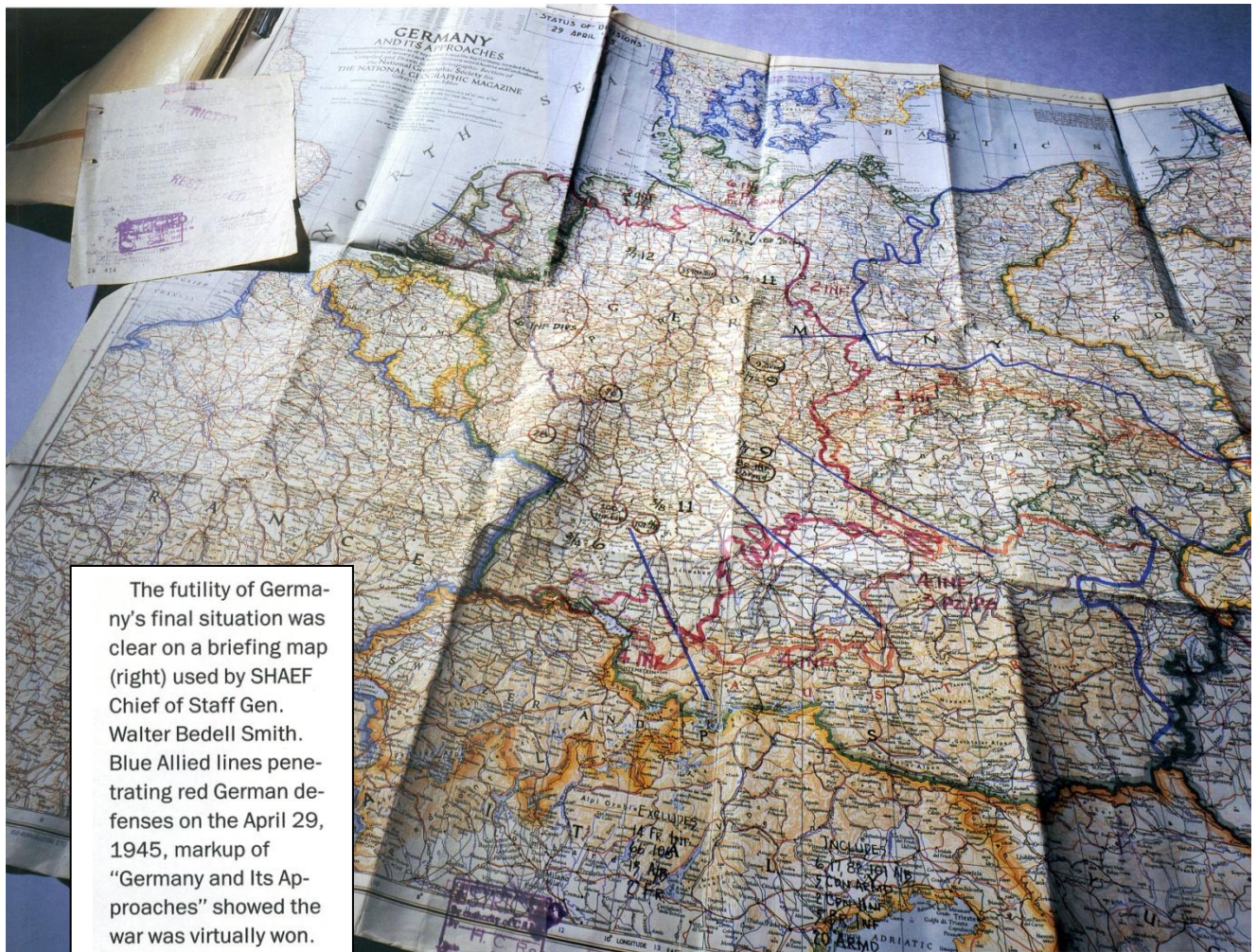


Chapter 20 – CLOSING ACT – Liberation [v6]

On 30 April, 1945 the New York Times reported; "Huge Prison Camp Liberated...27,000 American and British prisoners of war at a large camp at Moosburg." The report was correct, the camp was huge, but it was also wrong. The following day, the Times printed a correction; "The Fourteenth Armored Division liberated 110,000 Allied prisoners of war at Stalag 7A at Moosburg, instead of the 27,000 prisoners previously reported. This was Germany's largest prisoner of war camp."



The futility of Germany's final situation was clear on a briefing map (right) used by SHAEF Chief of Staff Gen. Walter Bedell Smith. Blue Allied lines penetrating red German defenses on the April 29, 1945, markup of "Germany and Its Approaches" showed the war was virtually won.

A week later in Reims, France, Smith confronted German commanders with this hopeless picture—adding two fictitious Allied attack plans for good measure. Germany surrendered within hours.

When summarized in a few short paragraphs the liberation of Moosburg seems simple –

On the morning of April 29, 1945, elements of the 14th Armored Division of Patton's 3rd Army attacked the SS troops guarding Stalag VIIA. Prisoners scrambled for safety. Some hugged the ground or crawled into open concrete incinerators. Bullets flew seemingly haphazardly.

Finally, the American task force broke through, and the first tank entered, taking the barbed wire fence with it. The prisoners went wild. They climbed on the tanks in such numbers as to almost smother them. Pandemonium reigned. They were free!

However, this was the liberation of POW Hell – and the devil is indeed in the details.

Jim Lankford, Deputy National Historian

Note: An edited version of this article was published by the Army Historical Foundation in the Fall 2005 issue of *On Point: The Journal of Army History*.



On 28 April the 14th Armored Division crossed the Danube River at Ingolstadt. It passed through the 86th Infantry Division, which had established the bridgehead on the previous day, with the mission of securing crossings of the Isar River at Moosburg and Landshut. Combat Command A (CCA) was on the right of the division's line of advance, Combat Command R (CCR) was on the left, and Combat Command B (CCB) was in reserve.

Large numbers of German troops were falling back on Moosburg to cross the river. Among them were the remnants of the 17th SS Panzer Grenadier and 719th Infantry Divisions. It was, as it had been for much of the way across France and Germany, a race to capture a crucial bridge before retreating German units got safely to the other side, and blew it up in the faces of the oncoming Americans.

Under its commanding officer, Brig. Gen. C.H. Karlstad, CCA moved quickly towards Moosburg. The order of battle consisted of the 47th Tank Bn., the 500th Armored Field Artillery Bn., D Troop, 94th Cavalry Squadron, C Company, 125th Armored Engineers Bn., B Company, 68th Armored Infantry Bn, and B Battery, 398th Antiaircraft Bn. Total strength of the command was about 1,750 men, including support units. With only one company of infantry at its disposal, the combat command was significantly under strength in infantry.

Brig. Gen. Charles H. Karlstad



Photo: "History of the 14th Armored Division"

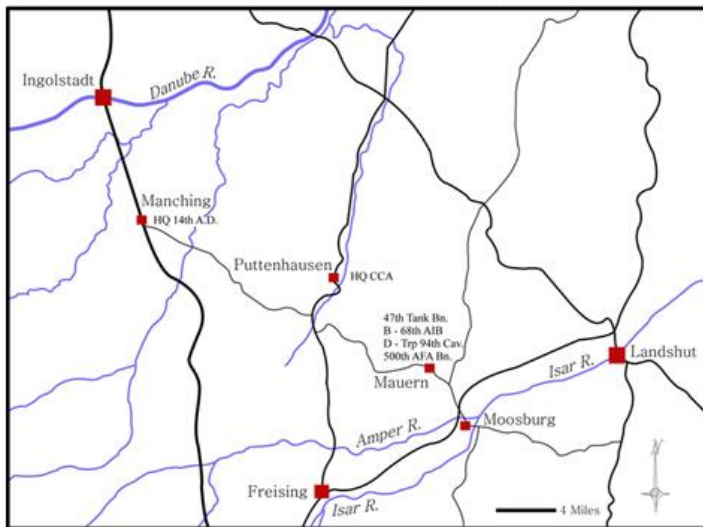
The combat command advanced nearly 50 miles on the 28th, against sporadic resistance. CCA Headquarters settled in for the night at Puttenuhausen at 2300 hours. The main force, including the 47th Tank Bn. and the infantry of B-68, was eight miles to the southeast at Mauern. They were only four miles from Moosburg.

The entry into Mauern had not been an easy one. Not long before midnight, the infantry went in ahead of the tanks to clear the town, and were ambushed by SS soldiers using machineguns and automatic antiaircraft guns. The enemy resistance was eliminated in a short, but intense fire fight. B-68 lost several men before the town was finally secured.

During the early morning hours of the 29th, a car approached a roadblock on the southeast side of Mauern from the direction of Moosburg. The car was not fired on as it was seen to be flying a white flag. In the car were four men who asked to speak with a senior officer. They were escorted to Lt. Col. James W. Lann, the commanding officer of the 47th Tank Bn.

The party included a representative of the Swiss Red Cross, a major in the SS, Col. Paul S.

Dispositions of Combat Command A, 0600 Hours 29 April 1945



Map by Jim and Mariko Lankford

Goode (U.S. Army), and Group Captain Kellet (RAF). The latter two were the senior American and British officers from Stalag VIIA at Moosburg. The SS major carried a written proposal from the area commander, which he was to present to the commanding officer of the American force. After a brief discussion, Lt. Col. Lann escorted the group to Puttenuhausen to meet with Gen. Karlstad.

The combat command's intelligence officer (S-2), Major Daniel Gentry, was on duty in CCA headquarters when Lt. Col.

Lann arrived. Lt. Col. Lann went in, leaving the delegates to wait outside. He told Major Gentry about the delegation, and asked if Gen. Karlstad was available. Major Gentry told him that the general had just awakened, and would be in the command post shortly. Gen. Karlstad walked in a few minutes later, and heard Lt. Col. Lann's report before the delegation was brought in.

The delegation entered the command post just before 0600. Col. Goode and Gen. Karlstad immediately recognized each other. They were old friends, and greeted each other warmly by their first names. Major Gentry was somewhat dismayed at Col. Goode's appearance. His jacket was not the right color, and was made of coarse, poor quality wool. The rest of his uniform was badly worn, and in generally poor condition. Col. Goode was wearing a single insignia of rank which was pinned to his jacket collar. It was crude, and appeared to have

been cut from a piece of tin. In contrast, Group Captain Kellet's uniform was in excellent condition. He was even carrying an officer's swagger stick.

After the introductions, the Red Cross representative and the SS major discussed the German proposal with Gen. Karlstad. Col. Goode and Group Captain Kellet did not take part in the discussion, and for the most part, spent their time talking with various officers in the command post. At some point during the discussions, Col. Goode left the room to get something to eat. Since it was actively engaged in combat operations, and far ahead of Division Trains, the combat command was on C Rations. Learning that Col. Goode was a prisoner of war, some the men, who had acquired a few fresh eggs for their personal use, cooked him a breakfast of fried eggs, bacon, and toast.

The German proposal was written in English. It called for an armistice in the area around Moosburg, using as a reason, the presence of a large prisoner of war camp. It also called "...for the creation of a neutral zone surrounding Moosburg, all movement of allied troops in the general vicinity of Moosburg to stop while representatives of the Allied and German governments conferred on the disposition of the Allied prisoners of war in that vicinity." Prior to this, no one in the division had even known there was a prison camp at Moosburg, much less how large it was.

