

Little Theater of Szubin College

Another project that helped keep the Oflag 64 POWs occupied was a theatrical group put together by some of the officers who had a theater and musical background. With the assistance of lumber provided by the YMCA and (believe it or not) the Germans, the Kriegies were able to build the "Little Theater" in one half of a barrack. Kriegy Lou Otterbein was the handyman who designed the stage and used everything from used Red Cross parcel boxes for the sides to Klim (Milk) cans for footlights. The International YMCA also provided other theatrical equipment and scores from Broadway plays. Costumes were created from scraps of old uniforms, blankets or whatever the tailor shop could find. Austin Knapp, who ran the shop, worked wonders but not without some consternation (see article from Camp Newspaper attached). Producing the shows in the Little Theater not only kept those performing busy, it provided much needed diversion for the POWs. According to Kriegy Sid Thal, "There was forever some show in rehearsal. Our theater was always busy, always producing. Every show was gratefully welcomed - even by the Germans. Each show or play had to pass inspection and approval by the Germans to make sure there was no negative references to the Germans in either actions or words." Contemporary full-length plays such as "Brother Orchid", "Three Men on a Horse", "Boy Meets Girl", "The Man Who Came To Dinner" and "Petrified Forest" were well received and so popular they had to run for three or four nights. Female parts were usually played by the younger men who with the right makeup looked almost too authentic. One time the Germans even thought a Polish woman had been smuggled into the camp.

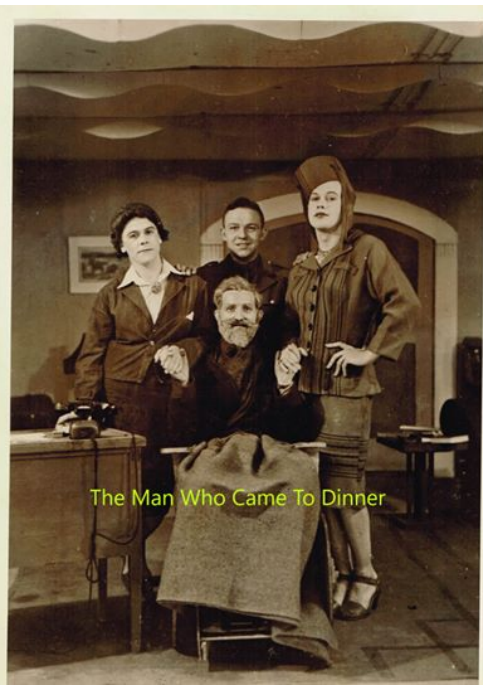
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Scene from "Brother Orchid"



The Man Who Came To Dinner

"Well Pressed Is Well Dressed," Says Knapp

By: Willard Duckworth

Warrant Officer Austin Knapp's tailoring shop offers little or no competition to Hart, Schaffner and Marx, but with scraps of material and practically no tools, it performs miracles in maintaining the wellpressed standards of the American Army.

All clothing repairs in camp are made from scraps cut from salvaged garments.

There is no steam press in the establishment—only a charcoal-heated iron. For pressing small articles such as ties, cuffs and collars a small hand-iron is used. As each new problem in pressing arises, pressing forms are constructed by Knapp and his three assistants from specially shaped wood covered with cloth.

Most of the customers, realizing the handicaps under which the tailor shop operates, are reasonable in their requests. Occasionally, however, "one of those show people" dashes in, gesticulating madly, and demands some weird and improbable creation for the next production.

However, if the required costume is not a Flo Ziegfield dream for one of the Oflag glamour girls, something suitable can usually be turned out by Knapp or one of his three versatile assistants, Lts. Jim Norwood, Verris Hubbell or Bernard Opitz.