

4/15/94

Mr. Stephen Rosenfeld, oped
The Washington Post
1150 15 St., NW
Washington, DC 20071

Dear Mr. Rosenfeld,

This newest unnecessary tragedy in Iraq reminded me of the problem the military had getting World War II pilots to use IFF.

I started to write a letter on it and then realized that it was going to be too long and might not be considered appropriate for a letter to the editor.

So, instead of throwing it away, perhaps some of you who were not around then might find it a little interesting or amusing or both.

Henry's easel was no more than 10 feet from Eero Saarinen's.

His first big job after his OSS hitch was the Dulles airport.

When I was in that part of ~~the~~ OSS we were then in the old Washington Auditorium. It was between 19 and 20 above New York Ave.

In many ways it was a much different world then.

Best wishes,



Harold Weisberg

Letters to the editor
The Washington Post
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The If in IFF

The more things change the more they remain the same -with IFF.

When it was invented during World War II the need came from the influence of the macho movies and novels on the youthful pilots of what was then known as The Army Air Corps. They all wanted to be the heroes of the dogfights ~~in~~ which they won by what was known as "flying by the seat of the pants."

Which are not for flying and flying by which cost us many pilots and planes.

When all other efforts to persuade the pilots to use and trust the then new IFF, ^{failed,} the problem was bounced to the branch of the OSS in which I served.

Much of its work was to make presentations ^{at times} in various forms that were convincing or persuasive.

Our branch was ~~roughly~~ ^{roughly} divided roughly into two shops, of artists and of writers, my part. Many of us, if not most, were detailed from the military. We came from all walks of life. And of all of us who were enlisted men, I was the only one who had had basic training. I had been in a theater of war overseas.

While I was in that branch there was but one military formation. When it was announced it caused consternation. I was the only one who knew the formations and what the commands meant.

Our entirely untrained first sergeant, the Hollywood writer Dick Wilson, had me fall in directly in front of him so I could tell him and the other men what each order meant!

Of the others I remember the Hollywood writer Ian Hunter and Robert Rogers. Rogers had been an editor for whom I worked. Later he saved WQAM, renamed it WGNS, and then he headed the National Symphony.

He was a ~~sergeant~~ sergeant and was one of those then ordered to take basic training. It happened that I then had an assignment nearby, part of my work to prepare the ~~classified~~ ^{classified} study on The Secret History of ^{of the OSS} ~~the OSS~~, as I remember the title. Although ^{classified} it was ^{not} before long a movie ^{"O.S.S"} ^{came from it.} starring Jimmy Cagney, before going there, with a civilian photographer and a chauffeur who was a first lieutenant ~~and~~ driving a buck private—

who was the ~~bee~~ boss. I had Ben's bakery on Pennsylvania Pennsylvania Avenue a few blocks west of the White House bake ^{Ben} him a cake in which was embedded hacksaw blades.

When the officer in charge of that base near Quantico pulled rank on me and made my time there a futility I reported that and within 48 hours he was on his way overseas, I was made a corporal and put in civilian clothes.

The OSS was that way. The work was to be done, regardless of rank, and no officer was to keep a private from his assigned task.

The hero of IFF, the man who solved that problem at least to begin with, also was a private. He was Henry Koerner, an Austrian refugee and an artist. He was told to find a way to take the "IFF" from IFF in the pilots' minds and attitudes.

Henry, who after the war was a successful ^a artists who among other things did a number of TIME covers, knew how to reach the seat of the pants. Or close to it, anyway.

He painted an overseas USO show. The United Service Organization provided entertainers for the troops. Not all were Bob Hopes.

In Henry's painting, looking from backstage at all those wide-eyed GIs with their tongues out, ^{gawking,} there was a naked woman dancing. Between her buttocks and her ^{shoulders} shoulders Henry superimposed the hollow letters, large, "IFF."

He had a caption at the top reading "The equipment is good."

His caption at the bottom was "Use It!"

Made into a poster that ^{was} painted ¹⁹⁴⁵ was placed above the urinals those pilots used.

It did get their attention. The losses went down significantly and immediately.

Too bad none of Henry's posters were above the urinals used by the pilots involved in the tragedy in Iraq April 14 when two of our helicopters were shot down by two of our fighters, killing 26, of whom 15 ~~was~~ were Americans.