On learning the details of the German proposal, Gen. Karlstad sent a radio message to division headquarters at Manching, asking the division commander, Maj. Gen. Albert C. Smith for instructions. It was clear that if accepted, the proposal would prevent CCA from capturing the bridge across the Isar River, as it was located within the proposed "neutral zone." It would also give the retreating Germans more time to withdraw across the river, and provided them with the opportunity to move at least some of the Allied prisoners with them. Gen. Smith rejected the proposal, and added a demand for the unconditional surrender of all German troops at Moosburg. Gen. Karlstad relayed Gen. Smith's response to the SS major. He did not issue a deadline by which the German commander must respond or make any allowances that might further delay the combat command in the fulfillment of its mission. After the delegation left the command post to return to Moosburg, Gen. Karlstad issued orders for the attack on Moosburg to proceed.

In his message, Gen. Smith had ordered Gen. Karlstad to: "Lead your troops into Moosburg." The order was unusual, and not in keeping with the way Gen. Smith typically worded orders to his officers. As a result, there was some discussion in the command post regarding Gen. Smith's meaning. Gen. Karlstad decided that it was his superior's intention that he was to actually lead the attack. He subsequently climbed into his peep (jeep), along with his aide, 2nd Lt. William J. Hodges, and accompanied by Lt. John Sawyer of D Troop, drove to the 47th Tank Bn. headquarters at Mauren. There he joined Lt. Col. Lann, and with him, moved with the tank battalion in its attack on Moosburg.

There was no further discussion regarding the prison camp or its capture. The combat command was to continue with its primary mission of seizing a useable bridge across the Isar River. Regardless, the liberation and security of the Allied prisoners of war was clearly of great importance, and the combat command would take the necessary steps to ensure this was

accomplished. The men of the division had done this sort of thing before. Three weeks earlier, they had fought their way into Hammelburg to liberate Stalag XIIIIC and Oflag XIIIIB.

As soon as its units were in position, CCA attacked down the main road between Mauern and Moosburg. The infantry platoons of B-68 were attached to the tank companies. The tanks of C-47, along with the 2nd platoon of B-68, were in the lead. They were followed by the tanks of B-47, with A-47 in support. Simultaneously, a platoon of tanks from C-47, and a platoon of infantry executed a flanking maneuver on the right of the main line of attack. Lt. Col. Lann took command of the main force, and Major Alton S. Kircher, the 47th's Operations Officer (S-3), led the flanking force. Since there were so many Allied prisoners of war in the area, the risk of casualties due to "friendly fire" was high. As a result, the attack was made without the powerful guns of the 500th Armored Field Artillery Bn.

The main force advanced without meeting any resistance to a point about 1 mile west of Moosburg, where the road crossed the Amper River. It was there, on the east bank of the stream, that the SS decided to make their stand. The first tank to move across the bridge came under intense small arms fire from SS troops located on the far side of the stream. The infantry quickly took cover behind the tank, while the rest of the tanks and infantry took up positions along the bank of the river, and opened fire on the enemy positions. Several infantrymen on the bridge were wounded by the first bursts of enemy fire. After they were evacuated from the bridge, the American tanks and infantry moved forward into the fight.

The SS fought from dug-in positions in the fields leading to the town, and from positions behind a railroad embankment on the American's left flank. The embankment was about 500 yards from the bridge, and lay on a direct line between it and the prison camp. Resistance was stiff, even fanatic, but short lived. The SS had no tanks or antitank guns, and were armed only with small arms, machineguns, mortars, and panzerfausts. The battle-hardened Americans fought their way through the SS positions in the fields with relative ease, while returning the fire coming from the railroad embankment. The Germans surrendered when the Americans reached the edge of Moosburg, and by 1030, "... the SS were lying dead in their foxholes or going to the rear a prisoner...."

The tanks of C-47, and their supporting infantry, moved out at once to seize the bridge across the Isar. They raced through the streets at 20 miles an hour without meeting any resistance. On arriving at the bridge, the force came under small arms and machinegun fire from the far

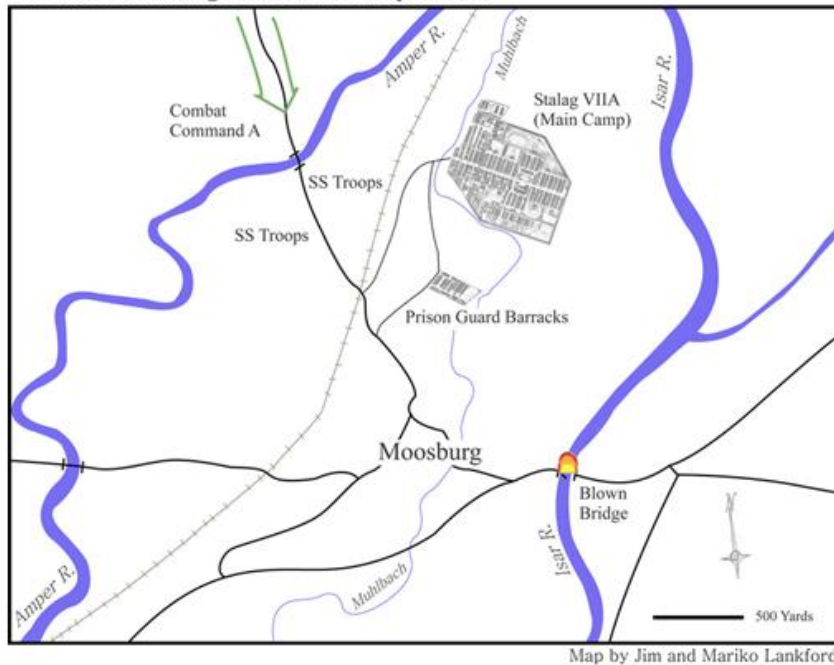
Aerial Reconnaissance Photo, Stalag VIIA and Moosburg



Courtesy USAF Academy Library Special Collections

side of the river. The infantry dismounted from the tanks, and returned fire while the lead tank rolled out onto the bridge. Just as the tank got fully onto the bridge, the Germans set off the demolition charge, and the center of the bridge disappeared in a massive explosion. The section of the span under the tank began tilting precariously down, towards the water. The driver brought his 32 ton vehicle to a halt, and slammed its transmission into reverse. With the tank's treads spinning, he skillfully backed the tank off the tilting portion of the bridge, and onto firm ground, before it slid into the river.

Attack on Moosburg 0930 Hours 29 April 1945



Col. Goode and Group Captain Kellet had arrived back at the camp shortly before the engagement at the Amper River bridge. They told their fellow prisoners that an armored unit was coming to free them, and while the German resistance was expected to be light, they should keep their heads down. The prisoners and guards watched as the SS took up defensive positions in the area. It was not long before the sounds of battle came from the distance. The fight for Moosburg was underway.

Two of the POWs recalls the intensity of the moment.

Bill Ethridge, April 29: *“Daybreak brought the sound of shouting and gunfire at the front gate. From our barracks we could see German troops near that gate, and they were firing in! We were ordered to stay inside as the Germans began fighting each other. We found out later when bodies were being loaded onto a truck that the Gestapo had attempted to take the camp from the Wehrmacht. Little did we know at that time, but Hitler had issued an order to kill all of the prisoners in the camp. The Gestapo and the SS troops attempted to carry out that Order, and the German army had saved our lives!”*

Lt. Harold W. Gunn: *“Sunday - April 29, 1945 10:04 - The time we have been waiting so long for has finally come. I am trying to record the events while sitting in rather cramped quarters in our barracks kitchen, the only place with brick walls. Bullets are flying, the*

chatter of machine gun fire and spasmodic rifle reports, punctuated by the heavy explosions of large guns makes a fitting background for our long anticipated liberation. The "Goons" are making a last stand at our gates. Rumors are flying as thick as the bullets. Two men have been victims of stray bullets. The whole camp has been taken in by the rumors. Inadequate causes and long stored up feelings makes the moment a dramatic one. Low flying Mustangs and Thunderbolts have been doing their bit to make it a "good show." Tanks have been sighted on the hill close by and are believed to be ours. Many "Kriegies" are eating what we hope to be our last "Kriegie" meal behind barbed wires. A heavy explosion just brought down a spray of plaster from the ceiling and walls. Air Force officers are receiving a lasting impression of a ground battle and feeling very much out of place.

I am now crouched in the abort where many Kriegies have taken shelter. The steady hum of excited conversation reflects the pitch of the moment. We are all nervous, but our morale is very high. There is no sign of panic. Smiles are worn by all, and in spite of the apparent danger, we all agree that it is a "good show." A direct hit in Moosburg, the nearest town, sent up a cloud of smoke.

The heavy traffic from barracks to abort shows that nature will have her way, even under these conditions. Even Kriegie burners are going full blast. Food is still an important item. We are all determined to eat. A Kriegie has tasted hunger and does not find it to his liking.

I am now standing in the sunshine at the corner of our block. Many are now outside watching the show. Our camp guards have made us go to the slit trenches. Too many have been injured. Those in the tents are very vulnerable to flying bullets.

The "Goons" are firing from a visible church steeple in Moosburg, a good reason for damaged cathedrals that we read so much about in German propaganda. We Kriegies have been under the German heel too long to be fooled by their propaganda and feel much sympathy for them at this time.

Most of the fire has been moved south into the town, but this slit trench is still a comfortable place to be. We jump up occasionally for a quick look, then back into the trench when close fire increases.

Until additional excitement arises, I will close this erratic account and enjoy the show.

Capt. Daniels was hit in the stomach by a 30 caliber bullet. His injury was slight thanks to an iron bar on the dispensary window."

Fire from the American tanks and infantry, aimed at the SS who were firing from behind the railroad embankment, came into the camp. Prisoners and guards alike hurriedly sought cover in ditches, under buildings, and behind brick walls. Adding to the commotion was the sound

of the demolition charges exploding as the Germans destroyed the bridge across the Isar. As soon as it had started, it was over. The firing ceased except for the occasional sounds of small arms and machinegun fire from the direction of the bridge.

Frank D. Murphy: *“Roughly an hour after it began the shooting abruptly stopped completely. The silence that followed was an almost deathly quiet, too quiet, strange and unnatural. It was short-lived. About fifteen to twenty minutes later we heard the unmistakable rumble and clanking of heavy armor approaching the camp from somewhere outside our perimeter fences. Moments later, without fanfare or warning, three Sherman tanks of the 47th Tank Battalion, Combat Team A, 14th Armored Infantry Division, United States Third Army, came crashing through the fence near the front gate. Amid the shouting, screaming, and cheering of the newly freed prisoners, the tanks drove a short distance down the main street of Stalag VII A and halted. Kriegies immediately swarmed all over them.*

Feelings not expressed for long months and years were finally being freely released. Frantically trying to defend himself against being crushed by the mob of ragtag rabble climbing all over his tank, the besieged sergeant driver of one the 14th Armored Division Shermans declared that he had never seen such “a crazy bunch of ragged ass people.

Lt. Gunn’s notes continue.

“The American flag went up over Moosburg at 12:15 and our camp hoisted the same at 13:05 – a truly wonderful sight !!

At 1:45 2 jeeps and a tank rolled into camp, barely recognizable because of the men clustered upon them. They received a deafening ovation. This account was begun by P.O.W. 1613, but is being finished by Lt. Harold W. Gunn, U.S.A.A.F.”

