

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA
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Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will deal with a woman named Noreen Riols who goes to the same church as Uncle Steve in Paris. She is in her 90's and is a famous heroine out of World War II. She has written 10 books and Steve sent Granny and me an autographed copy of what I think is her latest. This book "*The Secret Ministry of Ag. & Fish*", details her life in Churchill's school for spies.

Admitting that under normal circumstances to "Jaw - Jaw " is better than to "War - War" there still comes a time when decent men will fight to the death to keep someone from killing their families. That's why England refused to surrender to Hitler! Remember Churchill's famous words: "*We shall go on to the end. We shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be. We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender.*"

While Hitler murdered millions, the little children killed by the infamous Dr. Josef Mengele is particularly repugnant to me as a grandfather. He was known as the "angel of death". This sadistic fiend lured little children into a van by offering them candy. Once trapped inside they were taken to his laboratory and used as human guinea pigs. Mengele experimented on them in every way, even performing major surgeries without anesthesia. The fact that he tortured and murdered thousands of innocent children is too horrible for me to imagine.

At any rate, Churchill understood the danger and uniqueness of this war and felt that the existing intelligence service known as MI-6 was too soft-shoe to be effective. Consequently he initiated a new agency known as the Special Operations Executive or (SOE). This agency was super secret and responsible only to Churchill himself. Consequently it became known as his "Secret Army". In fact, the SOE was so secret that it was not until the year 2,000 that these heroic agents were permitted to tell their stories. At the end of the war there were 13,000 agents in Europe and Asia. Unfortunately, most of them are now dead. Their work, however, was so effective that Gen. Eisenhower felt that their sacrificial service shortened the war in Europe by 18 months. Today, Noreen is the only woman left alive who was part of the elite group known as SOE - F. The title of her book about Ag and Fish reflects the fact that even her closest family members never knew about her true work and assumed that she was merely a laborer working in London with agriculture and fish.

The discipline and training of these courageous volunteers defies description. They became experts in the use of all weapons and explosives. They knew how to pick locks and escape from handcuffs. They were trained to forage off of the land with no need to depend on local citizens. They were trained to endure torture and given a suicide pill that would kill them in two minutes. Their heroic efforts trained and equipped literally thousands of locals to resist the Nazis.

The SOE agents traditionally worked in groups of three. The radio operators had the most dangerous assignments with only a 50% chance of survival. Their life expectancy in the field was only six weeks. Their coded messages enabled fighters in the resistance to receive airdrops involving tons of necessary materials. One humorous incident involved a female agent who had her 20 lb. radio in a basket on the back of her bicycle. When forced to stop to let a passing train go by, the Gestapo pulled up beside her and demanded to know what was in the basket. The beautiful young woman smiled and said that of course it contained a radio with which she could contact London. Her beauty and disarming smile convinced that Gestapo that she was no danger. They were wrong!

Another similar story involved a male agent who infiltrated the German army. While he was making bombs in a secluded cabin one night a German patrol came to the door. Quickly hiding what he could of his explosives, he opened the door and discovered his beer drinking buddies. They were glad to see him and wondered what he was doing. Again, with a smile on his face, he said that he was making bombs to blow up the railroad. When they asked him to have a drink with them, he laughed and declined saying that he never drank while working with explosives. They all got a good laugh, but in reality it was the SOE agent who got the last laugh.

Not all encounters with the Gestapo had a happy ending. Hundreds, if not thousands, of SOE agents were captured, tortured, and executed. One favorite form of execution involved torturing and then hanging the victim with piano wire to a meat hook on the wall. It usually took 20 agonizing minutes for the victim to die. No form of torture was too cruel to be used by the Gestapo. On one occasion 12 SOE agents were tortured and executed at the same time. The youngest was 19 and the oldest was 36.

The book of Jude (v. 10), reminds us that some men are like “unreasoning animals”. An animal killing your children does not respond to reason. Some men don’t either. Please prayerfully consider this tribute to soldiers by an unknown author: *“It is the Soldier, not the minister who has given us freedom of religion. It is the Soldier, not the reporter who has given us freedom of the press. It is the Soldier, not the poet who has given us freedom of speech. It is the Soldier, not the campus organizer who has given us freedom to protest. It is the Soldier, not the lawyer who has given us the right to a fair trial. It is the Soldier, not the politician who has given us the right to vote. It is the Soldier who salutes the flag, who serves beneath the flag, and whose coffin is draped by the flag, who allows the protester to burn the flag.”*

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce