got up and made a run for it." In the time it took them to run 40 metres closer to Holland, three shots rang out. As other guards started firing, the two escapers raised their hands and were "prisoners again with all hopes gone."[84]

After two cold late-January nights in 1916 searching for a way to cross the River Ems, Edwards and Simmons finally found a bridge.

The driving cold rain and the fact that the ice-choked river had partially submerged the bridge's roadway gave them confidence that the border was not guarded. For a moment, Edwards thought of ignoring the flashlight beam and the loud bark, "*Halt*!" and of dashing across the bridge. Then, through the frigid air, he heard the command and "the clatter of rifle-bolts striking home" and the man who saw escaping as "an opportunity to prove my mettle and retrieve my lost reputation" raised his hands in surrender a second time.[85]

MacDonald and Wallie were sure they had finally escaped. In the last few hours, they had wiggled through several lines of sentries and, after a moment of *frisson*, they slipped quickly into the darkness after a pretty girl in a lace-trimmed nightdress screamed when she saw them as they stopped under a streetlight to look at their map. Now, as their rising spirits fought off the fatigue of days on the run, they were walking down a street in broad daylight and past soldiers whose impressive dark blue uniforms were "decorated with a double row of brass buttons" that made them so different from either the *feldgrauen* worn by the soldiers who captured MacDonald at Sanctuary Wood or the increasingly motley uniforms worn by camp guards in late 1916. MacDonald does not record anything about the uniforms worn by the soldiers guarding the railway crossing the escapers encountered a few moments later, likely because after a few questions, these soldiers arrested him and his partner after the two "had been in Holland and, without knowing it, turned around and crawled out again!"[86]

Given that their lack of good maps and the stealthy way they moved toward freedom in Holland, most escapers were surprised when they discovered that they had in fact escaped Germany. In the predawn darkness, after carefully observing what they thought was the last sentry before the border, Evans and his partner waited for the German to turn his back and then they "scooted over [the

road] like a pair of rabbits."[87] However, remembering how they had been mistaken before, they made for a field. As they neared the far end of it, they saw what appeared to be a white sheet, which they feared had been strung up to allow guards to better see escapers. Warily they crept closer to the "screen," which turned out to be two girls wearing white dresses and a man who, after Evans asked if they were in Holland, replied "*Jah! Jah!*"[88]

In October 1917, welling with confidence born of the difference in the signposts, and well-pruned trees, McMullan began to light his pipe. Then, as he and Hart rounded a bend, had McMullan not quickly grabbed Hart and pulled him back, Hart would have stepped directly under an arc light beneath which "a couple of sentries on a beat across a spot where the road was fenced off."[89] The light, however, also revealed a gulley running parallel to the road. Despite their exhaustion and the six inches of water at the bottom of the gulley, they crawled almost two kilometres through it before daring to get up and walk. They knew they were out of Germany when they saw a letterbox bearing a lion instead of the Prussian eagle.

In September 1916, although Simmons and Edwards feared that the border would be heavily guarded, it was not. What lay between them and freedom, however, was water. The moonlight showed what their feet felt the rising and falling of the mat on top of a peat bog, which, though exhausting to cross, all but ensured that German guards would be nowhere near. A few moments later, for the third time that night, they stripped and, after throwing their clothes across its width, swam a small canal that was not on Simmons' poor map of Germany but was on maps of Holland.

The last lap of Tustin's and Burk's escape, their ninth night on the run, began with a smoke, which was followed by a difficult transit of a bog. Scant yards from the road that they hoped was

the Dutch border, they saw a sentry box. On this cold September night understandably enough the sentry was more concerned with "flapping his arms against his body to warm them" than with keeping a good watch, thus allowing the escapers to crawl through the grass to the east of the box to a ditch that led to the road.[90] In their weakened state, Burk apparently having suffered a minor heart attack two days earlier, it took them more than an hour to make it the few hundred yards through the ditch to the road. Even when they reached the road and began walking north they were so unsure of where they were that when Tustin picked up a piece of newspaper that said, "National Bank, Gedempte Oude, -- Haarlem," Burke said that it could have been blown into Germany by the wind. A few moments later, however, seeing men in unfamiliar uniforms, Tustin rolled the dice and asked, *"Sind sie Deutscher oder Holländer*?" (Are you German or Dutch?) and waited long moments before hearing "*Holländer*."[91]

Their inability to speak German and difficulty in acquiring civilian clothes, explains why most Canadian escapers relied on their fieldcraft skills. Travelling at night and hiding during the day also meant that the escapers did not have to ape German manners, which most knew little about anyway. Even those like Evans,who had worked on a farm and had close contact with village girls, would have seemed like a provincial hayseed in Frankfurt, Bremen or Berlin and thus drawn unwanted attention to themselves.

Escaping required careful planning and knowledge of guards' routines. Though every escaper considered here left with some food saved from Red Cross supplies, it was never more than enough for a few days and, thus, escapers became foragers. Whether they escaped in the summer or during the winter, the escapers suffered from the elements. Rain may have provided much needed water, but it also soaked the men causing much more than simple discomfort. Their experience in the muddy trenches of the

Western Front meant that they knew that they had to find ways to dry their feet as often as possible. When this small comfort was not possible, they suffered terrible pains with each step towards freedom.

The strain on the escapers was akin to battle. Recapture did not, as some feared, result in their being executed. Nevertheless, it was a profoundly humiliating experience. It is a testimony to their belief in themselves and their understanding of their duty as Canadian soldiers that even after having experienced this humiliation one or two times, men like Evans, MacDonald and McMullan schemed to, and in fact managed to, escape again.

# CHAPTER FOUR
## MAJOR PETER ANDERSON'S HOME RUN

*But first whom shall we send*
*In search of this new world, whom shall we find*
*Sufficent? Who shall tempt with wand'ring feet*
*The dark unbottom'd infinite Abyss*

John Milton

Major Peter Anderson, who was captured at Ypres on 22 April 1915, was the first Canadian to escape a German POW camp and the first and only to successfully escape from Germany. Because he was a Dane by birth and spoke some German, Anderson had the "human intelligence" that allowed him to navigate openly through Germany. Indeed, he knew how to look like a German. Accordingly, it is convenient to consider his story apart from those of his comrades. Anderson's use of German trains points, in fact, to how a little over a generation later, many escapers and evaders moved through Occupied Europe and Nazi Germany.

In addition, Anderson's experience as a big game hunter in Canada provided him with exceptionally good fieldcraft skills. His chameleon-like ability to become in turn a German, a Swedish business-man and, finally, a Dane smoothed his way across Deutschland, so much so, that he was not the least bit worried about passing through Berlin. Equally important was Anderson's ability to use seemingly innocuous questions to gather information such as at what point on the trains going north are passengers checked for their passports and papers, which he did not have. Anderson's feat was so astounding that some in Canada's military felt it indicated

that the Canadian major had received help from German authorities and, thus, could pose a security risk.

Anderson planned that after escaping from Bischofswerda in Saxony he would walk 300 km to Stettin (present-day Szczecin), where he hoped to stowaway on a boat bound for Scandinavia. He spent three months preparing his kit, which included an air cushion for swimming rivers, and supplies such as chocolate and Oxo cubes. To blend in all the more, he carried a German pipe and *Rucksack* (knapsack). He also had a raincoat and money sewn into his clothes.[92] Importantly, he sewed cloth over the brass buttons that were stamped with the Canadian insignia.

Anderson escaped on the night of 28 September 1915. It started with men shielding him from view as he slipped into a well that was beyond the first line of sentries and barbed wire fence. It took another seven hours to clear a disused riding school that was in the camp's grounds, the short distance (the run across which had to be timed with the sentry's beat) to the stable, which afforded access to the last of three barbed wire fences. He cleared this obstacle while the two sentries, who had just turned their backs to each other, marched in opposite directions. Knowing that his absence would be noticed at the morning *Appell*, Anderson made false tracks, starting off in the direction of Switzerland, before heading east on a hard road where he knew he would not leave footprints. To throw off the dogs that he knew would be used to track him by his scent, the experienced Canadian big-game hunter took the precaution of leaving a Russian prisoner's slippers under his bunk.

As would other escapers, Anderson experienced the terror of loud breaking twigs, of cold and rain forcing him to burrow into haylofts. He also came across something that reminded him of Canada, a plantation of jack pines. The sign, "*Verboten,*" he knew

would keep people away from a wood in which he bedded down for one night. His German pipe, demeanour and some well-placed "*Guten abends*" ("Good evening") greased the skids as he walked through the town of Spremberg. A few days later, outside of Cottbus, his hunting experience and infantry training combined to save him. After realizing he was being followed, he took shelter in a bush and threw a handful of pebbles into another bush, causing the men pursuing him to fire into that bush while he lit out for a forest where he spent a wet night. The next day, to cover his accent, he wound a muffler around his neck, and when anyone spoke to him pointed to it and said in hoarse German, "The doctor has forbidden me to speak, sore throat."[93]

After two more extremely wet days the footsore Anderson played a card no other Canadian did. After destroying anything that indicated he was a Canadian soldier, he bought a railroad ticket and became "Peter Janson," a Swede, whose cover story was that he had lived in Minnesota for ten years, and had been marooned in Germany when his business partner, Hans Schmidt, had been called up and then killed in the Argonne. The story was preposterous enough to be believed by the shopkeeper who sold Anderson a rubber cape and umbrella. She was concerned about business conditions in America. After assuring her that they remained good, he turned the discussion towards his indignation at having been forced to show his passport a number of times. The shopkeeper assured him that he had been asked because he had been near the Austrian frontier and that only trains near the borders were checked.

In the Frankfurt train station, since many of the conscripts were in mufti, Anderson hardly stood out. His English rendition, albeit with an "F" replacing the "H" in the first word of *"Hoch der Kaiser*" ("Long live the Kaiser"), blended with the shouts of the conscripts. On the train to Berlin, he listened carefully as loquacious soldiers

ignored signs saying, “Do not discuss military matters with strangers,” and spoke of troops and heavy guns heading for the Serbian front.[94] Since, under the circumstances, “no German would expect me to visit [Kaiser] Bill’s home town [Berlin],” Anderson felt safe enough behind his Swedish avatar to boast of his big game hunting in America and to express his sympathy for Germany.[95]

In Hamburg, he stayed in a hotel for several days. When he got there, he had the strange experience of signing his name in the same guest book he had two years earlier. This time, however, he signed “Peter Jansen, bricklayer, Lubeck.” When he arrived via train in Flensburg, a small port just south of Denmark, he learned that going any further north without a passport was impossible. The next train he took went west, across the Kiel Canal. Surprisingly, given its strategic importance, the only security the paperless escaper faced on the train was the entry into his car of a gun-toting policeman whose job was to ensure that the car’s curtains remained closed as the train passed over the bridge spanning the canal that allowed the High Seas Fleet to move from the Baltic to the North Sea without going around Denmark.

Now in Schleswig, Anderson found that the truculent population still remembered that Kaiser’s grandfather had ripped the duchy from the Danish crown in 1866. Not surprisingly, the man now claiming to be a Danish bricklayer trying to get home without his papers had little trouble finding people willing to give him food and shelter. On the less-travelled road he had been told to take towards the border, Anderson was surprised when a guard appeared asking for his papers. As Anderson fumbled for his nonexistent papers, he bet his freedom on his ear and said, “You don’t come from this part of the country. You are from the south.” When the guard answered, “Yes, I’m from Silesia,” Anderson said how nice the country was compared to the bleak north and, as the guard became anxious about the papers, the escaper went for broke,

"You have some great forests in Silesia and great sawmills," which led the guard to speak of them with pride.[96] When the issue of the papers seemed ready to come up again, Anderson started speaking about the depth of snow in Silesia, which made the guard forget the papers and wave Anderson on. A short while later in a village inn, Anderson fended off a guard's demand for his papers by drinking him under the table.

While the heavy rain and wind made travelling miserable, it cloaked the final stage of Anderson's bid for freedom, which included creeping by a custom's house. When, a short time later, the touch of his foot woke a sleeping sentry, causing him to reach for his flashlight, Anderson readied to yell in German, "Asleep on your post eh! Give me that rifle. To the guardroom march!"[97] The bleary-eyed sentry did not see Anderson hiding in the shadows and, after the sentry was once again asleep, Anderson crept to the road, keeping sure to keep himself silhouetted against a hedge. The sentry near the hedge marched to a predictable beat, which allowed Anderson to know when his back would be turned so that the Canadian could slip into a ditch and hide as the sentry passed mere inches away. The deep darkness hid Anderson as he traversed several more ditches. When no one came running after the bell started ringing when he touched an unseen wire entanglement just before the border, Anderson assumed the sentry he had just passed credited the disturbance to the wind – and not to an escaper who would soon cut through the wires and sneak into Denmark.

Anderson's escape from Germany differs from the others we have examined in several ways. Unlike the other men, for most of his journey through enemy territory, he was in towns, cities and on trains. Furthermore, Anderson was alone. Most escapers travelled in pairs for a number of reasons: 1. one could sleep while the other kept watch; 2. one could "buck up" the other when his spirits

flagged; and 3., most importantly, each man brought a different set of skills to their joint endeavour. Anderson's ability to blend into the general German population and then become in sequence a Swede and a Dane meant that he did not need the support of another man.

Even as Sir Max Aitken was writing the first volume of *Canada in Flanders*, which told the story, albeit often in purple prose, of the Canadians' valiant stand at Ypres, Canadian authorities suppressed the story of Anderson's escape. Some senior officers, pointed to Anderson's Danish birth to suggest that he was something of a German agent, even though the 47-year-old Major had been brought to Buckingham Palace to meet King George V. Not all of Canada's overseas personnel were suspicious of the Major, however. On 25 October an officer in the Pay Office looked over documentation Anderson had filled out. A few moments later, he handed him a cheque for £39 ($7,341 in today's funds) made out to Major P. Anderson for "travelling expenses in Germany and elsewhere on Government business."[98]

# CHAPTER FIVE
## EVADERS IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR

*We were out of uniform, and we knew that if we were caught not only would it be terrible for the people trying to help us but we couldn't be sure that our dog tags would bring us under Geneva.*

Bomb Aimer, Ian MacDonald

As noted in the introduction, evaders, most of whom were airmen, constitute a group on their own. The main distinction between them and soldiers who escape after being captured in battle is that in most cases evaders were not in uniform when captured. Captured in civilian clothes meant, in turn, that evaders did not come under the Geneva Convention until their identities were established via the Red Cross. Though escapers were also "out of uniform" and had, essentially, committed mutiny against German Military Law, they had already been processed by German authorities and after being captured were, via checks of their fingerprints and photos on camp identity cards, usually quickly recognized as POWs.

While there were evaders who were shot down over Germany, this chapter concentrates on those who were shot down over Occupied Europe. Each of these men had to find ways to elude German, French or Italian security forces looking for them. The welter of German security forces included the *SS*, the *Gestapo*, *Luftwaffe* police and *Wehrmacht* police.

Each of the evaders discussed below received help from either a formal resistance cell or sympathetic locals. Some evaders became "parcels" of the most storied of escape lines: the *Comète*

*Line*, the *Pat O'Leary Line* and the *Shelburn Line*, this last being the work of two Canadians who themselves escaped from *Festung Europa* and went back as M.I.9 agents. Of the twelve men whose stories we follow below, seven evaded capture and escaped either by sea or over the Pyrenees, four were betrayed and two were among the more than 100 Allied Airmen who, just before the Liberation of Paris, were moved from Fresnes Prison to Buchenwald Concentration camp.

M.I.9's mission was to "facilitate escapes of British prisoners of war, thereby getting back service personnel and containing additional enemy manpower to guard duties" and to "facilitate the return to the United Kingdom of those who succeeded in evading capture in enemy occupied territory."[99] Canadian soldiers and airmen were included in M.I.9's education program that emphasized (in typically understated British English) the "undesirability of being captured." M.I.9 gave "instruction in evasion of capture" and on "conduct in the event of capture." As well, M.I.9's instructors "demonstrate[d] certain 'aids to escape' with which units were equipped by M.I.9 prior to going overseas."[100]

By early 1940, airmen carried escape kits containing malted milk, Benzedrine and Halazone tablets, two bars of chocolate, matches, a (magnetized) shaving blade (the "G" of Gillette signifying north), a needle and thread, a fishing hook and line, and an item that was almost as useful in bribery as cigarettes: soap. At best, these supplies could sustain men for a few days. M.I.9 thus explained to the servicemen that Occupied Europe was criss-crossed with Escape Lines and that even if they were not part of the networks or the Resistance, uncounted millions of Danes, Frenchmen, Dutchmen, Norwegians, Belgian and Luxembourgers (especially farmers) would point evaders toward someone who was, and might provide them with a little food and maybe a barn to sleep in for a night. While, as we will see below, some Allied airmen were

betrayed in the countryside, latent nationalism, the farmers' anger at their sons being drafted to work in Germany and traditional Gallic truculence at authority emanating from Paris combined to make it a fair bet that requests for help would be answered with a "*Oui*."

Among the lessons taught was that the very parachutes that saved the lives of what they jocularly called the "Caterpillar Club" became, once men like Bomb Aimer Ian MacDonald were on the ground, huge white calling cards that needed to be buried quickly. Insignia that marked them as Canadian or British fliers were often the next to go. Even after cutting down their flying boots, few of the men who "hit the silk" were able to put enough distance between themselves and their landing point where, thanks to spotters, the Germans would be looking for them. Because of the flying boot's fleece-lined uppers, walking long distances was impractical and, if seen by a policeman or security officer immediately tagged the wearer as an Allied airman. As a result, M.I.9 designed a boot, the uppers of which could easily be cut off, thereby making it a fair imitation of a shoe.

Since it was unsafe to be out in the open, the men were taught to hide. Following the advice, "Not in the morning, but at the end of the day," near dawn on 12 December 1942, Pilot Officer Sydney Smith climbed into a hayloft (remembering to spread out his undershirt to dry) before falling asleep.[101] (Few of the evaders used the Benzedrine tablet in their escape kit to stay awake.) After recovering from his landing, as dawn approached on 23 August 1943 and realizing he had put only a few hundred yards between himself and his ill-buried chute, Bomb Aimer John Dix climbed a tree from which he could see not only the women working in the fields but also the German patrols searching for him.