Vernon Burda: *“Then, suddenly for no apparent reason a hush fell over the compound, and all eyes turned toward the town in which stood two high church steeples...and then it occurred, a scene, the happening of which brought tears streaming down the face of every American prisoner-of-war there, and a sob from every throat – we saw the greatest sight, the most emotional moment we would ever witness – raised before our eyes and flying defiantly above one of the church steeples was the symbol of our beloved land – The American Flag. Yes, the tears flowed from over tens of thousands of faces that day – over tens of thousands of unashamed faces, as that flag shocked us back with memories of the place we all held most dear – our beloved land, our home.”*





While the effort to capture the bridge was underway, Gen. Karlstad went into Moosburg with the main body of his force. "Large numbers of German prisoners were being rounded up by Lann's tank and infantry platoons, including one large group that stated it was the guard of the prison camp." Gen. Karlstad and his staff questioned some of the German officers regarding the prison camp, "... and selected a German captain to act as his guide to the prison camp."

Gen. Karlstad: "With 1st Lieutenant Joseph P. Luby of the 68th Armored Infantry Battalion and 2nd Lieutenant William J. Hodges, and their 3 "Peep Drivers", this party started out across town, guided by the German captain. As this little convoy, carrying one mounted .30 caliber machine-gun, approached the camp gate, the alarming sight of a large number of armed "Heinies" in the outer yard of the great camp was noted, but Lt. Luby took exactly the right action. Without slackening his speed but with both hands on the business end of his machine-gun he rolled into the middle of the German formation, brought his peep to a sudden halt and called "Actung." [sic] The German guard of 240 men was ordered to line up and to drop their weapons in front of them. The two young officers and 3 drivers went rapidly down the line receiving the pistol belts from officers and making a quick search of arms in the pockets of the guards.

Moments later, a battle-scarred medium tank joined them at the main gate. Still others, carrying infantrymen on their backs, took up positions outside the camp.

Gen. Karlstad called for the German Camp commander [Col. Otto Burger] and received an unconditional surrender of the German garrison and the camp."



This photograph was taken by Capt. John Bennett of South Camp with a clandestine camera. It shows the Camp Commandant, Maj. Gustav Simoleit (left), Major Alton S. Kircher, Executive Officer 47th Tank Battalion (center), and Group Captain Kellet, RAF, senior British officer (right). This is the moment of official surrender and Major Simoleit is establishing the time needed to get his men in from the many guard posts around the camp, disarm them, and form them up to be trucked away to POW camps.



German garrison is packed in trucks and taken away. Note the camp chimneysweep in top hat.

General Karlstad continues: *“The first allied prisoners to present themselves were Group Captain Kellet and Colonel Goode, In a few moments an enterprising American produced a United States Flag – from where, perhaps only he knew – and amid thunderous cheers from the prisoners, ran it to the top of the camp flag pole. It was a **dramatic moment.**”*

That **dramatic moment** in history was the gift of 23-year-old 1st Lieutenant Martin Allain, a B-26 bomber pilot who became the 121st prisoner of war when his aircraft was shot down over

North Africa in January of 1943. His family and Lt. Col. Renita Foster recreate this American spirit story.

After being captured by Arabs and turned over to German soldiers, Allain was sent back to Germany where he was interrogated and held in solitary confinement.

During an initial search, Allain cleverly hid under his tongue, a sacred heart medal, given to him by his mother. It was the first of two prized possessions he would guard with his life during his years as a prisoner of war.

"My mother presented Martin with the medal that first Sunday in December of 1941," said Allain's sister, Net Garon. "Everyone gathered together that day to spend as much time with him as possible before he reported for flight training. It was just a few hours later we learned about the bombing of Pearl Harbor, which made us feel all the worse."

While serving as a security officer at his initial POW camp in Stalag Luft III in Sagan, Poland, Allain received his next treasure; a huge American flag smuggled into the compound to be displayed for identification, should the constantly prayed for Allied planes appear. For safe keeping, Allain immediately sewed the flag between two German blankets.

The renewed threat of the Russian winter offensive in January 1945 caused the Germans to evacuate Stalag Luft III kriegies. When the order came, Allain was determined to keep the sacred icon he'd been entrusted with and quickly grabbed the blankets for a six day forced march in horrendous weather and sub-zero temperatures from Poland to Germany, arriving at Moosburg in early February.

"I don't think at the time Martin knew just how significant that flag would become," said Lila, who became Allain's wife a few months before he left for overseas in 1942. "He simply felt it was his responsibility to make sure it was available if needed."

... Sunday, April 29, the Moosburg kriegies awakened to brilliant sunshine, restoring their belief freedom just might be near. "McGuffy," the code name for the BBC (British Broadcasting Company), heard by kriegies over hidden radios had announced General Patton's 3rd Army was northeast of Munich. This startling revelation sent many prisoners scurrying to examine their secret maps, confirming Moosburg was indeed close to that area. As the morning progressed, so did excitement in the camp. Men grouped together, whispering, planning, and praying this just might be the day.

The kriegies heard the long awaited, soul stirring signs of freedom before seeing them. Just over the horizon was the unmistakable chugging sound of a Piper Cub. As the observation craft every combat soldier knew so well came gliding over the Bavarian evergreens, it began wagging its wings over the camp as thousands of voices boomed up to greet it. The powerful engines of two P 51s followed the Cub, enhancing the already spectacular scene with victory rolls over barracks and tents for the exhilarated POWS.

And then the most revered sound of all; one holding thousands of kriegie eyes and ears spellbound with anticipation that seemed to last as long as the war itself; the deep rumble of diesel tanks approaching from beyond the surrounding hills. From the second they were spotted to their arrival at the main gate, the rescue machines were literally drowned out by the deafening kriegie jubilation.

It was the 14th Armored Division, storming the main gate of Moosburg that late Sunday morning. To this day, its veterans claim the cheering of captured servicemen being liberated, "is the most moving sound we've ever heard."

And in that moment, when impassioned kriegies began climbing over tanks and celebrating their deliverance, Allain realized the destiny meant for the highly coveted flag he'd protected for so long.

"I was standing at the front gate," said Robert Hartman, an infantry platoon leader with the 78th Infantry Division before his capture the year before, "when Allain began shinnying up the German flagpole. Everyone knew immediately what he was going to do, and there was no doubt in our minds he would make it despite his malnourished appearance. I think when called upon, Americans just have tremendous esprit de corps to accomplish whatever they need to. And the recollection of this grimy, skinny but smiling GI tearing down the ugly swastika and replacing it with the beautiful Stars and Stripes has never wavered or grown dim. I've never seen this soldier before or since, but it's the kind of memory that only gets stronger with time."

As for the veteran Moosburg kriegies, the ones who had been imprisoned for more than three years and "sweated out" every major World War II event from North Africa to D-Day to Bastogne; the ones surviving for so long by making German rations edible and turning tin cans into tools and utensils; the ones who would not allow themselves to feel hope that day because of so many near-but-not-quite rescues; witnessing Allain's display of American patriotism at its best, was nothing short of miraculous.

"As hardened as they were, seeing that glorious Stars and Stripes sent tears rolling down their cheeks," said another former Moosburg POW, "and they were not ashamed to be seen crying. Being set free can do that to people when they have been behind barbed wire and don't know if they will ever see their families again." Like most soldiers who keep souvenirs from their Army adventures, Allain brought home the swastika flag, but left Old Glory at Moosburg.

"He liked to believe it stayed hanging on that flag pole long after he'd left," Lila Allain said, "as a reminder when freedom came to the prison that day. And I think it was just marvelous he had the foresight to keep it and accomplish something so remarkable with it."

Martin Allain, Jr. vividly remembers hearing the "flag story" as a youngster and can easily picture his father climbing up the pole. He also views it as a bunch of young men trying to keep their sanity with the flag incident reinforcing the sense of who they were. "Freedom didn't exist for so long for those POWs, and when that flag appeared, that's the moment they knew freedom really was theirs. And to this day it's a favorite family bedtime story. Especially the part where my father hid the flag between the blankets to keep the Germans from finding it"

Most Americans never learned of Allain's symbolic contribution to the end of World War II until a decade ago when former Moosburg kriegies wrote to columnist Ann Landers sharing that unforgettable Sunday. But Allain didn't identify himself as the flag raiser until nearly five years later, a shot time before his death.



The liberators had arrived, and the prisoners were now, finally safe. As the realization of this sank in:

Scenes of the wildest rejoicing accompanied the tanks as they crashed through the double 10-foot wire fences of the prison camps.



This is the first of the 14th Armored Division's tanks into camp-- front row, left to right: tank crewman, Lt. Col. A.P. Clark, Lt. Col. R. M. Stillman with a big cigar and a lap full of German officers' dress daggers, and Capt. Dick Schrupp, who spoke German and photographed the events of Liberation morning.

There were Norwegians, Brazilians, French, Poles, Dutch, Greeks, Rumanians, Bulgars. There were Americans, Russians, Serbs, Italians, New Zealanders, South Africans, Australians, British, Canadians, - men from every nation fighting the Nazis. There were officers and men. Twenty-seven Russian Generals, sons of four American Generals. There were men and women in the prison camps There were men of every rank and every branch of service, there were war correspondents and radio men.

They rushed to greet their liberators. So many flowed around and over the tanks, peeps, and half-tracks, that even the huge Sherman tanks completely disappeared beneath a mass of jubilating humanity.

"You damned bloody Yanks, I love you!" shouted a six-foot four Australian and threw his arms around a jeep driver.

A weary bearded American paratrooper climbed onto a tank and kissed the tank commander. Tears streamed from his cheeks.

Italians and Serbs, tired and drawn, jammed around the vehicles, eagerly thrusting out their hands to touch their liberators, weeping.

An American Air Corps lieutenant kissed a tank. "God damn, do I love the ground forces," he said.

POWs Welcome Their Liberators at Stalag VIIA



Courtesy USAF Academy Library Library Special Collections



This is the happiest day of my life!" "You were a long time coming, but now you are here!"

"Endlich frei, endlich frei,"
["finally free, finally free"]

Here the 14th Armored Division found many of its own soldiers, some of whom had been listed as Missing in Action since mid-November when the division first went into combat. The tankers of C Company were thrilled to see eight of their comrades who had been captured the previous January. Tech 5 Floyd G. Mahoney, also of C Company, "... was particularly overjoyed upon finding that his son, an air corps lieutenant, was a prisoner there."

Most of the American soldiers who fought at Moosburg never actually saw the prison camp. They did not have much time to join in the celebrations or even to reflect on what they had

accomplished. That would come later. That afternoon the infantry of B-68 crossed the Isar on a footbridge built by the engineers, and began patrolling the far side of the river. They took some more casualties when they came under sporadic fire from small arms, mortars, self-propelled guns, and artillery. The rest of the combat command set up a defensive perimeter around Moosburg, and began patrolling the west bank of the Isar. Virtually everyone became involved in the task of rounding up the thousands of German soldiers who had been trapped in the area when the bridge was destroyed. Even Gen. Smith brought in a prisoner. Early in the afternoon he arrived at the CCA command post in Moosburg with an SS major riding on the hood of his jeep. In one of those strange coincidences of war, it was the same SS major who had led the delegation to CCA headquarters early that morning.

CCA failed in its mission to capture a bridge across the Isar, but this was soon overshadowed by the magnitude of the liberation of Stalag VIIA. It did not hold 27,000 prisoners of war, as was originally reported, but over 110,000. Among them were 30,000 American soldiers, sailors, and airmen! Word of the massive liberation spread quickly, and two days later even General Patton visited the prison camp with an entourage of high ranking officers, arriving in his jeep garbed in his usual uniform with four stars on everything including his ivory handled pistols. He was a sight to behold.



One of the more poignant stories written by Sharon Nicholson about POW Cameron Garrett excerpted from the text of a book in progress, Through Hell and Back, recounts the reunion of two brothers.

