

Chapter 21 – GOING HOME [v7]

“... there’s no place like home.”

Judy Garland as Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz

Thomas F. Jeffers *“In a few hours, loudspeakers were mounted on poles. Army chow was served to the starving prisoners, and soon music was hooked up. Much to their amusement, the now free men listened to the popular “Don’t Fence Me In.” The haunting strains of “At Last” entertained and touched each man. The upbeat “Pennsylvania 6-5000” was played over and over.”*

The reality of liberation was a very emotional experience for the tens of thousands of men in POW camps throughout Germany. Many had had a dreadful experience in the last four months of the war as they were marched or transported as far as possible from advancing Allied forces. In the case of the thousands of former POWs at Moosburg, liberation also brought frustration and disappointment.

Initially all support of the camp stopped. The Germans who ran the camp had all been taken off to prison camp and there was a serious delay before a U.S. Army support battalion was pulled out of the line to provide all necessary support for the camp.

Bill Etheridge - April 30: *“ There has been a steady parade of American Jeeps and Army officers in and out of camp ostensibly for the purpose of organizing our evacuation. We were ordered not to leave the camp and to behave like gentlemen while we were waiting to leave. This was one order almost totally ignored, but made easier by the stream of food and clothing that continued to arrive. The center of attraction today was two Red Cross girls who arrived about noon with a ton of doughnuts and plenty of good coffee.”*



Thomas Jeffers (as related by Marilyn Jeffers Walton): *“The liberated kriegies walked in and out of camp exploring their new found freedom. Trucks came in with food, water and doughnuts. The prisoners tore holes in the wires around the camp and walked out into the fields to look around. Inside the wire, some men played games while waiting for their departure. There were two more days of hunger until more trucks came in with food. White bread, chicken, turkey, ham, beef stew, salmon, pasta and meatloaf were delicacies*

most men found too good to be true. Most men started throwing up what they ate as their stomachs had gone so long with so little food.

Latrines clogged, and rubbish piled up as the men tried to be patient. Food was still in short supply, so men were determined to forage on their own. The mood turned sullen as they were free but not quite free, and men were turned back at the gate by American guards. The area was still not safe, and gangs of unpredictable Russian and Polish prisoners caroused in the streets of Moosburg causing their own deaths and the deaths of others.”

Frank D. Murphy: *“On April 30, 1945, American support troops appeared at Stalag VII A and began distributing K-rations and ten in one rations to the Allied POWs of all nationalities.*



On May 1, 1945 a grim-faced Gen. George S. Patton, Jr., commander of the U.S. Third Army, paid us a visit at Stalag VII A. He was dressed in a crisp, neat, fresh uniform and wearing his legendary wide black leather belt with a huge silver buckle to which were attached his famous paired set of ivory-handled six-guns. Maj. Gen. James A. Van Fleet, III Corps Commander, and Maj. Gen. Albert C. Smith, commander of the 14th Armored Infantry Division, accompanied General Patton. As he walked briskly through the camp General Patton occasionally stopped and exchanged a few brief words with small groups of American prisoners. When he came upon my group the General paused, looked at us, shook his head in disgust at the sight of the thin, unkempt scarecrows standing before him and said in a low voice, “I’m going to kill these sons of bitches for this.”

Next, the hundreds of French prisoners packed up and were flown out. General Charles de Gaulle had obtained first priority for their return from General Dwight Eisenhower.

Thomas Jeffers (as related by Marilyn Jeffers Walton): *“General Dwight D. Eisenhower repeatedly ordered that former prisoners stay put. Many could not restrain themselves*

and hitchhiked to Paris or elsewhere. He had made an agreement with French General Charles DeGaulle that French prisoners would be released first. It took ten days until the American prisoners left."

Bill Dennebaum: "After our liberation, we remained prisoners - this time of the Americans - for nearly two more weeks while plans were made and carried out to move us to holding stations in France. We were not permitted to leave the compound, probably for our own protection. Authorities were probably trying to keep us safe from our own foolishness and, perhaps, to afford a measure of protection to the German population around us. However, one day I decided to go out and look around. An armed American guard at the gate said, "I'm sorry, Lieutenant; my orders are to prevent you from leaving the camp. But," he added, "there's a hole in the fence down there a couple of hundred yards that I can't see." I thanked him and went through the hole in the fence. I walked through the woods reveling in the beauty of the forest in early spring, listening to the birds. I crossed the Isar River on a ruined bridge, hopping from one segment to another, and walked to Landshut. The feeling of freedom after six months of incarceration was wonderful!"

John Vincil Thompson of Kansas City, MO. Lieutenant, AAF (8th Air Force, 94th Bomb Group): "We weren't getting any food after our liberation on April 29, so after several days Jack Dealey and I gave up and began to hitchhike. Soon a blue truck stopped, and driving it was Major Salzarulo, our block commander at Stalag Luft III. He recognized us despite how dirty we were. We ended up with 10 guys in that truck, and we headed on out to the west to get away from the front. Major Salzarulo still had a gold leaf on his collar, so he had some rank even though he was dirty like the rest of us—and he had painted U.S. Air Force and some numbers on the truck to make it look official.

Along the way we saw soldiers who gave us food. They were from support divisions behind the front lines. They gave us all kinds of food and gave us some Czech rifles because we passed some pockets where members of the SS were still resisting. Finally we came to the 1st Air Force, a fighter squadron that was moving its base from England to France, and they said we could drive on into France. They told us that the stuff we had accumulated, including the truck, would sell on the black market in France for \$7,000—but they wanted the truck to help them move some of their personal things, and they said that if we gave it to them they would get us a flight to Reims, France. We made the deal, and they brought in a B-17 that picked us up right away. The pilot apparently had just arrived overseas and wanted to impress us, so he flew low and showed us where the trenches had been in World War I. We were all pretty nervous since the last time we had flown, we had been shot down. We debated bout yanking him out of there, but nobody had flown a plane in at least a year and we were anxious to get home alive.

We landed in Reims on May 8, the day the peace treaty was signed there. The streets were full of people singing and parading arm in arm. It really was a big party. We found our way to an officer's club and went inside. A ball was going on, with the women in long dresses, and soon a major was ordering us out because we were filthy. Some people

heard our conversation and discovered we had been POWs, and then we were the center of the party for the rest of the night.

The next day we caught a train into Paris, where there were more celebrations going on. The trains weren't running but somehow we ended up taking one to Camp Lucky Strike in LeHavre, where POWs were catching boats to go back home. We were on our way home before some POWs got out of Moosburg."