Sergeant MacDonald, who was shot down in April 1943 on what was his second bombing run, recalled the first few moments after

landing in four inches of new grain as "stunned confusion." After burying his parachute and walking some distance, he warily approached a house. When he saw a woman in a window, he put his Lourdes, Nova Scotia, high school French to the test with the words, "*Je suis Anglais et j'ai soif*" (I am English and I am thirsty). Despite his accent and the fact that she was alone, the woman, ignoring the many signs posted by Germans that threatened death for anyone who helped an Allied flier, ushered him in and fed him. The most awkward moment, MacDonald recalled, was when he refused wine and asked for "*l'eau*."[102] When her husband came home, they gave him a place to sleep. Unbeknownst to MacDonald, his plane's navigator, "Parky" Parkinson had also found aid and comfort nearby. They would be united a week or so later at Dr. Lupanov's house in Picardy where they hid for several weeks before being sent to Paris.

The day after he was shot down, 28 August 1943, Dix was so distrusting that despite mounting thirst and hunger, he ignored the advice given in escape and evasion training, "Old rather than young," and missed the import of the elderly man loitering near the hedge that he was hiding in and whistling "It's a Long Way to Tipperary."[103] After Dix had hidden for several days, another old man discovered the delirious, mud and blood covered, barefoot airman and led him to a house where an old lady welcomed him with a hug and a kiss.

Not long after waking in the haystack into which he crawled after being shot down on 11 December 1942, Smith readied for a fight with the men who had entered the barn. However, when he slid down from the haystack the words "*Anglais*" and "RAF" in a friendly voice underscored M.I.9's advice to trust country people. As both RCAF sergeant Robert Brooks and RCAF Squadron Leader Roy McLernon learned after they were shot down in August 1943, the people on Denmark's Mandø Island also proved themselves

trustworthy. Like Smith, McLernon, who had recovered from the shock of being thrown against a bulkhead of his burning Halifax bomber just in time to jump into the Danish night, spent his first thirty hours in Occupied Europe in a haystack. Then, pushed by thirst and hunger, after satisfying himself that the men nearby were Danes, he revealed himself. They gave him food and drink, and, perhaps, even more importantly, trousers and a sweater to put over his RCAF tunic. They also gave him shoes, as the vacuum effect of the slipstream behind the plane had burst the zippers on McLernon's flying boots and had pulled them off his feet. The Danes then took McLernon to the leader of the Resistance on the island, Søren Christensen.

Elsewhere on the island, Brooks, also pushed by thirst and hunger, revealed himself to the two Anderson brothers who gave him milk. Lacking extra clothing to cover Brooks' RCAF kit, the teenaged brothers made sure that Brooks sat with his back to the side of the road on which the Germans garrisoning the island usually walked to and from their barracks.

Eighteen months later in Yugoslavia, Norman Reid, who navigated a Wellington Bomber charged with bombing a three hundred-foot-long double-span bridge over the Jiu River near Filis, Yugoslavia, was shot down. After recovering from the shock of his landing he thought, "How the hell did Mrs. Reid's son get himself into this mess?"[104] Not long after, while hiding among some trees, Reid saw a group of heavily armed men moving in his direction. Since, they wore neither uniforms nor the German army's coal shovel helmets, Reid guessed they belonged to one of the many underground groups operating in Yugoslavia. Slowly, he made himself visible to them, making sure to keep his arms up and show that he was not armed. Then, while looking down the "wrong end of four automatic rifles," Reid used hand signs to make clear to the Serbian speaking Chetniks that he had been shot down. To prove

his story he took them to where he had poorly buried his parachute.[105] They then took him to a peasant's hut where he could rest his injured ankle. He was also given a breakfast of sheep's milk, cheese and unleavened corn bread.

"Helpers," provided evaders with civilian clothes and false papers. To make the papers declaring him a Belgian veterinary student look old enough to be believable, Dix stomped all over them and he transformed his hands by rubbing dirt into his nails. Later, thinking that the Germans would pay less attention to a deaf mute, Dix became one. MacDonald became "Guy Labourer," a barber and the Torontonian, Parkinson, was transformed into a school teacher.

"Home Runs," successful escapes from Occupied Europe, required an immense amount of what can be thought of as "tactical intelligence."[106] By purchasing his tickets for Paris, Catherine Janot ensured that the unilingual Smith's accent did not attract untoward attention. The distribution of tickets to Pilot Officer Ken Woodhouse, who was shot down in March 1944 and the other evaders with him in the Rémérangles train station was a masterpiece of choreography. Each evader passed through the crowd in the middle of which someone slipped his ticket for a train to Paris into his hand. By this point, Woodhouse was not surprised at the Resistance cell's organization. A day earlier, he had been ushered into a room where he wondered about the two rough looking young men who stood between Maurice Rendu, the farmer who had first hid him, and another couple. As Woodhouse struggled to answer the questions the couple asked him in rapid fire French, he began to wonder if there was any way he could prove he was not a German plant. Then, one of the two young men cracked a smile and said, "Hi Mac, welcome to France!"[107] He and the other man were both members of an American bomber crew that had been shot down a few months earlier.

Though used to following orders from uniformed superiors, the evaders now had to follow orders from a number of different people. Dix's guardian angel was Michelle, a beautiful Luxembourger. A few days after he was shot down while hiding at a farm, he saw Germans looking for the men who had survived his plane's crash shoot into a haystack. Just before Dix climbed into the back of the truck that was to take him to another hiding place, Michelle told him that he was to remain under the sacking hiding him until she called out for him. At one point during the trip, the truck driver stopped and called for Dix to come out; following orders, he remained silent and hidden.

At times, their helpers' tactics became clear only after the fact. As their train neared Paris and the helpers they had been entrusted to just before boarding the train began tearing up his and the other evaders' identity cards, Woodhouse could not but help wonder if he could trust these men. Seeing his discomfort, one of the helpers put his mind at ease by whispering that it was better to be caught without papers than with badly forged ones that could be traced. Not long after leaving Gare du Nord, Woodhouse's party put their faith in a most unlikely person, a little old lady who appeared as they waited outside a bakery and then led them to an apartment.

More than once in Yugoslavia, Reid, who was amazed at General Draža Mihailović's strategic vision and tactical knowledge, found himself acting as "poor bloody infantry" with his benefactors. Once they led him in a careful leapfrog approach to a restaurant. And later, when Germans unexpectedly burst into it, they led him out the back door and into a maize field. Even as the Germans were only a few feet away searching for him and the Chetniks, Reid could not help but notice that the ears of maize were so small that back home in Alberta they would be fit only for fodder.

Since so many men hid in plain sight in cities, “Human Intelligence” famously included the European way to put down knives and forks indicating “resting” or being “finished” and how to smoke a cigarette the Humphrey Bogart way. One day, as MacDonald and his helper were bicycling in Picardy, MacDonald saw that his helper had stopped at the hill they were approaching. When MacDonald caught up, his helper told the Canadian, “When we reach that hill, don’t stand and pump. That’s the North American way to ride. If a German patrol drives by, they will know immediately that you are not French.”[108] This type of human intelligence was something that only a local operative could know.

Despite accumulating evidence from infiltrated escape lines that women were helping evaders, the Nazi view of women (i.e., *Kinder, Küche, Kirche* – children, kitchen, church) prevented German soldiers from seeing past Lucienne’s beauty on 20 December 1942, when she walked over the bridge that led to the Bayonne train station. Once there, she told Andrée de Jongh, who was leading Smith’s evasion party, about the soldiers on the bridge they had to cross. The Germans’ stereotypical view of women allowed Smith and his fellow evaders to hide in plain sight. While following de Jongh’s directive to stoop so that they did not appear too tall, the evaders draped each of their arms around their comely helpers, ensuring only jealousy from the Germans.

At one point, Dix asked Michelle how she was able to outwit the Germans. Her answer was disarmingly simple. Confounding them required, she said, only common sense and local knowledge. Since she knew that on the train he had to take to Brussels he would rub shoulders with Germans, to inoculate Dix, she walked him passed the German headquarters in Luxembourg posing as lovers in a dangerous time. After they had spent a chaste night in the same bed and more than a week together, Dix and Michelle started falling in love. The Resistance committee, however, told

Michelle that she was more valuable in Luxembourg and could not escape to Britain with Dix.[109]

Evaders hid in plain sight in Paris too. Smith, who came from the postage-stamped sized town of Cooper Cliff, Ontario, accompanied Catherine to a (French) performance of *Macbeth* and sat in an audience with a number of German officers. When he was in Paris after being shot down on D-Day, Flight Lieutenant Louis Greenburgh accompanied his helper, the devout Mademoiselle Epechere, to mass. Greenburgh was sure that his Winnipeg rabbi would understand why he took the host while Mademoiselle Epechere in turn knew that her priest would forgive the venal sin of lying (and the throwing of a proper Parisian fit) when an *SS* officer stopped Jock Brown, the other Allied flyer in her care. She railed:

> *How dare you pick on my brother! He has been deaf and dumb since he was born, and everyone has been cruel to him. Haven't you Germans done enough to us? You ought to be ashamed of yourselves, pick on someone so defenceless*.[110]

In August of 1944, the driver of the truck taking Greenburgh to the Forêt de Fréteval outside Paris, which hid over a hundred Allied evaders, may have panicked and hit the gas, after a German asked to see Greenburgh's papers. In the moments between hitting a barricade and the German reaching the truck's window, however, the driver came up with an audacious story that Greenburgh's papers, which showed he worked as an electrician for a M. Dolphin, would support. "For God's sake," the driver shouted in excited French, "the Allies are advancing and we have to repair communication lines all over the place and you have nothing better to do than stop us and ask silly questions. Can't you see we're in a hurry?"[111] A nonplussed German officer not only ordered them to be let go but also gave them an escort.[112]

Although her street signs were now in Gothic German script and her major buildings and the Arc de Triumph were stained by huge swastikas, Paris was still Paris. Perhaps because they were French-Canadians and could act the part of provincial hayseeds, privates Conrad Lafleur, Robert Vanier and Guy Jolie, all of whom escaped from the train carrying the Dieppe POWs to Germany and who were armed with well-forged documents (and for our purposes can be considered evaders) reported that while in the City of Light they hid by "doing a little discreet sightseeing."[113] However, unlike them, the unilingual Smith was enjoined not to look like a tourist and not to speak. While MacDonald and Parkinson waited to be picked up in the Gare du Nord, MacDonald worried that his French would give him away to the German approaching with a question on his face. To avoid having to speak, he took what he hoped was a natural looking step backwards. When the soldier passed him by to speak to another man, MacDonald realized his *pas de deux* had been successful. A few days later, on a road near Pau, MacDonald found that his, *"Je ne sais pas*" was up to the task when a German stopped him and asked for directions.

But there were many close calls. Twice, Smith almost gave himself away. The first time occurred on the Metro when, with his attention grabbed by a woman carrying two quaking ducks, he unthinkingly stretched his leg, causing his pants' leg to ride up, revealing his British flying boots; before the Germans noticed, a helper yanked Smith's leg back. The second time "simple Canadian politeness" caused him to say, "Excuse me," when he bumped into a woman as he was exiting the Metro. Mercifully, the *SS* guard standing nearby either did not hear him or mistook Smith's words for "*Excusez-moi*."[114]

While the possibility of being recaptured was ever present, it was perhaps even greater on trains. MacDonald recalled the moment when, in June of 1943, his papers were examined on a train. "We

were living on the edge," says MacDonald. One slip in the printing, an untoward show of nerves or too-studied insouciance and they would be unmasked. As he noted, "The soldier who took my *carte d'identité* looked at it for what seemed a long time, then at me, then back at it. I waited for him to say something, hoping I'd be able to answer in passable French. Then he passed it back to me and moved on."[115]

A few months later in Luxembourg, the tension that had been building since an unexpected young man joined Dix's party which Michelle was leading to Brussels reached its zenith when the *Gestapo* boarded the train. The agents, who had been alerted to the presence of evaders by this man, opened Dix's cabin and demanded "*Vous êtes Belge*?" His *"Oui monsieur*" and his papers worked.[116] The American, Jimmy, in the seat across the aisle was, however, caught. Later, after seeing Dix throw papers out the window, the old woman sitting across from him leaned forward and patted the evader on the knee. Such spontaneous acts of support were common and of inestimable value to an evader's morale.

In Yugoslavia, Reid faced an entirely different "Human Intelligence" environment, one where he did not speak the language of his protectors and had little idea of their social norms. The appearance of a doctor to tend the badly wounded American airmen testified to Reid's skill at impromptu sign language. However, the lack of a common language meant that Reid did not know why the Chetniks kept moving the evaders from village to village or if they were arranging for the airmen's rescue. Equally important was the fact that the partisans lived in what Reid saw as a medieval world. Their obeisance to Mihailović, and through him to King Peter II, was something other than the chain of command Reid was used to, as was the amount of *slivovitz* he had to drink to be polite when eating with Mihailović. One feast, which included a roast pig, was notable for two other reasons: 1.) to impress

Reid with the number of troops under his command, Mihailović had the same troops march in a large circle so that his force appeared larger than it was, and 2.) Mihailović engaged Reid in what, given the context, seemed a surreal discussion about the *British North America Act* and the Reserve Power of the Monarch in the Canadian constitutional order.

Fear that the Chetniks intended to use the evaders as bargaining chips with London, which just weeks earlier had shifted its support from Mihailović to Josip Tito's communist partisans, prompted Reid and another evader to strike out on their own. But the rugged terrain that caused them to travel mainly in circles defeated their skill at celestial navigation. Accordingly, they joined the next Chetnik group they saw, hoping that these men did not know who the evaders were (for fear that they would think them German plants).

Escaping from *Festung Europa* was every evader's goal. The first part of McClernon's escape on 26 August 1943, began with him hiding under a tarp in the engine room of a fishing boat as it puttered from Mandø Island to the Danish mainland where he was met by a Special Operations Executive (SOE) operative who arranged for him to be spirited into Sweden. Eight days after being shot down, Woodhouse found himself as part of a party of 25 evaders that included three other Canadians led by 18-year-old Marie-Thérèse Le Calvez on a dash through a field, by hedges and houses without lights, and into a barn in which roughly built beds were hidden.[117]

Just before dawn on 24 March 1944, after she snuck into the barn without the airmen noticing, Marie-Thérèse chided them for their sloppy infantry skills. Eighteen hours later, on a night so dark Woodhouse could barely see the person in front of him, she led them again through heavily wooded areas and through a minefield

where she had previously planted markers. When, unexpectedly, a German patrol approached, she ordered the servicemen to scatter. Once the Germans had passed, she gathered them up and then led them to the heights above *Bonaparte Beach,* the exfiltration point for the *Shelburn Line*, established by Canadians Lucien Dumais and Raymond Labrosse (see Chapter 8). When ordered to, she guided them down the two hundred foot sandy cliff and then, as the small boats came to pick these evaders up, Le Calvez divided the men into groups small enough to climb into the dinghies.

In early August 1943, Reid, again using sign language, convinced the Chetniks to send a message to the Allies in Italy. To confuse any Germans who intercepted the message, which was sent in clear, Reid made it seem mundane: "Shoot a workhorse [DC3] to us, TKL (these last three letters being the initials of an American evader, Thomas K. Oliver)."[118] He sent the coordinates using another American's service number added to the longitude and latitude of Ravna Gora, Yugoslavia.

Dix's transit with a few other men from Belgium into France was so dangerous that they crossed the border alone, following an Alsatian dog that led them to the back door of a farmer's house. The dog was trained to flatten himself in the grass if he saw a German patrol and, after bringing the evaders into France, to return to Belgium. Like other evaders, Dix passed through Paris before being taken by helpers south, in his case to the French side of the Pyrenees.

Dix and Smith may have been on the run at different times, but they both owed their escape across the Pyrenees into Spain to Florentino Goikoetxea a Basque smuggler. Save for the word, "*douce-ment*," which he used to mean "Move quietly but quickly," he spoke nothing other than Basque. There was no escaping his meaning, however, when he "pressed his slab of a hand over his mouth."[119]

Not even his youth on the Canadian Shield had prepared Smith for the rigors of the climb in the misty, winter-like cold. The difficulty of traversing stinging cold streams, steep ridges and ledges only a few feet wide beyond which lay drops of hundreds of feet in the deepest dark of night was worse than any Canadian winter he could recall. Though only knee deep, crossing the cold, free flowing Bidasoa River, the border between France and Spain, was an ordeal for the emotionally exhausted, cold, hungry men whose soles were so worn they could find little purchase on the slick rocks. Their guide leant each man his "strong arm," without which "they would have been swept downstream."[120]

In August 1942, Lafleur, Joly and Vanier had a much easier time making it to safety. However, their first few minutes in Saint-Amand-Montrond in Vichy, France, after two *gendarmes* stopped them and asked for their papers were nerve wracking. As the *gendarmes* checked their papers, they brought up the raid on Dieppe and seeing the *gendarme's* favourable response, they risked telling them who they were. The Police Commissioner to whom they were soon brought quickly arranged for them to be hidden in the home of a wealthy American until M.I.9 smuggled them to Marseilles and then via Toulouse to Perpignan, where the Royal Navy picked them up.

The decentralized nature of these latter-day Underground Railroads meant that few of the helpers knew the names of the "station agents" more than one or two stops on either side of them. Accordingly, we cannot know exactly when MacDonald's party (which included Parkinson, who joined MacDonald when he was being hidden by a Dr. Lupanov) was betrayed. However, the sequence of events once they were to climb into the Pyrenees are telling:

- a difficult climb into the mountains during which the guide became "lost;"

- a descent that ended in being hidden in a barn where food was provided;
- the appearance of German troops with bloodhounds searching nearby; and
- being picked up by a truck and driven ostensibly to an easier place to climb the mountain, only to be stopped near a bend in the river where three German soldiers stepped from behind a clump of trees with rifles at the ready.

It seems likely that MacDonald's party was betrayed at the end of the line.