“May 1, 1945, dressed a fresh uniform and wearing his non military issue wide black leather belt with a grandly polished silver buckle, his famous ivory-handled six-guns stood the infamous General George S. Patton. Major General Albert C. Smith, commander of the Fourteenth Armored Infantry Division, and Major General James A. Van Fleet, III Corps Commander were at his side as were a number of lesser ranked aids.

There was no doubt in the minds of nearly 110,000 men, regardless of nationality, standing, sitting or on a Red Cross stretcher that didn't know which one was "Old Blood and Guts".

The cheering lasted as long as General Patton would stand for it. Like the orchestra leader that he was, when he dropped his arm there was immediate and complete silence. With a brief address to the ex-POWs and "Liberators" of the U.S. Third Army, General Patton led his entourage through the camp. Occasionally he stopped to talk with groups of American prisoners, though friendly to the men, ferocity, rage, and revulsion radiated from the General as he continued his inspection. Those of us who could stand, stood at attention.

Ex-POWs, ex-slave labors, ex-concentration camp inmates, soldiers and civilians, men and women of various nations of Europe wept, cheered, saluted, waved tear-stained rags, and shouted with unadulterated joy while they watched the troops paraded through the camp. The infantrymen of the 68th Armored Battalion stoically marched in formation trying to move German POWs in columns of four men wide and a half mile long.

This is not a parade that can easily be visualized unless you were lucky enough to be there at the time. It felt to me like the furnaces of hell suddenly flickered for the last time in my heart. I had yet to learn that it wasn't my heart but my head that would not forget or forgive...."

"... I had to be a thousand feet from him, but I would recognize that walk of his anywhere. Tears flowed from my eyes, I tried to cry out to him but my dry throat would not respond. He turned and followed the general as the Gen. Patton changed directions. Pushing and shoving my way through the crowd proved unsuccessful. Too many others were just as anxious to be near the generals, in hopes of hearing a word or two cast in their direction. "God help me!" I pleaded.

Then it came to me, putting my two little fingers to my mouth I gave what called back home in Nebraska, "One hell of a horse whistle." Gen. Patton, being a cavalryman at heart, he stopped short, turned and a slight smile appeared momentarily. One of the lesser officers in the entourage drew the attention of the general, and he nodded his head in approval. When I saw him put his two fingers to his mouth, I knew I hadn't been mistaken when I saw my brother, Clint. His whistle was strong and true in response to mine. But he was confused looking into the massive milling crowd until I let out another whistle and another.

When the ex-POWs parted like the Red Sea for Moses, Clint ran toward me. I was not the only one bawling like a baby. It was the first time I ever saw Clint with tears in his eyes. Those around us wept for joy when Clint picked me up in his arms like a June bride. "God you smell good!" That's all I could think of to say. His response was equally tender, "You smell worse than horse shit and you look like hell!" He intended to put me down, but I was too exhausted now to stand. So, he carried me through the parting waves of cheering men. After introducing me to the three generals as his baby brother Cameron,

they laughed and shook my hand gently. I think they were afraid they could crush my bony fingers. Clint requested to be dismissed, which was granted immediately by Patton himself. Then he carried me directly to his tent with his commander's blessing. I was too embarrassed to look directly at anyone, especially Patton, but I felt his eyes penetrate my shame as if I lay naked before him.

After reaching a tent, Clint casually laid me on a real army cot, and started heating water. Quietly he started removing my filthy rags, then tossed them outside the tent. I could not bear to look at the pain in his eyes. Clint fought back tears as he heated helmet after helmet of warm soapy water. Between washing the layers of grime, he tried unsuccessfully to entertain me with small talk. The antiseptic soap stung in the open sores on my body, but it was little price to pay for this bit of heaven.

Suddenly I felt extremely humiliated to know that I lay naked before my brother on his cot. I was feeling the same shame that our brother Donner must have felt when he was too weak with typhoid fever to wash. Clint and I had to wash his feverish, soiled and sweaty body. Clint tried to ignore the cadaverous condition of my body. I knew what he saw, for I had seen the walking dead in and outside of my own barracks, at the latrine, and fighting over Red Cross packages like dogs over a single bone. Suddenly I felt ashamed for my ingratitude, and I thanked God for the compassion in his touch and the love in my brother's eyes.

After a long silence, I had the courage to ask him about Donner, anticipating the worst. Clint flashed me one of his rare wide smiles. Donner? "To hear him tell it, he's fathered one the handsomest nephews you're likely to meet, according to his last letter. Donner's working full time as a male nurse in the Veteran's Hospital and his discharge from the Army. Donner met a cute spunky blonde named Maggie, who was the head nurse in the emergency room in Seattle, Washington. She convinced him to go to nursing school after he recovered from his surgeries. Naturally I inquired about the surgeries.

He had been stationed up in Alaska, and spent enough time as a snow bound infantryman somewhere in the Aleutian Islands. Weather and constant freezing temperatures caused more casualties than the Japanese. Medics revived our brother after his feet froze. After spending an entire day under enemy fire in an ice filled trench, medics revived our brother when he feet were frozen. I don't know the details, but it was bad enough to get him out of the war and into the arms of a sweet little Army nurse. I have some photos of him up in Alaska in my pack somewhere.

Anyway after a couple months, she had to proposed marriage to him; he was too shy to ask for a date. She waited until he was able to get up and able to start physical therapy then she took him out on a date to the commissary. Maggie had said, "She was tired of waiting, and they were going to the court house for a marriage license before he was able to run away. All Donner could say was, 'Yes dear'" when she handed him his crutches.

"When their baby was born, they baptized him Bryce Cameron Garrett. According his grandmother and grandfather he's very bright. Not like his Uncle Cameron who chose to fly around Europe in a B-24 until the Germans shot him down." He stopped there with his story, after reassuring me that Mom and Dad were fine too. The gentle scrubbing was like a massage that caressed each malnourished muscle. I knew he wanted me to eat before I fell asleep but I was too tired. I had eaten more the last two days than in the last month, my stomach was in a knot. So he fixed me some real coffee before I fell asleep."

Combat Command B closed in on Moosburg that afternoon, along with elements of the 395th Regiment. The following night they crossed the Isar River on a bridge which had been built by C-125th Armored Engineers Bn. and the 998th Treadway Bridge Company. "... tanks and endless lines of silent infantrymen, ..., faces set and hardly seeing the weaving scene about them, eyes straight ahead" moved forward, across the Isar River, and deeper into Germany. Behind them the war was over, but ahead, although it was entering its final days, the war was still very much alive. For the soldiers of the 14th Armored Division, there was a little more fighting and liberating, and some dying, left to be done.



As the Allied armies drove on, the German Army continued to surrender in large chunks. Besides the job of overcoming any enemy resistance, the Allied units had two other jobs, one to handle the thousands of German prisoners who fell into their hands and the other to care for and transport the thousands of American, British and other Allied soldiers whom they are liberating from Nazi prisoner-of-war camps.

Today the 7th Army, in its drive south, overran a camp at Moosburg, north of Munich, where it liberated 27,000 American and British prisoners of war. This is believed to be the largest number of American and British soldiers yet freed from a single camp. Sanitary conditions in the camp were reported as not too bad and there was a ten-day supply of Red Cross food packages on hand.

Huge Prison Camp Liberated

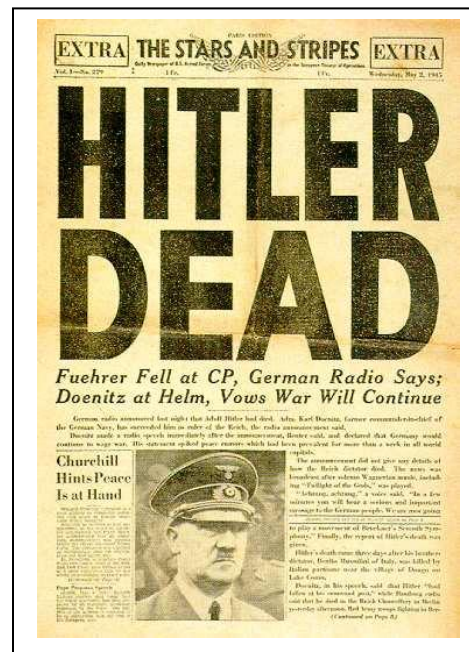
Other elements liberated 27,000 American and British prisoners of war at a large camp at Moosburg. The army of prisoners had been moved there recently from other camps in the path of the Allies' advances. The sanitary arrangements and water supply in the camp were called good, according to front line reports and there was a ten-day supply of Red Cross food packages on hand.



REILMAN'S FAREWELL – Recollections of Major General W.E. Arnold

A few days after Patton's troops took over the camp, an Army captain who was loaded with German equipment walked up to Col. Arnold. The American officer handed over a saber, pistols and a pistol belt, and told Col. Arnold that he had been asked to deliver them by a German guard named Reilman. Col. Arnold asked the officer to take him to Mr. Reilman, and the two set off to a gate at the far end of the camp. "By the time we got there, Mr. Reilman had already been taken away and I never saw him again. I thought it was sad that we didn't get to say good-bye." To this day, General Arnold often thinks of Mr. Reilman. "I knew he was an insurance salesman before the war, but I really didn't know much else about him. I never even knew his first name." "I was very honored that Mr. Reilman chose me to surrender to. He kept us alive on the march and I had great respect for him." Col. Arnold gave Mr. Reilman's things to some guys who were interested in those sorts of war souvenirs, but often wishes he'd kept some memento of Mr. Reilman's for himself.

The day after liberation, April 30th, Hitler and his mistress, Eva Braun, committed suicide in his bunker in Berlin. Ironically, the concentration camp at Dachau, near Munich, was liberated the same day.



Soon afterwards their bodies were carried up the stairs to a small garden outside the door to the bunker complex. Hitler's driver, another of those interrogated, helped carry Eva's body some of the way and noted that once there it was placed on the ground beside Hitler's. He told his interrogators he had noticed that she had been wearing a blue summer dress made of real silk, that her shoes had cork heels, and that her hair was "artificially blonde".



Moments later the same witness saw a party including Goebbels and Bormann gathered beside the bodies. One of them poured petrol from a can over the bodies. They then retired to the safety of a doorway with the sound of Russian artillery all around them. Hitler's adjutant lit a petrol-soaked rag and threw it on the bodies, which immediately burst into flames. The group made the Hitlergruss (the Nazi salute) and withdrew.

One of the bunker guards arrived late on the scene. He described how he was greatly startled to see the two bodies burst into flames as if by spontaneous combustion. He had been unable to see the Goebbels party concealed in a doorway and only later was told the true circumstances.

The bodies were only partly destroyed by the fire and were later hastily buried in a shallow bomb crater. According to Russian reports, the bodies were exhumed by Soviet troops and taken to Magdeburg in East Germany where Hitler's body was said to have been finally destroyed in April 1970 by the KGB. Two fragments of the body, a jawbone and skull, were preserved. They were displayed in an exhibition at the Russian Federal Archives in Moscow in April 2000.

By the time the YMCA was prepared to publish the April edition of "the War Prisoner Aid News" it was all over.

Swarms of Freed PWs Rejoin Units

By CLINTON B. CONGER

At the Russo-American Military Boundary, Germany, May 5 (U.P).—Thousands of liberated American, British and Russian war prisoners are crossing the Elbe River military line to rejoin their respective armies.

The U. S. 9th Army has massed trucks on the east bank to speed the evacuation of British and American soldiers liberated by the Red army. Soviet troops await the arrival of Red army soldiers freed by the Anglo-Americans.

