

## Bizarre, Fascinating, and Wacky World War I & II Secrets. Razzle-Dazzle Lights

Suddenly the "Bomber Destroyer" Nazi Aircraft shuddered violently, and quickly went into a tail spin. It had been hit squarely in the middle of the cockpit. However, it was not a bullet or bomb, or any kind of explosion, but a Razzle Dazzle Beam of Light. The light poured through the windows and ripped into the pilot's brain. He tried to squeeze his eyes shut, but the glare sliced through his eyelids. He covered his eyes with his hand, but that didn't help either. The light was so strong and bright, he was partially mesmerized. He soon became dizzy, and

Nazi Fighter Bomber  
Messerschmitt BF 110



then very nauseated. The light overwhelmed his senses and made rational thought impossible. He felt as if his brain was being torn from his skull, and the whirling light affected every member of the crew the same way. The aircraft is a super Bomber Destroyer Messerschmitt Me-110 of the Nazi Luftwaffe Air Force. It is the newest and fastest twin engine German fighter plane. It carries four 20mm cannons, two 30mm cannons, two machine guns, and four rocket launchers. Yet, all of these weapons are useless against a beam of light. The Nazi fighter plane is completely out of control and crashes violently into a large sand dune. The pilot is pulled from the wreckage just before it explodes.

"My name is Fritz and that is all of my name that I will give you. I am completely ashamed that I have been shot down by a beam of light. I was on a special mission for my Fuhrer Adolf Hitler. I was going to bomb the Suez Canal. The Suez Canal was the most important line in the British Supply Chain. It connected the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea. This cuts the maritime distance between London, England and far eastern ports almost in half. The canal is 107 miles long, 70 yards wide and 42 feet

deep. This size makes it extremely vulnerable, like a sitting duck. The Germans wanted to close it down, or even block it temporarily, by sinking a single ship. That would force British convoys to make the longer,

hazardous voyage around Cape of Good Hope, South Africa.

The British army officer conducting the questioning of Fritz is Lieutenant Jasper Maskelyne. He is head of the Camouflage Experimental Unit and responsible for the Razzle-Dazzle Lights that brought down the enemy fighter bomber Me-110 aircraft.

The time is the middle of August 1944 and the place is near Cairo, Egypt. It is out in the desert called the Abbassia Encampment. Lieutenant Jasper Maskelyne is called the World War II Magician and that is exactly what he is, a magician. His grandfather, John Nevel Maskelyne, was a renowned magician, and so was his father Nevil Maskelyne. They had passed on their magic to Jasper and he became the top magician of Europe, who made his stage debut when he was only nine years old. England declared war on Germany on September 3, 1939. Jasper was, at that time, 38 years old. He was around 6 feet 4 inches tall and was very good looking. His hair was black and gleaming and combed straight back. He had a neatly trimmed mustache and a cleft in his chin. He made a series of movies,

starring as a detective who used magic to solve crimes. He was famous as a top magician all around the world. However, now that England was at war, he wanted to use his magic against the Nazis. But, the

British army turned him down for nearly two years. Finally, Prime Minister Winston Churchill was contacted and Jasper became a British Army Lieutenant. Major Geoffrey Barkas was Jasper's commander, who gave him permission to select his own crew. Jasper's second in command was Lieutenant Frank Knox. They interviewed 72 men and finally settled for a crew of five. Soon, Jasper



Jasper Maskelyne

and his crew became known as The Magic Gang. Then, he started drawing plans for his headquarters, in what became known as Magic Valley. The work they knew was coming, a large space would be needed. So, twenty different types of buildings were erected. The nearby residents were afraid

to enter it, because they were told it was the "Valley of the Djinn" - a bad genie with magical powers.

The great Nazi General Erwin Rommel and his Afrika Korps were sweeping the desert, pummeling the British army very badly. There was a legend about Rommel that he had magical powers. He was supposed to be able to foretell the future; it was called "Fingerspitzengefuh". He seemed to know what the British were going to do ahead of time. Libertine Jasper Maskelyne is determined to prove that the Rommel legend is a

bunch of hogwash. Major Barkas gives Jasper his first big assignment. "The big brass want you to hide the 'Suez Canal.'" "Is that all," Jasper replied. Barkas and Lieutenant Frank Knox both didn't believe it was possible, but Jasper exclaimed, "Hey presto! Nothing is impossible in my world of magic." So Jasper and Frank flew to Suez to inspect the canal coastline defense system. A thin line of anti-aircraft gun placements and searchlights were the sum total. Jasper returned to Magic Valley, confident that he could make the Suez Canal disappear. "There is no reason why it cannot be done," he said. While Frank swore that the task was absolutely impossible. We will station searchlights along the canal and create a curtain of light. If the searchlights are bright enough, it would be

impossible to see anything through them. It would be like trying to see the filament in a lighted bulb. Tin reflectors properly arranged around the beacon would magnify its projection. Twenty-four fan shaped reflectors welded to a steel band would fit snugly around the lens. This would

allow one searchlight to produce twenty-four separate beams, each covering the same sky area as the original. Next, the tin reflectors were bolted to a rotating metal ring, powered by a small motor. This would cause them to spin rapidly, and send a whirling spray of light spokes up into the sky. Jasper took off with the crew of a C-47 cargo plane accompanied by a spitfire fighter plane. They were going to fly into the



Lieutenant Jasper Maskelyne

Dazzle lights in order to test them. When in the center of the tornado of whirling white lights at 12,000 feet, everything went haywire. The spitfire went straight up, then fell back on its tail, and began somersaulting downward. Then, the C-47 was tail spinning, twisting toward the desert. The pilot was fighting for every inch, but the plane was completely out of control. Then Frank Knox, who was in charge of the searchlights, switched them off ahead of time. The C-47 was down from 12,000 feet to 600 feet. The pilot was barely able to pull out of its dive to safety. The spitfire was in worse shape, it was just 400 feet above the desert. It was also flying upside down, and the pilot didn't realize what was happening. Just before he would crash into the sand, he pulled up the plane to safety. Later he joked, "My spitfire had an itchy back, so I was scratching it on the desert sand."



by Cecil Owen

Jasper's Razzle-Dazzle searchlights worked very efficiently. That is why Fritz's Me-110 crashed into the desert. The German Air Force sent several more planes, several more times. But, they never did find the

Suez Canal and they all ended up the same way, crashing in the desert. Lieutenant Jasper Maskelyne was later promoted to Major. His exploits became legendary. He moved the Harbor of Alexandria, Egypt, turned tanks into trucks, created an entire army out of shadows, launched a phantom fleet of submarines. He also caused a 700

foot German battleship, the Admiral Graf Spee, to sail down the River Thames in England. But this battleship had been sunk a year before.

He devised escape kits for prisoners of war, built a mini-submarine that sank a cargo ship; the ship was taking "heavy water" to the Nazi A-bomb that saved the lives of hundreds of allied aviators. This was only some of Jasper's amazing exploits; certainly he was a very extraordinary man. He survived the World War and lived a full life. Jasper Maskelyne, The War Magician, died in Kenya, Africa in 1973.

Sources:  
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