Bill Etheridge - May 1 to 5: "Every day has been a picnic with plenty of food, wood to cook with and bread that tasted like cake. And thank the Good Lord no more barley. Small groups of prisoners are being moved out every day to the airport at Landshut and then flown to Le Havre, France in C-47's, the military version of the Douglas DG3. I am among a group scheduled to leave on the 6th."

Eventually all American former POWs were moved out of Stalag VII-A to nearby German airfields and transported by C-47 aircraft to the vast but now empty Combat Personnel Replacement Depots on the French Channel Coast. While this last leg of their longest mission was underway, the folks back home were having their own party.



First Stop – Landshut, Germany

The march to the former Luftwaffe air field at Landshut was a short six miles. Many POW's walked and many went by truck but either way it was a step closer to home. The air field is still active today. It is a small single runway airport and it is hard to imagine the number of transport planes and personnel that converged on this area in May of 1945.

Landshut Airport

Do you want to fly private out of this airport? Please check our [Empty Leg](#) and [Transient Availability](#) pages for great deals on private jet charter in the region. If there are no listings, please contact your favorite private jet charter broker to find the best private aircraft for your jet charter trip.

Current Local Date and Time at EDML

3 Apr 2012 05:15:47

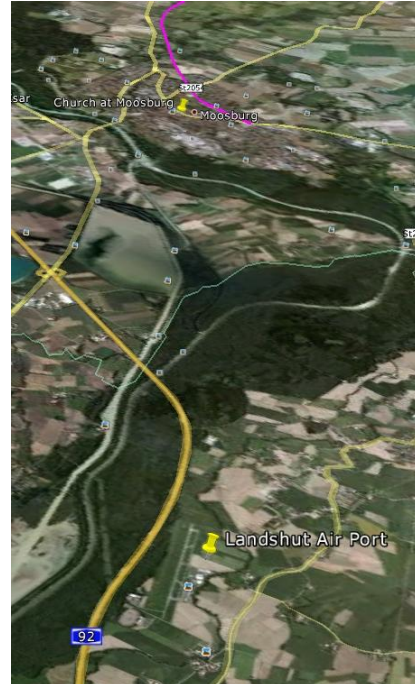
Current Weather Conditions at EDML

39° F, 4° C Clear. Humidity: 81%. Wind: E at 6 mph.

Airport Code : EDML	World Area Code : 429
Airport Name : Landshut Airport	Latitude : 48.51166534
Airport Type : Small Airport	Longitude : 12.03333282
City : Landshut	Elevation : 1312
Region : Bavaria	Runway Length : 2953 ft
Country : Germany (DE)	IATA Code : -
Continent : Europe (EU)	ICAO Code : EDML

Landshut Airport Runway Details

ID	Airport Ref	Airport Code	Length	Width	Surface
27239	28630	EDML	2953		UNK

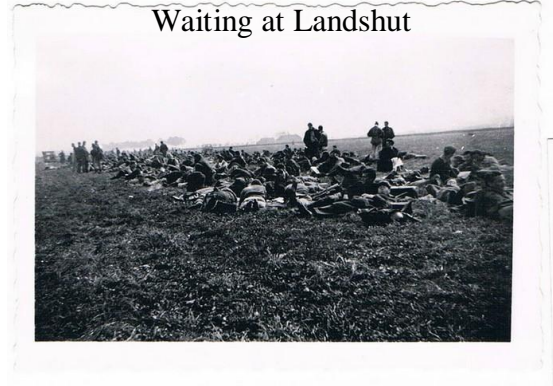


Bill Etheridge - May 6. *"We are on our way to the airport, where upon arrival we see hundreds of ex-POW's camped on the ground but only one C-47. It seems like we are back in the good old American Army, but no one is really complaining. We are told that we may be here a few days because there were more prisoners than expected and they must arrange for more planes. Fortunately, the weather is good."*

Finally Leaving Moosburg



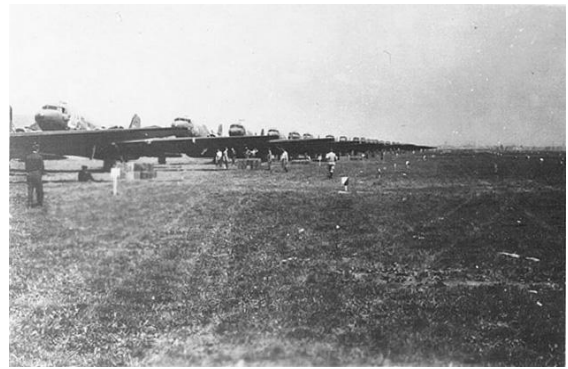
Waiting at Landshut



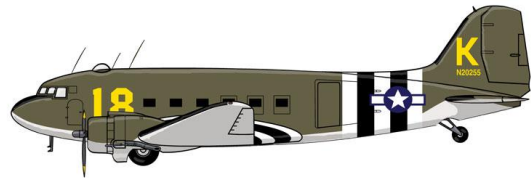
May 7. *We are still at Landshut. I was sitting at the very end of the line with two ex-prisoners I did not know when an American Captain drove up to us in a Jeep. He asked if the three of us would like to accompany him into town. What a dumb question! As we left the airport he announced that we were going to the local brewery to do some liberating. The brew master tried to be gracious but it was obvious that we really weren't welcome until the Captain handed him a \$10 bill. This brought a smile and another dumb question, "would you like some beer?" We came away with two kegs of very heavenly brew. The Captain left one for us to share, and took the other with him. There is now a happy bunch waiting at the end of the line."*



Frank D. Murphy: *"In the days that followed we were deloused, permitted to bathe and shower, and issued new American army uniforms. On May 9, 1945, I was in a group of ex-POWs trucked to a former Luftwaffe base at Regensburg, placed aboard a U.S. C-47 transport aircraft, and airlifted to Liege, Belgium. The next day, in a troop train filled with American ex-kriegies, I was transported to Camp Lucky Strike at LeHavre, France. Camp Lucky Strike was a collection point and rehabilitation center for former American prisoners of war. We were no longer prisoners of war; we were now officially designated as RAMPS (Recovered Allied Military Personnel)."*



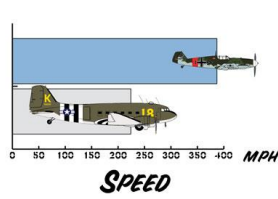
C-47 Skytrain



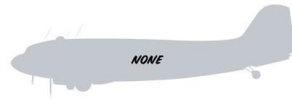
IT'S JUST THE BEST PLANE EVER.