Moments after being stopped, MacDonald, Parkinson and the other evaders were face down on the ground with rifles pointed at their heads. Later, in the *Gestapo* Headquarters in the small town of Pau, they were placed in a room in which the dried blood provided mute testimony of what the Germans could do. The *Gestapo* officer who interrogated MacDonald ignored his dog tags, mocked his rosary but got nowhere with his questions. A few days later, the evaders were in a jail in Bordeaux before being transferred to the notorious Fresnes Prison in Paris, where a *Gestapo* agent told them that they would be treated like spies. "And, as you know," he added ominously, "in all countries spies are shot."[121]

Over the six weeks before they were transferred to *Dulag Luft* while fearing for their lives, MacDonald and Parkinson endured repeated questioning about their helpers. To keep from being tripped up, MacDonald told them a great deal about a couple he knew well. By the end of the questioning the Germans had built up a rather complete picture of Mr. and Mrs. William "Billy" MacDonald of Lourdes, Nova Scotia.

After being shot down on 4 July 1944, not far from Chartres, Flight Officer John Harvie had been befriended by the Desmusois family,

who hid him for three days until he was picked up by the Resistance, which took him to Paris, where he was hidden for a week in a small second-storey room. Although thankful for half a loaf of bread his helper brought him, the navigator kept to himself.

Fittingly, on Bastille Day (14 July 1944), the anniversary of the French Revolution, the motto of which was *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité*, Harvie heard the expected three knocks on his door and soon he was in a car with three other evaders He enjoyed seeing the Arc de Triomphe but then noticed troops lining the street. He marvelled at his skill in avoiding a roadblock by making a sharp left turn through an archway until it registered that the courtyard was filled with German soldiers and military vehicles. Then in what even at the time seemed like a scene from the Grade-B movies he watched in movie theatres in the Laurentians north of Montreal, the driver slammed on the breaks and he and the other man in the front jumped out of the car, pulled out revolvers, turned and yelled, "Hands up!".[122]

Harvie arrived at Fresnes Prison almost a year after MacDonald had been transferred to *Dulag Luft.* Like MacDonald, Harvie heard the screams of Resistance men and women being tortured and the crack of rifle fire executing some. Concern that the Germans were to find the slip of paper indicating the location of an ammunition dump he had hidden in his clothes prompted Harvie to search the padding of his jacket. Even his dog tags would not save him from being executed as a spy if the paper was found. When he found the paper, he shredded it and flushed it down the toilet. Deprived of mental stimulation, Harvie kept his mind sharp by inventing games and puzzles, whistling the 165 popular songs he could remember, quoting long passages from the Bible and recalling high school Latin translation exercises.

On 10 August 1944, the sound of explosions nearby told Harvie that the Allies were closing in on Paris. Reasoning that they would not expect to discover that airmen had been held in Fresnes Prison, he scratched his name, service number and the dates into the wall along with the words "God Save the King!/Long Live the Allies!/Oh to be in Canada!"[123]

The next day, Harvie and 128 other Allied airmen, including 26 Canadians, were hustled on to trucks that took them to a train station where they were loaded into boxcars, 90 men in a car built for *40 hommes ou 8 chevaux* (40 men or 8 horses) that was to take them to Germany. Many of the prisoners had fetid clothes covered with feces or vomit. In a tunnel on the outskirts of Paris, the train came to a grinding halt, likely because the Resistance had blown the tracks. Since the coal-fired steam engine kept running, thick, black smoke soon filled the boxcars. RCAF Sergeant Edward Carter-Edwards, who had been shot down on D-Day + 2, recalled the terrible burning in his eyes and throat and wondering whether each painful and all-too-difficult breath would be his last. Then, the train backed up and the Germans opened the doors.[124]

Once the men had caught their breath, the *SS* divided them into two groups and marched them in sequence down a dusty road and, finally, across a bridge to another train. The conditions in the second car Harvie was in were somewhat better. Better still was the fact that just before leaving the car, the French workman who had been putting barbed wire over the windows, dropped to his knees and pried up several floorboards.

Escaping, which was never for the faint of heart, required split second timing, for, to avoid being ripped apart by the barbed wire broom at the rear of the train, an escaper had to drop through the hole and then time himself so he could *roll over the track* in the gap between the wheels. Five men, including Flying Officer Joel

Stevenson, who had come north from Texas to fly in the RCAF and who had been shot down on D-Day + 1, escaped before the guards realized what was happening and stormed into the car to nail down the floor boards. With the help of the *Maquis,* Stevenson made it back to England and provided the Canadian Government with the first eyewitness information about what the Canadians endured in Fresnes Prison.

After being in Fresnes Prison, none of the men had any illusions about the Germans' fidelity to the Geneva Convention. Yet, even they were shocked when somewhere in rural France the train stopped and the men were ordered onto a field and told to strip. "The bastards," Harvie thought, "are going to shoot us naked so that our clothing can be recovered . . . without bullet holes and blood stains!"[125] That, however, was not the plan. The Germans had ordered the men to strip to prevent any further escapes.

The Allied airmen's nightmare became even more terrifying when the train stopped at a station near Weimar. The gun-toting *SS* troops were to be expected. What was not was the smell that soon overwhelmed the stale smell of smoke and stink from the fetid clothes that had been returned to them. "The air," Carter-Edwards recalls, "was so filled with the stench of burnt death that we disbelieved our own senses." Soon Harvie and the others would learn that the smell came from Buchenwald's crematoria. Over the course of the war, these three ovens burned the bodies of more than 50,000 men and women, including three Canadian SOE agents, Romeo Sabourin, Kenneth McAllister and Frank Picksergill, who were executed along with 13 other SOE agents on 10 September 1944.

In the 100 days they were in Buchenwald, the airmen endured weeks of sleeping in the open on an old coal field (which sickened many) and, when they were finally given a barracks, sleeping six

men to a shelf, the filth of the upper levels dripped down to the lower ones. They witnessed the bombing of Buchenwald, and after it many of the barefooted airmen were forced at gunpoint to fight fires and search for survivors in the wreckage. Carter-Edwards became so sick that he risked going to the infirmary, where he was kept alive, delirious with fever, but alive, by the underground that shifted him from bed to bed so that *Herr Doktor* would not see him twice in the same bed and say *Krematorium*, which meant kill and then burn him.

The airmen's liberation from this patch of hell was improbable as escape was impossible. A Russian prisoner who laboured at a nearby *Luftwaffe* base passed a letter written by the Senior British Officer, Squadron Leader Philip Lamason, to a *Luftwaffe* officer telling him that the airmen were being held in the concentration camp. This prompted a visit by two *Luftwaffe* officers, including ace Hannes Trautloft (58 victories), ostensibly to inspect the damage to the factories, which were part of the *Luftwaffe's* supply chain. Trautloft's report to Göring that Himmler was holding prisoners that rightly belonged to Göring, prompted the *Reichsmarschall* to demand their release to his officials.

On 21 October 1944, most of the airmen left Buchenwald for *Stalag Luft* III. Five, including Carter-Edwards were too sick in the infirmary to leave then, though their care improved, and on 28 November were transferred to *Stalag Luft* III. A few days after he arrived in the POW camp, Harvie, having luxuriated in hot showers, towels, Red Cross food and clean clothes, was interrogated by the Security Division of the camp's Escape Committee. Once cleared, as Harvie was before the beginning of November, they became, again, active men at war and learned the camp's greatest secret: the digging of three tunnels named "Tom," "Dick" and "Harry."

While it is important to keep in mind the legal distinction between escapers and evaders, and the fact that the evaders discussed above made their way through Occupied Europe with the aid of "helpers," their stories still indicate much about the art of escaping. Though the airmen were equipped with M.I.9 escape kits, their contents did not determine success or failure for an evader. By contrast, the M.I.9-designed flying boots that could be cut down to look like shoes were very important, as was the airman's training to bury their parachutes as quickly as possible. The lessons learned in lectures – "Not in the morning, but in the evening/ Trust country people not city people" – and their receptiveness to lessons quickly taught by helpers – how to smoke a cigarette and to sit, not stand, when pumping a bicycle up hill – were decisive. Because of their ability to speak French, members of the Fusiliers de Mont-Royal who escaped from the train carrying Dieppe survivors to a prison camp were able to make their way through France with greater ease than did unilingual evaders.

With the exception of Reid, who was flown out of Yugoslavia by the US Army Air Force, there were only two ways of escaping from Fortress Europe. The land route required traversing the Pyrenees into Spain. Despite the harsh weather, which taxed even Canadians used to the harsh Canadian winters, with the help of guides like Goikoetxea, the difficult climb could be negotiated. There were also several sea routes. McLernon's included travelling in a fishing boat to the Danish mainland and then an M.I.9-arranged trip to Sweden. Most evaders, however, stepped from French beaches into dinghies manned by Royal Navy personnel. The one that picked up Woodhouse took him to a small ship belonging to M.I.9's secret flotilla. All evaders found themselves putting their lives in strangers' hands, the most surprising ones being, as Dix and Woodhouse discovered, young women whose beauty caused the Germans to never suspect them of committing crimes.

# CHAPTER SIX

## TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN PREPARING FOR ESCAPES IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR

*I had . . . come to realize that to devote all my mental and physical energy to the problem of escape had a very beneficial, therapeutic effect. The difficulties of the problem were so challenging that I was always fully occupied.*

RAF Wing Commander Thomas D. Calnan[126]

Much of the 1960s comedy *Hogan's Heroes* is pure Hollywood fabrication. Until very late in the war, for example, when the POW camp system broke down and hundreds of thousands of POWs were being marched away from the advancing Allied troops in the West and Russians in the East, there was no barrack with British, French and American officers in it. At the same time, however, much of their comedy is not simply fictitious. Escape tunnels, like the one at *Stalag Luft* III in the Great Escape, did begin under the stove. The lack of wood or fuel pellets meant that unlike the stove in fictional *Barracke* 2, the one in *Barracke* 104 rarely heated the chilled room that housed upwards of 100 – not a dozen or so – men. The guard who noticed the chip in the concrete floor caused when he dropped a tool – and thus discovered to entrance to "Tom" – was much smarter than Sergeant Shultz. Every camp, however, had at least one guard who, for the right price in chocolate or soap, would be willing to look the other way, if not smuggle in a shovel, photographic paper, or a radio tube, what the British called, "valves."

As it did in the First World War, escaping required careful planning. The Escape Committee at Colditz, for example, oversaw the building

of a glider as well as compasses hidden in walnuts. In a bid to prevent the Germans from considering captured escapers as spies, the compasses made at Stalag Luft III carried the cheeky words, "*Stalag Luft* III, *Pat. Pending*." Tunnels were the bureaucratic exercise *par excellence*, requiring in addition to planning and digging, the disposal of spoil, systems to provide air to the face of the "mine," tailoring to create passable civilian clothes and watch systems.

The comparison of the camps in which they held *den Kriegsgefangene*, shortened by the prisoners to *Krieges*, to fourth class British hotels ignores the cold winters and putrid food that, had it not been for Red Cross Parcels, would not have sustained the men. It also ignores the fact that the hard labour that many in the "ordinary ranks" were forced to do in mines and factories violated the Geneva Convention. Moreover, it ignores the beatings meted out by sadistic guards for their own reasons and the *SS* for very clear political purposes. And, by implication, it glosses over the long years of boredom and the hard work thousands of men did to get ready for escapes.

Following the jocular tone of A. J. Evans's *The Escaping Club*, many of the First World War escape narratives depict escape attempts as being akin to "school-boy adventures."[127] Escaping from Second World War Germany POW camps was, however, an even more bureaucratic enterprise than it had been during the previous war. Escape Committees, normally under the Senior British Officer or, after the American entered the war, Senior Allied Officer, ruled on escape plans. The committees considered a plan's technical merits and the proposer's suitability. As well, the committees gave weight to their "sixth sense," attuned, for example, to whether prospective escaper's actions, say, arranging for a few unopened cans of Bully Beef to be spirited out of the store rooms, would draw attention and thus trigger more thorough searches that might endanger plans for a larger break out.

Famously, the Escape Committee at *Stalag Luft* III authorized the digging of "Tom," "Dick" and "Harry, as well as deciding, after "Tom" was discovered, to close down operations. Several months later, the Committee decided to recommence work on "Harry." The chief engineer of the tunnels was Flight Lieutenant Clarke Wallace "Wally" Floody, whose Spitfire had been shot down in October 1941 over France. Floody, who had spent three years in mines around Timmins, Ontario mucking (shovelling rock and mud into a cart that would then be hauled to the surface) expected the worst when he climbed the 30 feet down the shaft to examine "Harry". He was pleasantly surprised when he reopened "Harry" and found that it would take only a week or so of work re-shoring the tunnel before the men could start tunneling again.

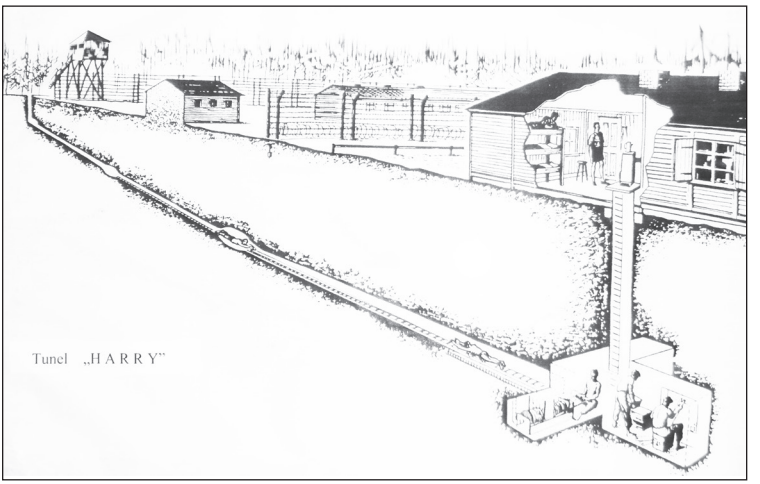


PHOTO CREDIT: AUTHOR'S COLLECTION

Less famously, the Committee at *Stalag Luft* III approved the "Wooden Horse" escape, which occurred on 29 October 1943, before the plan for the Great Escape had been formed. This escape too involved digging a tunnel, the entrance to which was hidden beneath a vaulting horse in the camp's south compound. As was the case with other tunnels, so that dirt-smudged uniforms did not alert the Germans to the tunneling, most tunnellers worked naked.

The Committee at *Stalag Luft* I also oversaw the digging of a tunnel. It was lit by lamps fuelled with margarine. The walls of this tunnel were strengthened with coal briquettes, each of which was a measure of cold to be endured in the coming winter. In both camps, tunnel collapses were common. The collapse of the bed-slat strengthened roof almost cost Pilot Officer Cox his life. To conserve the little air in the tunnel, Cox displayed the same *sang-froid* he had during his interrogation. (Despite being plied with Player's cigarettes by an interrogator who spoke flawless English, Cox remained silent when the German said, "We know you were flying a Blenheim Bomber," which told Cox that the Germans had not found the wreckage of his Hampden Bomber.[128]) In the tunnel, Cox put out the flame and tamped down the panic that, he knew, would cause him to use up more air, even as a deathly drowsiness overtook him until, at the same time, he felt a stream of damp, heavy, but breathable air, and a hand pulling on his boot.

Escape committees were divided into a number of sections. For example, Captain Vernon Howland who flew for the Royal Navy's Fleet Air Arm, was part of the communications section at *Stalag Luft* III. On 13 June 1940, his mission had been to bomb the German battleship *Gneisenau* in Trondheim, Norway. German flak brought the Saskatchewan-born pilot down. In mid-1943, his mission as part of the Communications Section was very different. Had the "goons" burst into the room with the hidden radio, Howland had the responsibility of eating the message sheet, smashing the radio coils and then hiding the other parts of the radio in the toilet before sitting on it with a determined look on his face.

The radio, incidentally, was hidden in the room assigned to a fellow Canadian, Father Philip Goudreau. Goudreau was not a military padre but, rather, a civilian missionary priest, one of 17 Canadian missionaries who were captured aboard the SS *Zamzam* in 1941, on their way to South Africa and thence to Basutoland

(present-day Lesotho). Instead of being interned as civilians or repatriated (as were more than 150 American missionaries who were also on the ship), the Canadians were sent into the POW camps. The Geneva Convention stated that the detaining power would allow POWs free practice of their religion. Hitler's Germany had enough Catholic priests to have ministered in the camps, but the Nazis did not trust them to minister to prisoners, presumably because the Nazis feared that the recalcitrant Catholic priests would make common cause with the POWs. As a result, these priests and brothers were the only Allied civilians to have been incarcerated in Nazi Germany's POW camps.[129]

This radio and those in other camps ensured that London had a good idea of the conditions in the POW camps and that, unlike their forefathers, this generation of POWs had a reasonably up-to-date picture of the progress of the war. After the news was copied down, newssheets were produced and then distributed to each barrack. Despite the fact that he risked death by hiding the radio, it was a matter of pride for Goudreau that he never asked the radio operators for any news but rather read it when the newssheet reached him.

Other sections of the Escape Committees included forgers, whose art incised dates and other information onto "stamps" made from hockey pucks sent from the Canadian YMCA. Photographers, some of whom used Kodak cameras smuggled into camps, made "passport pictures" and *Ausweiss* (work passes). The price for photographic paper and the chemicals needed to develop pictures varied but could be paid in chocolate, sugar, coffee or cigarettes. Typewriters, some accessed by sneaking into offices and others smuggled into camps (at least one piece by piece secreted in parcels sent from home), were used to type up identity cards and work permits.

Pilot Officer Kingsley Brown, who had been shot down in July 1942, worked for the Information Section at *Stalag Luft* III. It fell to him to comb German newspapers for the names, and occupations of Germans that escapers could be turned into, and plausible destinations for escapers. Accordingly, he created the avatars – Bulgarian steel workers – that Brown and a British soldier assumed in March of 1943. The civilian clothes they wore when they walked out of camp came from the Tailoring Section and were "of a suitable proletarian cut," recalled the man who in later life was a dapper dressed *Toronto Star* reporter.[130]

Perhaps no committee heard a stranger plan than the one proposed at *Stalag* 383, near Regensburg in Bavaria, in late 1943. The meeting with senior officers began with the Senior British Officer reminding Frank E. Raymond and "Fuzzy" Castelman that under the "Articles of War," they were subject to court martial should they "be found guilty of divulging any information you learn here about our organization."[131] After that warm welcome, the RCAF officers explained their plan, which would begin with letting their hair grow to allow them to pose as Basque sisters making their way to visit a sick grandmother in an Austrian town near the Yugoslav border, from which they hoped to escape from Germany.