The liberated prisoners are swarming up to the Elbe by every means. They hitch-hike rides in wagons, trucks and cars. They ride bicycles. Many have walked miles.

Aimed for Home.

As many as 3,000 Americans have a good chance of arriving in the United States before the War Department can notify their families of their liberation. Once they cross the Elbe they are rushed to Paris and thence to America.

Since May 1, I have been up and down several hundred miles of these roads in and near the Russian zone. Accompanied by Martin Harris and Jack Raymond, correspondents of the Army newspaper Stars and Stripes, we returned four liberated Americans and two Britons early this morn-

ing from the Elbe. Our jeep couldn't hold any more.

All were from the Luckenwalde prison camp. Lieut. Hugh Hogan of Binghamton, N. Y., a member of the 509th Parachute Battalion, was captured early in the Italian campaign; Lieut. Harlan L. Adams of Viroqua, Wis., a Flying Fortress pilot; Lieut. John Eiser of Baltimore, a flight officer, and William Norris of Lewiston, Pa., a Thunderbolt pilot, all were shot down early this year.

Russians Good Hosts.

Two RAF flight sergeants, Cyril Kershaw of Leeds, and Dennis Martin of Lincoln, were shot down over Arnhem.

American and British liberatees could not ask for friendlier hosts than the Russians. Red army officers naturally are disturbed at having so many foreigners moving in their army zone. For, besides American and British soldiers, there are slave laborers from a

dozen nations. They tried to collect them in hotels and estates but impatient GIs hit the road and the Russians apparently threw up their hands and let them go.

The six we picked up were warm with vodka, and had Russian cigarettes and Red army food.

IT'S V-E DAY!

Total German Surrender

By EDWARD KENNEDY

REIMS, France, May 7 (AP).---Germany surrendered unconditionally to the Western Allies and Russia at 2:41 a. m. French time today. (This was at 8:41 p. m., Eastern war time Sunday). The surrender took place at a little red school house which is the headquarters of Gen. Eisenhower. The surrender, which brought the war in Europe to a formal end after five years, eight months and six days of bloodshed and destruction was signed for Germany by Col. Gen. Gustav Jodl.

... And 125 Million More Americans Felt the Same Way



(NEWS photo by Mankin)

'THANKS'

As thousands cheered outside, these girls kneel in St. Patrick's Cathedral to devote a few moments toward thanking the Almighty for the blessings of victory. Throughout the city, churches were crowded as the faithful came to pray. Streamers and ticker-tape cover the graves (→) in Trinity churchyard at Broadway and Rector St. Amid all the confusion, Sergt. Cyril Coates and his wife stop for a moment of silent prayer.

(NEWS photo by Jackson)



(NEWS photo by Frutkin)

PROUD LADY. The big reproduction of the Statue of Liberty looked better than ever yesterday as almost everybody—and his cousin—flocked to Times Square.



(NEWS photo by Frutkin)

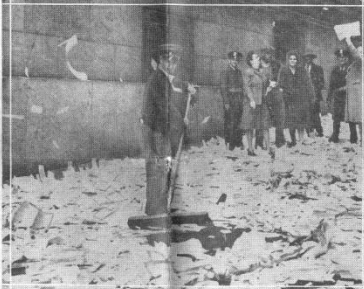
WORTH WAITING FOR. Times Square, mecca of true to form yesterday. As early as 10 A. M. the square was doing a rush business as milling, cheering mobs dug in for a long siege of celebrating. At the statue of Father Duffy, chaplain of World War I, peace prevailed as scores knelt to pray.



(NEWS photo by Heston)

SITTING PRETTY

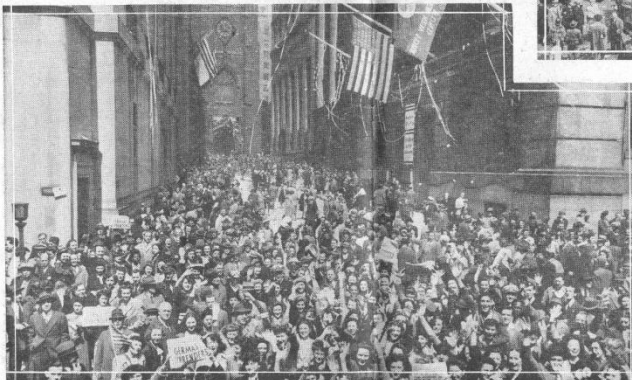
Mae Cusack is surrounded by good news as she sits in a swamp of torn newspapers. Hundreds of telephone books—torn up, of course—were heaved out factory and office windows.



(NEWS photo by Heston)

INTO EACH LIFE SOME SNOW ...

... but much too much has fallen into his (←). Scene: 46th St. near Lexington Ave.



(NEWS photo by Mankin)

WHERE TICKER-TAPE FLEW LIKE MONEY. This is Broadway near Wall Street yesterday. The money mart greeted the fall of Germany with a series of declines and rallies but with the hired help, it was all "rally"—a prolonged, substantial one.



(NEWS photo by Heston)

WAR ENDS—MANEUVERS CONTINUE. He had a lot to do with those happy headlines and it's time to cash in, so Corp. Arthur Stiefel collects his reward from Maxine Menkes in a doorway on E. 42d St. He wears the Purple Heart for wounds received in Europe.

The final YMCA publication was delayed and a combined April/May issue was released in May. Now there was plenty of news.

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



APRIL-MAY, 1945

No. 4

Views of Now Liberated Dulag Luft



U. S. Army Signal Corps Photo

Men at Dulag Luft called their mess hall "The Stage Door Canteen." Pictured above are American and Allied airmen at mess. This camp was a model P.O.W. camp, according to reports, before the happy day it was liberated by our advancing armies.



U. S. Army Signal Corps Photo

Downed American flyers who were prisoners of war at Dulag Luft, near Wetzlar, Germany, slept in this double-decker bunkroom. The Seventh Armored Division, U. S. Army, by-passed the camp, forced Germans to retreat without the prisoners.

V-E Day Speeds Return of G.I.'s From Prison Camps

With V-E Day a matter of history, thousands of G.I.'s just released from prison camps in Germany will soon find themselves returning to well deserved rests at home.

Every effort is being made to ship these newly liberated heroes back to their homes and loved ones as quickly as possible. Less fortunate soldiers suffering from wounds received in battle or physically disabled through sickness or long confinement will be returned to hospitals in the United States for treatment. Extended furloughs are being granted to those men returning home after long and weary months behind barbed wire.

Actually little news of newly liberated war prisoners can be accurately reported since events in Europe have moved so rapidly that any information given out on prisoners is usually hopelessly out of date before the ink has had a chance to dry on the paper.

News of Y.M.C.A. services to war prisoners is reported by our workers and relayed from our officers in Geneva and Stockholm.

Devotion to Prisoners

For the past several months, though, all workers serving prisoners have been too busy to send reports. The primary duty of these workers has been to do all they could for the prisoners and the very absence of reports shows the devotion of these men, all of whom have left the security of their homes in neutral countries to risk death serving their less fortunate fellow humans.

According to a cable received from Sweden, the war's end brought complete confusion to food and transportation facilities, adding to difficulties already faced by "Y" workers. Our fleet of trucks was forced to split into two units. One aided the wounded who were unable to move. The other was loaned to the International Red Cross to help get food parcels to the men.

"Y" Workers in Danger

A constant threat of death from Allied and German air and ground
(Continued on page 6)

Summary of Far East Developments:

War Prisoners Aid Supplies Arrive in Orient

Neutral Y.M.C.A. War Prisoners Aid representatives are being permitted to make visits to Japanese prison camps in Japan, Shanghai, Indo China, Hongkong and Thailand, where fighting men are being held captive, according to a cable received from Y.M.C.A. offices in Stockholm.

News has also reached War Prisoners Aid in New York of the arrival of a shipment of 299 cases of "Y" supplies in the Far East via Vladivostok. They contained 28,435 books; 4,962 victrola records; and 12 cases of theatrical kits. The cases were distributed in the Philippines, Japan, Formosa, Shanghai, Hongkong, Indo China, Thailand, Borneo, Sumatra, Malaya, Java, Korea and Manchukuo.

Relief Steamer Is Sunk

The steamer, Awa Maru, which reached Kobe on November 11, subsequently delivering the remainder of the relief supply shipments for American prisoners of war and internees at Formosa, Hongkong, Saigon, Singapore, and Netherland Indies ports, was reported sunk by a U.S. submarine on April 11, in a State Department announcement. It had been travelling under a safe conduct guarantee by the allies and was en route back to Japan.

This delivery of Y.M.C.A. materials via Vladivostok is the second shipment from the western hemisphere to reach Japanese held prisoners, culminating efforts of the "Y" throughout the war to supply leisure time materials and various essentials to Americans and other nationals held in the Far East camps. It augments supplies bought locally by Y.M.C.A. representatives for the prisoners.

For instance, latest news from the Far East reports the supplying of 1,200 dozen white cotton socks to civilian employees and prisoners of war in Japan, Korea, Manchuria, and Formosa.

Milk for Children

In one instance, some 2,000 eggs and 100 quarts of milk were supplied for the children of the civilian internment camp, Santo Thomas, in Manila. Beef, pork, ducks, sugar, and fresh fruit were supplied to this camp along with all kinds of welfare supplies, clothing, toilet articles, tobaccos and the like. Similar supplies were furnished other camps in the Far East, with restrictions by the local authorities differing in each section and camp.

Word has just been received of a large purchase of materials for the relief of civilian internees brought to Kobe from Guam, made with a sum

of \$3,500 put at the disposal of the International Y.M.C.A. by the Congress of Industrial Organizations, Washington, D. C.

The money had been furnished by the C.I.O. for relief of both the internees brought to Japan from Guam and those captured on Wake Island. The Y.M.C.A. discovered that the Wake Island internees were held in Shanghai and had already received a considerable amount of relief goods from the foreign community in Shanghai, whereas the Guam internees held at Kobe were badly in need of many articles, especially clothing. The Neutral Committee therefore concluded that it would be both fair and suitable to utilize this donation exclusively for the Guam internees.

In consultation with the internees, themselves, it was decided to purchase underwear, sweaters, soap, towels, socks, handkerchiefs, shirts, trousers and shoes. None of these items were available in Japan, however, so the order was eventually placed in Shanghai through the Y.M.C.A. representative there. All the items were obtained with the exception of shoes, trousers, and shirts.

"Y" Began Work in 1942

Early in 1942, the Japanese government granted the World's Committee of the Y.M.C.A.'s permission to maintain service to prisoners of war in Japanese controlled territory. Since the summer of 1942, a committee of prominent neutrals, Swiss and Swedes, have been administering affairs for War Prisoners Aid of the Y.M.C.A. from Tokyo. Minister W. J. K. Bagge, Swedish Minister to Japan, is chairman of this committee.

By the end of May 1943 the committee had distributed in Japan, Korea, and Formosa equipment for football, baseball, badminton and table tennis; musical instruments, radios and phonographs; indoor games; flower and vegetable seeds, with gardening tools; also a number of carpenter tools. Some 16,760 books, including English classics, history, geography, popular science, dictionaries, novels, hymn books and Bibles were secured and divided into travelling libraries of 200 volumes each and exchanged between camps and sub-camps every three months.

When the diplomatic exchange ship, Gripsholm, sailed in the autumn of 1943, it carried 225 cases of War Prisoners Aid Y.M.C.A. materials destined for distribution to prisoners. These materials were divided into 25 units, each unit containing 600 books, 85 sports articles, 12 harmonicas, 2 victrolas with 200 records, a violin, 2

ukuleles, 100 packs of cards and 20 assorted games including checkers and dominoes. One hundred and three of these Gripsholm cases were unloaded at Yokohama for use by the Tokyo Committee.

