

Thomas Joseph Spalding, T-20

24 March 1903 – 7 February 1973

(aged 69)



GERMAN PRISONERS IN SICILY SIZED UP THE DOUGHBOYS AS PRETTY DUMB BUNCH

Arrogant Nazi prisoners in Sicily thought their American captors were pretty dumb. The Americans didn't even know that New York was in ruins from German bombings and the Japs were in the Rockies? The Americans laughed and gradually the Nazi arrogance which caused them even to spurn preferred American cigarettes at first, gave way to misgivings and finally to the realization that not only were the Rockies Jap-free and New York intact; but they themselves had lost the North African campaign. So relates Army Major Tom Spalding home on sick leave after serving in North Africa and Sicily and a short stay in a hospital at Charleston SC. "The Nazis sulked and didn't want to work, but I noticed they never refused food although they did refuse cigarettes," Major Spalding says. "They seemed to have the idea at first the Americans were afraid of them, even though they were prisoners. No Germans wanted "to be in the same pens or work crews with Italians. The Italians hated them. "Sounded too real Major Spalding laughingly recalls how the Nazis "supermen" were humiliated when they cringed at what they thought was another bombing only to learn later that it was one of the American demolition squads

blowing up some buildings. Then he good-naturedly told a joke on himself. How flown back to North Africa before coming home by hospital ship, he and a fellow officer jumped out of bed only to learn that what had awakened them was the noise of battle in the movie, "Sergeant York," being shown in the same hotel just below their room. To Major Spalding the most beautiful sight, of the war was the ack - ack fire and the balls of fire from naval guns streaking toward shore at night, just before the landing in Sicily, with enemy searchlights playing over the sea. "One searchlight hit square on us and we felt like we were on a stage," he said. "We expected the enemy to open up on us, but after the capture, they said they never saw us."

"Major Spalding, On Sick Leave, Saw Exciting Time"

There was a bit of jittery feeling ashore, what with a little shell fire and plenty of land mines and booby traps," he said. The whole island was so thoroughly mined by the Germans and Italians that the major predicts "there'll be people dying from those mines 25 years from now." Major Spalding says the American soldier isn't afraid of anything and if he has any shortcoming it is recklessness. "He's more apt to jump up and run into something, instead of running away from trouble," he said. He has high praise for his men, activating in January at Camp McCain MS, and in battle in July.

Value of a Letter

He also has praise for Army nurses whom he saw "taking it coolly and doing a beautiful job," right in behind the front and great admiration for the British English Army. He urges the home front "bombard" the boys in service with letters because he has seen disappointment written on the faces of many men who got little or no mail. Letters filled with little,

personal details and expressions of faith and love are so much more important than packages, he emphasizes. He believes Americans generally are not sufficiently war-conscious because they have been given too much war stuff in newspapers, and movies and on radio dramatizations which make war beautiful and heroic. "Our men are doing a good job, but there's not a thing pretty or pleasant about war," he declared. "It's a job to do as quickly as we can."

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