The Committee was impressed by the choice of posing as Basques, as Basque was an uncommon language, which lessened the chance of being tripped up speaking it. The senior officers were also impressed by the plan to have another man pose as the sisters' mute brother because "people tend to leave mutes alone."[132] The Escape Committee's approval set in motion four months of learning to walk and hold tea cups like women, and for the tailoring sections, preparing dresses that included padded bras. A pliable guard provided lace panties at the cost of 350 cigarettes. The men also had to learn to shave, without soap, in 40 seconds.

Although M.I.9 sent thousands of blankets that could have been turned into passable versions of civilian clothes, no Canadian is known to have escaped using one. Some used red cabbage and lead from indelible pencils to cook up a stinking dye that turned a pair of trousers a sickly brown. Some acquired jackets and hats the old fashioned way, by theft. Private A. Robert Prouse stole a suit of clothes from civilians working at the factory at which he volunteered to work in order to position himself for an escape attempt. The trousers that passed muster on Sergeant Carswell's second escape started out as a German army blanket and his windbreaker was a "cashiered" British Army tunic.

Carswell's interrogation at *Dulag Luft* after being shot down in January of 1943 is worth special consideration. Airmen had been told not to say anything to their interrogators other than giving their name, rank and service number. A few days after the naked Canadian airman – a *Luftwaffe* officer had ordered him to strip in an effort to infantilize him – spent a night that was by turn boiling hot and freezing cold, a man purporting to be a Red Cross official entered Carswell's cell. When he began asking questions about Carswell's squadron, crewmates and plane, the Canadian remained mum. The next day, two *Luftwaffe* complained that Carswell was being uncooperative, causing Carswell to strike out, saying "He's no Red Cross officer . . . He's a phony."[133] The officers responded quickly, "How do you know that?" The answer being important to the Luftwaffe's psychological operations because were the Germans to know that the airmen had been told to be wary of Red Cross officials, Göring's men would know another piece of what the Allies knew about German techniques. Carswell moved quickly to cover his tracks. He retorted, "He doesn't look like a Red Cross man . . . He looks like a German and he talks with a German accent." This prompted the now self-aggrandizing *Luftwaffe* officer to say, "A lot of Swiss speak German." These words opened the door to Carswell's saying, "Oh, . . . I thought

they all spoke Swiss!" which slammed the door shut on the *Luftwaffe's* understanding of what Allied airmen had been briefed on German operating technique.[134]

Bribery also went a long way to helping escapes. The two "Ladies from Balboa" used a short tunnel to get under the wire of *Stalag* 383. Soap for *Herr* Weber's wife, cigarettes for him and chocolate for his *kinder* bought the three escapers a ride on his milk wagon to Hohenfels's train station in February 1943. As the perfumed soap, chocolate and cigarettes he had strategically left on the top of his pack stuck to the goon's sticky fingers in March 1943, Carswell knew that they would be less than assiduous of their search of British Corporal John Donaldson and the identity papers Carswell handed over to a German official, which identified him as British Private Reeves as they left *Stalag* VIIIB for an *Arbeitskommando*.

Carswell had swapped over, exchanged identities with the soldier the British called "Reeves." Swapping over required the agreement of each man's "mucker," the individual with whom another shared food and Red Cross parcels. It also required work since the new "Reeves," for example, had to learn as much about the real Reeves as possible so that if he were arrested, he could make a good show of being a British soldier. Carswell's lessons including learning Cockney Rhyming Slang, in which "Trouble and Strife" meant "wife" and learning how to say "Fuukin Jerries."

Howland was another swap-over. Perhaps uniquely, he swapped over with a POW who was set to serve a *Strafe* sentence. The man had failed to salute a German officer, which was a requirement in *Oflag* VI-B in Dössel. An *Oflag* was an officers' POW camp. The reason Howland wanted to be in "the cooler" was because the window at the end of the corridor overlooked looked the street, the barbed wire fence ran up to the front and back of the building but, importantly, not around its side. Near 2100 hours on a late April night in 1942, as a guard was leading one man to the latrine,

other men staged a disturbance, giving the first man the moments he needed to slide the bolts of Howland's and several other doors open.

Later that night, these men eased their doors open and walked gingerly to the window. Unlike other escapes, the men involved in this one decided that as soon as they were free from the camp, each would make his own way. Howland's first destination was a woodpile, where he was unable to find the civilian clothes and food that dragooned Polish workers promised to leave for him.

The tunnel that began under the wooden horse at *Stalag Luft* III that Flight Lieutenant Oliver Philpot and two other men climbed out took 114 days to dig. Philpot, who was born and raised in Vancouver, learned to fly while attending Oxford and joined the RAF at the start of the war. His first job was to dispose of the spoil, the same task given to the famed "penguins" (men with sacks of spoil in their pants) did for "Tom", "Dick" and "Harry". In 2013, I visited *Stalag Luft* III and was taken aback at how "yellow" the yellow spoil was. Disposing of it, first by letting a little fall onto the ground and then mixing it in with the dirt on the surface was an extraordinary achievement, helped, unintentionally, by the fact that the number of men walking the avenues of the camp prevented any grass from growing. A letter written by Father Goudreau indicates via an out of place reference to Voltaire, the 18th century arch-atheist, that some spoil from "Harry" was hidden in the good father's vegetable garden.[135]

Philpot's hard work merited him the invitation to escape. Since this tunnel was only 100 feet long, it did not require piping for fresh air, though, like the others, it was shored with slats taken from bunk beds. On 29 October 1943, after the evening *Appell*, Philpot and two other men slipped into the tunnel. Once he was beyond the wire, Philpot changed into civilian clothes, which befit his identity as a "Norwegian margarine salesman." At the Sagan

train station, he studiously avoided indicating that he knew two other men travelling together to Stettin. To strengthen his attempt to look like a quisling, Philpot wore a Hitler mustache and the same hat favoured by the *Führer* before the war, a black Homburg.

In April 1943, Carswell and a British soldier named "Mac" took advantage of the guard's evening liaison to slip away from the farmhouse belonging to an *Arbeitskommando.* His May 1944 escape from a different *Arbeitskommando* with Donaldson, was much harder. Seventy-six bolts holding the steel plate to the door that locked them and other POWs in to their sleeping quarters had to be reversed and a duplicate key fashioned from an imprint made on soft English soap had to be made. As did the men at the first *Arbeitskommando*, those at the second heartily resented the escape plan because it would lead to the end of their undemanding jobs. However, after Donaldson's stern reminder of their duty as British soldiers, a number of POWs covered the noise of others removing the heavy plate by playing their harmonicas and guitars unusually loudly, the din being added to by the guard's snores.

Posing as a Czech soldier, Private Robert Prouse, who was captured at Dieppe, and three other men took advantage of the pre-dawn darkness of 27 April 1943, to slip out of the line of men being marched in an *Arbeitskommando*. Razor blades made quick work of their army trousers, under which they had regular trousers, before they joined a group of civilians heading for the camp's main gate. Behind the escapers, to delay the roll call, their comrades were moving about and refusing to answer when their names were called. This sort of organized disorder was often staged, as was the odd fisticuffs, by comrades seeking to help escapers during their first few minutes of an escape. The feeling of exhilaration that followed walking through the open gates evaporated when, to Prouse's horror, he saw that the guard named "Rat Face" was checking the workers' identities.

Realizing Rat Face would see the prominent nose of a Canadian he had taken a malevolent interest in, Prouse delayed the inevitable with a lusty "*Heil* Hitler." Rat Face's automatic return of the Hitler salute bought the escapers just enough time so that when the sirens began to wail, they were far enough ahead that the Canadian could muscle his way through the crowd and quickly jumped a fence, noting while running the absence of shots ringing out.

Their lust for freedom, disgust at how scant rations had reduced Russian POWs to skeletons, and anger at the gall of the *Kommandant* who had charged them 140 Reichsmarks for the (British supplied) uniforms issued to them after being recaptured a few months earlier, helped steel Prouse and a British sergeant Tommy Glassey to escape from a camp near Liebenau in June 1943. Their escape was planned to begin with a split second run from the wood factory when the guard, who was only five minutes from being relieved, slowed his pacing. When they realized that a guard had noticed that Glassey was missing, those moments turned into a quick dash to the log-covered pit where they took shelter. Soon, the heat from boiling hot water (used to soften bark) travelling through pipes made the pit so hot they stripped off their clothes. Then, the sawdust in the pit began to cause terrible itching. When they could no longer take the heat and the discomfort, they dressed, climbed out of the pit and lay flat on the ground. The flashlight beam that played back and forth by a guard looking for them explains why the hair on the back of their necks "stood straight out."[136] Mercifully, the goon soon moved on and they climbed over the barbed wire fence unseen.

Unlike Prouse, who had been injured and was in a hospital, Private Jack Poolton was one of the more than 1,376 Dieppe POWs who suffered the indignity of being shackled for 18 months. Triggered by reports that German POWs taken on the Island of Sark on 3 October 1942, had been shackled, the tying of the Canadians' (and

thousands of British POWs') hands and, later, locking them into shackles, some, ironically, stamped "Made in Birmingham, Eng.", did not violate the Geneva Convention. It did, of course, make daily life difficult and was an affront to the POWs' honour as free men (as opposed to criminal prisoners). The Canadians soon found that klim or sardine keys opened the shackles, which were taken off for good at the end of 1943.

On a day in mid-1943, a few hours after hiding the two loaves of bread that two Polish girls who worked in the same factory risked death by passing to them, Poolton removed the glass from one side of a French window. Then, using a screwdriver, he chipped away at the cement holding the grid work of bars in place. To cover the sound of his chipping, his comrades repeatedly wound up a gramophone so that it could play and replay the one record they had: "O Sole Mio." When he had chipped away enough cement, they were able to bend the bars in, but they could not bend them enough because of the wood jamb for the windows. Using a pen-knife, Poolton began "making notches and narrowing the jamb like a beaver would nibble away on a tree" until it was small enough that one good yank pulled the bars free of the cement.[137] With the lyrics of the most famous of Italian songs ringing in his ears, Poolton was the last man out the window then over a wall, his weight adding to Ian Gilmour's pain, for he had volunteered to lie over the shards of glass embedded in the top of the concrete wall. As each man dropped down to the ground, he had to crouch, making sure to keep his face turned away from the sentry's beat and, silently, remove his boots because their steel shod would make too much noise as they crossed the road, on the other side of which was a canal with, luckily, only three feet of water in it.

Most men escaped in pairs. Two who did not were Captain Robert Runcie and Artillery Officer George Browne, both of whom were captured at Dieppe.  Runcie escaped from a Paris hospital while

Browne freelanced his escape from a bus carrying POWs to a camp near Grenoble. Abetted by a Canadian medic, Runcie convinced a German medical officer that he was suffering from appendicitis. Given the lack of medical care provided to the men in the hours after they surrendered at Dieppe and, more to the point, the lack of medical care at Verneuil, where scores of men suffered from suppurating wounds, from which at least five died, the German doctor's decision to send Runcie to a Paris hospital for an X-ray is surprising. After days of sour black bread augmented with sawdust and sleeping on filthy floors, Runcie enjoyed a few nights in a hospital bed with clean sheets and real food.

But, what really mattered were the easily opened French doors that led onto a well-manicured and poorly guarded lawn at the back of which was an easily surmounted low wall. On the night of 6 September 1942, Runcie escaped over the wall and made for the shadows of a nearby church. There, as per a plan established with someone connected to the Resistance in the hospital, he met a man who gave Runcie civilian clothes and took him to a safe-house.

Four months later, amidst the disorder in Southern France caused by Operation Torch, in December 1942, Browne found himself in an Italian bus convoy carrying POWs from the forbidding Fort de la Duchère to Grenoble. When, to provide light for the refilling of the busses' aged radiators, the drivers arranged the busses in a half circle, Browne seized the moment. Jumping out the back door of a bus was significantly less dangerous than jumping out of the train carrying the Dieppe POWs to prison as Browne had done. That time no one had seen Browne, until, that is, his poorly accented "*Bonsoir*" caused the man he met on a road to take a second look at him. Through the darkness of a French night, Fusiliers de Mont-Royal Captain Antoine Masson noticed that like him, the poor French speaker wore British battle dress. Over the next month, Browne played a deaf man relying on Captain Antoine Masson's French.

In mid-September as they neared the Demarcation Line, presumably only Masson realized the significance of the fishing pole carried by the 12-year-old boy who was guiding them to where they were to cross the Allier River, which divided Occupied France from Vichy. The usual term for fishing pole in French is *canne à pêche*; after Charles De Gaulle became the symbol of French resistance, thousands of French began carrying one or two fishing rods to signal their support for the Resistance because "*gaulle*" is a slang word for "pole."

Masson's and Browne's escape fell apart after they boarded a small bus near Saint-Pierre-les-Étieux and came face-to-face with the same *gendarme* who, a day earlier, had said he would help them escape but whom the young boy had not trusted. Even though the *gendarme* complained that by leaving town on their own they had complicated things, he again offered to help them. Seeing no alternative, they followed him and were soon being held, for their safety, in the prison in the town of Châteauroux. A few days later, they knew they had been betrayed when they were transferred to Fort de la Duchère.

Just a few weeks before Browne's second run into the night, Masson escaped from Fort de la Duchère. His escape was a model of perseverance. For weeks, he sat on a rock in the exercise yard. Each day, under the eyes of the seeing but not noticing Germans, he moved the rock just a little closer to the fence. When it was close enough to the fence that he felt he could make a run for it, Masson arranged for some of his comrades to stage a fight. Masson made it out, but, unfortunately, the Germans noticed Masson's escape partner, who had a greater distance to run and sounded the alarm. The Canadian was recaptured when a guard noticed his foot protruding from a bush.

Squadron Leader Vincent McAuley was shot down 11 December 1942 near Turin, Italy and subsequently knocked out when he

landed in an orchard. After regaining consciousness, he was too weak to bury either his parachute or his Mae West life preserver (named for the buxom actress), nor could he cut his badges off his tunic. He was, however, able to take a Horlicks malt tablet out of his escape kit before beginning to walk away. Realizing he was too weak to cross the 15-foot canal he soon came to, he threw his revolver into it and awaited the inevitable.

Although he received indifferent treatment from the Italian soldiers and endured some threatening moments by Intelligence Service officers smartly dressed in black Hugo Boss designed uniforms, McAuley received excellent treatment first at a hospital near Turin where his dislocated arm was placed in a cast and later in Celio Military Hospital in Rome. While there, he put off a man who claimed to be a scientist from the University of Rome who wanted to know if McAuley had been guided to Turin by a 48.7kc radio beam emanating from London. McAuley said that the only fiddling he had done with the radio was tuning into a Milan station that played a dance band. A doctor later told the dissembling Canadian that his interlocutor had been an Italian general.

At 0230 hours 14 April 1943, McAuley and two British servicemen, also being treated in the hospital, did what in four months Wing Commander Stewart Cowan could only dream of – they made a break for the freedom offered by the neutral haven of Vatican City. Cowan had been shot down on 29 July 1942. On 13 August, when he was a POW in a camp only a few hundred yards from the Vatican, he had stood in horror as a flight of American bombers swooped low over the Eternal City. Just as they flew over Michelangelo's famous dome, the planes began dropping their bombs. For a few moments, the RCAF officer forgot that immutable laws of physics would protect the Vatican and the thousands of Romans streaming into St. Peter's Square. Inertia ensured that the bombs fell and exploded in the marshalling yards about a mile away.

Before escaping, McAuley and his comrades had procured civilian clothes and learned to make up their beds so they would look occupied (thus preserving their head start were an Italian guard to perform an unexpected bed check). They learned on the night of 10 April, after they clambered out McAuley's window and having even climbed the hospital's outer wall, however, that they would need a good stout rope. On the other side of the wall was a 25 foot drop that one of the Briton's could not risk making because of his recently healed broken ankle. Three nights later, the rope duly woven from 100 feet of string saved from Red Cross parcels, the three men (this time with bits of slippers nailed to their boots to deaden the sound they now knew they would make) once again made their way to the wall and using the rope, lowered themselves down onto the street.

In addition to the 5,399 Canadian soldiers, almost 2,500 RCAF men (and an unknown number of Canadians who flew in the RAF) and 92 Royal Canadian Navy POWs (survivors of the sinking of HMCS *Athabaskan* in April 1944) were held by the Germans, the Empire of Japan held more than 1,790 Canadians who became prisoners on Christmas Day 1941, after the surrender of the British garrison on Hong Kong. Though Japan had not signed the part of the Geneva Convention dealing with prisoners of war, some weeks before the attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, and the attack on Hong Kong (and elsewhere) a few hours later, Tokyo pledged to abide by the Convention. In reality, however, Tokyo did not.

Within weeks of their surrender, hundreds of men were suffering from beriberi, pellagra or experiencing temporary blindness caused by a diet of polished rice that lacked important micronutrients. By September, a preventable diphtheria outbreak (the Japanese army had captured British stores of vaccine) began. By the time it ended some 200 men were dead. Over more than three and a half years of imprisonment, the Japanese all but starved these

men, beat many brutally (at least two to death), denied them Red Cross parcels and, often, mail. They also turned these free men into slave labourers in dangerous mines, factories and shipyards.

Following the escape of a Chinese speaking British officer who reached Chiang Kai-Shek's Nationalist forces, Winnipeg Grenadier Sergeant John Payne organized an escape. The first group of Grenadiers he asked to join him declined but the second group said yes. Convinced that Caucasians, especially those who did not speak the local language, would stand out – not to mention that they were weakened by their near-starvation diet – the Japanese did not establish a strict surveillance regimen at North Point POW camp, which was on the northern tip of Hong Kong Island across from Kowloon.

As was the case in Europe, other POWs contributed to would be escapers' efforts: socks, stout boots, a compass, a knife and, even, a revolver were procured. One thing their comrades could not give the escapers was food, however. They were also able to help them construct a bamboo ladder high enough to top the barbed wire fence. Accordingly, on 20 August 1942 under the cover of a rainstorm, Payne led his crew onto the hospital's roof, over the camp's fence, thence into a storm drain that led toward Hong Kong Bay. They stole a sampan with the intent of crossing to the mainland.