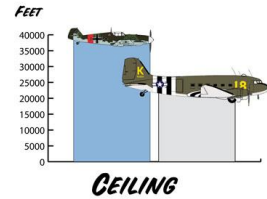
**NUMBER
PRODUCED
IN THOUSANDS**



CREW



ARMAMENT



**CARGO
IN THOUSANDS OF LBS.**



The 550 mile flight to Le Havre, France, was slow and uncomfortable 2 1/2 hours but it surely beat travel by by rail in a locked boxcar on an empty stomach. It was also a trip with an ultimate destination – home.



Second Stop - Camp Lucky Strike

The transition camps were all named for cigarettes – Old Gold, Twenty Grand, Philip Morris, Taryton, Chesterfield, Pall Mall and, of course, Lucky Strike. Strange? Not really.



The staging-area camps were named after various brands of American cigarettes; the assembly area camps were named after American cities. The names of cigarettes and cities were chosen for two reasons: First, and primarily, for security. Referring to the camps without an indication of their geographical location went a long way to ensuring that the enemy would not know precisely where they were. Anybody eavesdropping or listening to radio traffic would think that cigarettes were being discussed or the camp was stateside, especially regarding the city camps. Secondly, there was a subtle psychological reason, the premise being that troops heading into battle wouldn't mind staying at a place where cigarettes must be plentiful and troops about to depart for combat would be somehow comforted in places with familiar names of cities back home (Camp Atlanta, Camp Baltimore, Camp New York, and Camp Pittsburgh, among others). (I doubt if the GIs heading into Europe were taken in by any of that cigarette and city mumbo-jumbo!) By war's end, however, all of the cigarette and city camps were devoted to departees. Many processed liberated American POWs.

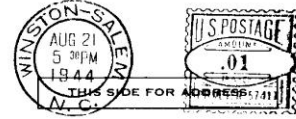
The American tobacco companies provided a constant supply of cigarettes to the interned POWs. Red Cross parcels and packages from home always contained cigarettes and they became a staple and “currency” for the krieges who traded with each other and with their German captors. It was a marketing “Home Run” of an inexpensive addictive substance to naieve nation under incredible stress.

With the men in the Army, Navy, Marines and the Coast Guard, the favorite cigarette is CAMEL. (Based on actual sales records in Post Exchanges, Sales Commissaries, Ship's Service Stores, Ship's Stores and Canteens.)

We acknowledge receipt of your **Victory Bonds** dated **8/11/44** amounting to \$ **1.00** covering CAMEL cigarettes to be sent to the Armed Services.

Your order is being entered under number **P-31444** and prompt shipment will be made.

Thank you.
R. J. REYNOLDS TOBACCO CO.



MRS. HAZEL HOFMAN
69 WEST 104TH STREET
NEW YORK 25 NEW YORK

UNITED STATES TOBACCO COMPANY

630 Fifth Avenue, Rockefeller Center, New York 20, N. Y.

January 26, 1945

Mrs. Hazel Hofman
69 W. 104th St.
New York, N.Y.

Dear Mrs. Hofman:

The two dozen pocket packages of Dill's Best Tobacco, as ordered by you, have been sent to 2nd Lt. George A. Hofman, and should reach him in due time.

An order such as yours means a great deal to us because of the sentiment and spirit that prompted you to send it. We are certain from what we have heard about the way similar gifts are received in the prison camps that it will be very welcome and carry a lot of cheer with it.

When this terrible war is over, we hope Lt. Hofman will return safely and find happiness in the peace he has helped to win.

Very truly yours,

UNITED STATES TOBACCO COMPANY

Harry Dwight Smith

HDS:MS

October 15, 1944

We acknowledge with thanks, your order No. **9-19117**.

The package is being mailed under our number P.W. _____ and we hope that the addressee will receive it promptly.

LIGGETT & MYERS TOBACCO CO.



The American Tobacco Company
111 Fifth Avenue
New York 3, N.Y.

April 26, 1945

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

Dear Mrs. Hofmann:

Thank you for your remittance together with order and addressed label form issued to you by the Office of the Provost Marshal General to cover shipment for consignment to a United States prisoner of war in Germany.

Arrangements have been made to insure prompt shipment of your order via parcel post and in accordance with regulations.

We appreciate your interest in our products and we wish to assure you of our desire to be of service at all times.

Very truly yours,

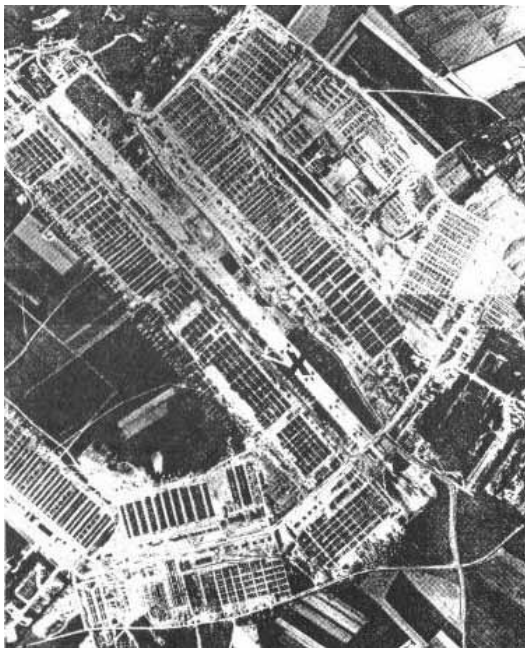
R. M. Brigagliano
R. M. Brigagliano

PC

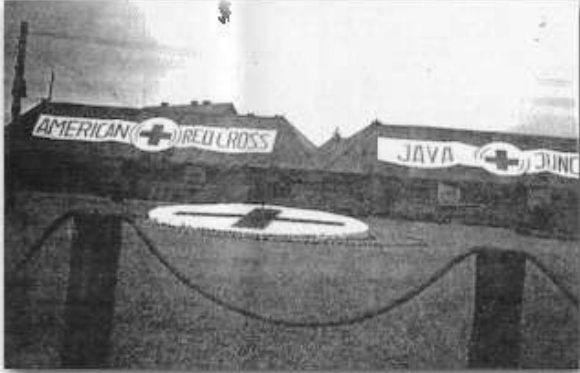
Although he kicked the habit fifteen years after the war, at 79 lung cancer took him from us as it had with many other heros of that amazing generation.

