

“Give me a hand!” History Skits 1942-1945 Little-Known Episodes from World War II

REBECCA LOCKLEAR

For grades 8-12 or adults



Rebecca in Spain

BACKGROUND

In 2016, while on spring break from teaching at a high school in Switzerland, I visited friends in Spain. They took me to a café where I met a few British expats. In the course of the conversation, one man mentioned that when he was a boy in England, a German POW made a toy crocodile for him. “It was joined in three parts and swiveled around when you pulled a string attached to it.”

My world stopped. I needed to know more: the how, why, what, and where questions.

Eventually, I did find out details, which in turn led to a greater understanding of how Britain remained economically stable during World War II.

THAT was the start of this book!

THE BOOK

“Give me a hand!” stands out because it’s not about battles and strategies. Instead it focuses on true stories of compassion, friendship, and survival.

- Are you studying internees and enemy aliens? There are two skits.
- Are you interested in how the field of audiology began? Find out with a skit about a friendly fire accident and how Helen Keller helped a soldier.
- Would you like to hear something funny related to the Royal Air Force plane or an incident on a ship in the Pacific?
- Find out how two French POWs in Germany helped five German women escape from the Russian Army.



There are four pages of teaching ideas and each skit comes with background information on the event and the characters.



HOW THE SKITS CAN BE USED

- In history or English classrooms to introduce topics or as stepping stones for additional research.
- Performed as a set for a drama event, or combined with music from that era for a performance.
- For a Veterans Day program or for educational programs connected with World War II museums.



Peter Davis
Locklear

Background Information

Peter Davis (1924-2014), born in Scotland, was a navigator (also Morse Code and wireless operator) in the Royal Air Force during World War II and continued in aviation when the war was over. He married his sweetheart, had four children, and later in life retired to Berwick-upon-Tweed, England. Peter shared many funny stories about his life as a navigator. He made these remarks about navigation:

“You have to use any means possible [in order to navigate]. You have to know which way the wind is blowing to steer a proper course. And there are various ways of doing it by looking at the ground and seeing where you are. But you can’t always recognize houses on the



Pilot or Navigator?

Rebecca Locklear

Scene 1

On the airfield at a Royal Air Force station

- JAMES/PILOT:** *(walking fast, catches up to PETER)* Peter. Ready for a week of Air Corps cadets? These youngsters are what...15? 16?
- PETER/NAVIGATOR:** Something like that. I never thought we’d spend so much time training kids. Shall we take a few of them up in the air first? Then they can sit for lectures.
- JAMES/PILOT:** Sounds good to me. They should arrive at *(looks at watch)* 0800. *(smiles)* You know Peter, we might have a bit of fun if I wore your navigator’s jacket and you took my pilot’s jacket.
- PETER/NAVIGATOR:** Right. Another of your jokes, I see. *(chuckles, switches jackets)*
- JAMES/PILOT:** We’ll see what they think of it!

Scene 2

Near aircraft

- CADETS:** *(lined up near aircraft, at ease)*
- PETER/NAVIGATOR:** *(in pilot jacket, gesturing to plane)* Cadets. The Mosquito Hawk 16 aircraft you see over there is constructed of a sandwich of balsa wood between layers of plywood. It’s extremely strong. Do you know why lumber was

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DRAMA PREVIEW



Italian **Carlo Caldirola** (1912-1971) completed nautical studies in Genoa and during that time enjoyed playing musical instruments. As a ship officer, he spoke French and English fluently and knew some Spanish.

At age 28, Carlo sailed on the *SS Ada O* as second officer and arrived in New Orleans on May 30, 1940. A year later, while he was on shore leave, the ship was scuttled and the entire crew taken into custody. Though the

Captive to Romance

Rebecca Locklear

Scene 1 Columbus Hospital hallway

RAIMONDO: *(to CARLO who is coming down hallway with cart)* Carlo, my friend! On time today, I see. These long shifts make a man miss life on a ship. *(yawns, sighs)*

CARLO: *(taking over RAIMONDO's shift)* This? This is not so bad. *(indicating their work as orderlies)* What would you have? We're prisoners. But we work. We have a roof over our head. We sit out the war. We don't fight. *(sees DELLA as she goes into a hospital room, jaw drops, to RAIMONDO)* Ma che bella. *(It. Tr. But beautiful.)* Come si chiama, Raimondo? *(It. Tr. What's her name, Raimondo?)*

RAIMONDO: *(stops with cart)* Della. Nice, eh?

CARLO: *(says sweetly)* Della. Della.

DELLA: *(exits room with clipboard and pencil, comes toward men, stops when spoken to)*

CARLO: Hello. My name is Carlo Caldirola.

DELLA: *(acknowledges CARLO)* Mr. Caldirola.

CARLO: *(speaking slowly so she understands, stands with straight back)* I am the officer of a ship. I am from the campo. *(meaning internment camp)*

DELLA: *(nods)* Yes, I see. Good. Welcome. *(smiles)*

CARLO: So, I am Italian.

CONTINUED

DRAMA PREVIEW

Tasting Freedom

Rebecca Locklear

DILLON: (to JOLENE as they walk into the school theatre) Look. If you don't write something about the *Battle of the Bulge*, you won't pass the class.

JOLENE: (crosses arms) I don't care about World War II...and battles...and tactics.

DILLON: If you don't know anything about anything, that's not good either. There's that cliché about history repeating itself. (comes up with an idea) Then write about the POWs...about the ones who survived.

JOLENE: I don't want to know about bad things.

DILLON: As in man's inhumanity toward man? Perhaps you can think about positive things, not the gory details. I'll show you. (turns to light booth) Hey José, are you in the light booth?

JOSÉ: (yells down) Yeah. I'll be here for a while.

DILLON: Would you mind putting spots in different places on stage? I want to show Jolene a few things.

DRAMA PREVIEW

CONTINUED

I loved every minute of writing this book. Special thanks to thirteen veterans and family members who graciously shared their stories. I'm grateful to them for the inspiration these stories give others.

“Such is oft the course of deeds that move the wheels of the world:

Small hands do them because they must,
While the eyes of the great are elsewhere.”

~J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*



These uplifting story-skits include vivid pictures of compassionate interactions between enemies, strength and fortitude among survivors, and light-hearted pranks. Students are captivated.

~Linda Plant, middle school teacher

The detailed background on essentially unknown moments from World War II enrich the reader's understanding of ordinary people's unique experiences. Fascinating and well-researched.

~ Mary C., educator



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