A few weeks before the Grenadiers' escape, the Red Cross ship SS *Gripsholm* arrived in Canada carrying, among others, Lance-Corporal William Poy of the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps, who, just before the capitulation had been ordered to change into civilian clothes by his commander. Because Poy worked for the Canadian government, he was able to secure a place on the ship for himself and his family. He provided the Canadian Government with the first eyewitness account of the Canadians valour against overwhelming arms, and of the atrocities, such as the murder of patients and rape and murder of nurses at the St. Stephen's

College Hospital on Christmas Day 1941. (Poy's daughter, Adrienne, was later Adrienne Clarkson, Canada's 26th Governor General.)

Although the men who were captured in the Second World War had had some escape and evasion training and access to M.I.9 escape gear, in the final analysis, escaping from one of Nazi Germany's POW camps differed little from escaping from the Kaiser's. As their forefathers had, many men dug. Indeed, one POW camp was so undermined by tunnels that the Germans had to abandon it. The British (and, hence, Canadian) penchant for tunneling prompted engineers to place tunnels on concrete supports so that the "ferrets" could keep watch under the barracks. At *Stalag Luft* III, Floody got around this watch by tunneling through the concrete support on which stood barrack 104's stove. Escape Committees were divided into sections, including tailoring, forgery, planning and communications.

One essential difference between the experience of POWs in the two world wars concerned news. In the First World War, news came from three main sources: newly arrived POWs; German newspapers (most of which quickly became propaganda mouthpieces); and the *Continental Times.* Though the POWs knew that it too was a propaganda vehicle and nicknamed it the "*Continental Liar*," morale still rose and fell with the *Continental Times*' reports of the destruction of London and New York or the sinking of the British fleet. One Royal Navy ship was reportedly sunk three times. Conversely, during the Second World War almost every camp had a radio, which meant *Krieges* were reasonably informed about the war.

# CHAPTER SEVEN
## "HOME RUNS" FROM POW CAMPS IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR

*To All Prisoners of War*
*Urgent warning is given against making future escapes!*
*In plain English: Stay in the camp where you will be safe!*
*Breaking out of it is now a damned dangerous act.*
*The chances of preserving your life are almost nil!*
*All police and military guards have been given the most strict*
*Orders to shoot on sight all suspected persons.*
*Escaping from prison camps has ceased to be a sport!*

Text of signs posted in all POW camps on 24 June 1944

Though Germany was a totalitarian state, the view of there being an *SS* or *Gestapo* officer on every street corner is pure Hollywood fiction. The competition between these two forces and Admiral Wilhelm Canaris' military intelligence force, the *Abwehr*, militated against coherent policing, though it did satisfy Hitler's desire to keep his satraps eyeing the others nervously. As well, in January 1944, for example, when Germany attempted to defend all of Western and Central Europe, there were a total of only 50,000 members of the *Gestapo* and Criminal Police. Accordingly, once the escapers had put some distance between themselves and their camps, the odds of blending into the millions of foreign workers, at least for a while, were less than daunting. Indeed, of the men to be considered below, only those captured in the area around Sagan following the Great Escape were arrested close to their camps.

For some, escapes from Second World War POW camps began with a test of their fieldcraft skills. As noted earlier, only one of the

men discussed here was captured while hiding in a bush. Like the evaders, escapers used trains, which meant they too had to affect European manners, and since most of the time they were dressed the same way as dragooned foreign workers were, they had to avoid customary Canadian politeness. As important as the ability to speak German was, or at least the ability to speak it badly with a believably foreign accent, the *Ausweiss* and other forged papers were even more important.

Many were also armed with maps sent from England. The December after being captured, the Dieppe POWs at *Stalag* VIII-B were surprised to receive a shipment of Christmas crackers from an organization they had never heard of. They were delighted to find when they bit into them that baked into these crackers were tiny rice paper maps of Germany and the surrounding countries.

With the exception of Pilot Officer Philpot and the men who escaped from France and Italy, every one of the escapers considered in this chapter was recaptured. Some, like the POWs dressed as a ladies from Bilbao, were captured in moments that could have been scripted for one of the many reviews put on in *Stalag Luft* III's theatre. Most escapers had the Geneva protections recognized quickly. Others were savagely beaten or condemned to stints in Black Cells. Of the 86 men who escaped from *Stalag Luft* III in the Great Escape, 50, including six Canadians, were executed.

Good fieldcraft skills were essential for those who escaped Hitler's gulag archipelago just as they had been for the soldiers who fought The Great War. After stepping on Ian Gilmour's bleeding body, Private Jack Poolton and his comrades who escaped from *Stalag* VIII-B, including Gilmour, walked the entire night through the rain. To throw off the dogs that would soon be straining at their leashes, the Kapuskasing, Ontario-born escaper led his group some distance through every creek they came to and then walked

"in the opposite direction when they came to another creek."[138] He chose the bushes they hid in during the day while the airmen, who knew celestial navigation, led the party at night.

Vegetation was often these escapers silent ally, furnishing food (e.g. potatoes and lettuce) and places to hide. Poolton's group hid in wheat fields. In April 1943, even as the wail of the siren sounded and the guards with dogs followed them following Rat Face's recognition of Private Prouse, the Canadian and his three escape partners ran across an open field and then into a dense evergreen forest. After 15 minutes, the exhausted escapers dropped to ground and crawled into the "lowest and thickest branches" they could find.[139] They chose well, for even though some of the dogs were no further than six feet from Prouse, they did not pick up his scent.

That same spring, after escaping from *Oflag* VI-B, Captain Howland found that nature was not always beneficent. Not long after beginning his home run, upon seeing a snow bank glistening in the moonlight, the thirsty Canadian did what seemed natural. A moment later, he was bent over retching his guts out, for the snow bank that reminded him of home covered a manure pile. He choose better near dawn when, after realizing he could not reach the marshalling yard he was walking towards, he took shelter under a branch. When, later in the day a group of children began playing nearby, he was able to crawl under a clump of bushes. He credited his now rank smell for the reason why a dog that came close turned with his nose turned up. On his first escape, Pilot Officer Carswell also hid in bushes and was tormented for hours by insects.

So that the trees would hide the men as they climbed out of the tunnel, Flight Lieutenant Floody planned for "Harry" to reach the pines on the other side of the road that leads into *Stalag Luft* III.

But, when word came back from RAF Flying Officer Johnny Bull, the first man out, that the tunnel's exit was some 15 feet short of the pines and, worse, close to a guard tower, for a few moments RAF Squadron Leader Roger Bushell considered calling the escape off. The fact that the 100 men in "civilian clothes" in the tunnel carried travel passes dated 24 March 1944 tipped the balance. Soon the men were exiting into the snow when signalled by a controller (hiding behind a fence) who like those in the tunnel itself, used a rope to indicate when it was safe to move forward.

Dozens of these men never would have had a chance at a home run had Flying Officer Henry "Hank" Birkland not jumped into action when the tunnel caved in on RAF Squadron Leader Thomas Kirby-Green. It took Birkland, who had worked in a coal mine in Ontario, more than an hour working in total darkness to free Kirby-Green and reshore the tunnel. Flight Lieutenant George McGill, who acted as a controller outside the tunnel, had more reason than did the other escapers to be thankful that the trees on the far side of the road were coniferous. For the same kind of pine needles he knew so well from vacations in Algonquin Park, hid him from the sentry who stepped into a gap in the trees and unbuttoned his pants to urinate.

Unlike First World War escapers, many of these intrepid men did not eschew roads, trains, towns and cities. Their shabby dress and poor German allowed them to hide among the millions of Czechs, Belgian, Poles, Byelorussians, French, Dutch and others that were forced to work in Germany's war machine. Like their comrades who evaded, men who came of age aping Carey Grant's suave manner had to let cigarettes dangle from their lips and never be seen smoking a Canadian cigarette, millions of which were sent by the Red Cross, families and such organizations as the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire and the Ontario Chinese Cigarette Patriotic Fund. Red Cross chocolate also had to be kept

hidden. Forks and knives had to be used the European way. On the roads of Germany and in towns, escapers had to remember not to fall into a military gait but, rather, to effect the shuffle of the dispossessed. To help explain why he slurred his German, Flight Lieutenant Philpot, who escaped during the *Wooden Horse Escape*, kept his pipe in his mouth. Philpot's German was good enough to garner him the train tickets he needed to take him to Danzig, where he secreted himself on a Swedish ship that took him to Sweden.

Squadron Leader McAuley and the two British soldiers who escaped with him from the Celio Military Hospital quickly vanished into the warren of streets leading toward the Coliseum, which glowed a ghostly white under the moon. A few hours later, having avoided the well-lit area around the Altare della Patria, the National Monument to Victor Emmanuel II, known to most Romans as La Macchina da Scrivere or The Typewriter (because of the shape of its grandiose architecture), the escapers carefully walked through the Borgo district on streets that the Caesars had walked. They crossed the Tiber and approached the Vatican. Once in Vatican Square, and hence already on neutral soil, they saw a Catholic soldier belonging to the oldest army in the world, *Pontifica Choors Helvetica*, and kitted out as though he expected to do battle with the Swedish King, Gustavos Adolphus, who led the Protestant forces during 16th Century's Wars of Religion.

The halberd and sword-armed guard clearly knew little of modern kit, for he asked the three escapers if they were generals before taking them into the Vatican. The famed Monsignor Hugh O'Flaherty, the "Irish Pimpernel," who used safe houses, churches, monasteries and convents around Rome to shelter hundreds of Allied airmen and thousands of Jews arranged for McAuley and his comrades to escape the Vatican, via a car accredited to the Holy See that took them straight to a plane belonging to neutral Spain.[140]

In June 1943, in a further effort to blend in, when passing a group of farm hands, Carswell and Donaldson raised their arms and loudly called *"Heil Hitler*!" Coincidentally, a few days later and several hundred miles away on a road near the town of Kessel, Prouse and his escape partner gave their own version of the Hitler Salute: "*Heil* Churchill!" That none of the officers noticed this amendment or that the two men were wearing British battle dress prompted Prouse to wonder, "How dumb can these guys be?"[141]

Escapers without papers reprised teenaged hijinks of hopping freight trains hoping to reach Denmark, France, Switzerland or the port of Stettin. Unfortunately, as Carswell discovered in April 1943 when the train he and Donaldson were on started heading back into Germany, it was not always possible to predict a train's route! Worse, as the camp guard charged with returning them to *Stalag* VIIIB told them, marshalling yards were well guarded.

Freight trains also lacked drinking water, which explains why the men who did not have water bottles were tormented by thirst. The need for drink forced Prouse's party to risk going into the beer hall in the Warburg station. Years of sobriety explains why after a few stout German beers they "soon passed into the land of no worries."[142]

Train stations were especially nerve-wracking places as Prouse and his party discovered when they woke up to discover a number of Germans had bedded down on the table on which the escapers had lain their heads. The escapers extricated themselves from this sticky situation by stealing off to the washroom where they shaved as they waited for their train to Ransburg. A nervous Prouse almost gave himself away when, before jumping on the train then leaving the station, in "the world's worst German" he asked a station agent if the train was going to Warburg (where he was) and not Ransburg. In Ransburg, anxious minutes, heightened by the old woman in the crowd who whispered to Prouse, "*Aufpassen*" ("Be Careful") passed as the stationmaster inspected Tommy's

papers and questioned him before finally selling the escaper three tickets for the next train.[143] Other old women, no doubt, silently cursed the ill-dressed men who refused to give up their seats as well-mannered men should.

However stressful travelling on trains was, some men experienced lighter moments. On a train in early 1943, Brown stifled the urge to smile when, after listening to a member of the Hermann Göring Division boasting about being posted to Tunisia to fight the Allies, Brown's escape partner whispered that he would like to say, "Be careful, old boy, for all you know we might be British officers."[144] On their second escape, Carswell and Mac followed the guard's advice, "Short-run workers' trains are better [than express trains]. They are usually crowded, full of ordinary workers . . . and seldom are there any checks done for papers."[145] Shortly after a *Fräulein* entered their cabin, Carswell fought to keep a poker face when Mac tapped out a message in Morse code that was never rehearsed in intelligence briefings: "Did you ever see such a gorgeous ass …. And those tits!"[146]

The minutes during which an official on a train checked the escapers' papers seemed to stretch on forever. For the two "bimbos from Bilbao" on the train to Salzburg, Austria, being stopped for papers caused "their hearts to hammer."[147] Once he saw the others in their car reach for their papers, Pilot Officer Raymond faked sign language. Under the *SS* man's glare that said he "did not like imperfect human beings," Castleman took out his passport and visa which were "stud[ied] for a long time" before handing them back.[148] Flight Lieutenant Philpot endured heart stopping moments when a train policeman inspected his identity card and did not notice that the picture on the identity card was of another man.

Some men's capture had the air of a comic opera, The *Pickelhaube*-wearing-*Burgomeister* of Liebenau who arrested Prouse and Sergeant Glassey in mid-1943, had been alerted to the escapers'

presence in a train's caboose by a railway guard who at the train's previous station had found them and heard Prouse answer "*ja*" when asked if they were "escaping prisoners." Prouse apparently did not understand the question.[149] The *Burgomeister*, incidentally, had almost certainly seen other Canadians, including two children, Wendy and Peter Levitt. Libenau was the site of the internment camp for women that seven Canadian women, including Wendy's and Peter's mother, who were aboard the same SS *Zamzam* on which the Canadian priests and teaching brothers were travelling to Africa were brought to. Mrs. Levitt and her children were on their way to join her husband, a British 8th Army officer, in Egypt.[150]

While waiting in a beer garden for their train to Villach dressed in light print dresses, Castleman and Raymond caught the eye of two drunk and amorous *Luftwaffe* officers. When one put his hand over Raymond's hand, Raymond deflected this unwanted attention by showing his "Basque" passport. The inevitable occurred when the *Leutnant* reached under "Conchita Velazquez's" dress and exclaimed, "What the hell do we have here?"[151]

For a few moments after the German officer started inspecting their passes that said they were Bulgarian steelworkers, Brown believed their story would hold up. Then, he heard the words "Not Bulgarian. French" and "There is no steel works in Liegnitz," which deflated Brown because the idea for forging a work pass for the steel mill in Liegnitz came from his work on the Escape Committee's Intelligence Section.[152] At the word *Gestapo*, Brown reached for his dog tags.

Poolton never got a chance to see what 28 bars of English soap could garner because at 0430 hours while he and his fellow escapers were nearing an outpost that they planned to hide in during the day, a German soldier stepped out of darkness, yelling "Halt!", as he shoved his rifle into Poolton's stomach. Carswell's first capture showed that railroad yards were not the only place that were

well guarded. Within minutes of revealing themselves to what Donaldson hoped was a Czech at the construction site next to the siding that their train was on, they heard whistles blowing, the thump of running soldiers and orders barked out in German before being surrounded by men with "index fingers twitching on their triggers."[153] In May 1944, Carswell and another escape partner were waiting in a park before returning to Stettin's harbour where they hoped to find a boat bound for Sweden. They were captured by policeman looking for workers taking unauthorized breaks.

Captain Howland's home run ended with him so dehydrated that he began to hallucinate an escape partner. His imaginary companion agreed that under the circumstances, Howland would have to risk travelling during the day even though he was dressed in British kit and looked haggard. Howland hoped that "they" could find a train to Holland in a marshalling yard but instead were found by a guard.

In a cruel irony, Boreas, the god of winter, quickly put an end to several home runs by Canadians who escaped *Stalag Luft* III through "Harry". After Flight Lieutenant William Cameron started hallucinating in the deep cold, the other men in his group decided to turn themselves in but, surprisingly, given the number of men searching the area around Sagan, they were unable to find someone to surrender to. Accordingly, they left Cameron in a barn, where he was found by a farmer the next morning. Two days later, while making their way through waist-deep snow, Flying Officer Birkland began hallucinating and he and two other men knocked on a farmer's door only to find four German soldiers on the other side. Penatanguishene-born and bred Flight Lieutenant Alfred Burke "Tommy" Thompson was the 86th and last man out of the tunnel. The bad luck that saw him being shot down on the second night of the war repeated itself, for just moments after he climbed out of "Harry" he was arrested seconds after hearing the

cry "*Nicht schießen*" (don't shoot) and a few wild shots from a startled sentry.[154]

In the back of every escaper's mind was the question, "If captured, how will the *SS* or *Gestapo* deal with the fact that I was out of uniform? Will the Nazis recognize that my dog tags put me under the Geneva Convention?" Many officials, the *Luftwaffe* officers whose ardour vanished when Castleman's and Raymond's disguise came undone were among them, recognized the POWs' duty to escape and even displayed a grudging admiration for their efforts. As they waited at a hotel for their transfer back to *Stalag* 383, the "ladies from Bilbao" enjoyed a few shots of John Dewar whisky, said to have been liberated from Canadian officers at Dieppe. The roughest thing the POW camp's Chief of Security, who came to collect them, seems to have done was urge them to hustle so they could be back in "Hohenfels before dark."[155] The guard who arrested Howland was also understanding and quickly gave him water. The delusional Canadian could not remember his name, but his dog tags and a few phone calls soon established his identity. A few days later, he was sent to *Stalag Luft* III.

The Geneva Convention was silent on corporal punishment, but German military law permitted it (and Prussian military culture encouraged it). Accordingly, some recaptured escapers, especially those who were handed over to the *Gestapo*, such as Poolton, were beaten. After being stripped and searched (which included a rectal inspection to see if he had hidden a compass, which, in fact, he had but under his foot) Poolton was punched in the nose before being led to a cell connected to a barn. The next day, citing the Geneva Convention, he complained about being taken to a civilian prison. The German officer told the *Schwienhund*, "You are lucky that you were not shot."[156]

Poolton decades later recalled acidly, "The Germans were human after all," specifically remembering when they had allowed the Dieppe prisoners to spend Christmas Day 1942 without being

shackled. In general, he was not surprised at his treatment.[157] On the beaches of Dieppe he had seen Germans shoot wounded Canadians in the head, and had endured the hours of thirst and hunger that followed. He had been shackled, and he had been made, and seen others be made, to stand four hours with his nose against a wall, any movement of relaxation being followed by the rough pain of the butt end of rifle smashing against the spine.