Josephine Bovill, 77th Field Hospital, Camp Lucky Strike: - *"When American prisoners of war (POWs) started to stream out of Germany, the several camps situated on the Normandy coast near Le Havre, and which had originally been used as staging areas, were now used to take care of the American prisoners of war until they could be sent home.... Large trucks would arrive at the camp regularly, full of jubilant GIs dressed in all sorts of motley clothes, half-'Jerry' (German) and half-American. We took those soldiers who were ill to the hospital. There were many emaciated soldiers who had been caught in the Battle of the Bulge the previous December. The Germans did not know what to do with them as they were in full retreat after January 1945, so they marched them back and forth from place to place, and fed them very little as there was little food to be had. Prisoners captured earlier were better off, but all of ours were sad to see. However, their spirits improved once they arrived at Lucky Strike, since they knew they would soon be going home."*

Lucky Strike was opened in December 1944 and closed in February 1946. From 1 June 1945, the camp stood under the management of the 89th Division until this division was deactivated and returned to the United States in early December 1945. The camp, where the 89th Infantry Division managed the reception of troops, was a veritable American city for 18 months. Life was therefore rhythmical with this enormous hub of military personnel, short stopover for some, several months for others. One could find, like in any American city, a hospital, church, movie theater, post office, police station, barber shop, and a supermarket. There were also concerts and shows with famous celebrities (Bob Hope and Mickey Rooney, among others).



The only part of Camp Lucky Strike visible today is the original air strip. Everything else has been converted back to farmland.





The city was divided into four sections: A, B, C, and D. Each section was made up of 2,900 tents under which were housed 14,500 men (at times, more than 100,000 U.S. soldiers stayed there). These virtual neighborhoods even had public parks, and in certain places, statues of pretty women.

The Red Cross also had offices in the neighborhoods: nurses and girls who would serve hot coffee, cake, and newspapers day and night. A little further down were the bars: one for officers; another for NCOs and soldiers. One could drink everything they used to in pre-war France: the best liqueurs, good champagne, cognacs, and water of life (aqua vita), as well as Coca-Cola, whiskey, gin, and American beer. The bars were only open from 7:00 to 10:00 p.m., which was not enough time to satisfy the customers. Each sector also had its own auditorium, which served as a theater, cinema, and chapel all-in-one.

Frank D. Murphy: “ *Chest x-rays taken at Camp Lucky Strike revealed that I recovering from a touch of pneumonia and, at 122 pounds in weight, had lost more than 50 pounds as a prisoner of war. I was hospitalized for two weeks and treated with what I was told was a new miracle drug, penicillin.* ”

Remarkably, this was the same new miracle drug that saved Hazel Hofmann’s life in 1946 when she contracted rheumatic fever.

Earl L. Fort “*There was a sign at Lucky Strike, prominently displayed, that in no uncertain terms stated that 'personnel being processed through this camp were entitled to have one souvenir pistol in their possession, but only one. Anyone found to have more than one will be court marshaled and given a sentence of six months hard labor in the European Theater of Operations!' There were pyramidal tents pitched on platforms and outside each tent was a large hogshead full of water to be used in case of fire. Before we had been in the camp more than an hour or so, these barrels were overflowing and by evening you could clearly see that they were half full of all sorts of side arms. If you'd ever been there, many GIs agree that you would have no desire to revisit the camp. Under the floor of the tents the rats grew to cat size and sounded as though they were wearing boots when they tramped around while the men were trying to sleep at night. Really nothing to do all day, don't remember being allowed to go into the city and time passed slowly waiting for a ship.*”



A long line of GIs carrying war souvenirs to bring back to the United States following the surrender of Germany waits outside the so-called "Booty Tent" at Lucky Strike



Inside the booty tent, GIs "register" their booty. By the looks of it, the majority seems to be daggers and other edged weapons



George Hofmann's "booty" included a Sauer & Sohn 38H, 0.32ACP (7.65MM) double automatic pistol and magazine. The **Sauer 38H** or often just **H** was a small semi-automatic pistol made in Nazi Germany from 1938 until just after the end of World War II by J. P. Sauer & Sohn, then based in Suhl, Germany. The "H" in the model number denotes "hammerless"—the pistol uses an internal hammer.

Sauer developed the model 38H from their earlier semi-automatic handguns. It was necessary to compete with companies such as Mauser and Walther in the commercial market. However, with the outbreak of the war, most pistols went to various German police agencies. Sauer 38H pistols presented to Nazi officials often featured custom engraving, ivory grips, and often gold inlay as well.

The Sauer 38H was produced in three basic models. Generally, the slide of the first model says "JP Sauer und Sohn" on the left. The second version says only "CAL 7.65", and the third version omits the safety and the cocking/decocking lever. Towards the end of the war, weapons produced were simplified for quicker, cheaper production. For the 38H, this meant simpler markings, rough finish, and the elimination of features like the slide-mounted safety. So-called "late-war" models were still fully functional though. Final examples, produced until April 1945 when the factory was overrun by the Allies, feature mismatched serial numbers and poor fit and finish.



Another of George's souvenirs was a Second Class Iron Cross.



Adolf Hitler restored the Iron Cross in 1939 as a German decoration (rather than Prussian as in earlier versions), continuing the tradition of issuing it in various grades. Legally, it is based on the enactment (**Reichsgesetzblatt I S. 1573**) of 1 September 1939 *Verordnung über die Erneuerung des Eisernen Kreuzes* (Regulation for the Re-introduction of the Iron Cross). The Iron Cross of World War II was divided into three main series of decorations with an intermediate category, the Knight's Cross, instituted between the lowest, the Iron Cross, and the highest,

the Grand Cross. The Knight's Cross replaced the Prussian *Pour le Mérite* or "Blue Max". Hitler did not care for the *Pour le Mérite*, as it was a Prussian order that could be awarded only to officers. The ribbon of the medal (2nd class and Knight's Cross) was different from the earlier Iron Crosses in that the color red was used in addition to the traditional black and white (black and white were the colors of Prussia, while black, white, and red were the colors of Germany). Hitler also created the War Merit Cross as a replacement for the non-combatant version of the Iron Cross. It also appeared on certain Nazi flags (mostly the Third Reich flags) in the upper left corner. The edges were curved, like most original iron crosses.

The standard 1939 Iron Cross was issued in the following two grades:

- ♦ Iron Cross 2nd Class (*Eisernes Kreuz 2. Klasse*)
- ♦ Iron Cross 1st Class (*Eisernes Kreuz 1. Klasse*) (abbreviated as EK I or E.K.I.)

The Iron Cross was awarded for bravery in battle as well as other military contributions in a battlefield environment.

The Iron Cross 2nd Class came with a ribbon and was worn in one of two different methods:

- When in formal dress, the entire cross was worn mounted alone or as part of a medal bar.
- For everyday wear, only the ribbon was worn from the second button hole in the tunic.



The Iron Cross 1st Class was a pin-on medal with no ribbon and was worn centered on a uniform breast pocket, either on dress uniforms or everyday outfit. It was a progressive award, with the second class having to be earned before the first class and so on for the higher degrees.



