

## Chapter 16 – INTERMISSION – Has Anybody Seen My Boy? [v4]

It is now mid-January of 1945 and the war was plodding on. There would be no more letters home from George and no one would know why until after the war. Families were clipping newspapers and watching newsreels searching for any clues, images or news about their loved ones. On January 19, Hazel received the following invitation from the New York Chapter of the American Red Cross who had been a continuing source of support throughout this ordeal. There was no doubt she would be there and eventually brought her good friend from church, Hannah Swayze (Hazel called her "cupcake").

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THE AMERICAN RED CROSS  
NEW YORK CHAPTER  
(BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN AND BRONX)  
315 LEXINGTON AVENUE  
(CORNER 38TH STREET)  
NEW YORK 16, N. Y.  
MURRAY HILL 4-4455

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MRS. WILLIAM KINNICUTT DRAPER  
HONORARY MEMBER

January 19th, 1945.

To the Next of Kin of Prisoners of War  
and Civilian Internees:

The American Red Cross, in cooperation with the War Department, extends a cordial invitation to attend a meeting to be held Thursday evening, February 1st, 1945, at seven o'clock, at the Armory of the 17th Regiment of the New York Guard, Park Avenue and 54th Street, New York, N. Y.

This will be the first of a nation-wide speaking tour to 30 cities by a group of twelve or more repatriated men who have been Prisoners of War. These meetings have been planned jointly by the National Headquarters and General H. H. Arnold, Commanding General of the Army Air Forces.

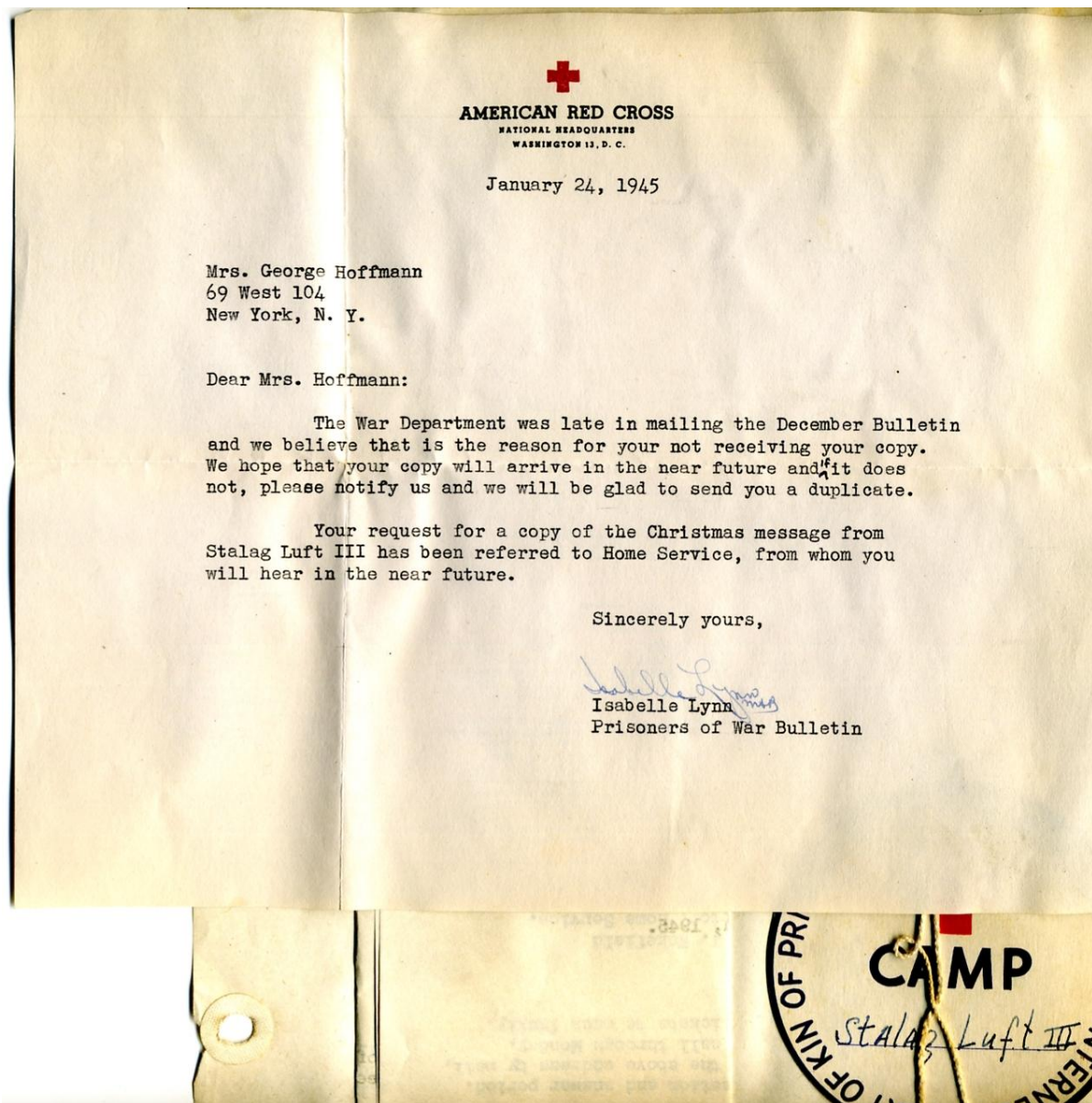
Lt. Colonel Joseph B. Kavanaugh, will represent the Provost Marshal's Office, Prisoner of War Section. There will also be two escaped American Prisoners of War from Camps in the Far East, Miss Sadie L. James, A.R.C., Consultant, Prisoner of War Program and Dr. D. A. Davis, Associate General Secretary, World's Committee of the Y.M.C.A.

The audience will be invited to participate in a question and answer period. Admission may be secured by applying to the Red Cross at the above address by mail, telephone, (Murray Hill 4-4455, Ext. 118) or by personal call through Monday, January 29th, 1945. The distribution is limited to two tickets to each family.

(Miss) Edna J. Wakefield  
Director, Home Service.

(Mrs.) E. R. Sturges  
Casualty & P.O.W. Section

Struck by the lack of letters and expected newsletters Hazel sought information directly from the Red Cross and received this reply.



No news!!

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A few days later the following letter arrived from Army Air Force Headquarters.



HEADQUARTERS, ARMY AIR BASE  
MITCHEL FIELD, NEW YORK

IN REPLY  
REFER TO:

22 January 1945

Mrs. Hazel J. Hofmann  
69 West 104th Street  
New York, N. Y.

Dear Mrs. Hofmann:

I am honored to have been selected to make a presentation to you of the Air Medal with one (1) Oak Leaf Cluster awarded to your husband by direction of the President.

On Wednesday, January 31, 1945, it is anticipated that several such presentations will be made at Mitchel Field in conjunction with a special ceremony. If you wish to participate in this ceremony to receive the decoration, both my staff and myself would consider it a privilege to have you with us. If, on the other hand, you find that circumstances prevent your being here or if you should wish to forego the ceremony, I shall be glad to comply with a request to send the decoration to you by registered mail.

If it is your intention to be here on Wednesday, January 31, 1945, you may want to invite intimate friends and relatives to be here with you. They will be most welcome. Just inform me as soon as possible of the full name of the person who will accept presentation of the decoration and the number of guests whom you intend to invite. May I ask that everyone in your party arrive at the Reception Center opposite the Main Gate to Mitchel Field at 2:00 P.M., Wednesday, January 31, 1945. You will be met there by my representatives.

Please be assured that both my staff and myself are sincerely interested in gratifying your wishes in this matter as to the manner in which you desire to receive the decoration.

Sincerely,

*E. E. Hildreth*  
E. E. HILDRETH  
Colonel, Air Corps  
Commanding

Please address reply to:  
Commanding Officer  
Army Air Base  
Mitchel Field, N. Y.  
Attention: Awards & Decorations



The Air Medal was awarded for number of combat missions flown and the Oak Leaf Cluster was a designation of a second Air Medal award for being shot down.



(This photo of three-year-old Mike Cargill was clipped by Hazel from the NY Times) As was customary for MIAs and POWs, families back home were given the opportunity to accept commendations on their behalf.

Johnnie remembers "medal day" too - Pictured here with three generations; Hazel, Hazel Sr. and Nanna, a former piano player in silent movie theaters



**Kin Receive GI's Medals**

Twenty-five soldiers from the Greater New York area, all but one of them classed either as prisoners of war or missing in action, were honored in an award ceremony at Mitchel Field.

Lt. Col. Everett W. Holstrom presented the medals, which were received in most instances by the mothers, fathers or wives of the men.