70 Camps Served By Shipment

These materials contained in the Gripsholm shipment and those purchased by the committee through local sources, were distributed to 70 camps and subcamps in Japan.

Late in 1943, permission was granted by Japanese authorities for War Prisoners Aid of the Y.M.C.A. to have a representative in Manila, Philippine Islands. Swedish Consul Helge A. Janson of Manila was appointed by Minister Bagge of Tokyo to act in this capacity. Seven neutrals were appointed a committee to assist him.

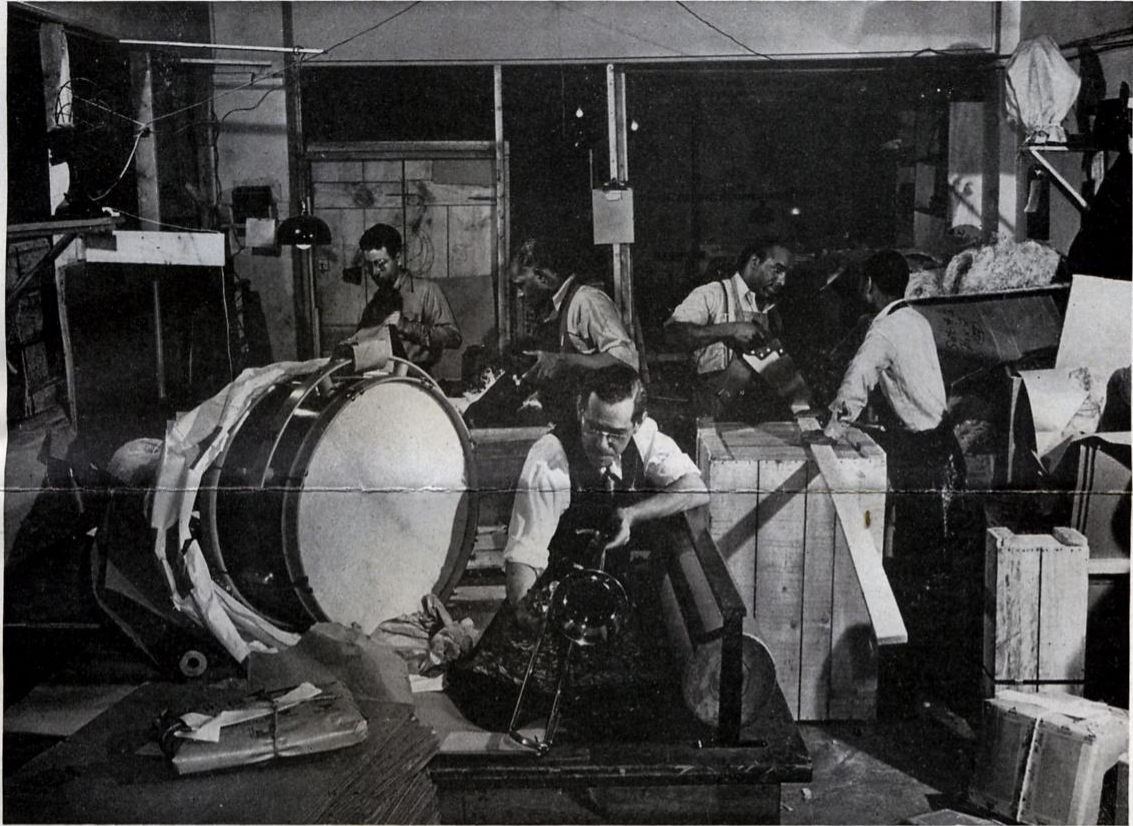
Funds were spent to supply men in the camps with suitable locally available materials for leisure time activities. One hundred five of the Gripsholm cases were unloaded at the Philippines and distributed before Christmas of that year to all civilian internment and prisoner of war camps in that territory. Japanese authorities gave permission for the "Y" committee in Manila to purchase locally relief supplies to an amount not exceeding \$25,000 monthly. U.S. Government funds were made available for this purpose, but the Japanese permission was rescinded before the plan could be put into operation.

There are six other men in the Far East representing War Prisoners Aid of the Y.M.C.A., all appointed by Minister Bagge at Tokyo. Three visit camps in Japan proper, while the others work in Shanghai, Thailand, and Indochina.

Italians Sent News Through "Y" Service

Many Italian prisoners of war interned in camps throughout East Africa have received what was for most of them the first news from home in several years, through a unique service supplied by War Prisoners Aid of the Y.M.C.A.

War Prisoners Aid mimeographs for the Italian P.O.W. weekly, "Il Piave," a supplement which contains both news and short personal messages from families of the prisoners. These heartwarming personal messages are picked up by official sources from broadcasts over Radio Vatican, mimeographed by the "Y," and the supplement then forwarded to camps.



The music instrument section of the warehouse packs everything from tiny ocarinas to giant tubas for jazz bands and symphonies.

Supplies From Y. M. C. A. Warehouse Reach P. O. W.'s Around The World

One of the busiest places in bustling midtown Manhattan is War Prisoners Aid warehouse. Three stories of this beehive of activity which employs from sixty to seventy people are located underground. The street level door is on 47th Street, just off Madison Avenue.

From this warehouse, some 1,600,682 gross pounds of War Prisoners Aid supplies were shipped to Geneva, Switzerland, last year, for use by American and Allied men held behind barbed wire in Germany.

The thousands of items stored here before shipment run the gamut from streamlined typewriters to ankle bells. These materials are preventive medicine to preserve the sanity of war prisoners, and return them to society with alert minds and oftentimes with a better education and higher skills than before internment. There are educational, recreational, and religious supplies.

The warehouse stores enough textbooks, novels, technical books, romances, grammars, dictionaries, vocabularies, phrase books and Bibles for several large city libraries.

There are enough musical instruments for several jazz bands and symphony orchestras, with music for each.

Swahili prayer books, Korans, Bibles, hymnals, icons, altar cloths, Communion wine, religious articles for every faith and creed stock the religious department.

Woodcarving tools, palettes, water colors, oil paints, drawing paper, paint brushes, modelling clay are ready to pack to serve the hobbyists.

Softball, baseball, boxing, basketball, skating, football, and badminton supplies are always kept on hand. There are indoor games like dominoes, cards, checkers.

Packing the supplies for shipment overseas is a difficult task that keeps

the staff busy. Six sides of each crate must be marked with the red Y triangle identification. Then each crate must be marked as to gross, net, and cubic weight, contents, address, case number, and for shipment on Red Cross relief ships. Shipments to Japan required 27 markings on each case. The sturdy crates are all wooden and items must be packed securely for transoceanic shipment.

Books pose a particular problem of censorship. The book department is separated from the rest of the warehouse by partitions and locked doors. Books are packed under the supervision of the U. S. Customs officials, by whom they are examined for security and censorship reasons.

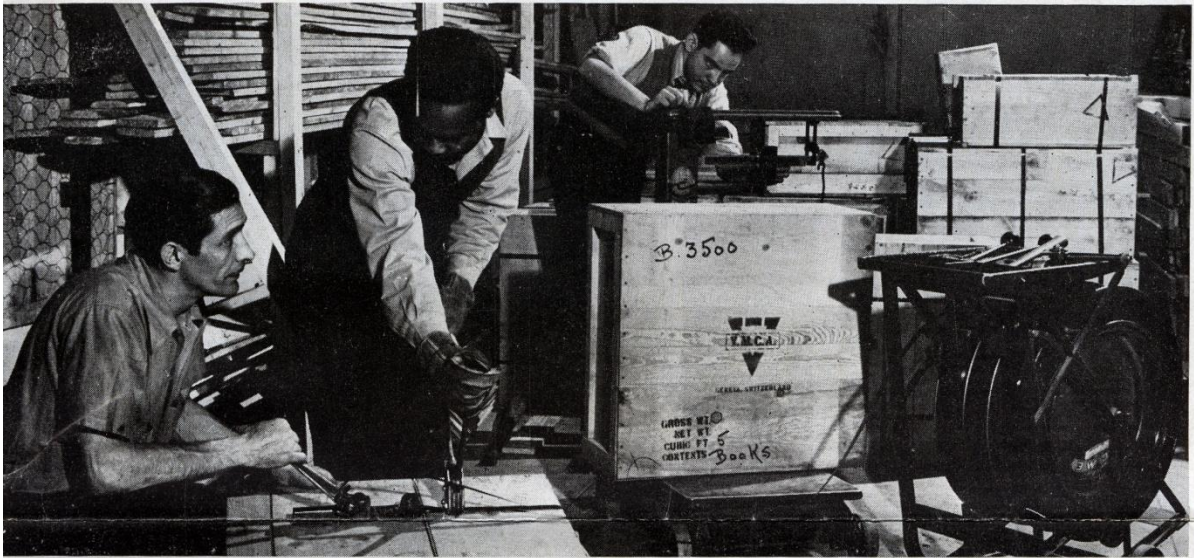
A prison camp hospital without a single patient was reported recently in the Edinburgh, Scotland, area. In other camps containing 300 to 400 Italian prisoners, an average of from five to ten hospital patients was reported.



Two busy workers make second hand books ready for shipment, by cleaning them up with erasers and mending any torn pages. Many new books are also sent. (At right) T/Sgt. John Guros of Garfield, New Jersey, visits War Prisoners Aid warehouse and makes merry in the musical department. The Sgt. was recently repatriated from Stalag 17 B in Austria. He used "Y" books in the courses

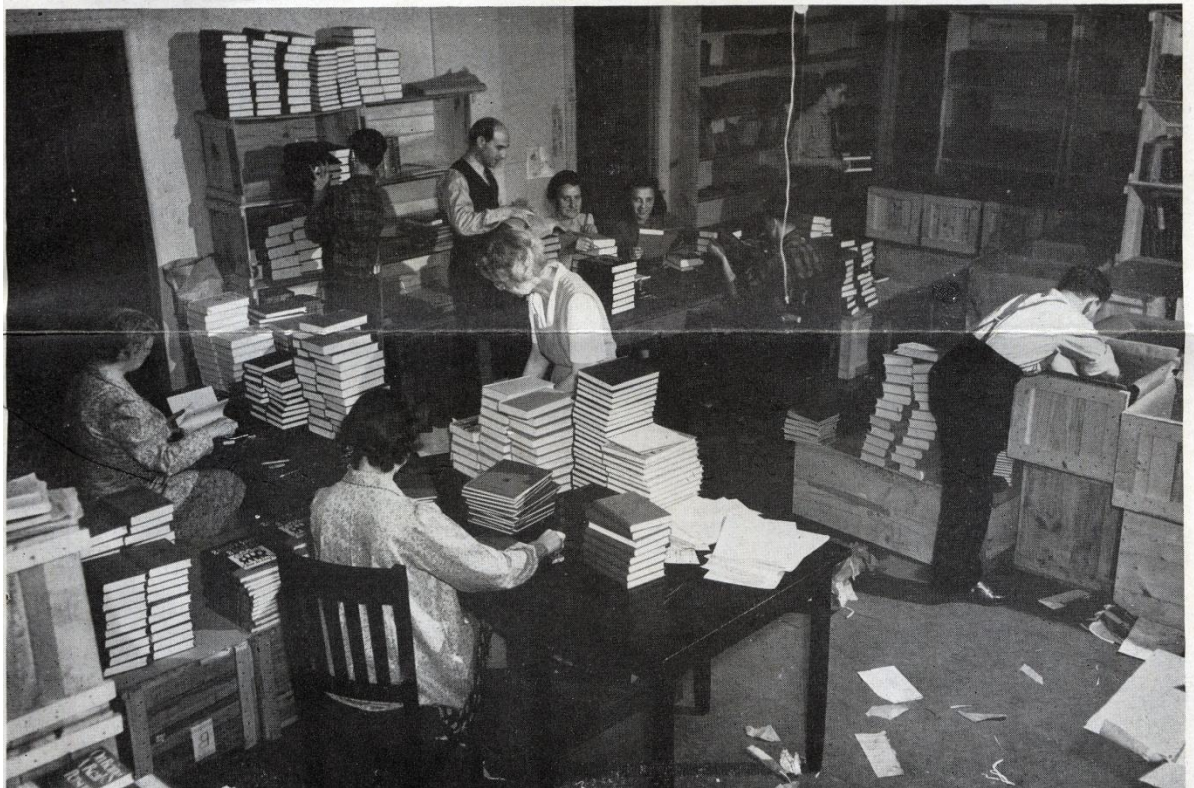
he studied in the "kriegie college" in camp. War Prisoners Aid warehouse (below) is a busy place when a shipment is being readied for overseas. Huge stacks of crates are unpiled, moved by truck to the docks. The staff of sixty to seventy employees works harder than ever to speed supplies to our P.O.W.'s. The motto of these workers is: "Keep the shipments rolling."





