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Printing News at the Front

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Printing News at the Front

Abstract

Contextual essay about the first issue of the newspaper *Stars and Stripes* to be published in France following the Normandy invasion.

Keywords

Stars and Stripes, Normandy, World War II, Printing, Book History

Disciplines

History

Comments

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24
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Printing News at the Front

POSTED BY MITCH FRAAS IN POSTS

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A quick post today to highlight a find made in our drawers of oversized and broadsheet materials. Our talented catalogers are in the process of re-describing materials in these drawers and one of them, Elsa Varela, alerted me to a puzzling piece of 20th century history she had found.



— Vol. 1 No. 1 of *The Stars and Stripes*
Friday, June 16, 1944 (Penn Call# AB9
St285 944s)

At first glance this piece of World War II ephemera seems pretty straight forward – it’s an issue of the venerable military newspaper *The Stars and Stripes*, millions of copies of which were printed during the war. What puzzled Elsa was that the date on this issue

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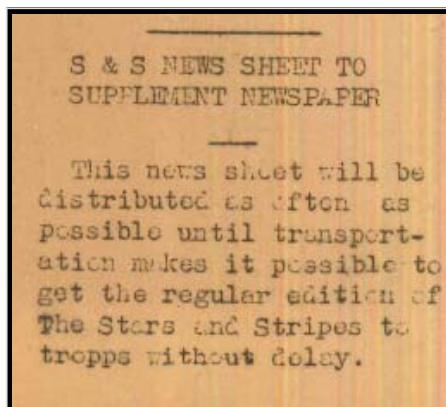
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didn't seem to match information available from other libraries about the paper's publication history. Our copy, dated June 16, 1944 claimed to be Vol. 1 No. 1 of the "Continental Edition" that is, the first issue of *The Stars and Stripes* printed in France after D-Day. The problem was, that every other library seemed to believe that Vol. 1 No. 1 of *The Stars and Stripes* in France was published July 4, 1944 and looked quite different [1].



- Vol. 1 No. 1 of the "true" Continental edition printed July 4, 1944 at Cherbourg. Photo of a copy sent home on July 5th by a soldier in France (<http://wwii-letters-to-wilma.blogspot.com/2011/07/05-july-1944.html>)

After some digging around in the literature on the newspaper and records available from the National Archives in microfilm, we determined that the June 16 issue represents one of the few surviving mimeographed newsheets produced by *The Stars and Stripes* staff in the outbuilding of a Chateau in **Sainte-Marie-du-Mont** near Utah beach. In the days following the Normandy landings, several members of *The Stars and Stripes* staff, including a former sportswriter named Charles Kiley came ashore to assist in disseminating information to the newly arrived troops. With no printing plants available, Kiley and others took up a mimeograph machine, popped in pre-printed letterhead marked "Continental Edition" brought from England, and began churning out one-page news sheets for distribution to the front lines only miles away [2]. According to a note on the sheet, they "will be distributed as often as possible" until the London edition could be distributed Sources vary on how many



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sheets Kiley printed that first day in June, anywhere from 5,000 to 75,000 but however many did go out, very few survive today. According to Jean-Yves Simon who has [written extensively on *The Stars and Stripes* in Normandy](#), there is [one very torn copy of this edition at the New York Public Library](#) [3].

The news presented in the newsheet edition at Penn focuses on developments in the war, ranging from local offensives in Normandy to the latest bombing of Tokyo and testifies to the voracious appetite for information on the part of front line GIs. As a historian I'm very much interested in what the very existence and material production of this newsheet tells us about the importance placed on information-distribution in times of war. At first glance it's almost incredible to imagine the commitment of the Army to landing reporters and press officials with their mimeograph machines and other equipment in Normandy and to have them driving around a war zone printing off papers and distributing them to troops. In fact, by July, the Army and *The Stars and Stripes* secured newspaper printing plants at Cherbourg and Carentan to print massive runs of the paper for distribution in France.

As a final coda, Penn's copy also has a noteworthy provenance. As attested by the signatures around the edges of the issue, it was owned by [Adolph G. Rosengarten, Jr.](#) a Penn Law alum and Penn Libraries benefactor who [served in Army intelligence](#) during the war and was on Gen. Omar Bradley's staff in Normandy. Though we haven't identified all the signatures on the issue it seems likely that they are from Rosengarten's fellow officers in the General Staff Corps.

[1] For a guide to Library of Congress holdings of *Stars and Stripes* see <http://www.loc.gov/rr/news/starsandstripes.html>

[2] A variety of sources shed light on the Normandy operation of Stars & Stripes. For a published account see [Hutton and Rooney, *The Story of the Stars and Stripes* \(New York, 1946\), p.118](#). Also see [Otis McCormick, "Troop information and education" Information bulletin \(Magazine of U.S. Military Government in Germany\), No. 134 \(May 1948\), p.14](#). The most detailed account is provided in a formerly classified July 7, 1944 interview given by Lt. Col. Llewellyn who was in charge of Stars & Stripes in Normandy now National Archives and Records Administration (College Park) RG 498 Administrative History Collection File 492S. Llewellyn noted that on "D+7,8,9,10,11, a small mimeo issue of news (with a pre-printed masthead) was also distributed." He also recalled that about 75,000 mimeo copies were made by Kiley at Ste Marie Dumont.

- [Leonard B. Meyer papers, 1935-2008](#) May 6, 2014

- [The Joseph G. Rosengarten collection](#) April 30, 2014

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[3] There are likely additional copies in the possession of veterans around the country as noted in [this 1994 article](#). See [Simon, *The Stars & Stripes : Normandie 1944 : The Official Daily of the US Armed Forces = Quotidien officiel des Forces Americaines : en*](#)

[Bataille de Normandie \(Université de Caen Basse-Normandie, 2004\)](#). Electronic versions of many of his thesis materials, including the NYPL copy, are available at <http://www.stars-stripes.info>

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About Mitch Fraas

[Mitch Fraas](#) is the Scholar in Residence at the Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts at the University of Pennsylvania Libraries. He is also the interim director of the Penn digital humanities forum. At Penn, Mitch works on a variety of projects cutting across general and special collections, with a special focus on digital humanities. He holds doctoral and master's degrees in history from Duke University and earned his bachelor's degree at Boston College. His doctoral dissertation examined the legal culture of British India in the 17th and 18th centuries, arguing for the existence of a unified early modern British imperial legal culture whether in Philadelphia, Bombay, or London.

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