After being captured in Stettin on D-Day, Carswell and Mac were repeatedly kicked and punched. In the prison they were taken to, *SS* men amused themselves by making Carswell and Mac do laps of the exercise yard on their knees. They were transferred to *Stalag* VIII-B more than a month later.

The Geneva Convention mandated that POWs could not be held in regular prisons for long periods of time. Accordingly, the short time after their escape from Molsdorf that the out-of-uniform Prouse and Glidden spent in Libenau's prison did not violate the Geneva Convention, nor did Carswell's and Donaldson's stint in a jail near Brno, Czechoslovakia. Prouse made the 21-day, bread and water, *Strafe* sentence he served, belatedly in June 1944 for his first escape, bearable by pretending that the salt he smuggled in turned the sour, saw-dust augmented, sour bread into pork chops.

Jokes about "Da cooler" from 1960s comedy show *Laugh In* aside, punishment cells were grim places. The one Poolton served his *Strafe* sentence in was six feet by six feet with a two foot wide wooden bunk (no pillow). A bucket in the corner served the purpose of a latrine. His exercise consisted of being allowed into a yard where he could walk around in circles, four feet behind another prisoner.

The cat and mouse game that the prisoners in *Stalag Luft* III had been playing with the senior NCO in charge of security, *Lagerfeldwebel* Hermann Glemnitz, whom they dubbed "Dimwitz," led the

prisoners, including eight Canadians, who were quickly recaptured and brought to the prison in Sagan, to expect nothing more than stiff *Strafe* sentences. As they waited, Ottawa-born RAF Flight Lieutenant Keith Ogilvie, who had been arrested by a knife-wielding civilian, studiously avoided eye contact with the other recaptured men even as he watched Thompson try to use his Penetanguishene French to try to pass himself off as French worker on his way home. Within days, the dragnet formed by more than 70,000 German soldiers and policemen captured all but three of the escapers: two Norwegian RAF pilots made it to Sweden, while a Dutchman escaped to Spain through France.

Unbeknownst to the *Krieges*, news of the escape of more than eighty men sent Hitler into a fury. A few months earlier, he had issued the *Aktion Kugel,* which decreed, in direct contravention of the Geneva Convention, that escaped POWs were to be turned over the *Gestapo* for immediate execution. Even though the decree had exempted American and British POWs, Hitler demanded blood, first of almost every man and, after Himmler intervened, more than half before settling for the deaths of 50 men. The executions were by firing squad.

The men in *Stalag Luft* III knew about the "Bullet Decree" but did not believe that the "Germans would . . . be so unsporting as to shoot prisoners in cold blood."[158] They learned differently on 15 April when a list of the murdered men's names was posted on a bulletin board. Thompson, who felt that by getting shot down in the first week of the war he had failed to pull his weight in the conflict, owed his life to the fact that hours after being shot down he was being interviewed by the second most powerful man in Germany, Hermann Göring. In 1944, Göring may not have been the force he was in 1939 when his *Luftwaffe* was dive-bombing Poland, but the *Reichsmarschall's* promise to Thompson that he would live to see the end of the war saved the Canadian's life, if at

the cost of living for decades with the knowledge that it was likely another man had died in his place.

Thompson was not the only Canadian to carry this burden for the rest of his life. Because of the length of time he had been a prisoner and because he was the only POW who had real civilian clothes, (which were often borrowed for theatrical shows), Father Goudreau was invited to be one of the first escapers. During the first years of his imprisonment, like the other Fathers and Brothers, his letters speak of his great desire to reach Basutoland in order to spread the Gospel. By 1944, however, the Fathers' and Brothers' letters reveal that they saw their mission as being witnesses to Christ in the POW camps. Accordingly, Goudreau turned down the offer. After the Great Escape in 1944, Goudreau risked his life by hiding the entrance to "George" behind the chapel he had built in the basement of the theatre. "George" headed towards the German compound, the intent being for the escapers to break into the compound and seize arms in order to fight their way out if the Senior British Officer felt at the end of the war that the Germans were about to massacre the POWs.

POWs who escaped in France and Italy were often able to find local help and thus made more successful home runs (and hence their experiences resemble the evaders discussed above). The Resistance cell that had helped Captain Runcie after he escaped from a Paris hospital quickly put him on the road south. More than once, French truck drivers ignored Runcie's butchering of *la langue de Molière* while Germans drivers took his accent to be a dialect asking for a lift. Not every farmer gave him food. Despite large rewards, none betrayed Runcie. According to the report he filed once back in London, the hardest part of his trek occurred in the Forest of Landes, between Bordeaux and Bayonne, where for two days he could not find water in a man-made pine barrens that in the 19th Century was so wet people had used stilts to walk

around. Following a map drawn by a brave waiter, Runcie crossed into Spain on 22 November 1942.

On the night of 7 December 1942, it did not take long for a guard to notice the bus door that Captain Browne had just run through. Browne, seeing flashlight beams by the bush in which he hid realized he had to make a break for it. Anxious moments followed. Then, the lights and busses were gone.

Alone, and all but unable to speak French and without papers, Browne knew he had to get rid of his British battle dress and get directions. The engineer in the building he approached warily exchanged the battle dress for food and dry socks. He also gave Browne directions to a village where he could expect to find help among the sympathetic railroad men. Unfortunately, Browne erred at a crossroad and soon found himself approaching another village. There the mantra of trusting country people was again validated by a farmer who arranged for Browne to be taken to Grenoble where he was given an identity card before being taken to Toulouse. After learning that the Germans had broken several of the escape lines running through Toulouse, Browne thought it best to leave the city by foot.

Subsequently, Browne found help in a number of villages. In Pamiers, a plumber bought him a train ticket for Ussat, a village not far from the pass that led through the Pyrenees. On the road to Goulier-et-Olbier, in exchange for his watch, he received extra clothes and money. Moreover, a group of young men gave him directions for Andorra. Then, realizing that Browne had been seen by nearby villagers, the group decided it was safer to hide him for a day. The next day they showed him the pass through the Pyrenees to Spain.

Browne's Canadian background helped him deal with the knee-deep snow and told him that the howling winds could soon kill

him. As the sky cleared near 2200 hours, on 19 December, his training as a Forward Artillery Officer told him something equally terrible. For several hours he had been walking north, back into France. Luck, however, this time was on Browne's side. For, as the cold bit deeper, he saw a construction site. After trying to find warmth in a hut under some waste on the floor, he risked knocking on the door of yet another hut. The engineers there welcomed him and the camp's doctor put the shivering Canadian to bed. The next day, two Spanish smugglers took him to the neutral principality of Andorra.

RCAF Flight Lieutenant Stewart Cowan was shot down on 29 July 1942 and plucked out of the Tyrrhenian Sea by the Italian Coast Guard. In late September 1943, after Mussolini had fallen, he and his escape partner, a British soldier named George, jumped from a train taking them and the other POWs from *Campo di Concentramento per Prigionieri di Guerra No. 78* in Sulmona, Italy to a camp in Germany. Repeatedly they found help, first from a 12-year-old boy who told the mayor of Villalago that the two escapers were hiding in a nearby cave. With the mayor's permission, three Americans, a mother and her two daughters (from Massachusetts) who had been trapped in their ancestral village when the war began, took the escapers in for a few days. Had the Germans discovered this hospitality, Villalago would have suffered reprisals. Days later, and some miles south and thus closer to the Canadian lines at Campobasso, Cowan and George found help from an affianced couple. He was a Vatican lawyer and she was the daughter of Carlo Bergamini, the Italian admiral killed by a German dive-bomber as he sought to surrender the Italian fleet to the Allies. They too risked their lives to help the escapers.

At one point, Cowan and George joined a group of demobilized Italian troops. However the Canadian's height, the Italians' voluble arguing and, more importantly, their leader's failure to prepare

shucks of corn for the Allied airmen that would make them look like peasant farmers, meant that Cowan was not discomforted when he awoke one morning and saw that the Italians had pushed on. Because of the absence of the shucks, a passing German patrol noticed Cowan and George and opened fire causing the two escapers to zigzag into the gathering dusk for safety. Nor were Cowan and George impressed by several British and Italian soldiers they met as they neared the Canadian lines. Despite what these soldiers said about wanting to reach Allied lines, their desultory move south and refusal to share their food prompted Cowan and George to sneak away before light the next morning.

A few days later, tortured by diarrhea, lice, dehydration (kept at bay only by George sharing water from his bottle), and the pain of rocks pushing through the worn sole of his right shoe, Cowan had just about given up. Then, they noticed three men heading towards where they were hiding in some bushes. Both men stepped into view as George called "*Inglesi . . . Canadesi.*"

A few moments later, they heard in accented English, "I am Giovanni, I am working with the Canadians at Campobasso."[159] Giovanni then took them to a farmhouse where they were fed and provided with a place to sleep. The Italian, later praised by the famous Canadian author Farley Mowat, also provided Cowan and George with detailed directions to the Canadian lines. Giovanni instructed them to travel only during the day. He asked them to shave, presumably so that the patrols would recognize them as North Americans.

For most Second World War escapers, their first few minutes or hours beyond the wire differed little from those of their forefathers. First, there was the exhilaration of simply being out from under the nose of guards with machine guns. Second, since almost every POW camp was in a rural area, their freedom depended on their fieldcraft skills, which told them where to hide and how to

use brooks and streams to throw off the dogs they knew would be searching for them. Sadly, not even experience with the Canadian winter was enough to save two Canadians who escaped in the Great Escape from becoming delirious in the cold, which led to their capture.

The labour requirements of the *Reich's* war industries and farms meant that the Germany into which the *Krieges* escaped teemed with men who did not speak German (or spoke it badly) and were poorly dressed. The population of dragooned foreign workers meant that the escapers could hide in plain sight on trains, and in towns and cities. Some found in train station beer halls that years of enforced sobriety had deprived them of their ability to hold their beer. Others found that as long as they were being berated for being stupid foreign workers, their avatars were working.

Trains moved the escapers faster than walking would have. Since the escapers did not know the routes of freight trains, however, sometimes they found themselves heading back to where they had just been. Equally disheartening but infinitely more heart stopping were the moments when train officials or the *Gestapo* stepped into a train car to check identity papers. Notably, the Canadians we have been considering here had remarkably good luck with these papers.

While profoundly depressing, for some, recapture did not mean anything more than a *Strafe* sentence. For those who fell into the *Gestapo's* hands, however, it meant violations of the POWs' rights under the Geneva Convention. Several Canadians were beaten and tortured before being sent back into the regular POW camp system. For fifty of the men in the Great Escape, including six Canadians, recapture resulted in their illegal executions.

Only one Canadian POW successfully escaped from Germany. Several, however, escaped from France and Italy.

# CHAPTER EIGHT
## SERGEANT-MAJOR LUCIEN DUMAIS' ESCAPE FROM *FESTUNG EUROPA*

*I took the handkerchief from the bayonet and threw the rifle down on to the shingle. The bayonet dug itself in and the rifle stuck, butt end up; the way we mark the spot where a soldier lies wounded or dead. It seemed to symbolize the fact that my military life was over.*

Sergeant Lucien Dumais moments after surrendering at Dieppe.

Three of the Fusiliers de Mont-royal who jumped from the train carrying the survivors of Dieppe to Verneuil-sur-Avre later returned to France as M.I.9 agents. Two, privates Robert Vanier and Conrad Lafleur, were radiomen in different escape lines. Thanks to his memoir, *Un Canadien français face à la Gestapo* (published in English as *The Man Who Went Back*), more is known about the desperate battle Sergeant Major Lucien Dumais fought at Dieppe, his escape from the train carrying the Canadians to a prison camp near Paris, his return to France as an M.I.9 agent charged (along with fellow Canadian Raymond Labrosse, who was already part of M.I.9) with establishing the *Shelburn Escape Line*.

At Dieppe, the Fusiliers constituted Major-General Hamilton Roberts's "floating reserve." The Germans had stymied the attack and the regiment should not have been committed to battle near 0700 hours on 19 August 1942. Yet, once a shore, Dumais's platoon gave a good account of itself by advancing over the beach strewn with dead and dying Canadians, and tanks that had thrown their tracks on the rocks. Dumais led his men into the casino, which

overlooked the beach. Just outside the casino, Dumais survived fire that bracketed his helmet before a burst from his Bren gun silenced the German shooter. A short time later, as he turned the corner near the casino's solarium, he saw a German helmet about knee high. As he put it years later, "I drew faster than he did, so I was alive and he was dead."[160]

Soon, however, came the order to withdraw and Dumais, having failed to get on to one of the landing craft taking men off the beach under heavy fire, found himself with a number of other soldiers, including many wounded, sheltered in the lee of a burned out tank. Not long after 1300 hours, they saw the attack's command ship, HMS *Calpe*, steam away, her decks slick with the blood of the dead and wounded. As the rising tide threatened to drown the wounded on the strand, Dumais tied a yellow rag to his rifle and surrendered his part of the beach.

Although some Germans fired on the flag, the one who came forward took Dumais's surrender properly. Some of the shocked and terribly thirsty men were given water, some beer. Most, however, were denied water. Elsewhere, violations of the Geneva Convention occurred, the most egregious being the German officer who went up and down the beach shooting wounded men in the head.

Later, as the captured Canadians were marched through Dieppe, the Germans kicked over the pails of water that *les Dieppoises* had put out. *Les dames de Dieppe* got around the German attempt to prevent the Canadians from slaking their thirst. One woman ran up to a Canadian and told him to have the men start cursing at the women. *Les Dieppoises* responded by throwing fresh tomatoes at the Canadians, who caught them and promptly began to eat them. Had the Germans been correct in their surmise the women of Dieppe were insulting the Canadians, this event would not have been a *pièce de théâtre* but a violation of Article II of the Geneva

Convention, which states that "at all times" prisoners of war are to be "protected . . . from insults and from public curiosity."[161]

As pens, watches, wallets and money stuck to sticky German fingers, hundreds of men saw violations on the prohibition on taking personal property. Fortunately, they missed Dumais' penknife, which allowed him to cut their life preservers into foot coverings for many of the men who had doffed their boots before they made attempts to swim to the landing crafts which had been unable to make it onto the beach. In the disused brick factory into which he and most of the POWs were herded on the night of 19/20 August 1942, Dumais was one of the lucky ones; he was given a hunk of sour black bread and a cup of *ersatz* coffee. After the *Hitlerjugend* arrived to guard the factory, they turned off the only water tap, forcing men like Private Poolton to dig a hole in the dirt floor and suck what moisture he could from the damp earth.

Late in the evening on 20 April, Dumais and some eighty other men were stuffed into a cattle car. Never one to miss a propagandistic moment, Joseph Goebbels ordered that the words "Churchill's Second Front" be painted on the sides of this train taking the POWs from Dieppe to a POW camp near Paris, where they were held for about a week before being taken to Germany. Using his penknife, Dumais managed to prise up a floorboard. However, because there was not enough room between the track and the turning axel, escape through this hole was impossible. Dumais then turned his attention to the plank barring the window on the right side of the car.

As other Fusiliers de Mont-Royal kept watch on a man suspected of being a German plant – he claimed to belong to No. 6 Commando and to be Scottish, though his English had no burr – Dumais, Corporal A. Vermette and Private Cloutier pulled the plank off the window. Fittingly, near Rouen, where Jeanne d'Arc had been

tried and burned, and thus a city filled with patriotic and religious meaning for these French Canadian Catholics – Dumais and the others made their bid for freedom. During a moment when the train rounded a bend to the left and their car was out of sight of the guards both in front and behind them, the three Fusiliers slipped out of the window and climbed hand over fist to the buffers between their car and the next. The anxious moments when the train rolled through a small station with German soldiers on the platform passed quickly. To jump from the train, the escapers waited until it slowed to about 20 km per hour. Then they lowered themselves down to the track's ballast and, while gripping handholds on the side of the train, ran alongside it before letting go.

A few moments after the train rumbled into the distance, from his hiding place in a small copse he had run to after hearing shots from the train, Dumais heard Cloutier calling him but could not call back because of two nearby railroad guards. As soon as the guards had moved on, Dumais began looking for Cloutier. Repeatedly calling out a name in the middle of the night might garner unwanted attention, so Dumais began whistling "*Un Canadien errant".* This can be considered a textbook case of what would later be called "Human Intelligence" because Dumais could be certain that the two French Canadians who escaped the train with him would recognize the song and its intended meaning *and,* equally importantly, that no German or Frenchman would.

As dawn approached, remembering the intelligence officer who said, "Not in the morning, but at the end of the day," Dumais, crawled into a haystack and soon fell asleep.[162] Later, as night neared, he acted on the advice, "Women in preference to men," and knocked on the door of a house that he had seen a lone woman enter.[163] Although she refused to help, she pointed across the street saying, "Try her."[164] This woman, Madame Collais, led him to a shelter, and brought him food, wine and civilian clothes while

her gardener replaced the nails in Dumais's boots with cement. (The nails would have tipped off the authorities that Dumais had not live in Occupied France long.) A day or two later, after giving him a map torn from one of her children's textbooks and 500 franks, Madame Collais walked Dumais to the train station where he bought a ticket for Poitiers, which required an overnight stop in Le Mans and a change of trains in Tours.

The farmer outside Le Mans was gruff, but, the French-speaking Dumais immediately grasped the importance of his use of the familiar "*tu*" (instead of *vous*). As such, not surprisingly, the farmer allowed Dumais to sleep in his barn. The next morning, Dumais listened to the men and women coming from Sunday mass and heard who complained about new requisitions of food (which had reduced much of France to hunger) and what people were saying about the meaning of the raid on Dieppe. In Tours, as he waited for the train to Poitiers, Dumais hid in plain sight talking to a woman, who, taking him for an escaped French POW, gave him information about how to cross into Vichy, France.

A few days later, on a road outside Limoges, Dumais tried to cover his tracks when he realized that neither his accent nor disguise (which included carrying his water bottle – uncorked in his pocket the way the peasants carried wine bottles) were enough to fool the woman working outside a blacksmith's shop. His request for a second glass of cold water was a completely uncharacteristic request for a Frenchman. His attempt to cover his tracks by commenting on how hot it was elicited the unexpected response, "You'd better not go on, it's dangerous" and an invitation to wait until nightfall.[165]

After hearing Dumais's plan to cross into Vichy, France, the blacksmith drew him a map and told him about guard positions on the Demarcation Line. The arrival of an old man with a cart heartened Dumais because walking with an old man and a cart would make

him less conspicuous than a young man walking alone, while millions of young Frenchmen were still being held as POWs in Germany. Dumais knew the blacksmith had shared his secret with the old man. At one point he stopped and pointed to the distance saying, "There's the ditch. Follow it as far as that field of Jerusalem artichokes. Take cover and don't move before dark. You'll be in full view of the *Boche* [derogatory word for Germans]. When it's dark enough, make for that wood over yonder."[166]

Trained infantryman that he was, Dumais waited until dusk to approach the Demarcation Line. After stepping out from some bush, he paused and carefully sniffed the air for a telltale whiff of a guard's cigarette nearby. When he was sure that "there was no movement, sound or smell," he jumped over the fence, "sprinted across the ballast, skimmed over the opposite fence and dived into the bushes."[167] Elated at being in the Unoccupied Zone, Dumais erred by walking down a road as if he "hadn't a care in the world" – until he heard the order to "Halt!" that is.[168] Partially shielded by the darkness, he took a few quick steps backwards before jumping into a ditch and then running for some bushes as bullets whistled around him. Dumais stopped by the shadows formed by an overhang of trees and remembered to turn his coat's collar up (thus covering his shirt). He put his hands in his pockets and kept his face turned to the ground so that it would not reflect either a flashlight or moonlight as he made for some cover on the other side of the road. Fearing that the guard would widen his search, Dumais made his way through the thick underbrush, using his knife to hack his way through the brambles that tore at both his clothes and hands. Once on the other side of this thicket, he crawled through a field of artichokes and then, spying a copse, set off on a five mile run. Beyond the copse was a road which he walked down for about four miles. The exhausted Canadian soon saw a hay stack about 100 yards from the road into which he burrowed and fell asleep.

The next day, Dumais erred again and found himself too far from the ditch on the side of the road to jump into it when a car slowed and a woman rolled down the window and asked if he was going to Lussac-les-Châteaux. Feeling that accepting the lift was less risky than refusing it, he climbed in. The car stopped at the garage at the entrance to the village and just as Dumais was about to get out, the driver asked if he was going to the Hôtel de la Gare?

Stunned, Dumais, quickly dissembled, "Not particularly, unless the cooking is good." After a moment's thought, Dumais realized the full import of the man's pregnant reply, "The cooking is exceptionally good; you should try it."[169] The blacksmith had orchestrated the appearance of the man with the cart and sent this car to ensure that Dumais would arrive at the Hôtel de la Gare and into the arms of Père La Classe. Three weeks later, now outfitted with a *carte d'identité* giving his birthplace as the neighbouring village, Dumais readied to leave for Marseilles in the company of two French soldiers seeking to join General Charles de Gaulle in England. Before the Canadian left, La Classe, perhaps seeing Dumais as a synecdoche[170] for the Allies, said "*Il faut que je t'embrasse*" as he threw his arms around the Canadian and kissed him on the lips.[171]

Dumais shifted from the homespun ways of rural France to the bureaucratic realities encountered at the consulate of the still neutral United States in Marseilles with aplomb. The consul told Dumais, he could do nothing to help him or the Frenchmen. At his companions' urging, a short while later, Dumais returned alone and did not stand on diplomatic niceties. "You're American and I'm Canadian. Does that frontier [border] really make so much difference," he told the American in perfectly idiomatic Montreal English.[172] Taken aback, the consul asked about the Frenchmen, and when Dumais said that he had left them in a café, the consul gave him an address of a doctor and the instructions to say he had a sore throat and sore right foot.

Three "delightful and civilized" weeks followed during which Dumais read, had high tea and, on one afternoon, found himself being quizzed on details of Montreal by the supposed Canadian, "Pat O'Leary," the *nom de guerre* of the Belgian General Comte Albert-Marie Edmond Guérisse.[173] The next day, O'Leary led Dumais into a train compartment. One ferocious-looking man in it gave Dumais especial pause, as did O'Leary when he introduced Dumais to them in English. It turned out that these men were escaping British soldiers.

During the tense nights at Canet-Plage, a village near the Spanish border, as they waited for what Dumais believed would be a Royal Navy destroyer that would whisk him and some sixty other men away from *Festung Europa* at thirty knots, O'Leary made good use of Dumais's French by giving him the job of helping to organize food distribution. Three times the Royal Navy tried to pick them up from the beach that the men reached by marching noiselessly in single file, and three times failed. At O'Leary's request, the Royal Navy broke standard operating procedures and tried a fourth time. The next night, Dumais knew they would soon be off the beach when thanks to the phosphorescence of the sea, he saw something "blacker than its surroundings" that grew into a number of dinghies that ferried the evaders to a "smelly old trawler," that turned out to be HMS *Sea Lion*, which took them to Gibraltar.[174]

Dumais's career with M.I.9 did not begin immediately after his return to England. He was attached to the British First Army as an observer during Operation Torch, the invasion of North Africa that began on 8 November 1942. In mid-1943, after a week of putting up with the "airs and ignorance" of the new platoon commander who had just arrived from Canada, Dumais bent the rules and asked a Canadian intelligence officer to put him in contact with the one-armed major who had debriefed him after he had returned to England.[175] Major James Langley, of M.I.9, met Dumais in

St. James Park to explain what Dumais was getting himself into and confirmed that if he were caught "Yes," he likely would be shot, "but only after the *Gestapo* have finished with you," words which made the hot day seem suddenly chilly but which did not dissuade Dumais from asking to join M.I.9.[176]

Over the next few months, Dumais found strange men (M.I.9 agents testing him) would come up to him to buy him drinks in bars and then ply him for information. His training also included parachute jumping and target practice with a variety of pistols. Most importantly, he spent weeks getting to know – and trust – Raymond Labrosse (a former Canadian Army Signals Corpsman cum M.I.9 agent who had been the radioman for the *Oaktree Line* and, after it was compromised, led twenty-seven evading airmen from Paris through France and across the Pyrenees into Spain). By the end of his training, Dumais had the odd feeling of no longer being the Fusiliers de Mont-Royal Sergeant-Major but, rather, being the Amiens-born Lucien J. Desbiens who lived at 40, rue Violet in Paris's 15$^{e}$ arrondissement (near Montparnasse) and was an associate of Barbier et Besse, morticians. Langley's words, "Glad to have you with us," signalled that Dumais would be transferred from the Canadian Army lists to the "'Q' list of people about whom no information was available."[177]

After three failures, on the night of 16 November 1943, a Lysander plane landed Dumais and Labrosse on a field near Paris. Soon, using uncompromised contacts from *Oaktree*, the two Canadians built the *Shelburn Line*. Because of German anti-radio surveillance, Labrosse had to keep changing the locations of where he tuned-in to broadcasts from London and where he broadcasted from. Obsessed with security, Dumais set down ten rules – including that all agents were to keep their addresses secret from each other, (including him and Labrosse), as well as that "parcels" were to be passed along the line without their guides meeting one another

and that evacuees were not to be told of the existence of the network. Even though Dr. Le Balch (one of Labrosse's old contacts) had risked his life by agreeing to help, Dumais upbraided him for telling his brother and sister-in-law that he was working to set up an exfiltration beach in Brittany.

The first escape from *Bonaparte Beach* took almost a month to launch. Moving the "parcels" from Paris to Brittany was the easy part. What held up the escape was atrocious weather of the English Channel from mid-December 1943 through late January 1944. On the night Dumais and François Le Cornec, the café owner who was the local Resistance leader, were to lead 15 evaders to the beach, they heard the seemingly innocuous sentence on BBC, "*Yvonne pense souvent à l'heureuse occasion*," which told them the pick-up was off.[178] Nine days and nights, which even the Montrealer recalled as frigid, passed until they heard that the pick-up had been put off indefinitely. Dumais hid the evaders with local farmers, who suddenly had a number of mute farmhands.

In late January, Dumais and Labrosse returned to Brittany, and on 28 January, a BBC announcer said, "*Bonjour, tout le monde à la maison d'Alphonse.*" Not long after the fifteen men were assembling in a small room in what came to be known as *La maison d'Alphonse*, where, to the men's surprise, Dumais not only spoke in English but told the hardened soldiers that they would travel single file, each man holding on to the coat of the man in front with the first man holding on to the coat tail of their guide, the same Marie-Thérèse who some months later would guide Pilot/Office Woodhouse. Marie-Thérèse would also observe several weeks later the Germans install a minefield, of which she produced a map.

Even on this first exfiltration, Dumais had confidence in the 18-year-old Marie-Thérèse, for, once on the beach, it was her task

to use the blue plastic screened flashlight to signal the letter "B" at one-minute intervals. Though he did enjoin them from talking, coughing or sneezing, Dumais thought better of telling the men that there were German listening posts 500 yards on either side of where they slid down to the beach on their rear-ends.

The cipher clerk who decoded a message Labrosse sent following the second Bonaparte exfiltration (26 February) must have thought Dumais was using a secondary code, for surely no agent would speak like this. Following London's orders, one of the "parcels" being exfiltrated was a person who had escaped the *Gestapo* and an individual that the British government wanted back in Britain. Dumais does not give his name, saying only that he "was to become something of a hero after the war."[179] Whoever he was, he had little understanding of security as evidenced by the farewell party he had in Paris and his speaking English on the train south. When, after he was safely back in England, London asked Dumais for a report on him, it ended with the Canadian telling M.I.9 that if they sent this "lunatic" back to France, Dumais would, "shoot him on sight."[180]

To London's surprise, in early March 1944, Labrosse sent what seemed at first an absurd message: pickups on the nights of 15, 19 and 23 March. The first almost did not happen, for the Germans saw something and started firing at the motor torpedo boat (MTB) flotilla when it was four miles away. However, Dumais, who had been holding a walkie-talkie to his ear after hearing, "We're being fired at. . . . but we'll be back," heard "*Dinan*" through the static, which told him the MTBs were fast approaching.[181] Over that one week period, Shelburn exfiltrated seventy-five men and earned the sobriquet, the Cross Channel Ferry Service.

In May, Dumais found himself screening two parcels who at first claimed to be Arabs and then Indian soldiers. Neither spoke

English. To confirm that they had been in the British-Indian army, Dumais hit on the idea of putting them through a short drill. Each followed commands like "Attention" and "Stand at Ease" automatically. They passed Dumais's test when, with a broomstick, each performed a flawless short arms drill. A few weeks later it was Le Cornec's turn to be surprised. He had arranged for Dumais to meet the Resistance leader Branchoux. Standard operating procedures in such situations required that each agent have his pistol at the ready. As soon as Le Cornec and Dumais entered the room, Dumais dropped his pistol and threw his arms around what both Le Cornec assumed was a complete stranger to Dumais, but who turned out to be his fellow Fusilier, Robert Vanier.

One of Dumais's most heart-thumping moments occurred leaving the Montmartre Metro station as he returned from Paris to Brittany. The station was swarming with both *Gestapo* agents and *gendarmes* checking every suitcase. Before approaching a table, Dumais realized that the Germans and French were not working in pairs, so he headed for a table manned by a young Frenchman, who was not amused by Dumais's joke about the suitcase being filled with grenades and machine guns, his search for his keys or the words, "If you look in those cases, you're a dead man . . . I'm not alone and others have your number," a believable threat because recently the Resistance had killed a number of zealous *gendarmes*. Finally, Dumais went for broke, "All right then, you're either with me or against me." The young *gendarme* calmly replied, "The inspectors are watching, so you'd better open them. We're searching for food." He kept his equanimity when beneath the shirts that he ostentatiously lifted he saw stacks of francs and heard Dumais say, "It's Resistance money."[182]

While the Canadians were still fighting for Caen, while bicycling to St. Brieuc, Brittany, Dumais, Labrosse and Louisette, another member of *Shelburn Line*, were stopped by a German soldier who

demanded Dumais's bicycle. While Labrosse and Louisette were allowed to proceed (carrying Dumais' baggage), Dumais lost the argument with a *Feldgendarmerie* sergeant. Dumais' story that the bicycle had cost him 11,000 Francs prompted the German to arrange for a lift in a German staff car that was going to a town twenty-five miles from Saint-Brieuc. When a *Luftwaffe* officer in the car asked in broken French, "If the Allies are your friends, why did they bomb this village. It's not a military target." Dumais' answer, "If you are our friends, why do your soldiers steal our bicycles," put an end to the conversation.[183] For the rest of the ride the officer spoke to his batman in German, which from the subjects discussed he assumed Dumais did not speak. Hence the German was non-plussed when, just before Dumais left the car, he said, "*Gute Nacht, Herr Leutnant, und danke schön.*"[184]

Dumais's next two lifts were much more difficult emotionally. The first was in a small truck in which he could see whips with blood still dripping from them. The final lift to Saint-Brieuc was in a car into which the *Gestapo* had also loaded a parachutist who had been given a "mauling."[185] Dumais had to fight both his anger and force himself to remember that not only did he stand almost no chance if he tried to rescue this man, but if he were not killed, his capture would endanger the whole *Shelburn Line.* Over the course of its six months life, the *Shelburn Line* exfiltrated some 150 Allied airmen, including Woodhouse and at least five other Canadians, by *Bonaparte Beach* and, after that beach was closed down, another 150 through Spain.

Dumais had one last moment of *frisson* after the Liberation of Paris. Alone in his apartment one morning, he heard a knock on the door. Opening it, he saw four heavily armed men: a French *Commandant de Gendarmerie*, a British major from the Military Police, a Canadian provost marshal and a British corporal. Dumais' "uniform" was equally eclectic: "French riding boots and breeches,

an American army windbreaker, a German leather belt with '*Gott mit uns*' on the buckle, an American woolen shirt [and] a British beret adorned with a Canadian badge." In addition, he carried a Luger and a commando dagger.[186] Though he had trouble remembering that he was once again Lucien Dumais, the squad believed his story, though it did take the precaution of bringing him to the Canadian HQ in Paris to fill out the necessary paperwork so he would have a proper identity card.

Dumais' career demonstrates the importance of daring, as for example, when he jumped from the train. It also shows the importance of holding on to his emotions, which he did in the *Gestapo* car giving him a lift to Brittany. From his decision to whistle "*Un Canadian errant*" to his testing of the soldiers who did not speak English but, nevertheless, claimed to be members of the British-Indian Army, Dumais was particularly adept at what we now call "Human Intelligence".

The *Shelburn Line* was, however, more than Dumais' show. Without Labrosse's contacts and his radio work, little could have been accomplished. Dumais' decision to trust an 18-year-old girl with the lives of so many men – both by moving them through the dark night to *Bonaparte Beach* and by signalling the Royal Navy that they awaited pick-up – tells us more than that Dumais was an excellent judge of people. It tells us also that irregular warriors must often rely on irregular partners.

# CONCLUSION

*Those are the same stars, and that is the same moon, that look down upon your brothers and sisters, and which they see as they look up to them, though they are ever so far away from us and each other*

Sojourner Truth (escaped American slave, b. 1797)

The reason that First World War escapers were much more successful in escaping Germany than were escapers in the Second World War is easily explained. In the First World War, Germany did not invade Holland or Denmark. Holland, which the Chief of the German General Staff, Helmut Von Moltke famously called a "windpipe" through which German trade could "breath" (i.e. get around at least part of the British blockade), was reachable by land as was Denmark.[187] By contrast, during the Second World War, both Denmark and Holland were occupied, this last until it was liberated by the First Canadian Army. Accordingly, what matters for us is not the men's success rate but, rather, the experience of these men, only a few of whom are still alive.

In his memoir, *A Season in Hell: My 130 Days in the Sahara with Al Qaeda*, retired Canadian diplomat Robert R. Fowler wrote, "We saw the stars at night and watched the moon wax and wane, and we stared at the contrails of high-flying jets carrying free, happy people—well into their second cocktail—to and from Paris, London, Rome, and Berlin."[188] Speaking of his days in Yugoslavia, Norman Reid told me something similar as he spoke of the moon and the stars. More than one POW writing of Christmas and Easter underscored the importance – not just of their faith – but of the

fact that in just a few hours their families back in Canada would be performing the familiar rituals back home. In much the same way a stage director does, these men so far from home could imagine a mother's, father's, wife's, sister's or brother's movements in church or at family dinner. These familiarities help to bring comfort during these periods of duress. Though this monograph has focused on these men's war behind the wire, it is important to pause, before we conclude, to discuss how their families or, to be more precise, love for their families, figured in their actions.

The point is not, of course, that men who did not evade or try to escape loved their families any less; all POWs drew the strength to carry on through the purgatory of Japanese POW camps and the cold of German camps from letters which were every bit as important as the calories, fats and proteins in parcels. This is the point William Allister made in his memoir of his years in a Japanese POW camp when he recalls receiving a letter from his mother. He wrote:

> *Contact! . . . This paper had actually been in my home in Montreal! It had been touched, handled, folded by loving compassionate hands. . . . Touching it was touching them, an invisible embrace, a reunion, a banishing of all the grime and horror and ugliness.*[189]

As Allister read it, he "sucked up the life-affirming images of real and civilized people doing the make-believe things I dreamed of. …" He explained, "I read it again and again, over and over, to retain the secret tenuous thread that still bound me to a dimming reality."[190]

In our time of instant communication it is hard to grasp how important letters were, but in both wars, letting another man who had not received mail and thus was starved for this feeling read your letter was considered a mark of true friendship. As the Australians called it in a word that has come to mean something more, "mateship."

Notably, I do not wish to imply that those who did not evade or try to escape were any less brave, patriotic or resourceful than those who did. Indeed, their very presence as a mass of men numbering in the hundreds of thousands (to count only Western POWs) behind enemy lines tied up both men and *matériel* and thus acted as a drain on the enemy's economy and armed forces. To this accomplishment we should add the damage to morale when, despite the propaganda in both wars about the destruction of Britain, German guards saw the amount of food sent from Britain, the United States and Canada. As Tustin recalled of the Great War, the guards "read in their newspapers that England was starving, and yet here before their eyes was food galore arriving from the land of famine." Despite the fact that more than a little had turned rotten, the guards, as they would in the next war, could see that the food "was very much superior to their own scant rations." And he noted, "They eyed it hungrily enough, poor beggars."[191] It was also, of course, the disparity between German rations and what the POWs had when they were receiving their Red Cross parcels and cigarettes that provided the economic margin for bribery.