The one award posthumously granted was that of 2nd Lt. Robert G. Roeder, of 161 Boulevard, Scarsdale, the Air Medal being received by his mother, Mrs. Walter G. Roeder. Nine-months-old Richard Carl Walz received the Air Medal awarded to his father, 2nd Lt. J. G. Walz, 3207 Hull ave., The Bronx, and John Charles Hoffmann, two years old, accepted the Air Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster awarded his father, 2nd Lt. George A. Hoffmann, of 69 W. 104th st., Manhattan.

*Jan. 31-45*



On the day after the medal presentation at Mitchell Field on Long Island Hazel and good friend from church, Hannah Swayze (her nickname was "Cupcake"), went downtown to the 17<sup>th</sup> Regiment Armory on 34<sup>th</sup> Street. The meeting was also attended by 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. William Higgins who had been a former POW at Stalag Luft III.

**MEETING OF NEXT OF KIN OF PRISONERS OF WAR AND CIVILIAN  
INTERNEES OF THE NEW YORK METROPOLITAN AREA TO HEAR  
REPATRIATED AND ESCAPED PRISONERS OF WAR**

at the

**17th REGIMENT ARMORY**

34th Street and Park Avenue

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 1st, 1945, at 7 P.M.

*Arranged by*

**NEW YORK CHAPTER - AMERICAN RED CROSS**

*In Cooperation with*

**THE ARMY AIR FORCES AND LOCAL RED CROSS CHAPTERS**

Presiding Officer:

**COLBY M. CHESTER,**

Chairman of the Board, New York Chapter

**AIR TRANSPORT COMMAND BAND**

**INVOCATION**

**Captain PAY H. PRINCE**

Base Chaplain, Air Transport Command

**Lt. Col. JOSEPH B. KAVANAUGH**

Chief, American Section, Prisoner of War Information Bureau  
Office of the Provost Marshal General, Washington, D. C.

**Miss SADIE L. JAMES**

Consultant, Prisoners of War Program, North Atlantic Area, A. R. C.

**Dr. ETHAN T. COLTON**

Executive Secretary, War Prisoners Aid, N. Y. M. C. A.

**Captain RAGNAR (Rug) BARHAUG**

Comanding Officer, Repatriated Prisoners of War Tour

**Sgt. HAROLD SHEAHAN**

Repatriated Prisoner of War, Stalag XVII-B

**First Lt. WM. F. HIGGINS, Jr.**

Repatriated Prisoner of War, Stalag Luft III

**Corp. WILLARD E. HALL**

Escaped Japanese Prisoner of War

Question and Answer period with the assistance of

**RED BARBER**

## PRISONERS OF WAR FROM GERMANY

### Capt. Ragnar Barhaug

Air Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, Purple Heart

Pilot of a B-17, Capt. Barhaug baled out when his plane was put out of action on a bombing mission over Hamburg, suffering fractures of the pelvis and back. He was held prisoner at Dulag Luft (Frankfort) and Stalag Luft III, and repatriated after 8½ months. His home is Casper, Wyoming.

### 1st Lt. William F. Higgins, Jr.

Air Medal, Purple Heart

Lt. Higgins, a B-17 pilot was the last to leave his plane when three engines were knocked out during a mission over Kiel. He blacked out after leaving the plane and woke up two days later in a hospital. He was confined at Stalag Luft III for 13 months before being exchanged. His home is Hamden, Conn.

### 1st Lt. James N. Groves

Purple Heart

Navigator of a B-17, Lt. Groves suffered loss of his right eye and severe body wounds from flak when his plane was shot down during a mission over Bremen. He was confined at Heilag and at 4D/Z for 20 months before being repatriated. His home is Bayfield, Colo.

### 1st Lt. Cecil B. Fisher

Purple Heart

A B-17 pilot, it was necessary to amputate a foot and finger because of wounds received when his plane was shot down while bombing submarine pens at Emden, Germany. He was held at Stalag Luft I and Dulag Luft IV. He comes from ~~Bethlehem, W. Va.~~

### 2nd Lt. Stewart E. Cooper

Purple Heart

Lt. Cooper, bombardier of the B-17 piloted by Lt. Fisher, shot down while bombing submarine pens at Emden, received multiple flak wounds as he parachuted to the ground. He was treated in the Marine Hospital at Emden and at Arnheim before being sent to Stalag Luft III. Exchange came 11 months after he landed in Germany. His home is Cedargrove, N. J.

### Staff Sgt. Azzan McKagan

Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Medal  
Three Oak Leaf Clusters, Purple Heart

Sgt. McKagan, an armament gunner on a B-17, baled out over Cologne, Germany, receiving head and shoulder injuries and flak wounds in the back and legs. A prisoner for 13 months he was confined at Dulag Luft 17-B, Austria, and Heilag 4 D/Z near Annaburg, Germany, before being exchanged. His home is Milwaukee, Wis.

### Staff Sgt. Martin W. Nissen

Purple Heart

Top turret engineer of a B-24 which was forced to crash-land in Germany, Sgt. Nissen received flak wounds and was confined at Stalag Luft VI for 8 months before being repatriated. He resides at Oakland, Calif.

### Staff Sgt. Edward P. Troy

Distinguished Service Cross, Distinguished Flying Cross,  
Air Medal with Three Oak Leaf Clusters, the Purple Heart

A gunner on a B-17, Sgt. Troy's plane exploded in the air while on a mission. Thrown clear he parachuted to safety but suffered head wounds. He was confined at Stalag Luft 9 C for 13 months before being repatriated. Sgt. Troy's home is Houston, Texas.

### Staff Sgt. Ralph J. Tomek

Purple Heart

A B-17 waist gunner, Sgt. Tomek suffered only hand injuries when his plane was set on fire by bursts from a Focke-Wulf. He was confined for varying periods in Camps 7 A, 3 B, 8 B, 17 B, 13 B and 14 B before being exchanged.

### Sgt. Harold Sheahan

Purple Heart

Radio operator on a B-24, Sgt. Sheahan was blown out of his plane during a high altitude bombing mission over Vienna and fell 5,000 feet before regaining consciousness and pulling the ripcord of his chute. He suffered injuries in the back and to his left hand and leg and was confined at Dulag Luft near Wetzlar and at 17 B for 11 months before being repatriated. His home is West Chicago, Ill.

## PRISONERS WHO ESCAPED FROM THE JAPANESE

### Technician 3rd Grade Donald I. McPherson

Bronze Star, Purple Heart

Captured at the fall of Corregidor, Technician McPherson was a prisoner of war in the Philippines for 32 months, being held captive at Malay-Balay, Davao, and Lansang camps. He effected his escape on Sept. 7, 1944 when a Japanese ship in which he and 750 Americans were being transported to the Continent of Asia was torpedoed off Mindanao. He was one of 83 American survivors. His home is Lincoln, Nebr.

### Corp. Willard E. Hall

Purple Heart, Presidential Citation

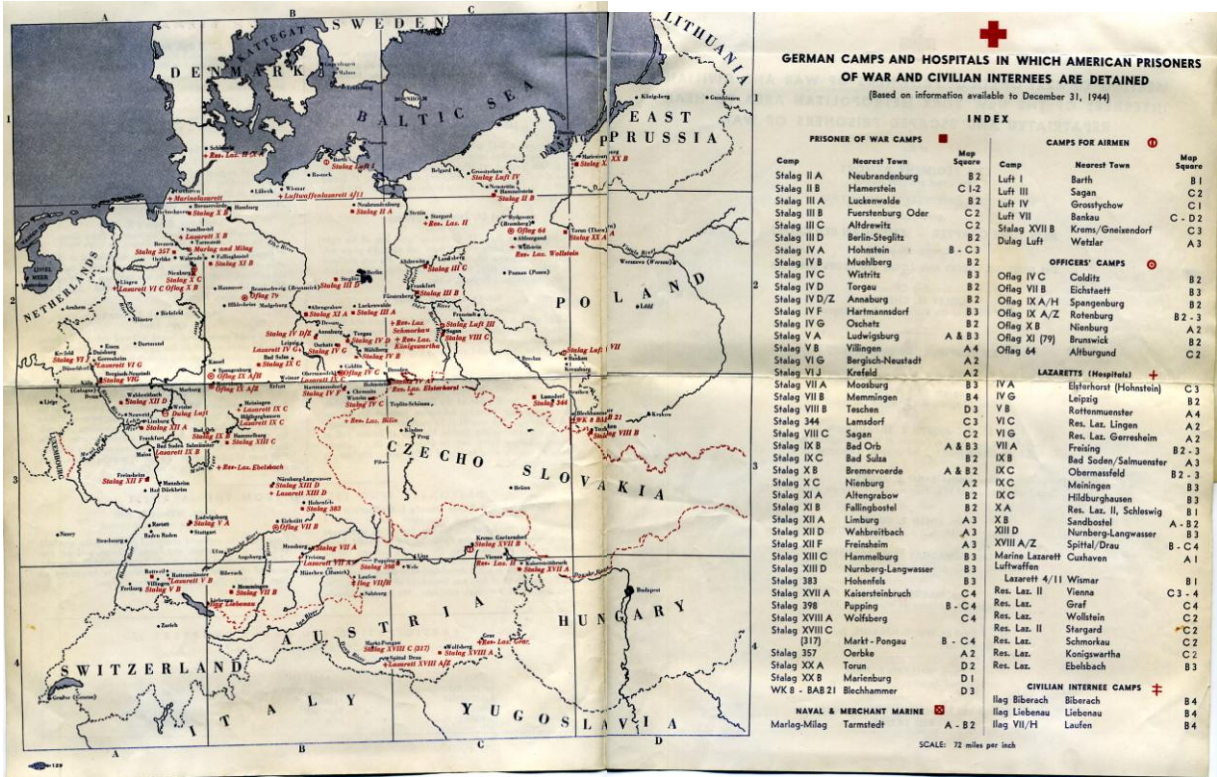
Corp. Hall, also captured at the fall of Corregidor, was held at Camp I Cabanatuan, and Camp II Davao, and was one of the 83 survivors, together with Technician McPherson who escaped when the Japanese transport was torpedoed on Sept. 7, 1944. He comes from Baker, Oregon.

