

Axis Sally Biography

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Biography

Mildred Elizabeth Gillars was born in Portland, Maine on November 18, 1900. She graduated from high school in Conneaut, Ohio, and attended Ohio Wesleyan University from 1918 to 1922 before leaving without a degree to go to Europe. In 1940 Gillars took a job with German radio. A year later the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, and the United States declared war against the Axis Powers, Germany, Italy, and Japan.

When Allied troops landed in North Africa on November 8, 1942, Gillars began broadcasting Nazi propaganda from Tunis, Tunisia. For the next three years Gillars worked as a propagandist for the Axis Powers in Europe. Allied soldiers who heard Gillars' radio broadcasts nicknamed her "Axis Sally." Gillars typically greeted Allied forces by saying "Hello, gang. Throw down those little old guns and toddle off home. There's no getting the Germans down!" In 1943 Gillars was the highest paid performer in German foreign broadcasting, earning more than 3,000 marks a month.

After the Nazis surrendered in May of 1945, U.S. military officers found Gillars living in the cellar of a bombed out building in Berlin, Germany. Gillars was immediately arrested and shipped back to the United States. She was prosecuted for treason in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. Her trial started on January 24, 1949. Less than three months later the jury returned a verdict of guilty. Judge Edward M. Curran sentenced her to serve ten-to-thirty years in prison and imposed a fine of \$10,000. Gillars was released from prison in 1961. She died of cancer in 1988.