It is estimated that some four and a half million 2nd Class Iron Crosses were awarded during World War II, and 300,000 of the 1st Class.

At the core of the U.S. Army Demobilization Plan was the so-called 'Point System.' Points were awarded for years of service overseas, medals and other commendations received, campaign battle stars earned, as well as other factors. The magic point total for being sent home was 85. Many men had more points, and those that had the most were slated to be sent home first. Following is a pretty typical point-system computation table (though probably incomplete):

Number of months in the armed forces	1 point per month
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Number of months overseas	1 point per month
Number of children	12 points per child
Number of battle stars earned by unit	5 points per star
Purple Heart winner	5 points per award
Soldier's Medal winner	5 points per award
Bronze Star winner	5 points per award
Presidential Unit Citation winner	5 points per award

GI were constantly badgering company clerks to get errors corrected and adjustments made to their point totals, which were recorded on their "Adjusted Service Rating Cards." Those men with the magic number of 85 points, or more, were to return to the United States, while those with fewer points were transferred out to make room for high point men from other organizations. Those with 80 to 84 points were sent to other units in the ETO and some of those with even fewer points were sent home on furlough and then went on to retraining for duty in the Pacific. The latter were perhaps the most fortunate of all, since the war in the Pacific soon ended and many of them were discharged before the higher-point men in the ETO got home.

George was one of the winners! And, in the end it was little Johnnie who made the difference.

Appendix I
OFFICER'S ADJUSTED SERVICE RATING FORM

Aug 45

Holtman, George A. *0741310 244* *AC*

	Number	Multiply by	Credits
1. SERVICE CREDIT. (Number of months in Army since 16 Sep 40).....	<i>48</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>48</i>
2. OVERSEAS CREDIT. (Number of months served overseas since 16 Sep 40).....	<i>14</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>14</i>
3. COMBAT CREDIT. (Number of decorations and bronze service stars awarded for service since 16 Sep 40).....	<i>3</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>15</i>
4. PARENTHOOD CREDIT. (Number of children under 18 years old).....	<i>1</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>12</i>
TOTAL CREDITS			<i>89</i>

4. PARENTHOOD CREDIT. (Number of children under 18 years old).....

Individual Desires--
to be retained in the service during the present emergency (see par 4b).
No SAH

(For those of the above who are interested in Regular Army appointments, further information and an opportunity to apply will be forthcoming.)

Efficiency Index--
(See par 4c and Appendix IA)
(For officers of the AAF, use four (4) digit CER)

Certified by.....
(Officer who prepared form)

OFFICER'S ADJUSTED SERVICE RATING FORM

INSTRUCTIONS

1. EACH OFFICER MUST UNDERSTAND THAT HIS "TOTAL CREDITS" AND DESIRES ARE SECONDARY CONSIDERATIONS TO MILITARY NECESSITY IN DETERMINING WHETHER HE SHALL BE RELEASED OR RETAINED (See par 3b.)
2. SERVICE CREDIT. As for enlisted personnel in RR 1-1 and as set forth in paragraph 4a (2) of these regulations.
3. OVERSEAS CREDIT. As 2 above.
4. COMBAT CREDIT. As for enlisted personnel in RR 1-1 with the addition of the Distinguished Service Medal to the awards for which credit will be given
5. PARENTHOOD CREDIT. As for enlisted personnel in RR 1-1.

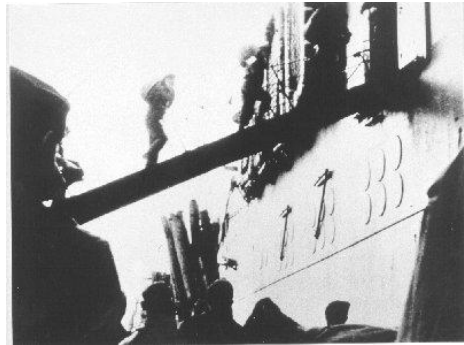
Third Stop – LeHavre, France



Frank D. Murphy: *“A few days after being released from the hospital, together with a group of other RAMPS, I was taken the port of Le Havre where we boarded a large troop ship, which happened to be the prewar Moore-McCormack Line passenger ship, Argentina, which had been refitted for wartime use as a hospital ship. Following an overnight call at Southampton, England where we picked up additional patients, we set sail for America in a large convoy of approximately thirty ships. It was a slow twelve-day Atlantic crossing.”*



Happy U.S. veterans head for harbor of Le Havre, France, the first to be sent home and discharged under the Army's new point system.



An Army band plays a farewell tune as a Victory Ship leaves Le Havre bound for the States.

On May 16, 1945, George boarded the American vessel M.S. John Ericsson, formerly the Kungsholm of the Swedish American Lines, just seventeen days after being liberated from Moosburg.

Kungsholm 1928 – 1941, John Ericsson 1941-1947, Italia 1947-1965



Original name:	S/S Kungsholm
Shipyard:	Blohm & Voss, Hamburg, Germany
Year:	1928
Tons:	21,250
No of passengers:	1544
Delivered to SAL:	1928
Sold:	1941
Sold to:	US Government
Renamed:	John Ericsson, 1948 Italia
Today:	Scrapped in 1965

"The only sound in the night came from the Havana harbor water slucking gently against the sides of the ship. Through the moon mist the Kungsholm could be seen, anchored sleepy and rich, just a few hundred feet aft. Farther shoreward a few small boats corked about."

Quote from *A Young Girl in 1941 With No Waist At All* (Mademoiselle 25, May, 1947) by J.D. Salinger.

This famous liner was built in Hamburg in 1928. Her gross registered tonnage was 21,256 and her passenger capacity 1,544.

The Kungsholm inaugurated cruises for SAL on January 19, 1929, when she first visited the Caribbean. On January 20, 1940, the Kungsholm made the first South Seas Cruise. The Kungsholm was taken over by the U.S. government on December 12, 1941. On January 2, 1942, the Swedish flag was lowered and the American flag was raised as the vessel was named John Ericsson.

During World War II John Ericsson served with distinction as a troop transport in the Pacific, the Mediterranean, as well as during the invasion of France in 1944.

