

By high noon, the announcement was shouted out for the departure of the Anzio Express from the Depot Station. German soldiers were loading their troops onto the train to make their escape from the Allied Forces closing in on Rome north back to Germany.

As the train rolled forward from the station, passengers heard the growl of a damaged American Patrol Airplane over head. Shortly after, the train approached an open field where the shot down Allied airmen were on the ground cutting loose their parachutes and making their escape into the fields. The Anzio Express came to a halt at the field and the Germans funneled off the train into the field to capture the escaping pilots. The

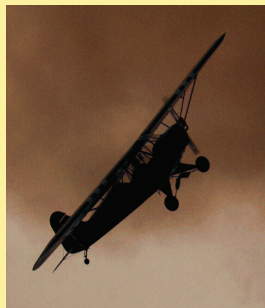


Photo by Rebecca Tulloch

Photos by Tom Davison

pilots were brought on the board to be taken back to Germany. While on the train, the passengers experienced papers checks and many other small skits that played out for museum guests to witness.

Children and adults were equally excited to be interacting with the WWII actors in such a unique way. Near the end of the excursion, the train was stopped again as the Allies attack the Germans and rescued the downed airmen. Later that afternoon, the Germans counter attacked with a full out battle in the steam engine bone yard which doubled for an Italian rail yard some where outside of Rome. Allies and Axis soldiers battled for victory in and around the locomotives. The crowd cheered and rooted for an American victory through an explosive demonstration of a WWII battle.

The most moving part of the day was the reenactment of the North Platte Canteen. Shortly after the start of WWII, troop trains became a very common site in America. On December 25th, 1941, Rae Wilson along with other women volunteers of town North Platte, Nebraska met the 1st Troop train stopping at North Platte with home-cooked food, fruit, gifts and coffee. Rae wrote, "We can do our part... Why can't we, the people of North Platte and the other towns surrounding our community, start and open a Canteen now?" At its peak, 3,000-5,000 troops were being served each day by volunteers.

North Platte Canteen during WWII IRM Canteen 2009



Photo Courtesy of Union Pacific Railroad.

Photo by Rebecca Tulloch



Photos by Tom Davison

The soldiers were packed into rail passenger cars with little or no food, sleeping quarters, and very few rest rooms. The home sick soldiers were tired from little rest and scared about what lied ahead for them once they got into the fight. Most of these troop trains were pulled by steam locomotives and required regular water stops about every 50 miles or so. At these water stop, the troops would have a little time to get off the train and stretch their legs. Ten minutes later, the whistle blew and all the troops piled back on to the train. North Platte, Nebraska was and still is a major rail hub for the Union Pacific Railroad.