## PARTICIPATING RED CROSS CHAPTERS

BROOKLYN	NEW YORK (Manhattan and the Bronx)	QUEENS NORTH SHORE	STATEN ISLAND
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	ADJACENT		
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WESTCHESTER	PASSAIC		NEWARK
YONKERS	ELIZABETH		NORTH HUDSON
BAYONNE	HOBOKEN		PATERSON

A map showing the locations of POW camps was distributed along with a booklet for the families of the prisoners. Considering the actual conditions at Stalag Luft III described in Chapter 15, it is interesting to see the picture that was painted for the families back home. As you will see later in this book, the conditions that were going to be reported in the next few months would tell a totally different story altogether.





**WAR PRISONERS AID**

**YMCA**

Information for Next of Kin



**Y**OUR boy is not forgotten when he becomes a prisoner of war. The United States Government continues to regard him as a member of its armed forces, and cooperates with neutral agencies to help meet his needs. Through its "protecting power," Switzerland, the Government constantly exerts its influence to obtain full observance of international agreements relative to war prisoners. It also carries postage-free mail sent to and from prisoners of war.

The Young Men's Christian Association, through the War Prisoners Aid organization of its World's Committee in Geneva, provides for the educational, recreational, religious and other leisure time activities of war prisoners.

The International Red Cross supervises the distribution of food, clothing, medical supplies and comfort articles, inspects camps, and maintains in Geneva a clearing house by which governments are informed of the prisoner's capture and his address.

The Y.M.C.A. and the Red Cross collaborate closely, in this country and in the prison camps. In addition, a number of other agencies, here and abroad, are concerned with the welfare of war prisoners.

#### The Geneva Convention

Of great importance to war prisoners is the Geneva Convention of 1929. Signed by forty-seven nations, it sets standards of food, clothing, shelter, sanitation, medical care, labor and other factors, together with freedom of worship and the encouragement of constructive leisure time activities. Work of the Y.M.C.A. under the Geneva Convention has been recognized by all the belligerents except Russia.

That Germany is adhering in general to the Geneva Convention is indicated by the extensive work the Y.M.C.A. and Red Cross are able to conduct, the reports of neutral observers, and statements from prisoners. However, conditions vary widely from camp to camp, reflecting the abilities and attitudes of the commanding officers as well as the resources of the surrounding countryside. It is important to remember that the standards of comfort of a prisoner of war are not those of a civilian.

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## "Y" Workers Visit German Camps Regularly to Help War Prisoners

It is the job of War Prisoners Aid of the Y.M.C.A. to help make life more tolerable for the war prisoners by enabling them to have educational, recreational and religious activities to fill at least some of their dreary hours of idleness. Even prisoners who are put to work (a permissible practice followed by all nations) find that their greatest problem, next to food, is keeping their minds and hands busy. For officers, who are not required to work, the problem is even more acute.

Neutral representatives of the World's Committee of the Y.M.C.A. visit war prison camps in Germany regularly to learn the needs of the men and to stimulate educational, recreational and religious activities. On their visits the workers are able to talk freely with prisoners and the commanding officers of the camps. Usually the needs of the camps are discussed with the senior officer or leading prisoner who has been chosen to represent the men and who is familiar with their needs.

After visiting the camp, the workers report their findings to the World's Committee headquarters in Geneva, which then sends the required materials from stock piles accumulated since the beginning of the war. Geneva purchases as many supplies as possible in Europe, but as these are not sufficient to meet the needs, large shipments are sent regularly from the United States with particular emphasis being given to requirements of the increasing number of American prisoners. Our purchasing agents shop throughout the world. For example, large quantities of rubber and leather goods, not obtainable in the United States, are bought in South America where they are more plentiful, and shipped directly to Geneva.

Nothing in this booklet is meant to give an overly-optimistic picture of prison camp life, or to imply that it is pleasant. At best it is bleak and barren, even if the terms of the Geneva Convention should be met in their entirety. Worry over loved ones, problems of the future, the dull, monotonous routine of camp regimentation, lack of any privacy, the ignominy of working in the enemy's fields or on his roads—these are so great that the combined efforts of all welfare agencies can alleviate them only in part. But War Prisoners Aid can and does help vast numbers of captive men make the best of their lot, to the full extent of existing possibilities.

An interesting sidelight on the visits paid the camps by these "Y" men is the reception they receive from the prisoners, who are

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happy just to see a person in civilian clothes. "As you walk up and down the streets of our camp," a prisoner told one of them, "the atmosphere of the camp changes. We know the outside world cares." Another prisoner put it this way: "All the little things that happen to you, you take very personally, so that impersonal aid, no matter how great, is never enough. Internment is when a feller needs a friend," and above all when he wants somebody to consider him as an individual. You somehow did all of that: even those of us who never made any requests of you always knew they could."

#### First Months of Capture Are Hardest

The first months after a fighting man has been captured are the hardest for him. From the exciting life of soldier, sailor or airman, he is thrust behind barbed wire, cut off from news of his comrades, and generally feels himself to be a complete loss. With the passing of time this attitude is replaced by a determination not to let captivity get the better of him, and the prisoner then looks around to see how he can fit into the camp's activities. Until he reaches a permanent camp a prisoner will not have much opportunity for leisure time events, and it may take him a while to get on his feet again once he gets to his prison camp "home."

To help ease the first months of capture, the "Y" as soon as possible sends books and a recreational kit to American prisoners in Germany. There usually is an English-German dictionary to help him get along in his new surroundings, and a book of light reading to divert him. A booklet describes the Y.M.C.A. and its services, and cards are provided so he can designate the books he would like to receive.

The special recreational kit received by Americans contains a combination diary and photograph album, notebooks, pocket Testament, sports articles, games such as chess, checkers, pencils, crayons, a mouth organ or other simple musical instrument, plus other recreational items. These are packed in a box designed to serve as a portable locker to hold the prisoner's personal effects.

The American Senior Officer at Oflag 64, a prison camp in Germany, writes: "On behalf of American prisoners of war in my camp, I wish to state that we are very grateful to the Y.M.C.A. for what it has done in caring for our needs in books, equipment of all sorts, religious materials, aids in entertainment, and above all, the kind, sympathetic and understanding attitude in which the help has been extended."

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Captured Americans usually find some "Y" activities in progress when they reach a permanent camp, for the Association has been serving prisoners since the war broke out in 1939. (Before that it worked with prisoners in the first World War, and even in the Civil War.) If there are only a comparatively small number of Americans in the camp, they fit in with activities of other prisoners, usually the British. When there are larger groups of Americans, they have their own classes, entertainment and sports.

You will be glad to know that the actual programs within the camps are conducted by the prisoners themselves. Those who are athletes organize the sports activities, former teachers set up educational programs, and clergymen or theological students carry on religious observances of all faiths. Classes in all subjects are taught by prisoners who were experts in their fields in civilian life. Hobbies are directed by men whose talents run to woodworking, metalwork, leathercraft, model building, or the fine arts. Skilled musicians organize orchestras to entertain their fellow prisoners, and so it goes, each helping the other to weather the storm.

#### Studies Keep Minds Alert

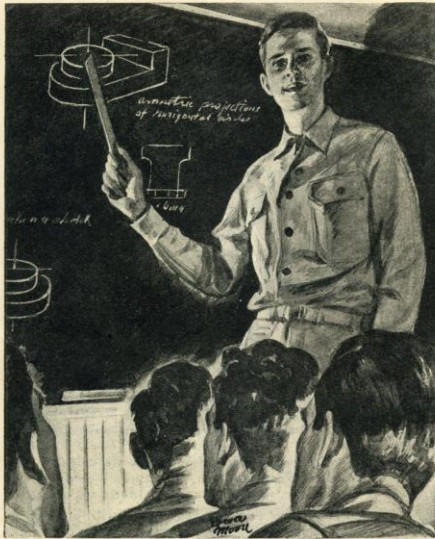
Most relatives of American prisoners seem to be more interested in the educational opportunities than other leisure time activities in the German camps. This is understandable because many of the captives joined the army before completing their educations, some are professional men to whom continued study is vital, and for all it is recognized that study is one of the best ways of keeping minds alert.