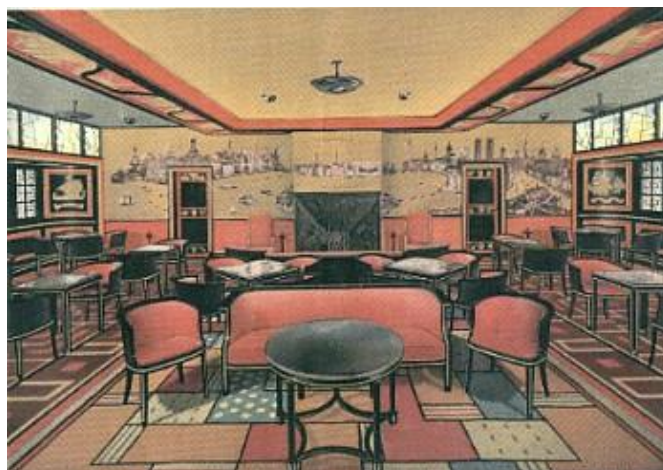
She was repurchased by SAL in 1947 and operated by the Home Lines as the Italia. While in Swedish American Line service, the Kungsholm carried 82,745 transatlantic passengers and 58,779 cruise passengers.

In 1941, the position of entertainment director for the M.S. Kungsholm of 1928 was held by J. D. Salinger. Mr. Salinger would go on to become a world-renown author with the publication of "The Catcher in the Rye" in 1952. Undoubtedly the Kungsholm's most famous crew member. No doubt he used this experience when writing his short story "Teddy" (republished in his collection Nine Stories) which takes place on an ocean liner.

A Masterpiece of Art Decó Design

Although the Kungsholm of 1928 was a masterpiece of Art Decó design, and the architect Carl Bergsten was a Swede, Art Decó was not a typically Swedish style at that period. The style was primarily chosen to suit the American market. A similar design can be found in the Empire State Building.

At this period there were two different trends in Swedish design. Carl Bergsten had designed the Swedish pavillion at the 1925 Paris Exhibition, and the Swedish participation had been a great success, especially the display of exclusive Orrefors chrystal glassware. At the same time the Swedish welfare state was evolving, favoring a functional, but attractive, design at a price range the workers could afford. The Kungsholm was a combination of both these trends.



The Art Decó interior was primarily to be found in the first class sections. The first class public rooms were decorated in black, grey, red and gold, with geometrical patterns and Egyptian details. There was a red grand piano in the first class lounge. Grey seal skin was used in some of the tapestry and carpets. The first class smoking room was inspired by the Orient. In the main embarkation hall, there was a round table with an Orrefors glass top, decorated with astrology symbols. The furniture was mostly manufactured at the NK factories in Nyköping, Sweden.

As a contrast, and a special feature of the first Kungsholm, was the general upgrading of the third class sections. The dining room had bright colors and tables for four or six persons, instead of the long tables that were customary in third class dining rooms at that period. The public rooms were inspired by Swedish rural life, with much influence from Carl Larsson paintings.

When the ship was seized by the US Government in December 1941 (soon to be purchased) and converted into a troop transport ship, all the furniture was thrown on to the pier in New York. None of it has been found, with the exception of a mirror that appeared at an auction in New York some years ago.

Updated Feb 11, 2010

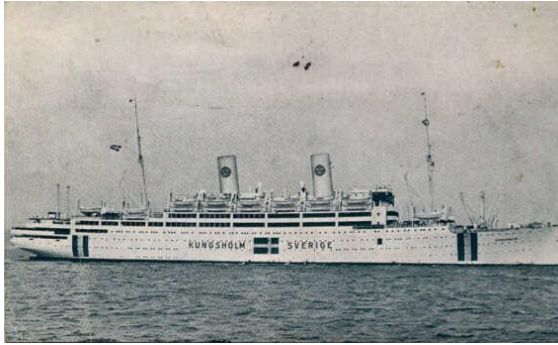
Donation to The Maritime Museum of Gothenburg



Photo: Olle Andersson

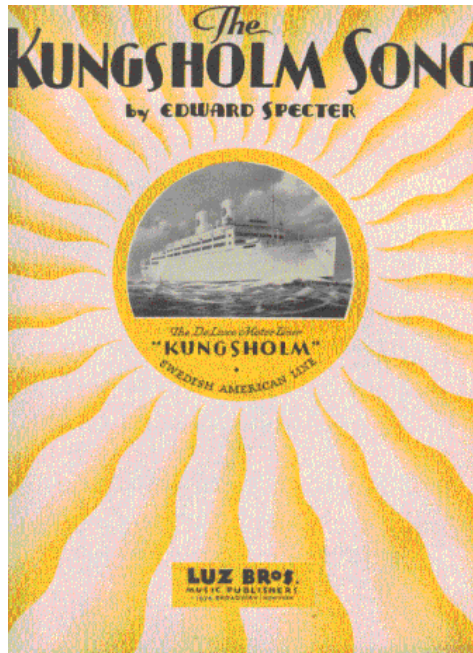
Christer Bengtsson, crew member on the Gripsholm 1968-69 and the Kungsholm 1969-70, has informed us about a unique donation to Sjöfartsmuseet, the Maritime Museum in Gothenburg. It is a statue of Venus and a model in relief of the Kungsholm of 1928. Both objects were removed from the Kungsholm in 1941, when she was converted into a troop transport ship, and renamed John Ericson.

A Kungsholm Cruise from New York to Haiti 1935

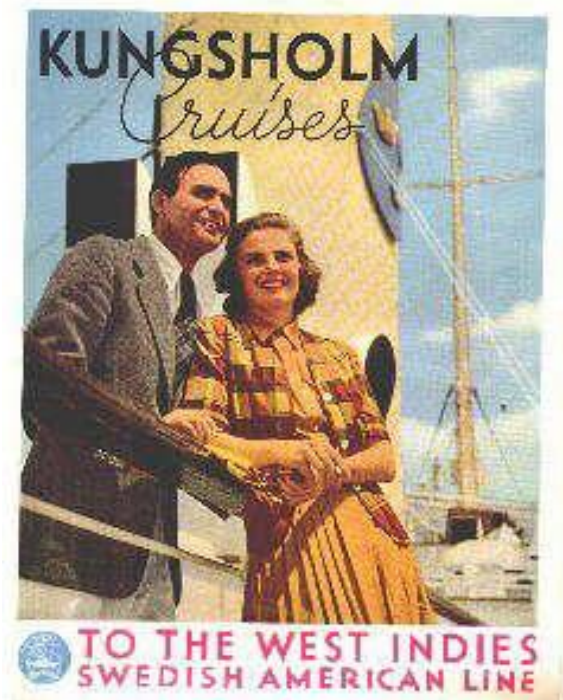


Kungsholm 1928-1941

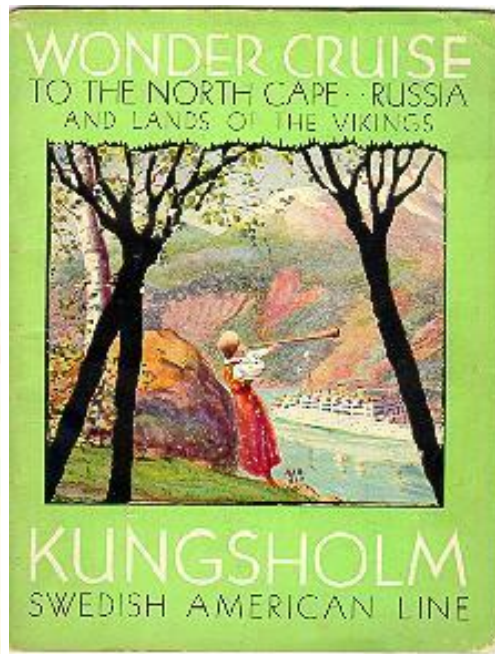




The Kungsholm Song was written by a passenger in the thirties, and became the ship's official song, sung at the Farewell Dinners. A legendary Chief Purser, Evert Eriksson, made a 78 rpm recording of the song.



