

Bizarre, Fascinating, and Wacky World War I & II Secrets. Moonbeams for Monica

Everyone stood up as the three judges entered the court-room. All of them wore their black SS Gestapo military uniforms. They sat down under a huge portrait of Adolf Hitler. The presiding judge looked sternly at the two rows of prisoners facing him. In a clear ringing voice he began to read the sentences:

Georg Brockhoff Quistgaard - Death! Arne Lutzen-Hansen - Death! Carl Jorgen Larsen - Death! And Monica Emily Wichfeld also condemned to death! All four will be executed by a firing squad!

Georg Brockhoff Quistgaard: A writer by trade, involved in retrieving arms drops.

Arne Lutzen-Hansen: Trained in England to be a radio operator.

Carl Larsen: Cashier in Arhus private bank, supplied ammunition and funds to saboteurs on Island of Zealand.

Monica Emily Wichfeld: hiding downed pilots and Danish leaders in her attic. Hiding and delivering guns and explosives. Printing and delivering the underground newspaper, "Frit Denmark" (Free Denmark). Retrieving arms drops from waterproof containers in her big lake. Collecting funds for the movement.

The audience was stunned and began to complain, following the sentencing of Monica. It was the first death verdict given to a woman in Denmark for several centuries. It is indeed a very solemn and terrible moment. But, Monica remains completely calm and unmoved, she just smiles.

The time is May 12, 1944, just two months before her 50th birthday. The place is the Dagmar House in downtown Copenhagen, Denmark. It is a large business building taken over by the Nazi Gestapo. Joined onto Mrs. Monica Emily Massey-Beresford De Wichfeld is a very elegant aristocrat, born in London, England. She has such an

impressive grace and noble bearing, she immediately stands out in a crowd. She does not possess a sexy figure, but was a charming and attractive beauty. Everyone is impressed by her quiet and unbending courage. Monica is married to a Danish nobleman, whose name had been Jorgen Wichmand. But the Danish king, Christian VII granted the family a patent of nobility with the name of Von Wichfeld. Monica and Jorgen have a large mansion called "Engestofte" on the Danish island of Lolland. It contains 40 rooms with 100 windows. It faces South, and all of the main rooms are located on that side. They all face a large beautiful lake called Maribo.

Joined onto the northernmost tip of Germany is the small country of Denmark. (Copenhagen is the capitol) It consists of the mainland of Jylland (Jusland) and 100 inhabited islands. Some of the most important islands are Fyn, Lolland, and Zealand. Denmark is low and flat, less than 10 ft. above sea level. In fact, the highest point is Mt. Ejer Bavenhoj, only 565 ft. high. The whole country of Denmark is slightly smaller than our state of West Virginia. However, it houses a population of over five million people. It was occupied by Nazi Germany for nearly five years (1940-1945). Now the Danes, as the people call themselves, were very highly resentful of the occupying Nazi Germans. So they formed a very strong underground resistance organization. And completely unknown by the Jorgen, her husband, Monica quickly became a top secret leader in this move-

ment.

Now the SOE (strategic operations executive) was started by England's Prime Minister, Sir Winston Churchill. It was a secret military organization that trains all Danish underground resistance saboteurs in London, England. One



Monica and Jorgen Wichfeld at Engestofte

day the SOE sent Monica a former Danish fisherman from the Island of Fyn. His name is Jacob Jensen, but his code name is Jens Jacobsen. His job is to help pinpoint likely places for the dropping of arms by parachute. He also is to instruct local patriots in the use of firearms and high explosives. Jacob is meticulous in carrying out orders, and his work is very good. Monica has no specific reason to distrust him, yet she cannot completely trust the man. Even though she double checked him out with the SOE and he passed their tough scrutiny with flying colors. Every agent is given a cyanide (poison) pill to swallow, and foil his captors. But Monica secretly doubted that he would ever use his.