As we told you, the classes in prison camps are taught by the prisoners themselves. Some prisoners were teachers or college instructors in civilian life, while a great many others are experts in subjects ranging from algebra to zoology and are well qualified to teach them. War Prisoners Aid supplies the necessary text books, study outlines, notebooks, paper, pencils and other educational materials. In addition to the more formal high school or college type of studies, many camps have "trade schools" at which prisoners may learn new skills to be better fitted to earn a living when the war ends. These courses are taught by prisoners who were welders, carpenters, mechanics, or other artisans in civilian life.

As might be expected, not all camps have the same educational opportunities, and in some, such as the smaller camps for working detachments, there generally is little chance for study. In others, however, the list of courses sounds like a university catalogue: From Stalag Luft III, the camp where most American airmen are

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interned, and the best-equipped camp in Germany, the American Senior Officer writes: "New classes have begun in meteorology, elementary German, geology, geometry, differential calculus, mathematics, elementary algebra and sociology."

"On behalf of my comrades and myself I wish to express our gratitude for your kind consideration in forwarding the educational and interesting books to us, as they have proved very helpful in the study of different trades," states the American Senior Officer at Marlag Milag, the camp where seamen are interned.

### The Armed Forces Institute

The hundreds of self-teaching and correspondence courses in high school, college, and technical subjects available to American fighting men through the Armed Forces Institute are being taken to Yankee prisoners of war in Germany and other countries by War Prisoners Aid. A letter and registration blank sent to each prisoner explains the educational courses available.

This opens a vast new field of educational opportunities for the men, and helps to make more certain that they will obtain post-war credit for their studies. The Armed Forces Institute courses, together with others offered in cooperation with many American universities will be provided in addition to long-established prison camp classroom work, for which the "Y" will continue to furnish educational supplies.

In connection with the office of the World's Committee of the Y.M.C.A. at Geneva, Switzerland, a branch of the United States Armed Forces Institute has been established. This branch will provide all USAFI educational facilities (subject to censors' judgment), make available lesson instruction, administer examinations and record all factors of a prisoner's studies which are educationally significant.

It is deemed likely that most schools will look with favor upon a student's prison camp work. As in the case of all other military personnel, the exact amount of academic credit will be determined by the institution concerned.

### Books Are Popular in Prison Camps

"The library continues to be very popular and is undoubtedly the recreational activity rendering a real service to the greatest portion of our camp." So reads a letter from a German prison camp, pointing up one of the greatest needs of the men—books, and lots of books.

War Prisoners Aid sends great quantities of books to the prisoners, and many camps have both lending and reference libraries. Of course, it is not possible to meet the total needs of the men, because with so much time to read, they all want to do it. Even keeping up with the wear and tear on books is a chore. "Our records show that the more popular novels begin to show signs of wear after about 30 or 40 readings, and from that point on fall rapidly. It must be understood that our entire library changes hands every 10 days, due to the enormous interest in reading," a letter from an airmen's camp states.



FROM NEW YORK TO GERMANY

Because prisoners have as varied reading tastes as civilians, they must be sent a bit of everything. Each case of books contains a balanced reading diet. The cases serve as shelves after reaching the camps. A recent shipment contained over 200,000 books. To help keep books in repair, prisoners are supplied with bookbinding materials. The picture above shows books being packed in the New York warehouse of War Prisoners Aid, while the one below shows American and British airmen reading them in the library at Stalag Luft III, a war prison camp in Germany.



Through the Individual Book Service of War Prisoners Aid, Americans receive books they specially desire for personal use. Requests range from "How to Write Love Letters," to the most ponderous of scientific tomes. Many text books intended especially for college and university men are contributed by the World Student Service Fund. Bibles and Testaments are provided by the American Bible Society.

You will be interested in the composition of libraries now being prepared for units of 200 men. Out of a total of 1,050 books, 600 are fiction and general reading, 150 are text-books, 25 biography, 50 history and travel, 100 vocations, professions and trades, 50 science, including medicine, 50 religious of various faiths, and 25 poetry and art.

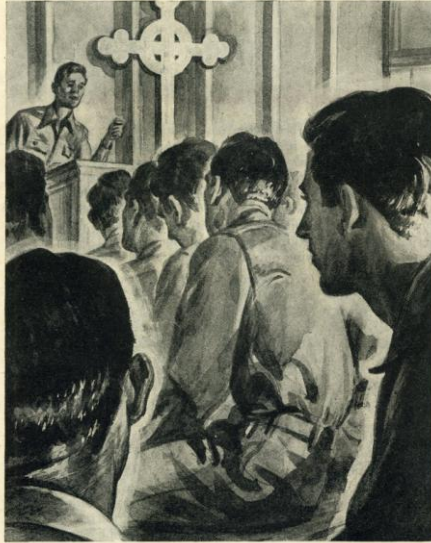
### Hobbies Chase the Blues

Hours behind barbed wire pass more quickly when a man can lose his thoughts in a hobby. To prisoners of war, hobbies and handicrafts are doubly valuable for they provide an activity that keeps hands and minds busy. A War Prisoners Aid worker reports seeing an unusual exhibition of handicraft work by the prisoners. Among the exhibits was a perfect model of a 24-gun frigate, whose guns moved out automatically when the ports were opened. But perhaps the most striking example of ingenuity was a clock made of tin cans and varying only two minutes a day from correct time.

Of course, not every person has great artistic or mechanical ability, but even the most inexpert find relief from prison camp tedium through a hobby. Naturally it is not possible for prisoners in more isolated work camps to have the same time or energy for a hobby, but even there men like to fill their odd moments by putting away at a hobby of one sort or another, however inconsequential it might seem to those of us in this country. Prisoners who never before worked with their hands develop amazing skills during their long hours of enforced idleness. Because there are nearly as many different hobbies as prisoners, we endeavor to provide as personal a service as possible, filling individual orders as requested by prisoners. Many of the men make use of their hobbies to provide entertainment for their fellow prisoners. Magicians' outfits and ventriloquists' dummies have been sent to the prison camps along with tools, paints, canvas, sculpturing supplies, model building outfits, and other hobby and handicraft materials. Gardening enthusiasts are furnished seeds and implements.



Requests for great quantities of toy lead soldiers by American seamen interned in Germany proved very puzzling until it was discovered that they were melting them down for use in building a working model of a steam boiler and turbine. "We wish to thank you for the many useful and entertaining gifts," a letter from an American prisoner in Germany says. "Your organization is doing a wonderful work for the American prisoners of war in sending us the materials we need to pursue our favorite hobbies."



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### Religion Gives Men Courage

"I have rediscovered my faith in Christianity."

That statement from a prisoner of war sums up the experience of many men confined behind barbed wire. "You can't kid yourself here," is the way one tough American top sergeant put it. Religion is one of the powerful, basic interests of prisoners of war. Many who gave but passing thought to it during the years of peace, find unexpected hope and comfort in religion in their captivity. War Prisoners Aid makes it possible for each man to worship according to his particular desire, by supplying the religious articles of all faiths. Nearly every camp has one or more chapels where the men can worship.

American prisoners in one camp in Germany constructed and decorated a camp chapel, using food parcel crates and whatever materials were at hand. The pulpit, altar, trellis-work railing dividing the altar from the rest of the chapel, and other interior fittings were made entirely by hand.

Whenever possible religious services for American prisoners are conducted by Army chaplains of the different faiths. When an American chaplain is not available, a chaplain of one of the other Allied armies may be called upon to officiate. Many times, too, laymen or those who were theological students in civilian life conduct the services. Barriers of creed and communion are likely to be ignored. Occasionally clergymen of one faith lead the services of another and make common use of such religious articles as are available.

Prisoners of war may not always read their Bibles but just carrying them in their pockets seems to comfort them. "I never read it," a prisoner said, referring to his Bible, "but I know that I have it in my pocket and this knowledge gives me a certain feeling of security. I know that something necessary is following me around." When prisoners first arrive in a camp, they want to read light literature or hear dance music, according to an American aviator at Stalag Luft VI in Germany. "Then they begin to think of the future and wonder about the meaning of life," he explained. "Then comes the time when they want to think deeper. They choose books in the library that lead them into the world of Mind and Spirit and they ask for and voluntarily attend religious services regularly."

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### Music Brings a Touch of Home

The solace that music brings to troubled men is not denied prisoners of war. To meet the varied musical tastes of prisoners, they are sent instruments for swing bands as well as symphony orchestras. Talented musicians give concerts and serve as instructors for music classes. Frequently groups of musicians are taken from the camps to play for work detachments in the country.