Kungsholm Cruises 1937



Wonder Cruise to the North Cape, Russia, and Lands of the Vikings, 1938

Contributed by L-O Rydén

The following photos from a Caribbean Cruise in February 1935, have been contributed by Colonel Edward S. Murphy, USMC Ret., of Yuma, Arizona.



Kungsholm at Curacao in 1935



Ed Murphy's (standing) 7th birthday party, Feb 6, 1935.



Caribbean Costume party 1935.
 Syl Murphy, Anita Wilson Schmidt, Bill Schmidt, Aileen Wilson Murphy, (plus unknown passenger).

swedish
american line

"The Kungsholm Follies"

I. Orchestra Selection ... Charles Park Ave. Orchestra

II. MOCK JUSTICE ON THE KUNGSHOLM
 Judge Clerk Henry Huger
 Prisoners { Grace Franklin, Alfred Moorhouse, Nat. Mary Lewis
 Warley, Clerk Chapman, A. T. Mayer
 Colonel Condit Laurence Scudler
 Jurors { Bulcroft Forsell, Emma Martin, Regina
 blom, Ruth Chapman, Christine Chind-
 berg, Florence Bunneth, Irene Hud-
 son, Edith Hudson, Helen Duff.

III. "A BROWN BIRD SINGING"
 Tenor Solo Irving Johnson

IV. "THE MAN FROM OSHKOSH"
 Girl Helen Steitz
 Man Arthur Neal
 Steward Einar Jonson

V. Piano Solo Mrs. Carl Chindblom

VI. "MOTHER'S BIRTHDAY"
 Mother Mrs. Evelyn Travers
 Her Son Peter Muhlend

VII. "THREE WEEKS"
 Wife Helen Conklin
 Husband Ed. Spooner
 Joe Duane Conklin
 Gop Burt. Goffang

VIII. "SIBONEY"
 Soprano Solo Elisabeth Taylor

IX. "THE ARTIST"
 Artist Paul Andor
 Man Charles Miller
 Girl Mabel Day

XI. "HUAPALA"
 Decd. Nuisance Ruth Himmner
 Mrs. Goodby Mrs. Anne Kimball
 Elderly Couple Mr. & Mrs. O. Eiskelberg
 Passenger Mrs. Carrol Lottimer

XII. "HUAPALA"
 Passenger Mrs. Henry Huger
 Steward George Hanson

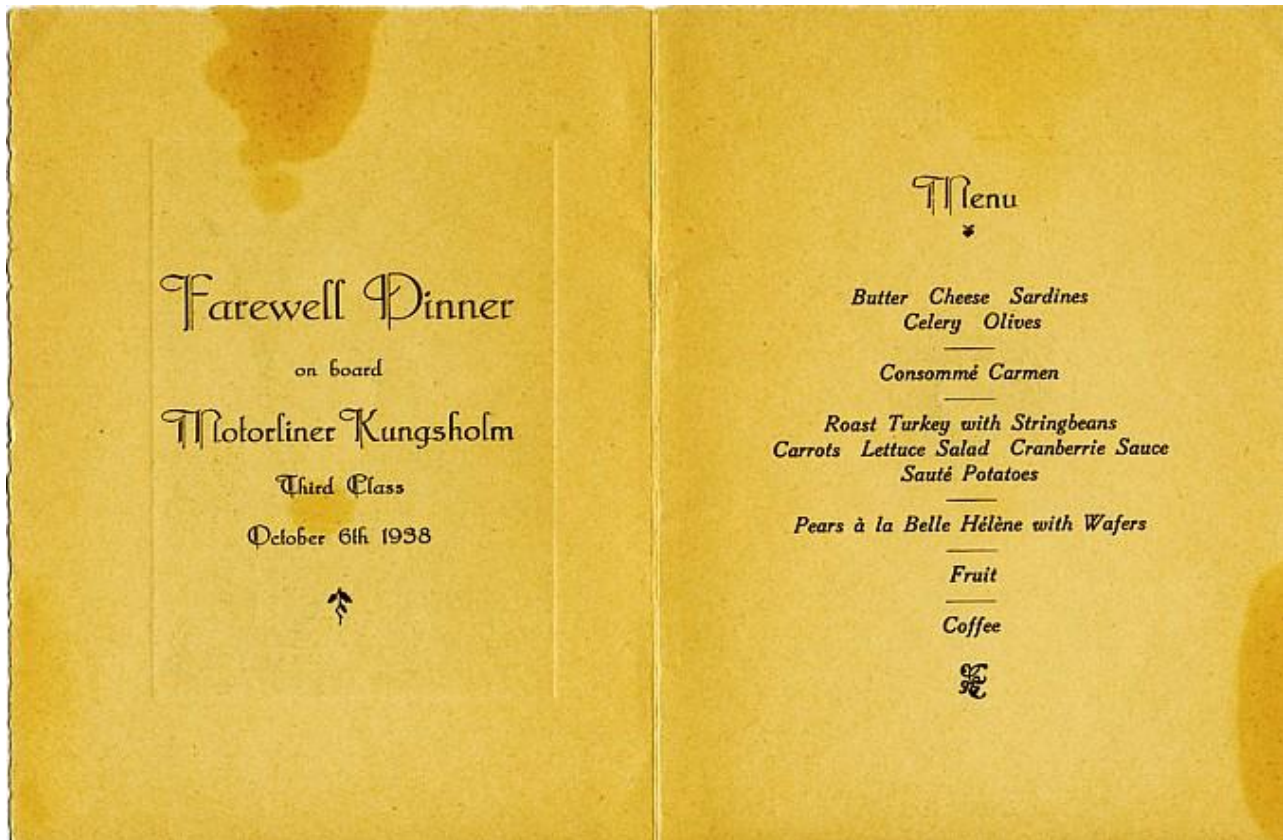
IX. THE KUNGSHOLM SONG
 Sing by entire company and fanfare.