In December of 1943, Jacob is sent to Jutland, the mainland of Denmark. There he is safely hidden in

the town of Arhus. But there, in defiance of all security precautions, he makes several long distance phone calls to the town of Randers. The Gestapo have the phone line tapped, and swoop down to arrest him. After several days, as Monica had feared, he didn't use his poison pill. Instead he brakes down and becomes a "stoolie" for the Nazi Gestapo. Forty four leaders in the underground movement are arrested, including Monica.

Monica is arrested on January 13, 1944, and barely given time to dress. She was dressed immaculately in a brown tweed shooting and riding suit with a cashmere sweater, woolen stockings, and highly polished brown brogues (oxfords). She is an attractive woman who will be 50 years old in just two months. Her dark hair is gracefully parted, revealing a calm attractive face, with just a trace of powder and lip gloss. However, when she is sent to prison, this is traded for the standard prison uniform. It is a very weird and hideous affair: It consists of wooden clogs, gray stockings, bloomers with a patch in the back, and a dismal looking black dress. And a yellow armband, the sign of your prisoner status.

Monica's main Gestapo interrogator for five whole months is Heinrich Nagel. With several others, she tried to break her down and make her confess. Sometimes the questions would last for ten hours. She had been used to smoking up to six packs of cigarettes a day. They were all cut off, but still she did not weaken.

There was still such an uproar over her death sen-

tence, that it was changed to life imprisonment. But her three compatriots were duly executed by firing squad!

There is usually not indoor plumbing in the German prisons so everyone is issued a "kubel" (chamber pot) you are allowed to empty it only once a day. However, you did not worry about it running, for water is also severely rationed. You barely have enough to take care of your basic needs. (For us in the south, a kubel (chamber pot) is an old fashioned "slop jar.") Even today in Germany, many houses don't have indoor plumbing as we do. If you rent an unfurnished house in many parts of Germany, bare walls is about all you get. If you want a sink or bathroom commode, you must go to a "installieren", a plumbing house, and rent a sink and commode. Then you pay the plumber to install them for you.

At the end of January of 1945, the Germans decided to move all foreign prisoners from Cottbus to a small hill town called Waldheim. So Monica and 179 others are herded into three cattle cars. The snow was deep and they were clad only in their flimsy prison garb. The trip took three days and nights, and the cold was intense. It was below freezing and no heat at all was provided. When they arrived in town, the snow was still deep, and the women were forbidden to even wrap blankets around themselves. The march from the train station to the local Lutheran church was Monica's final effort. For the nightmare journey from Cottbus destroyed the last shred of her physical resistance. She collapsed in the church, with a high fever racked with a cough. After a week, she developed viral pneumonia and was put into the sick ward.

Years earlier, Monica had visited a fortune-teller, who had described the previous years of her life in accurate detail. She predicted, Mon-



by Cecil Owen

ica, you will die just before you turn fifty!

On a wall in the church on the Island of Lolland, Denmark is a stone plaque commemorating Monica De Wichfeld as the heroine of the Danish underground movement. Flowers are placed there almost every-day of the year. She truly was a remarkable lady, she was urged to flee to London, England. There she would have been safe, but she stayed in Denmark to inspire her fellow countrymen to keep the faith and resist the enemy.

The evening of February 27, 1945 was a beautiful moon-lit night. Everything was still and frosty, not a cloud in the sky. Monica could see the full moon rising over the town from her hospital bed. All her life she had loved the moon, and admired it's cold, distant beauty. Monica and her brother Jack used to walk on the cliffs of Donegal by moonlight and climb a "magical staircase to the moon." Pastor Viereck came to see Monica late that evening. Pastor, will you please open the window wide so I can see the moon beams more clearly? When the pastor returned to her bedside, Monica lay serene on her pillow. With a beam of moonlight crossing her face. Monica had stopped breathing, she was taking her final journey with her moonbeams!

A few months later, when the war was over, a special Danish commission came to take Monica's body back to Denmark. But sadly, when the grave was opened up, it was empty, her body has never been found!

-Sources: TV History Channel, "Monica" by Christine Sutherland