You can well imagine what it means to an American interned in a camp thousands of miles from home to be able to hear the music he has learned to love. Attendance at prison camp concerts often crowds the halls so far beyond capacity that many repeat performances are held.

Prisoners who love music, but have little artistic ability, are provided large quantities of such simple instruments as ocarinas and mouth organs. Phonographs receive such hard use that they must be equipped with extra springs for the motors. For community singing, thousands of song books are sent to the camps. Glee club music is supplied for smaller groups. There are "barber shop" quartets in prison camps as well as along Main Street.

### Baseball Behind Barbed Wire

You would not expect to hear such a good old American sound as the crack of a bat against a baseball in a prisoner camp in Germany, but it can be heard there, for baseball is the most popular sport among Yankee prisoners. In some camps the men have organized leagues made up of teams named after their favorites in this country. There is the New York Yankees, the Pittsburgh Pirates, the Cardinals and many another. The softball team at an airmen's camp has no less than six colonels on it.

You must not get the idea that life in a prison camp is like belonging to a country club because the men are able to play baseball, football, basketball, soccer, ping pong, volley-ball, boxing and many other sports for which the "Y" supplies the necessary materials. Our representatives report, however, that even in work camps the Americans are still interested in athletics and turn to them in the evenings and on their rest days for relaxation. One of the most popular features of our sports service is the sending, by wireless, of a weekly sports summary. This is done in cooperation with Time, Inc. The summaries are sent by radio to Geneva, then relayed to the prison camps.

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At Stalag III B, a prison camp in Germany, Yankee prisoners of war have formed an orchestra to entertain their comrades behind barbed wire. The "Y" supplies prisoners with musical instruments, glee club music, and phonographs and records. Musical comedies also are presented.

### Plays and Movies Help Pass the Time

Theatricals and musical comedies, as well as motion pictures, are highlights in the lives of Americans in prison camps. In every camp are talented actors, musicians, stage designers and others who work together to entertain their comrades. To help them, we supply make-up kits, costumes, scripts, music and stage materials. Films and projectors also are furnished the camps. Regular Hollywood productions are supplied American prisoners through the cooperation of the War Activities Committee of the Motion Picture Industry of America, the Overseas Motion Picture Division of the United States Army, and Y.M.C.A. Motion Picture Bureau.

In some prison camps, the men have erected stages and built properties that are of a professional quality. Stalag Luft III has an orchestra pit that can be raised and lowered like those in American movie palaces.

"We are producing two and sometimes more, big-time Broadway successes here each month. This is a big enterprise here and is doing wonderful work in morale upkeep. We are doing 'Rose Marie,' thanks to your help. We are also doing a variety show as an added attraction. Thanks again and a salute for the 'Y,'" writes a prisoner from Germany.

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### Service to Prisoners in the Far East

Because it has been impossible so far for any agency to establish regular channels of shipping and communication to the Far East, the Y.M.C.A. has not been able to extend its full program to prisoners of war there. However, service of a limited nature has been provided, and while this does not come anywhere near meeting the problem, it is a step in the right direction.

For some time neutral representatives of War Prisoners Aid have been able to purchase quantities of books, seeds, gardening and carpentry tools, athletic equipment, musical instruments and other such goods as are obtainable in the Far East, and distribute them to war prisoners in Japan and Japanese-occupied territories. As this booklet goes to press, there are hopes that arrangements may be completed whereby boats going to Russian ports will carry relief supplies which then will be transhipped to Japan and Japanese-occupied territories. Exchange ships which have gone to the Far East have carried large quantities of relief supplies sent by the American Red Cross as well as recreational equipment and religious materials sent by the Y.M.C.A.

All such shipments made to date have reached the prisoners as scheduled, according to cabled information from neutral sources in the Far East, and more shipments will be made as frequently as conditions permit. The demand for these materials is unceasing and the appreciation of the recipients is boundless.

A letter from a prisoner of war in Japan states, "Thank you most sincerely for your very kind gifts. All of us greatly appreciated your thoughtful selection of books. Your kind action will always be remembered." A prisoner from another Japanese camp writes, "We want to give you our most sincere appreciation. Your gifts have been extremely welcome. We will always remember the fine work you are doing for all the prisoners of Japan."

#### What the "Y" Cannot Do

There are certain things the Y.M.C.A. cannot do for prisoners or relatives. The Y.M.C.A. cannot send food or clothing to men in prison camps, nor locate men listed as "missing" or those known to be prisoners but for whom an address has not yet been received. Full instructions concerning the sending of mail, books, food and clothing to prisoners are sent to the next of kin by the Prisoner of War Information Bureau, Office of the Provost Marshal General, War Department, Washington, D.C.

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### How YOU Can Help

One of the things you can do to help your relative who is a prisoner of war in Germany is to tell him to write to our Geneva headquarters requesting any educational, recreational or religious materials he may desire. His request will receive the same attention as though it came through our own official channels. The address is:

War Prisoners Aid of the Y.M.C.A.

37 Quai Wilson

Geneva, Switzerland

Large stockpiles have been accumulated in Geneva for this very purpose. Prisoners also may list their needs with their camp leader, who will turn it over to our workers when they visit his camp.

#### All Prisoners Are Served

While this booklet deals chiefly with the aid provided American prisoners in Europe, it should be borne in mind that the World's Committee of the Y.M.C.A., together with the International Red Cross, serves all war prisoners and civilian internees, regardless of nationality, race or creed. It is significant that in a world torn by war and hatred, the great humanitarian work of these two organizations continues on a basis of international, inter-racial and inter-faith help to suffering mankind.

Work of War Prisoners Aid of the Y.M.C.A. is carried on in Australia, Bermuda, Bonaire, Canada, Free and Occupied China, Egypt, Finland, Formosa, France, Germany, Great Britain, British and Dutch Guiana, Hong Kong, India, Indo-China, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Korea, Mexico, New Zealand, North Africa, Palestine, Philippine Islands, South Africa, Switzerland, Thailand, Trinidad and the United States.

The object of this booklet is to acquaint you in general with our work. While the service of War Prisoners Aid is as comprehensive as conditions permit, you can readily understand that circumstances beyond our control may make it impossible to reach every American prisoner. Even in the same camp, not all prisoners have identical leisure time opportunities. Because it is difficult or impossible to stamp with our insignia all materials we supply, it may well be that a prisoner is being served by the "Y" without his realizing it.

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### A Word of Advice

When you learn that your boy has become a prisoner of war, try not to give in to despair. The chances are good that he is well and safe. Believe the best, not the worst. Above all, keep your letters to your boy bright and cheerful. You must not tell him war news of any kind, as this is against censorship regulations. Write short letters frequently. One typewritten page once a week is about right. Typewriting has the best chance of getting past the censors. Letters in handwriting sometimes are held up because the censors cannot decipher them.

Prisoners generally can write about two letters and four post cards a month, but may be under more rigid restrictions. It takes time for mail to cross borders and oceans in war time, so allow months, not days or weeks, for an exchange of letters. Do not wait for your boy to write to you. As soon as you have his address write to him, and keep on writing even if you do not hear from him. He may be getting your letters, even if you do not get his.

#### We Are Supported by the National War Fund

War Prisoners Aid of the Y.M.C.A. is financed largely through the National War Fund. Certain religious activities are financed by the churches. Funds also are received from the various national Y.M.C.A. Movements and other sources.

You can support War Prisoners Aid by giving to your local war chest, which represents the National War Fund in your community. The sending of this booklet to you should not be construed as an appeal for funds. Its intention solely is to inform you of our service to prisoners of war.

All inquiries should be sent to

### War Prisoners Aid Young Men's Christian Association

347 Madison Avenue

New York 17, N. Y.

403—Guide Printing Company

Printed in U.S.A.

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The Red Cross most often referred to the POWs as "boys" – a touching reminder that many of these soldiers and airmen signed up or were drafted just out of high school. Their parents and grandparents watching them go off to war.



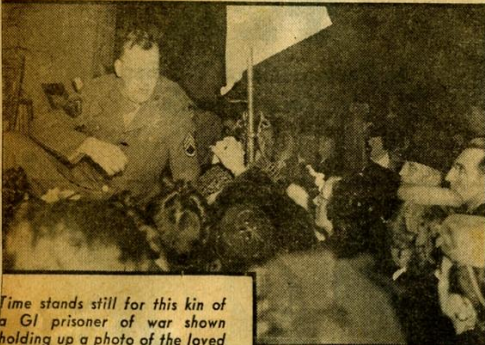
*Two of them was Hannel and A.*

# 9,000 Throng Armory To Get News of POW Kinsmen

By GEORGE MARION and GEORGE JOHNSTON.

Next of kin! Nine thousand relatives of American soldiers and civilians held in German and Japanese prison camps crowded the 17th Regiment Armory, 34th St. and Park Ave., last night, seeking news of their kinsmen.