Crates being shipped overseas must be securely packed. Wire reinforces the sturdy wooden containers. (Upper Photo). Each box is then marked as to weight, contents, destination, and with the identifying red triangle of the Y.M.C.A. When a shipment is being readied in this way, one of the busiest departments of all is book section below. Books are inspected by U.S. Customs Dept. before shipment. The book section is separated from the

rest of the warehouse by partitions and locked doors for security reasons. Visitors to the warehouse enter this department with a guide who must stay with them throughout their visit. Books of every type imaginable are stored here. There are romances and highly technical textbooks alongside each other on the shelves. Books on psychology, farming, religion, mathematics, and other educational topics are shipped along with ever popular fiction.



Fair Treatment of War Prisoners Pays Dividends, Says Provost Marshal General Archer L. Lerch

America's humane treatment of war prisoners in accordance with the Geneva Convention, has paid dividends by saving American lives. That's the opinion of one of our top ranking military leaders, Major General Archer L. Lerch, the Army's Provost Marshal General.

In a statement read to the House of Representatives by Rep. Andrew May of Kentucky, General Lerch has gone on record as defending humane treatment of prisoners by quoting foreign correspondent Victor Jones of the North American Newspaper Alliance who, says General Lerch, writes that he "watched in amazement as Ninth Army troops took strong fortifications around Bruchelen without resistance."

Fair Treatment Known

According to the General, Jones talked to some of the surrendering Germans and says, "We asked all the prisoners whether they had been afraid of mistreatment after capture. They all said their officers had told them they'd be shot or tortured, but that they hadn't believed it because they had letters from captured comrades who told them British and American treatment of prisoners was excellent.

"It may burn you up to hear that German prisoners are getting cigarettes when you can't but it's not a big price to pay when you can get guys like these to come out of strong bunkers without firing a shot."

General Lerch added that, according to Correspondent Jones, "a die-hard rear guard had been left behind with instructions to fight to the last bullet. If they'd done so our casualties might have been much heavier than they were. From that point of view, our policy of living up to the Geneva Convention is smart tactics, even without considering other angles."

General Lerch's Congressional report gives ample evidence that fair treatment of prisoners is "smart tactics" on the home front as well. During 1944 alone, the Government realized one hundred million dollars from POW labor invaluable to the war effort as a stop gap against manpower shortages.

In 1944, the War Department alone, says the General, "realized an estimated saving of over \$80,000,000 from the prisoners who did work on Army posts, camps, and stations throughout the country" and "performed a total of 19,567,719 man-days of work ranging from such highly skilled work as watch repair to common maintenance labor."

The War Prisoners Aid of the Y.M.C.A., a world-wide neutral organization with headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, has been serving prison-

ers of war of all faiths on both sides of the conflict since World War II began in the autumn of 1939.

During the past two years, for instance, War Prisoners Aid has sent to Americans behind barbed wire in Germany 1,745,254 sports articles, 244,232 musical articles, and 1,280,146 books, together with large quantities of hobby, handicraft and dramatic supplies. That these have played a major part in making prison life more bearable for captured Americans is attested by thousands of cards, receipts, and letters from Protestant, Catholic and Jewish prisoners and by the personal testimony of hundreds of liberated prisoners who have returned to the United States in recent months.

This service to American prisoners of war would not have been possible except for the fact that War Prisoners Aid of the Y.M.C.A. has been providing a similar service for German prisoners in the United States. There is not the slightest doubt that aid to American prisoners in Germany would have been impossible except for this similar service to Germans conducted on a reciprocal basis by Y.M.C.A. workers from neutral countries.

In the words of General Lerch, "the War Department has an abundance of evidence which leads it to believe that our treatment of German prisoners has had a direct effect in securing better treatment of American prisoners held by Germany."

Geneva Terms Are Law

General Lerch pointed out that the Geneva Convention terms were agreed upon in time of peace when presumably heads were cool and reason prevailed. He also emphasized that they were ratified by the Senate, signed by the President, and became law which must be observed. He added that as a "leading Christian nation" must adhere to the Geneva Convention or accept Dumbarton Oaks and the San Francisco Conference as a waste of time. The Geneva Convention rules are "the law of the land," he observed, which the Army can do nothing about but obey.

War Prisoners Aid believes that America has not jettisoned decency nor has Christianity changed its humanitarian code under pressure of war. We subscribe wholeheartedly to an editorial in the Cleveland Press of April 27, 1945, which states in part: "The Geneva Convention is about the only civilized thing that has been salvaged out of this war. If we throw

it overboard in our revulsion against the Germans and the Japanese, we get down into the gutter with them. Following which, we revert to savagery with the speed of light."

It should be pointed out further that the fair treatment accorded German prisoners by the United States government has been the foundation upon which the Red Cross and the Y.M.C.A. have built their service to American prisoners in Germany. The Y.M.C.A. at this time wants to go on record as vigorously endorsing the policies of the Provost Marshal General's Office under which the United States has observed the spirit as well as the letter of the Geneva Convention.

"Y" Does Its Duty

In serving prisoners of war of all nationalities, the Y.M.C.A. has not been unaware of the possibility of incurring criticism from those not fully understanding the reciprocal character of such services. The Y.M.C.A. nevertheless has gone forward with this work, convinced that it would be falling in its duty as a Christian organization should it do otherwise, and that most citizens would approve its action when they realized that this was the only way that anything at all could be done for the men behind barbed wire.

Prisoners Return

(Continued from page 1)

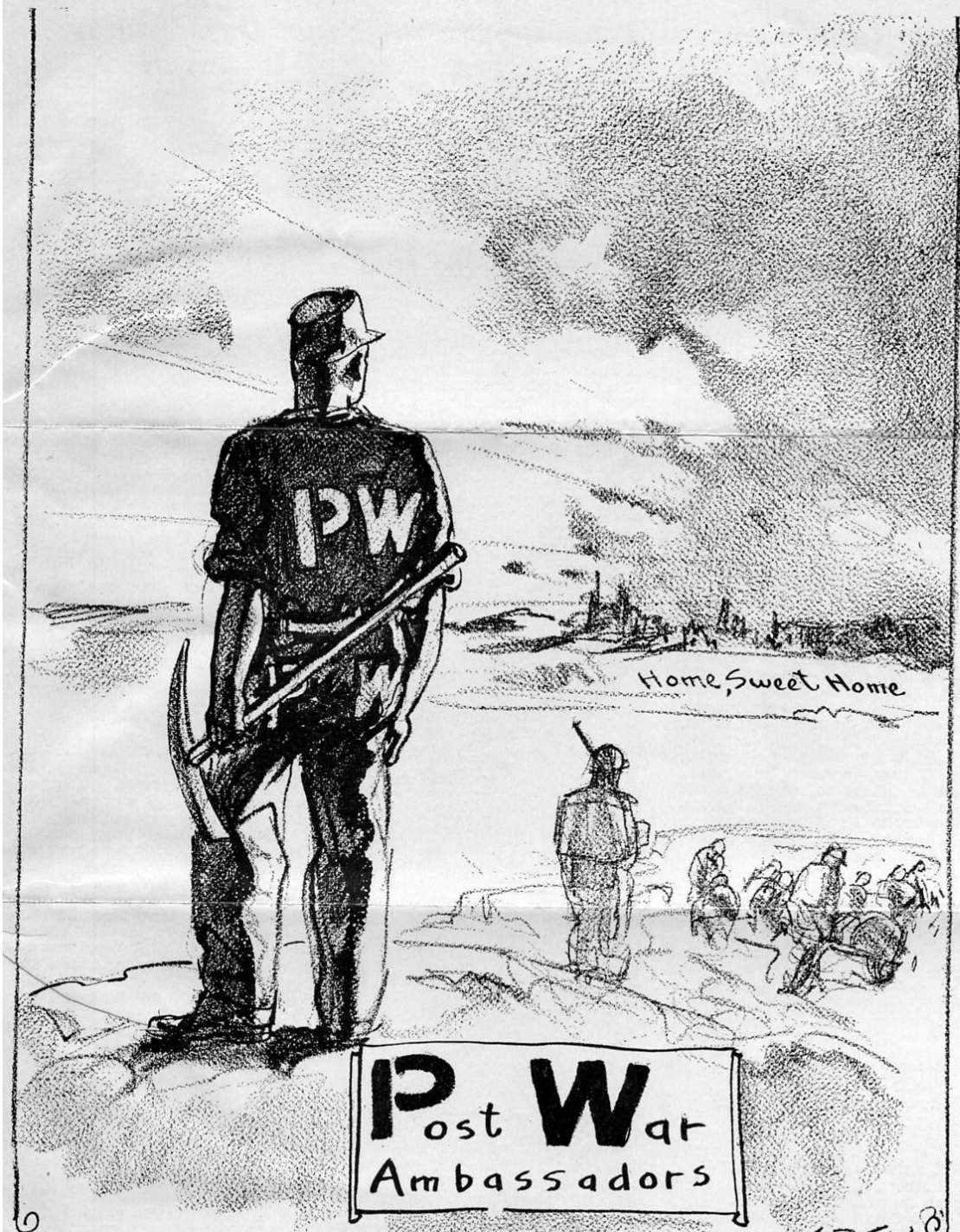
forces hung over "Y" workers in Germany, and one, Gunnar Celander, was seriously wounded when aiding in the evacuation of American and British captives at Oflag IX A/Z. The entire staff continued to work amid incredible difficulties and additional personnel was provided from Sweden and Switzerland to aid them.

(In a cable from London, Tracy Strong reported that an "astonishing number" of prisoners were still being provided with the regular Y.M.C.A. services in the educational, recreational and religious fields up to the war's end. He added that the "Y" workers were continuing personal service to the men wherever possible, and that this was greatly appreciated by them.)

A desperate effort was made by the Y.M.C.A. up to the end of hostilities to improve conditions in a prisoner of war camp for Polish women. When two Y.M.C.A. workers visited the camp, they had found conditions there to be "deplorable."

