

Stranger than fiction

1. The first German serviceman killed in the war was killed by the Japanese (China, 1937), the first American serviceman killed was killed by the Russians (Finland 1940), the highest ranking American killed was LtGen. Lesley McNair, killed by the US Army Air Corps. So much for allies.

2. The youngest US serviceman was 12 year old Calvin Graham, USN. He was wounded in combat and given a Dishonorable Discharge for lying about his age. (His benefits were later restored by act of Congress)

3. At the time of Pearl Harbor the top US Navy command was called CINCUS (pronounced "sink us"), the shoulder patch of the US Army's 45th. Infantry division was the Swastika, and Hitler's private train was named "Amerika". All three were soon changed for PR purposes.

4. More US servicemen died in the Air Corps than the Marine Corps. While completing the required 30 missions your chance of being killed was 71%.

5. Not that bombers were helpless. A B-17 carried 4 tons of bombs and 1.5 tons of machine gun ammo. The US 8th Air Force shot down 6,098 fighter planes, 1 for every 12,700 shots fired.

6. Germany's power grid was much more vulnerable than realized. One estimate is that if just 1% of the bombs dropped on German industry had instead been dropped on power plants German industry would have collapsed.

7. Generally speaking there was no such thing as an average fighter pilot. You were either an ace or a target. For instance Japanese ace Hiroyoshi Nishizawa shot down over 80 planes. He died while a passenger on a cargo plane.

8. It was a common practice on fighter planes to load every 5th round with a tracer round to aid in aiming. This was a mistake. The tracers had different ballistics so (at long range) if your tracers were hitting the target 80% of your rounds were missing. Worse yet the tracers instantly told your enemy he was under fire and from which direction. Worst of all was the practice of loading a string of tracers at the end of the belt to tell you that you were out of ammo. This was definitely not something you wanted to tell the enemy. Units that stopped using tracers saw their success rate nearly double and their loss rate go down.

9. When allied armies reached the Rhine the first thing men did was pee in it.
This was pretty universal from the lowest private to Winston Churchill (who made a big show of it) and Gen. Patton (who had himself photographed in the act).
10. German Me-264 bombers were capable of bombing New York City but it wasn't worth the effort.
11. A number of aircrewmembers died of farts. (ascending to 20,000 ft. in an unpressurized aircraft causes intestinal gas to expand 300%).
12. The Russians destroyed over 500 German aircraft by ramming them in mid-air (they also sometimes cleared minefields by marching over them). "It takes a brave man not to be a hero in the Red Army" - Joseph Stalin
13. The US Army had more ships than the US Navy.
14. The German Air Force had 22 infantry divisions, 2 armor divisions, and 11 paratroop divisions. None of them were capable of airborne operations. The German Army had paratroops who WERE capable of airborne operations. Go figure.
15. When the US Army landed in North Africa, among the equipment brought ashore was 3 complete Coca Cola bottling plants.
16. Among the first "Germans" captured at Normandy were several Koreans. They had been forced to fight for the Japanese Army until they were captured by the Russians and forced to fight for the Russian Army until they were captured by the Germans and forced to fight for the German Army until they were captured by the US Army.
17. German submarine U-120 was sunk by a malfunctioning toilet.
18. The Graf Spee never sank. The scuttling attempt failed and the ship was bought as scrap by the British. On board was Germany's newest radar system.
19. One of Japan's methods of destroying tanks was to bury a very large artillery shell with only the nose exposed. When a tank came near enough a soldier would whack the shell with a hammer. "Lack of weapons is no excuse for defeat." - LtGen. Mutaguchi

20. Following a massive naval bombardment 35,000 US and Canadian troops stormed ashore at Kiska. 21 troops were killed in the firefight. It would have been worse if there had been Japanese on the island.

21. The MISS ME was an unarmed Piper Cub. While spotting for US artillery her pilot saw a similar German plane doing the same thing. He dove on the German plane and he and his co-pilot fired their pistols damaging the German plane enough that it had to make a forced landing. Whereupon they landed and took the Germans prisoner. I don't know where they put them since the MISS ME only had 2 seats.

22. Most members of the Waffen SS were not German.

23. The only nation that Germany declared war on was the USA.

24. During the Japanese attack on Hong Kong British officers objected to Canadian infantrymen taking up positions in the officer's mess. No enlisted men allowed you know.

25. Nuclear physicist Niels Bohr was rescued in the nick of time from German occupied Denmark. While Danish resistance fighters provided covering fire he ran out the back door of his home stopping momentarily to grab a beer bottle full of precious "Heavy Water". He finally reached England still clutching the bottle. Which contained beer. I suppose some German drank the Heavy Water.