## REPATRIATED PRISONER SEEKS TO REMEMBER



Time stands still for this kin of a GI prisoner of war shown holding up a photo of the loved one with the hope that Staff Sgt. Martin W. Nissen, a repatriated prisoner of war, will recognize it and say he's alive. This scene of pathos was taken at 17th Regiment Armory last night. (Other Photos on Center Fold)

(Mirror Photo)

Next of kin! They thronged about 12 servicemen repatriated after escape or release from enemy prisons and brought here by the Red Cross and the Army Air Forces.

Mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, wives and husbands of prisoners and internees, jammed the hall for the meeting, the first of its kind, but now to be repeated in 40 major cities as the ex-prisoners continue their tour under the same auspices.

The audience listened intently to addresses by Lt. Col. Kavanaugh, assistant director of the American Prisoner of War Information Bureau, and others, then to personal-experience accounts by the soldiers, 10 of whom were held by the Germans, two by the Japs.

### Quiz Is Highlight

Red Barber, sports announcer, handled the quiz session, giving the audience extended opportunity for direct exchange with the repatriated prisoners.

None of the prisoners attempted to build up a picture of serious mistreatment at the hands of the enemy. They emphasized rather that mistreatment was often the result of misunderstanding and that it was possible to aid the prisoners with Red Cross packages which, in many cases, prevent actual starvation.

But it was the question period that provided the dramatic highlight of the affair. Anxious relatives thrust snapshots high in the air trying to attract the attention of one or other of the soldiers.

"Did you see my boy in Stalag VI?"

## AN ANXIOUS MOTHER PLEADS FOR NEWS OF HER SON



At 17th Regiment Armory, Red Barber listens closely to the questions put by mother of GI prisoner of war before relaying the query via mike to repatriated prisoners of war who answered —if they could.

(Mirror Photo)

"Did you see my boy in Stalag VI?" "Was John Doe in Luft I, Dulag Luft, Oflag IVC or Ilag Biberach, when you were there?" "Are the prisoners in Lazarett (Hospital) IX C getting adequate medical care?"

The ex-prisoners of the Japs are: T-3 Donald I. McPherson and Corp. Willard E. Hall, both taken at Corregidor and freed when a Jap transport was torpedoed off Mindanao last September. Hall was once held at Cabanatuan in Luzon where a

raid freed 500 Americans last Tuesday.

Repatriated from German camps in exchanges, were: Capt. Ragnar Barhaug, Lt. Wm. F. Higgins, Lt. James N. Groves, Lt. Cecil B. Fisher, Lt. Stewart E. Cooper, S-Sgt. Azzan McKagan, S-Sgt. Martin W. Nissen, S-Sgt. Edward P. Troy, S-Sgt. Ralph J. Tomek, Sgt. Sheahan. Most were badly wounded, bear several decorations.

## Former War Prisoners Here

William Higgins - Stalag Luft III



TWELVE REPATRIATED AND ESCAPED American prisoners of war, pictured on their arrival at LaGuardia Field from Washington yesterday, on the first leg of a 40-city tour. Designed to bring first-hand information about POW and civilian internees to their next of kin, their first appearance was arranged by the Army Air Forces and the American Red Cross at the 17th Regiment Armory, 34th St. and Park Ave., last night. The group addressed and answered questions of approximately 9,000 New Yorkers. L. to r., front: S/Sgt. Azzan McKagan, S/Sgt. Martin Nissen, S/Sgt. Edward Troy, S/Sgt. Ralph Tomek, Sgt. Harold Sheehan and S/Sgt. Willard Hall. Rear: Capt. Ragnar Barhaug, Lts. William Higgins, Jr., James Groves, Cecil Fisher and S. E. Cooper and T/3 Don McPherson.

(Story and other photos on Page 5)



RESIEGED by anxious crowd at 17th Regiment Armory meeting last night, Cpl. Willard E. Hall, prisoner of war who escaped from the Japs, does his best to tell them whatever he can about their sons, husbands, fathers, brothers or sweethearts who are languishing in the enemy's prison camps.



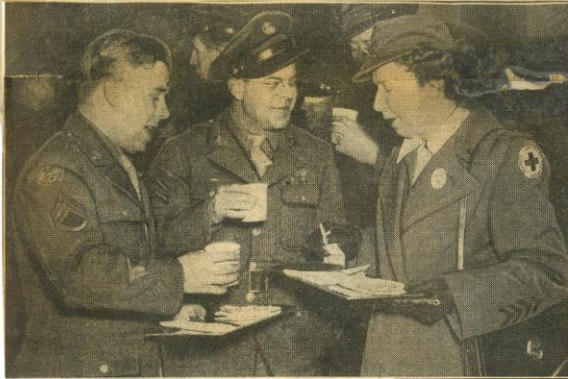
# TWELVE COME BACK TO TELL ABOUT IT



**WOUNDED.** B-17 gunner Sgt. Edward Troy lost an eye when plane exploded during mission over Germany. He wears DSC, DFC, Air Medal and Purple Heart.

(All News Photos)

**SURVIVORS TO TOUR NATION.** Twelve repatriated Yankee prisoners of war arrive at LaGuardia Field yesterday to begin tour of 30 cities, bringing to families of other captives news of prison camp conditions. L. to r., standing, Capt. Ragnar Barhaug, Lieut. William F. Higgins Jr., Lieut. James N. Groves, Lieut. Cecil B. Fisher, Lieut. Stewart E. Cooper and Sergt. Donald I. McPherson. Kneeling: Sergt. Azzan McKagan, Sergt. Martin W. Nissen, Sergt. Edward Troy, Sergt. Ralph Tomek, Sergt. Harold Sheahan and Corp. Willard E. Hall.



**EXCHANGE.** Lieut. Cecil B. Fisher (left) and Capt. Ragnar Barhaug, both B-17 pilots released by Germans in prisoner exchange, chat about their experiences.



## JAVA IN THE YANKEE WAY

Red Cross worker, Sadie James, drinks coffee with Sergt. Azzan McKagan (left) and Sergt. Harold Sheahan after boys landed at LaGuardia Field yesterday. McKagan, armament gunner on a B-17, bailed out over Cologne, Germany. He holds DFC, Air Medal and Purple Heart. Sheahan was radio operator on B-24 Liberator and was blown from plane over Vienna.



**TORPEDO FREED THEM.** Marine Sergt. Verle D. Cutter (left) and Onnie Ellsworth Clem tell story of rescue to press at 90 Church St. yesterday. They were saved when prison ship was hit by U. S. sub.

**CAPTURED WHEN CORREGIDOR FELL,** McPherson (left) and Hall escaped from torpedoed Jap transport on Sept. 7, 1944. They're talking to Olwen Roberts, Jackson Heights, and Mrs. Helen Cooney, Richmond Hill, both of whom have relatives in Jap hands.



The YMCA January edition of "War Prisoner Aid News" also painted a reasonably stable and hopeful picture of life in the camps.

# WAR PRISONERS AID NEWS

Published by  
War Prisoners Aid of the Y.M.C.A.,  
347 Madison Ave., New York 17, N. Y.

A participating service of the  
NATIONAL WAR FUND.

Vol. 2



JANUARY, 1945

No. 1



**YOU KNOW SOME ONE CARES:** that's what American prisoners of war held by the Germans say when they get a chance to talk to a visiting Y.M.C.A. worker such as Henry Soederberg (left) pictured as he brought word from home to a Yankee at Stalag Luft III. When they visit prisoner of war camps, the "Y" workers always try to talk personally with as many men as possible, both to learn their needs and to give their morale the lift that always comes from the chance to talk with someone from the outside world.

## Thirty Men Pass College Entrance Exams At Oflag 64; 40 Courses Are Offered

Three hundred American officers held at Oflag 64 are attending 40 different educational courses running a 12-hour day starting at 8:40 a.m., Henry Soederberg, neutral Y.M.C.A. worker, reported following a visit he made to the camp on November 20, traveling by automobile over bad roads and through heavy snow and rain storms.

New school rooms have greatly helped the holding of formal classes at the camp, and 30 students recently passed college entrance examinations. The faculty, under the direction of Captain H. D. Eldridge of Denver, Col., consists of 35 well qualified teachers, Soederberg said. Among the courses offered are three in law, seven foreign languages, six in mathematics, five in English grammar, four in social science and three in science.

The hospital attached to the camp has received consignments of plates

and cooking utensils from the Y.M.C.A., and the patients are very pleased with them, it was stated. A large shipment of lumber, a precious item in prison camps, has arrived from the "Y" in Sweden. The men use lumber to build chapels, school rooms, theatrical stages, furniture, book shelves and many other things they otherwise might do without.