Post War Ambassadors

C. D. Batchelor's cartoon on the opposite page reprinted from The New York Daily News, May 2, 1945, is a self-evident illustration of the value inherent in fair treatment of prisoners of war.



To War Prisoners Aid of the YMCA with my cordial
good wishes. C.D.B.

Thanks From The Yanks:

Liberated G.I.'s Praise "Y" War Prisoners Aid

By Mary Sullivan The Boston Record

"I couldn't express my appreciation, or that of all the men who were my fellow-prisoners, for what the Y.M.C.A. did for us. It would be impossible for the layman to understand."

These words, spoken vigorously and warmly by Capt. James L. Sweeny of Pensacola, Florida, who was captured in Tunisia in February, 1943, and was one of the 1500 American prisoners liberated by the Russians and returned last week to this country, expressed the sentiment of the entire group.

Boys Say "Put It in the Paper"

Their gratitude to the Y.M.C.A. for the books, musical instruments, religious articles, athletic equipment and other recreational and educational material was overwhelming, emphatic and unanimous.

"Put it in the paper . . . it ought to be in all the papers," urged dough-boys who had been months, even years, behind barbed wire. "Tell them we'd have gone nuts if it hadn't been for the 'Y'."

They interrupted one another to tell of the orchestras in their various compounds, of the library with 3000 books, "all good ones," of the baseball games and football leagues, the boxing gloves, the drawing boards and the sketching class.

"The men in the camp all felt that the 'Y' and Red Cross had done an amazing job for us," one officer said. "We would have starved if it hadn't been for the Red Cross food parcels, and the things the 'Y' sent kept us alive spiritually."

Soderberg Is Praised

On all sides I heard the highest praise for the representatives of the Y.M.C.A., who were one of their few contacts with the outside world. One in particular, a Mr. Soderberg, a Swede, apparently did a superlative job. The boys went to great trouble trying to find someone who remembered his name. They wanted the 'Y' authorities to know what he did for them.

Lt. Tom Miller of East Walpole, a Ranger captured near Anzio, spent 13 months in prison camp Oflag 64. He told of the athletic shorts and shirts that arrived, the handball, volley ball and other games equipment, and how much they had meant to morale.

"This Soderberg was wonderful," he said. "He saw to it that we got all the equipment that was sent. He talked to us and found out our needs. He not only provided emblems for winners in the various sports con-

tests . . . he attended them and presented the awards personally. You can't imagine what that gesture meant to us." (The emblem of the 'Y' triangle, with a miniature shaft of gilded barbed wire around its face.)

The same sort of praise was expressed less elegantly, but just as sincerely, by a tough little corporal from Chicago.

Men Seem Older

Officers at the Boston Port of Embarkation and reporters who interviewed the group were struck by the fact that these boys seem much more adult than the average soldier. Their morale is magnificent: I saw only one boy out of hundreds whose face showed nervous strain. But they are serious in their outlook, and greatly concerned with the future of the world. Even the youngest among them are gently and notably courteous.

"We had plenty of time to think and talk, and to read," explained Capt. Raymond B. Prince of Ocala, Fla.

"Thanks to the Y.M.C.A., there was anything anyone could want in the way of books . . . light fiction, new non-fiction, biography, complete sets of math and other textbooks," he said. "They were the best, too. We had eight copies of 'The Robe,' 'A Tree Grows in Brooklyn,' and new phonograph records and music."

There can be no doubt that the mental and spiritual health of these men is attributable directly to the gifts sent by the 'Y,' and that their broadened interest can be traced to their reading and to the hobby groups.

Sgt. Sylvio Limoges, for example, of Chicopee, Mass., confessed: "I never read a book unless I had to before the war. In prison I read over 100."

Ice Skates Enjoyed

Lt. Woodley C. Warrick of Smithfield, N. C., an infantry officer who spent 23 months as a prisoner, remembered the ice skates that arrived, and which were in demand when winter came and froze the pond in the compound.

Most of the enlisted men had been interned at Stalag 3C or Stalag 2B, the officers at Oflag 64. Among the latter was Lt. William C. Comstock, Paratrooper, of Grand Rapids, Michigan, who played the trumpet in the camp band.

"We had a 16-piece orchestra, and gave jazz concerts and jazz sessions several times a week," he said. "We were planning to start a concert music group when we were liberated. The

boys were very grateful for the instruments."

Pfc. John A. Anderson of Detroit, Michigan, imprisoned for 6 months, declared:

"I'll be a regular donor to the Y.M.C.A. for the rest of my life. I don't believe we could have gone on without their help."

Sgt. John R. Beres of Oyster Bay, L. I., was one of dozens of boys who mentioned the Wartime Log Book which the 'Y' presented to the boys. This gift seemed to mean more to them than almost any other single item.

It is a grey, cloth-bound book of substantial size, sturdy and attractive. One of the boys went back to his barracks to get his and showed it to me. In it he had kept a diary; on the first page, beautifully printed in Old English letters, was the Lord's Prayer. On the second page was a drawing in color of Old Glory, with the words and music of the Star-Spangled Banner printed below.

"Those books were swell," Staff Sgt. Edward A. Szott said. "When our Red Cross packages were held up and we were just about starving, we used to dream up menus of meals we'd have when we got home, and put them in the log so we'd remember."

Religious Items Appreciated

Lt. Warren H. Nord, of St. Paul, Minnesota, added his voice to the chorus of praise for the religious and recreational aids furnished by the 'Y' in Oflag 64.

"The boys certainly appreciated the Bibles, rosaries, prayer books and such things, much more than civilians at home can realize," he said.

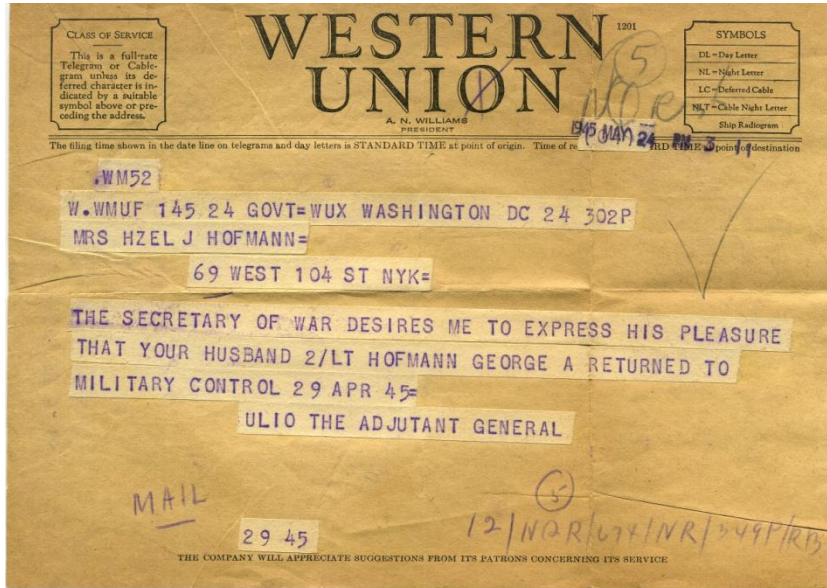
In the officers' camps, there were chaplains who were also prisoners, and who conducted religious services; but in Stalag 30, an Italian priest was allowed to say mass, but there were no chaplains. The boys themselves, however, held religious services regularly, with leaders of their own choosing.

Sgt. Hal Murdock of Atlanta, Ga., a paratrooper who was captured in France and was a prisoner for 8 months, said:

"I was a member of the Y.M.C.A. before the war, and I was certainly proud of the job they did for us, and of the way the boys of all backgrounds and creeds feel about the 'Y' after their experience as prisoners of war."

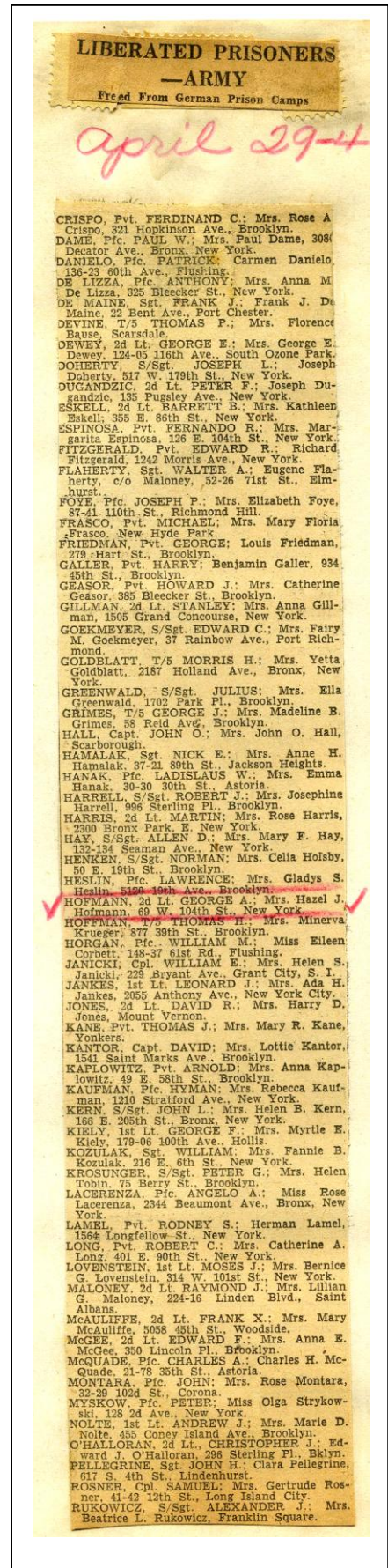
Cpl. Ralph Tison, another paratrooper, who comes from Frostproof, Fla., emphasized again the value of the books, 2000 or more, and of the boxing bouts and athletic tournaments.

And then the long awaited news arrived – George was free and coming home.



2300 Bronx Park, E. New York.
HAY, S/Sgt. ALLEN D.; Mrs. Mary F. Hay,
132-134 Seaman Ave., New York.
HENKEN, S/Sgt. NORMAN; Mrs. Celia Holsby,
50 E. 19th St., Brooklyn.
HESLIN, Pfc. LAWRENCE; Mrs. Gladys S.
Heslin, 5120 19th Ave., Brooklyn.
HOFMANN, 2d Lt. GEORGE A.; Mrs. Hazel J.
Hofmann, 69 W. 104th St., New York.
HOFFMAN, T/5 THOMAS H.; Mrs. Minerva
Krueger, 877 39th St., Brooklyn.
HORGAN, Pfc. WILLIAM M.; Miss Eileen
Corbett, 148-37 61st Rd., Flushing.
JANICKI, Cpl. WILLIAM E.; Mrs. Helen S.
Janicki, 229 Bryant Ave., Grant City, S. I.

NOTE: The massive return of POWs and the associated record keeping and notification of their progress had to be a daunting task for the War Department. The telegram above is a good example of this as it arrived on May 23rd and announced George's liberation of April 29th. On May 23, 1945, George was already halfway home on a ship in the middle of the Atlantic!



An appropriate and fond farewell to war in Europe from a bombardier and his B-26 crew.



Hmmmm! I wonder who that is? --- Nah!

Postscript - In its advance across Germany, the 14th Armored Division liberated approximately 200,000 Allied prisoners of war from German captivity. Among them were more than 30,000 Americans or about forty percent of the total number held in Germany. The division also liberated some 250,000 "displaced persons," as well as the large Dachau sub-camp at Ampfing. Shortly after the end of the war, the nickname "LIBERATORS" was suggested for the division in an article which appeared in Army Times. Understandably, the nickname stuck, and "LIBERATORS" became the division's official nickname.