

Susan Caughey, past President of CMS and proprietor of Susan Benjamin Rare Prints & Maps, has an extensive collection of escape and evasion maps and ingenious compasses used in World War II. These maps printed on silk or rayon could be tightly rolled and hidden in uniforms and games.

Early in WWII special charity organizations were set up in Britain as fronts to deliver such maps and devices to prisoners of war. Christopher Clayton - Hutton was a WWI flyer assigned the task of designing them. At his request the Edinburgh firm of John Bartholomew & Son gave permission to use its maps at no charge. He helped discover how to mix pectin with ink so the print would not run. Most maps were printed double sided to increase their usefulness. The United States contributed a million yards of slightly defective parachute silk for their production. Tissue paper maps (from Japanese mulberry paper) were inserted in playing cards, Monopoly boards, cigars, shoe heels and pencils.

The U. S. first produced maps of West Africa on balloon cloth from Michelin tourist maps in late 1942. In 1943 printing on rayon began with edges fused with a solvent that deterred fraying. The U. S. focused on Asia and the Pacific and produced only two European escape maps. (Britain supplied the U. S. with over 300,000 silk maps of the European theater under the lend-lease program.) Only one U. S.-produced map included a “blood chit”, a promise to pay for escape and evasion assistance, which was printed in eight different languages. It was specially made for the Flying Tigers, who flew the Hump in the China-Burma-India theater. Surprisingly, with 3.5 million maps printed for all theaters



Ms Susan Caughey displays one of her WWII escape maps of France at a recent CMS meeting.



Map 9U, a very early miniature map printed only in black on one side and hemmed. Covers all of Germany, Luxembourg, Austria and Poland and surrounding areas, depicting boundaries both as they were in 1939 and in



during the war by both the British and the U. S., they are hard to find today. 1941. Scale:1:3,000,000, printed on silk, 14.5 x 18.5".

The British also devised many ingenious compasses to accompany the escape maps. Tiny ones were hidden in uniform buttons; some were small enough to be hidden inside a pencil eraser. Swinger compasses were simply strips of magnetized metal, marked for north. They were used as collar stays, molded into plastic combs and wrapped into cigars.



Zones of France, issued March, 1944, undoubtedly the most beautiful of the escape maps. Printed on silk, one side only, in numerous colors, edges sealed with the British paint-like substance, issued prior to the Allied invasion. Scale: 1:2,000,000. 24.5 x 22.75".