There was great excitement for some of the officers when Soederberg presented them with a hare that had just been shot in the fields outside the camp. The Y.M.C.A. worker had lunch with Col. Schaefer and Capt. Floyd Burgeson, and brought a new pair of eyeglasses to Col. Paul Goode, the Senior American Officer who has replaced Col. Thomas Drake, repatriated with the last exchange of prisoners.

Morale at the camp is good, Soederberg said, adding that he had a long conference with the six chaplains.

## Prisoners Sent Books and Games By the Millions

Millions of books, games, musical instruments and sports articles were shipped to Europe from the United States by War Prisoners Aid of the Y.M.C.A. during 1943 and 1944.

In addition, shipments of materials were made from South America, while huge quantities of goods were purchased in Europe for distribution to the prisoners of war there. Shipments from the United States showed a great increase in 1944 over the previous year, in some cases being five times as large.

The compilation reveals that 244,232 musical instruments, plus \$1,272 worth of accessories were sent from the United States in the period covered by the survey.

Books totalled 1,280,146 volumes, together with 21,955 pounds of bookbinding materials and 33,200 yards of bookbinding cloth. Books wear out rapidly under the continuous use they receive in prison camps, and the bookbinding materials are necessary to extend their lives. Prisoners who are skilled at bookbinding set up repair shops to put the books back into shape.

### Sports Lead Shipments

By far the largest amount of materials sent was in sports equipment, reflecting the interest of the prisoners in athletics and games of all kinds. A total of 1,754,254 sports articles, including baseballs, footballs, basketballs, clothing, ice skates, boxing gloves and indoor games was shipped from the United States. Chess, checkers, cards and similar games totalled 101,249.

Nearly 4,000 gallons of gasoline was sent to Germany to enable the Y.M.C.A. workers there to use gasoline instead of charcoal in their automobiles. The gasoline has permitted them to double their efficiency in visiting the camps, the workers report, one saying that it was the best thing the "Y" has done since the beginning of the war. Charcoal-operated cars are slow, and the driver must stop frequently to "stoke up" with the bags of

(Continued on page 4)

## Report from Stalag Luft IV, Camp for Airmen:

# Needs Are Great, but Sports and Music Boost Morale

Morale of Americans at Stalag Luft IV, a German war prison camp for airmen to which men from Stalag Luft VI have been sent, is somewhat better since recreational supplies from the Y.M.C.A. have started to arrive, according to a report cabled from Stockholm by Hugo Cedergren, Swedish associate director of War Prisoners Aid of the Y.M.C.A.

"Although Luft IV is still under construction and the needs are still great, the camp is steadily improving, leisure-time activities are in full swing, and morale is rising," he said.

"Y.M.C.A. workers Christian Christiansen and Henry Soederberg recently visited Stalag Luft IV, and met there many friends from Stalag Luft VI. There are now four compounds in Luft IV, each with its own sports field. They saw afternoon theater performances and variety shows. The camp now has an American jazz orchestra, British and American symphony orchestras and a male choir, using instruments supplied by the Y.M.C.A.

"After long conferences with American spokesman, Sgt. Frank Paules, and leaders of camp activities, they visited the camp hospital in the company of two American physicians. 'Camp spirit is high,' they report."

### Pictures Life in Camp

Previous to the visit described above, Mr. Christiansen had been the first outsider to arrive at the new camp. His report of that earlier trip clearly paints the depressing life led by war prisoners when they have no constructive activities to fill their long hours of enforced idleness.

"It is not difficult to report on the needs of Stalag Luft IV, made up of aviators, some of whom have been transferred from Stalag Luft VI," Mr. Christiansen said. "There is not a single book, no balls, musical instruments, handicraft materials, or any other supplies for entertainment and occupation. In addition, the men have not had any news from their families, and consequently, morale is very low.

"Although I sent a large telegraphic order to our Geneva office, and asked the Sagan office (Y.M.C.A. headquarters in Germany) to send over some things as quickly as possible, it was extremely difficult to point out to the men that deliveries take time, and much patience is needed.

"However, the men are not entirely inactive, for I saw them play football. They made a ball out of old socks wrapped in bits of leather from worn-out shoes. A cricket ball was made in the same manner. These two articles are the only sports gear Stalag Luft IV possesses at present. When nothing else is available one has to get along

## Y. M. C. A. Does Not Report on Prison Camp Conditions

It is not the responsibility of War Prisoners Aid of the Y.M.C.A. to make reports on conditions within prisoner of war camps. This is the task of the protecting powers and the Red Cross. Reports of the Y.M.C.A. generally describe the educational, recreational and religious needs and activities of the prisoners, and do not necessarily reflect living conditions, food, sanitation or other physical aspects of prison camp life. Further, the needs of the men are so great that the combined efforts of all organizations concerned with prisoners of war are not sufficient to meet them fully.

with such makeshift methods.

"After my talks with the Commandant, Chief Man of Confidence and his assistants, I said I would like to give a concert for the men, and I shall never forget the afternoon that fol-

lowed. I had brought along 30 gramophone records, for which I borrowed a gramophone from the Commandant. Soon word got around that 'A Y.M.C.A. concert is to be given.' On the large, grassy plot between the barracks, I started the gramophone, completely surrounded by the entire population of the camp.

"The weather was glorious, and never have I seen a more appreciative audience than this one. For the first time in many weeks they were given some entertainment, and they crowded eagerly around me so that not a single note would be lost. Now that I know what such a concert means to prisoners of war, I shall never be without my gramophone and records."

Assured of a supply of free-time materials from the Y.M.C.A., the Man of Confidence immediately appointed a librarian, educational officer, musical director and sports leader, said Mr. Christiansen, so that a regular program of activities could be started when the materials arrive.

"Before I left the camp accompanied to the gates by several hundred men," the report concluded, "I had time to visit the sick bay and say a few words to each patient. They, too, eagerly await some means of filling in the long hours of imprisonment."

## Boxing Gloves and Watch Repair Outfits Included in 1944 Shipments to XVII B

The list of articles ranging from boxing gloves to watch repair kits that have been sent by the Y.M.C.A. during 1944 to the 4,400 American non-commissioned officers at Stalag XVII B has been received from the "Y's" headquarters in Geneva.

The shipments include 4,400 "war time logs," a combination diary, photo album and sketch book; three complete dance orchestras supplied by the U. S. Army; 15 musical kits for working detachments; a quantity of other musical instruments including flutes, mouth organs and ocarinas; two theatrical kits; \$750 worth of Christmas decorations and lights; four handicraft outfits; 2,400 pairs each of gym shoes, shorts and shirts; 626 baseballs, 112 bats and 80 sets of baseball suits; 45 footballs, 130 pairs of boxing gloves; 75 sets of water colors, 30 of oil colors and 4,000 pencils.

Four thousand bridge decks, 600 games, eight spot lights for the theater, 363 yards of Mexican cloth for book binding, watch repair kits and a wrest-

ling mat. From Sweden the following materials were sent to the camp: 250 ice skates, equipment for six hockey teams, a public address system, and four electric phonographs supplied by the United States Army.

To help ease the first months of capture, the "Y" sends a special recreational kit to American prisoners in Germany as soon as possible after a man is taken prisoner. The materials, packed in a box designed to serve as a portable locker, include notebooks, pocket Testament, sports articles, games, pencils, mouth organs and similar supplies. Twenty-three hundred of these kits were sent to Stalag XVII B during 1944.

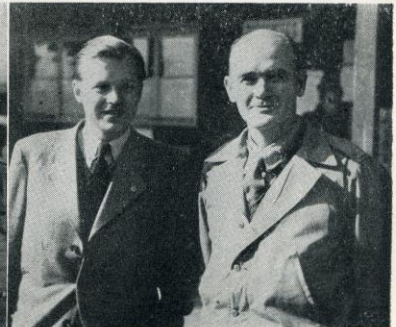
Recreational needs at the camp are very great, and the Y.M.C.A. is not able to meet all of them. Present main needs were said to be all kinds of footballs and football clothing.

Correspondence in regard to United States Armed Forces Institute courses (see War Prisoners Aid News, August, 1944) has been started.





The staff at Stalag Luft III poses with the visiting Y.M.C.A. workers, Gosta Lundin and Henry Soederberg. The officers had the "Y" men as their guests for lunch. Mr. Lundin, director of Y.M.C.A. services in Germany, is seated in the left foreground.



Left: Lt. Col. Saltsman thanks Henry Soederberg as General Vanaman looks on. Center: Col. Goodrich, Lt. Col. Klocko and Lt. Col. McNichell get their picture snapped. Right: Henry Soederberg and Col. Delmar T. Spivey. Bottom, left: Mr. Soederberg and Col. Goodrich. Bottom, right: The boys try a few musical instruments that have just arrived from the Y.M.C.A.





## Stalag Luft I Continues to Grow:

# Books, Athletic Articles in Demand by Allied Fliers

Stalag Luft I, where American and British airmen are interned, is rapidly expanding and now comprises two sections, North Camp and West Camp, while a third, South Camp, is in process of being organized, according to Christian Christiansen, who reported a visit to the camp in a wireless message to the New York headquarters of War Prisoners Aid of the Y.M.C.A.