The point here is to recognize how memories of home and families provided the escapers with a psychological ballast. They were not, as were the Germans at the end of the Second World War, responding to hysterical speeches by Joseph Goebbels predicting the rape and pillage of their homeland. Nor were the escapers motivated by anything like the ancestor worship of the *kamikazes.* Honour and duty tied the evaders and escapers to their comrades and, respectively, to the Army and Air Force, which, it is important to recall, each of these men had joined voluntarily.

Yet even as escape or evasion fulfilled their bargain that began with taking "the King's schilling," escaping was a deeply personal and familial act. Britain was more than 3,000 miles from Canada's eastern most shore. And London was not Lourdes, Nova Scotia,

still less Montreal. Yet, especially for Anglophone Canadians in both world wars, England and, more specifically, London, was a symbolic home. Canadian servicemen in Britain received mail regularly. The symbolism, which is long gone, was linked to a Canada in which, as Geoffrey Smith, who fought in the Battle of the St. Lawrence recalled, when King George VI spoke on the radio, he and his brothers stood at attention in their living room under the approving eyes of their father. The Smiths may have been more formal than most, but it is worth remembering that just months before the Second World War broke out, the new King, George VI, and Queen Elizabeth, received rapturous welcomes in Ottawa, Toronto, Vancouver, Victoria, and Melville, Saskatchewan, and they were warmly received in both Montreal and Quebec, where they royal couple disembarked from RMS *Empress of Australia,* as well as in Trois-Rivières.

London was the seat of the Empire to which Canadians proudly belonged, many in the First World War seeing the British prime ministers, rather than the Canadian one, as the Dominion's true war lords. For men educated in early part of the 20th Century, there was even more. England, the term most used to denote what constitutional nitpickers would point out was really Britain, was where Canadian's literature originated. The London of Charles Dickens and Arthur Conan Doyle, the strains of Shakespeare's language and the poems of the Shelley, Keats and Byron, formed the mental furniture of these men, something clearly seen by the number of quotes, some misattributed, that pepper their letters.

What used to be called the "Great Tradition" provided the POWs with a rhetoric, a way of speaking, that bound them and their families who, though across the sea, also believed that they were part of what was, as the First World War poet Rupert Brook put it, "forever England." Ian MacDonald's letters home after arriving in London in 1943 speak of the battered and broken city in familiar

terms. He knew that his family in Lourdes, Nova Scotia needed no introduction to St. Paul's Cathedral, London Bridge or the Palace of Westminster – Parliament. Indeed, the mere sight of Big Ben, after he arrived in England after the end of the war gave MacDonald the feeling of coming home. In a way not normally considered, escaping united the personal and the political during the thousands of days during which Canada's citizen soldiers, sailors and airmen stepped on to the stage of history.

The stories of these men making compasses out of razor blades, donning wigs or digging tunnels under the nose of a guard nicknamed "Dimwitz" are testament of these men's ingenuity. These activities, no less than tunnelling, were markers of the human spirit of those who put on the Canadian uniform.

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# NOTES

1 Unless otherwise indicated, every soldier and airman discussed in this monograph served in the Canadian Army or Royal Canadian Air Force.

2 Jack A. Poolton and Jayne Turvey, *Destined to Survive!: A Dieppe Veteran's Story Written as a Tribute to the 55th Anniversary of the Dieppe Raid* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1998), 43.

3 Lucien A. Dumais and Hugh Popham, *The Man Who Went Back* (London: L. Cooper, 1975), 47.

4 Herbert W. Tustin, *Escaping from the Kaiser: The Dramatic Experiences of a Tommy Pow* (South Yorkshire, England: Pen and Sword Books, 2014), 25. This book's subtitle does not give justice to its subject, most of which is Tustin's memoir of his successful escape from Rennbahn POW camp in 1916 undertaken with Private Gerri Burk of the 8th Battalion Canadian Expeditionary Force. Both men were captured at Ypres in April 1915.

5 Ibid., 82.

6 George Eustace Pearson and Edward Edwards, *The Escape of a Princess Pat: Being the Full Account of the Capture and Fifteen Months' imprisonment of Corporal Edwards, of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, and His Final Escape from Germany into Holland* (New York: George H. Doran, 1918), 45.

7 Tustin, 83.

8 https://sherlock-holm.es/stories/pdf/a4/1-sided/stud.pdf (accessed 17 April 2015), 11.

9 A. J. Barker, *Behind Barbed Wire* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1974), 88.

10 Andrew B. Cox, *Our Spirit Unbroken: Memoirs of a Prisoner of War* (Port Elgin, ON: Brucedale Press, 1999), 39.

11 Henry Chancellor, *Colditz: The Definitive History* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 3.

12 The minor differences between the wording of these two treaties need not concern us here.

13 Only the fact that in 1918 some 3,500 POWs returned to Canada prevented the convening of numerous Courts of Inquiry. Jonathan Franklin William Vance, *Objects of Concern Canadian Prisoners of War through the Twentieth Century* (Vancouver, B.C.: UBC Press, 1994), 26.

14 John Fabian Witt, *Lincoln's Code: The Laws of War in American History* (New York: The Free Press, 2012), 383-385.

15 Kingsley Brown, *Bonds of Wire: A Memoir* (Toronto: Collins, 1989), 212.

16 *Geneva Convention 1949*, Section I, Chapter II, Article 8. https://www.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/52d68d14de6160e0c12563da005fdb1b/eb1571b00daec90ec125641e00402aa6 (accessed 20 February 2015).

17 Ibid. The Hague Treaty reads, that "Escaped prisoners who are retaken before being able to rejoin their own army or before leaving the territory occupied by the army which captured them are liable to disciplinary punishment."

18 John Lewis-Stempel, *The War Behind the Wire: The Life, Death and Glory of British Prisoners of War 1914-1918* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2014), 97.

19 Andrew Carswell, *Over the Wire: A Canadian Pilot's Memoir of War and Survival as a POW* (Mississauga, ON: J. Wiley & Sons Canada, 2011), 231.

20 The Canadian rate of pay led some Germans to consider them mercenaries.

21 Cited in Neil Hanson, *Escape from Germany: The Greatest POW Break-Out of the First World War* (Toronto: Doubleday, 2011), 136.

22 Robert d'Harcourt, *Souvenirs de captivité et d'évasions 1915–1918* (Paris: Payot, 1922), 229.

23 In both world wars, the provisioning of food via Red Cross parcels was so important they were never used to send escape gear. Personal parcels were another matter and could contain compasses, saws, materials for forgers, cameras and, during the Second World War, parts of a typewriter and radio tubes.

24 Tustin, 103.

25 Indeed, soap was so scarce that later in the war, two bars bought O'Brien a crown for a tooth and a bottle of brandy. As the war wore on and both their rations and their guards' diminished, malnourished POWs took what pleasure they could from the fact that they and not their guards were able to enjoy the luxurious suds produced by Castile or Williams soap, both of which also provided fuel for candles for men digging for freedom.

26 Tustin, 102-103.

27 Transcript of Memoir of David Stephen O'Brien, N/D, Library and Archives Canada (LAC), MG30 E 426, 11.

28 J.C. Thorn, *Three Years a Prisoner in Germany the Story of Major J.C. Thorn, a First Canadian Contingent Officer Who Was Captured by the Germans at Ypres on April 24, 1915 : Relating His Many Attempts to Escape (once Disguised as a Widow) : And Life in the Various Camps and Fortresses : With Illustrations* (Vancouver: Cowan & Brookhouse, 1919), 34.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid., 35.

31 Robert Service, "The Cremation of Sam McGee," http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/174348 (accessed 21 March 2015).

32 Fred McMullen and Jack Evans, *Out of the Jaws of Hunland: the Stories of Corporal Fred McMullen, Sniper, Private Jack Evans, Bomber, Canadian Soldiers, Three times Captured and Finally Escaped from German Prison Camps* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1918), 170.

33 Frank Cecil MacDonald, *The Kaiser's Guest* (Garden City, N.Y.: Printed by Country Life Press for Frank C. MacDonald, 1918), 103.

34 John Harvey Douglas, *Captured; Sixteen Months as a Prisoner of War* (New York: George H. Doran, 1918), 14.

35 Transcript of Memoir of David Stephen O'Brien, N/D, Library and Archives Canada (LAC), MG30 E 426, 13.

36 McMullen, 178.

37 Simmons, 29.

38 Ibid., 30.

39 McMullan, 143.

40 MacDonald, 136.

41 Ibid., 141.

42 Tustin, 111.

43 MacDonald, 100.

44 Simmons, 26.

45 McMullan, 154.

46 Alexander Watson, *Ring of Steel: Germany and Austria-Hungary in World War I* (New York: Basic Books, 2014), 338f.

47 MacDonald, 208.

48 McMullan, 61.

49 Thorn, 68.

50 Ibid., 68.

51 MacDonald, 232.

52 Simmons, 93 and 94.

53 Ibid., 97.

54 Tustin, 132.

55 Ibid., 132.

56 Evans, 213 and 215.

57 Ibid., 189.

58 McMullan, 144.

59 MacDonald, 142.

60 McMullan, 190.

61 Simmons, 36.

62 Ibid., 62.

63 Tustin, 156.

64 Edwards, 52.

65 Simmons, 92.

66 McMullan, 148.

67 Edwards, 52.

68 Ibid., 53.

69 Edwards, 70.

70 McMullan, 151.

71 Ibid., 157.

72 Thorn, 76.

73 MacDonald, 139.

74 McMullan, 147.

75 Moran, Lord, *The Anatomy of Courage* (New York: Carroll and Graf, 2007), 67.

76 Tustin, 127.

77 Ibid., 127.

78 When their jailor found them fighting and asked "What's going on?", Donaldson, his nose dripping blood, quickly replied, "We were just exercising . . . We do this to keep fit." Carswell, 115. Notably, the two escapers did not speak to each other for some days.

79 Edwards, 71. This incident is not recorded by Simmons, likely because his amanuensis, Nellie McClung, did not write any similar scenes in her novels.

80 Simmons, 35.

81 T.V. Scudamore, *Lighter Episodes in the Life of a Prisoner of War* (Aldershot, England: Gale & Polden, 1933), 41.

82 Thorn, 39.

83 Ibid., 78.

84 O'Brien, 16.

85 Edwards, 45 and 55.

86 MacDonald, 146.

87 McMullan, 217.

88 Ibid., 218.

89 Ibid., 163.

90 Tustin, 160.

91 Ibid., 165.

92 The POWs were able to have money transferred from their accounts in England to the account the Germans set up to pay them (as stipulated by the Hague Convention) and hold money they forced the POWs to turn over to them. Anderson's stash included 10£ that had been transferred to him ostensibly to pay a gambling debt.

93 Peter Anderson, *I That's Me: Escape from German Prison Camp and Other Adventures* (Edmonton, AB: Bradburn Printers, 1920), 124.

94 Ibid., 132.

95 Ibid., 133.

96 Ibid., 141.

97 Ibid., 148.

98 Ibid., 164f.

99 M.R.D. Foot and J.M. Langley, *MI 9: Escape and Evasion, 1939-1945* (Boston, Massachusetts: Little, Brown, 1980), 26.

100 "MI9 Historical Report - Arcre." MI9 Historical Report - Arcre. http://www.arcre.com/archive/mi9/mi9history#mi9_03 (accessed February 20, 2015).

101 Dumais, 60.

102 Nathan M. Greenfield, *The Forgotten: Canadian POWs, Escapers and Evaders in Europe, 1939-45* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 2013), 144.

103 Ibid., 60. In August 1944, W/O Douglas Jennings reversed this logic and signalled his status as an evader by whistling "God Save the King."

104 Greenfield, *The Forgotten*, 257. This was actually the second time Reid had been shot down. The first time was over the Mediterranean. Since he was rescued by the American Navy, he was able to keep flying missions over Europe. With few exceptions, successful evaders were not allowed to fly operation missions again. There were two reasons for this restriction. First, the Germans would know their faces and identities, and were they to be shot down a second time and captured, they could be taken for spies and executed. Second, as would be the case with Reid himself, their expertise in escaping burning planes, and in escape and evasion made successful evaders important sources for intelligence briefings.

105 Greenfield, *Forgotten,* 257.

106 Though not unimportant, perhaps because the evaders were in the hands of escape lines, compasses were of lesser importance than they were for First World War escapers.

107 Emerson Lavender and Norman Sheffe. *The Evaders: True Stories of Downed Canadian Airmen and Their Helpers in World War II* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1992), 99.

108 Ian MacDonald, RCAF, in discussion with the author, November 2014.

109 A few weeks after Dix escaped, Michelle found out that her commander in the Resistance was a Nazi collaborator. This news caused her to have a nervous breakdown. Other friends in the Resistance managed to smuggle her to Switzerland where she recovered and spent the rest of the war, after which she became a doctor.

110 Lavender, 117.

111 Ibid.

112 The more than 150 RAF and RCAF men in the Forêt de Fréteval were liberated by British commandos on 13 August 1944.

113 Greenfield, *Forgotten*, 88.

114 Sydney Percival Smith and David Scott Smith, *Lifting the Silence* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2010), 132.

115 Greenfield, *The Forgotten,* 167.

116 Lavender, 49.

117 Some sources give her name as Marie-Thérèse Le Meur-Jouvent.

118 Greenfield, *The Forgotten*, 289.

119 Smith, 147.

120 Ibid., 148.

121 Greenfield, *The Forgotten,* 176f.

122 John D. Harvie, *Missing in Action an RCAF Navigator's Story* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), 39.

123 Ibid., 52.

124 Edward Carter-Edwards, RCAF, in discussion with the author.

125 Ibid., 65.

126 S.P. Mackenzie, *The Colditz Myth: British and Commonwealth Prisoners of War in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 325.

127 Ibid., 6.

128 Cox, 32.

129 For a full discussion of the Oblates' and Sacred Heart Brothers' experiences in Nazi Germany's POW camps, see: Nathan M. Greenfield and Bill Rawling, *Missionnaires en terre barbelée: Des Oblats prisonniers de guerre* (1941-1945).

130 Brown, 64. After his career at the *Star*, Brown became Special Assistant to the Honourable Ellen Fairclough, Canada's first female member of Cabinet.

131 Brian G. Hodgkinson and George E. Condon, *Spitfire Down: The POW Story : The Memoir of an RCAF Spitfire Pilot in the Second World War* (Toronto, ON: Penumbra Press, 2000), 169. Castleman was another American who had come to Canada to join the RCAF. He was born and raised in Louisiana's bayou country.

132 Ibid., 169. The number of escapers and evaders who posed as mutes seems striking until we recall that because of the millions of cases of shell shock during the First World War, Europeans were more accustomed to seeing men wounded in mind than we are today.

133 Carswell, 44.

134 Ibid., 45.

135 Greenfield, *The Forgotten*, 163.

136 A. Robert Prouse, *Ticket to Hell via Dieppe: From a Prisoner's Wartime Log, 1942-1945* (Toronto: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1982), 73f.

137 Poolton, 74.

138 Ibid., 75.

139 Prouse, 59.

140 Monsignor O'Flaherty's story is told in Steven Walker, *Hide and Seek: The Irish Priest in the Vatican Who Defied the Nazi Command* (Guilford, Connecticut: Lyons Press, 2011).

141 Ibid., 77.

142 Prouse, 60.

143 Ibid., 60.

144 Brown, 67.

145 Carswell, 119.

146 Ibid., 209.

147 Hodgkinson, 186.

148 Ibid., 186.

149 Ibid., 77.

150 Carolyn Gossage, *The Accidental Captives: The Story of Seven Women Alone in Nazi Germany* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2012); and Peter Levitt, *A Memoir of the Sinking of the Zamzam* (Victoria, Australia: Lugus). Mrs. Kathleen Levitt had the forethought before fleeing the SS *Zamzam* to leave their passports on the sinking ship. After a parcel from a Canadian Jewish welfare agency arrived addressed to Mrs. Levitt, the Gestapo called her in and demanded to know if she and her children were Jewish. Just as many escapers hid in plain sight, Levitt, metaphorically, took shelter behind Wendy's and Peter's blond hair and blue eyes.

151 Hodgkinson, 188.

152 Brown, 71.

153 Carswell, 109.

154 Jonathan Franklin William Vance. *A Gallant Company: The Men of the Great Escape* (Pacifica, California: Pacifica Military History, 2000), 231.

155 Hodgkinson, 191.

156 Poolton, 79.

157 Ibid., 61.

158 Vance, 195.

159 Gladys E. Smith, *Forty Nights to Freedom: The True Prisoner of War Escape Story of Wing Commander Stewart F. Cowan (ret.)* (Winnipeg: Queenston House Pub., 1984), 172.

160 Dumais, 27.

161 Geneva Convention, Part I: Article 2.

162 Dumais, 60.

163 Ibid.

164 Ibid., 62.

165 Ibid., 73.

166 Ibid., 75.

167 Ibid., 76.

168 Ibid., 77.

169 Ibid., 79.

170 "Part for whole" as in "all hands on deck."

171 Dumais, 85.

172 Ibid., 87.

173 Ibid., 89.

174 Ibid., 92.

175 Ibid., 101.

176 Ibid., 102.

177 Ibid., 104. Presumably since he was already an M.I.9 operative, Labrosse's name was already on this list.

178 Ibid., 144.

179 Ibid., 159.

180 Ibid., 160.

181 Ibid., 165.

182 Ibid., 156.

183 Ibid., 192.

184 Ibid., 193.

185 Ibid., 195.

186 Ibid., 207.

187 Maartje M. Abbenhuis, *The Art of Staying Neutral The Netherlands in the First World War, 1914*-1918 (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 32. http://dare.uva.nl/cgi/arno/show.cgi?fid=171954 (accessed 21 April 2015).

188 Robert R. Fowler, *A Season in Hell: My 130 Days in the Sahara with Al Qaeda* (Toronto, HarperCollins, 2011), 81f.

189 William Allister, *Where Life and Death Hold Hands* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1989), 76.

190 Ibid., 76.

191 Tustin, 35.

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