"This means that all requests will have to be met in triplicate," said Mr. Christiansen, who was accompanied by Hugo Cedergren, associate director of War Prisoners Aid. "For instance, we furnished some time ago a sound film projector to West Camp. This will have to be done for the other two sections, and the same applies to the library, sports equipment and musical instruments.

### Camp Has Difficulties

"Many difficulties at Stalag Luft I have not yet been overcome. One notices that the camp is being reorganized, and that most of the prisoners have been in captivity only a short time and have not yet become adjusted to camp life. However, in the last two weeks many shipments have arrived from the Y.M.C.A. and this has greatly improved the general morale."

Mr. Cedergren was able to inform the American prisoners of the Armed Forces Institute courses available

through the Y.M.C.A., and they showed much interest. Up until now all study has been done in conjunction with the British program. About 20 classes are running in each section. However, lack of room is an unfortunate handicap. In the North Camp, for instance, the dining room must be used—one study group in each corner. Note paper, books, pencils and textbooks arrive regularly from Stockholm.

### Prisoners Empty Library

"Although since my last visit new shipments of books have arrived, libraries in both sections are still inadequate. There is not even one book per man, and if within the next fortnight another thousand prisoners should arrive, the situation will be still worse. For the time being we cannot send too many books to Stalag Luft I. We saw only empty shelves in the library, with all available books loaned out. Book-binding materials are urgently needed, and we are ordering them at once."

In order to show their appreciation for Y.M.C.A. services, the American prisoners prepared a program of entertainment during the two-day visit of the "Y" representatives, which Mr. Christiansen said was "excellent." There were sports events, concerts and dramatic performances. American swing and jazz music alternated with classical music by the British sym-

phony orchestra. On the second day a religious service commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Y.M.C.A. was held at West Camp.

"In between the many and varied items of the entertainment program," said Mr. Christiansen, "we had a few minutes in which to talk to individual prisoners—chaplains, librarians, sports leaders, choir and orchestra conductors and education directors—and to discuss with them their various problems."

Mr. Christiansen reported that the 150-page, cloth bound, Wartime Log books supplied to American prisoners of war by the Y.M.C.A. are very popular, and that a new shipment of about 300 copies had just arrived. "Entertainment is well organized," he said. "Both sections have several orchestras and theater groups, and most all the men actively pursue various sports. Y.M.C.A. materials make it possible for them to follow their particular hobbies, too."

### Camp Built in 1942

Stalag Luft I, located near Barth on the Baltic Sea, was established in 1942 for men from the British air force. During the summer of 1943 Americans began to arrive in the camp. In October 1943, new buildings were put up to accommodate the ever-increasing population.

## Weight of Long Captivity Bears Heavily on Men, Report States

The deteriorating effects of long confinement on prisoners of war, which War Prisoners Aid of the Y.M.C.A. endeavors to prevent and correct by supplying recreational, educational and religious materials, are vividly described in a report about Italian camps in England received from a visiting "Y" secretary.

"The life in the camps appears to progress," he said. "Those in the old established camps add this and that for their comfort or their entertainment. The newcomers work at their huts, their water towers, their gardens and their playing fields. Confusion gradually subsides into order like the sediment in a bottle.

"Yet life in a war prison camp does not really progress. Not because of its rigidity. Not because of the truck loads of men who drive off in the mornings and return in the evenings day after day to work in the fields. After all, most normal lives are subject to routine and without it would disintegrate. But because prison life is superimposed and artificial, it re-

mains static.

"On some of the men long captivity is having its effect, which one hopes will not be disastrous. Sometimes it is the actual symbols of imprisonment which become intolerable. The uncompromising symmetry of the huts. The daily walks to and fro between them which can be measured, exactly, in paces. The barbed wire is a token only, but a token of something immitigable. The views beyond it of woods and hills become too familiar, however they may change with the seasons and passing hours, and however they may fling their shadows—familiar and yet infinitely remote.

"War prison life is a vacuum, which, one is told, nature abhors, and that is why it is so important for us to introduce, even as mere palliatives, what we can to mitigate it. Fortunately, most of the men realize this, and can, as a rule, find some outlet.

"The camp leader savagely plans his garden, the teachers work feverishly in the interests of their classes, the camp captain grimly inspects his flaw-

less barracks and the chaplain his beautiful chapel on which no money or effort is too great to expend. They become obsessed. It is their form of escape."

## Overseas Shipments

(Continued from page 1)

charcoal carried on the top of the car. It frequently is difficult to obtain ever charcoal in Europe, so the gasoline must indeed be a boon to the men who must visit the camps.

One hundred bicycles also have been sent to Europe, to be used for the most part to permit chaplains and camp leaders to visit working detachments.

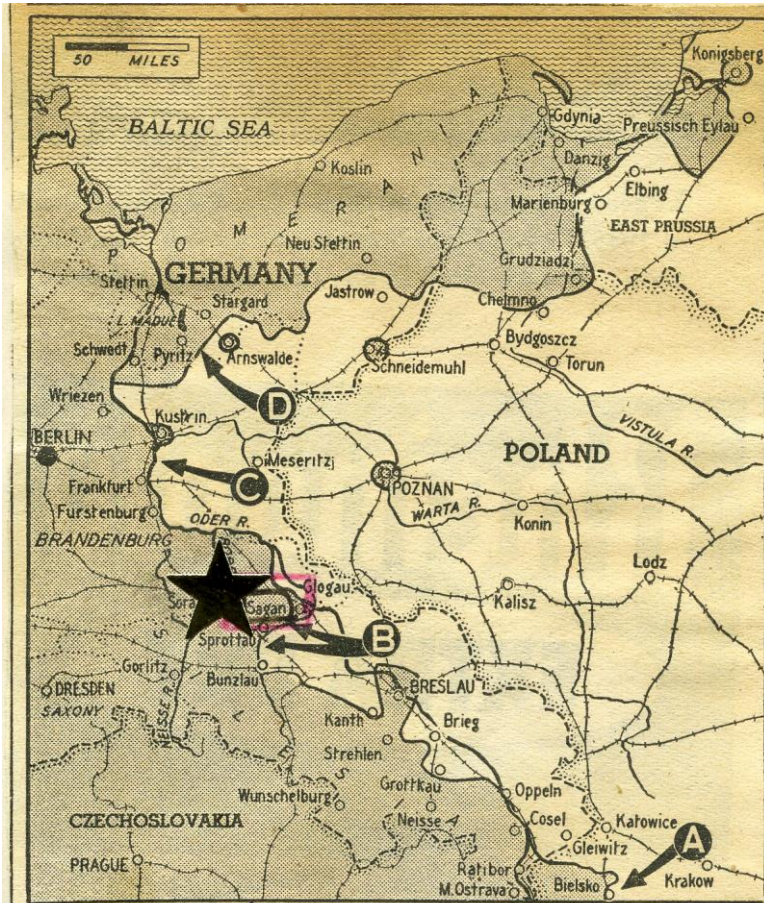
Blind prisoners were not forgotten. They were sent 22 special phonograph and large supplies of the "talking book" type of records.

Art supplies included 17,756 yards of cloth, 11,675 lithographs, 4,000 pounds of miscellaneous paint supplies such as oils, varnish and water colors.

Over 200 Hollywood feature motion pictures and 50 sound projectors were sent. Prisoners are eager to obtain films as they bring them a glimpse of the outside world, and a touch of home



At the time this newsletter was being printed and the Red Cross repatriated-POW meetings were taking place, in fact, at the very moment little Johnnie was accepting his father's medal, 4200 miles away in Poland Hell had begun for the prisoners at Stalag Luft III. Within a few days all POWs on the eastern front would join them.



Berlin said the northern prong of Konev's offensive had raced up to the Bober River in the area of Naumburg, forty miles northwest of Bunzlau, putting it only twenty-seven miles from a junction with Marshal Gregory K. Zhukov's Berlin-front army menacing Crossen, on the central Oder. These mobile columns, operating twelve miles north of the rail center of Sagan, were cutting in behind German forces anchored between the Bober and Oder Rivers in an 865-square-mile rectangle formed by Crossen, Zuelichau, Sagan and Glogau, thus turning the flank of the enemy's Berlin front southeast of Frankfurt.

(NEWS map by Staff Artist)  
**Reds yesterday captured Bielko (A), 32 miles east of Moravska Ostrava, and seized the Bober River fortress of Bunzlau (B). Berlin said Reds have already crossed the Bober between Bunzlau and Sprottau, with another wing operating 12 miles north of Sagan. Russian artillery continued to pound German positions across the Oder in the Frankfurt-Kustrin sector (C). British radio reported Russian columns operating on both sides of Lake Madue (D), 15 miles from Stettin.**