October 20th, 1938

The Kungsholm Follies, October 20, 1938.
 A show performed by passengers and cruise staff.



Third Cabin Class Menu, June 10, 1935.

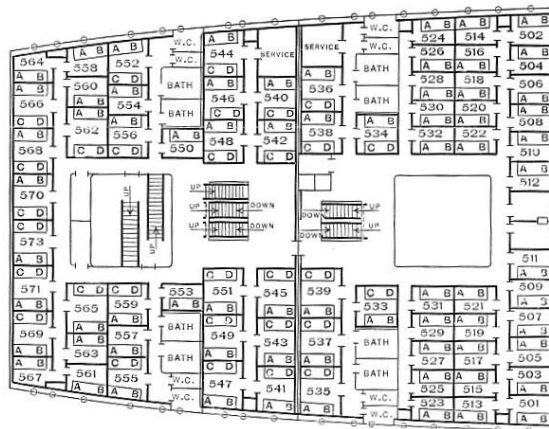
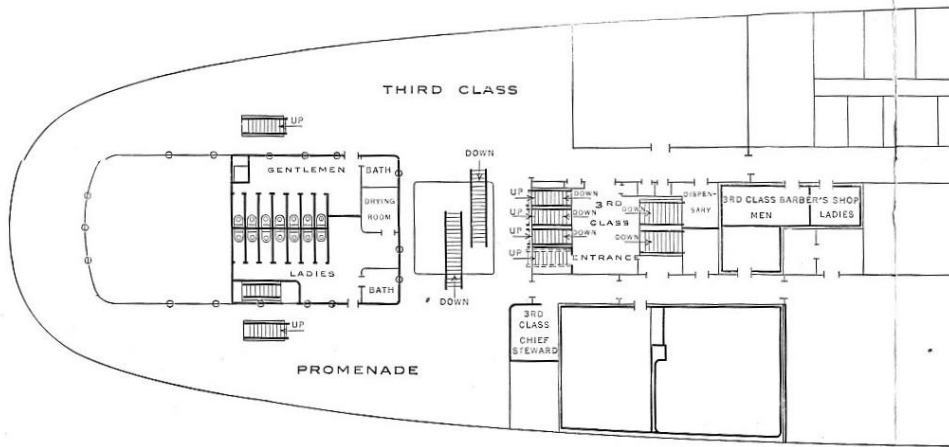
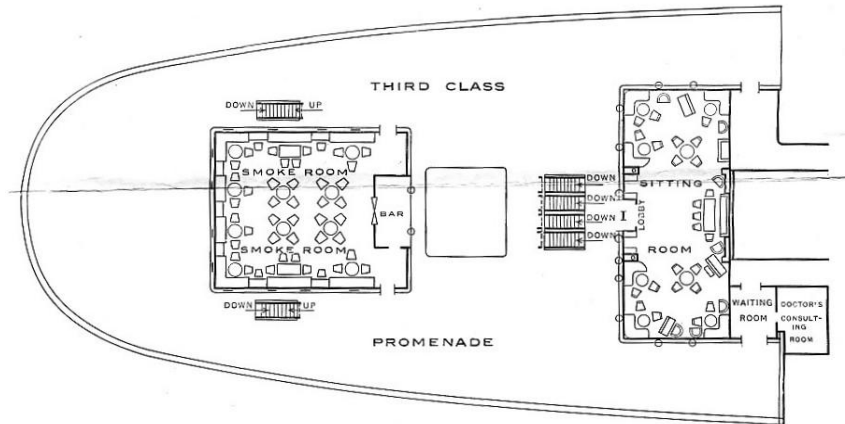


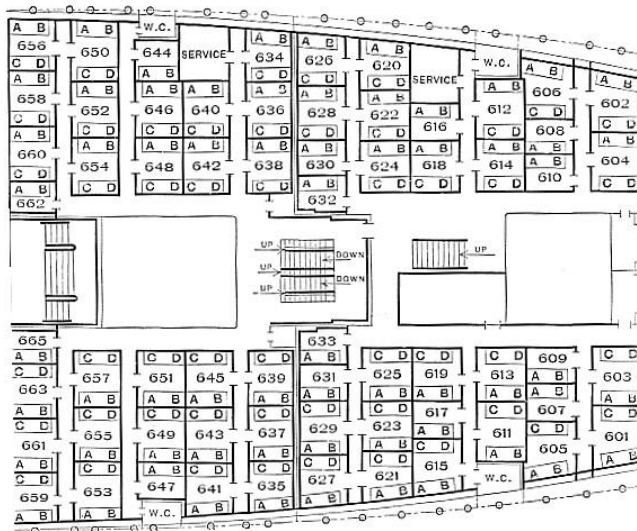
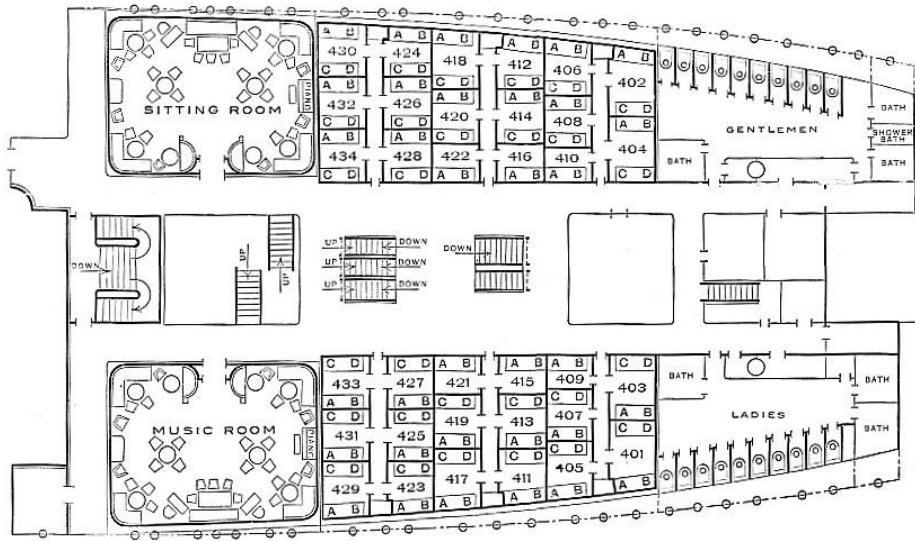
Third Class Farewell Dinner Menu, October 6, 1938.

This crossing must have been just prior to the cruise featuring the Kungsholm Follies, above.

Third Class Passenger Accommodation of Motor Liner "KUNGS HOLM"

Parts of the Third Class accommodation shown below.

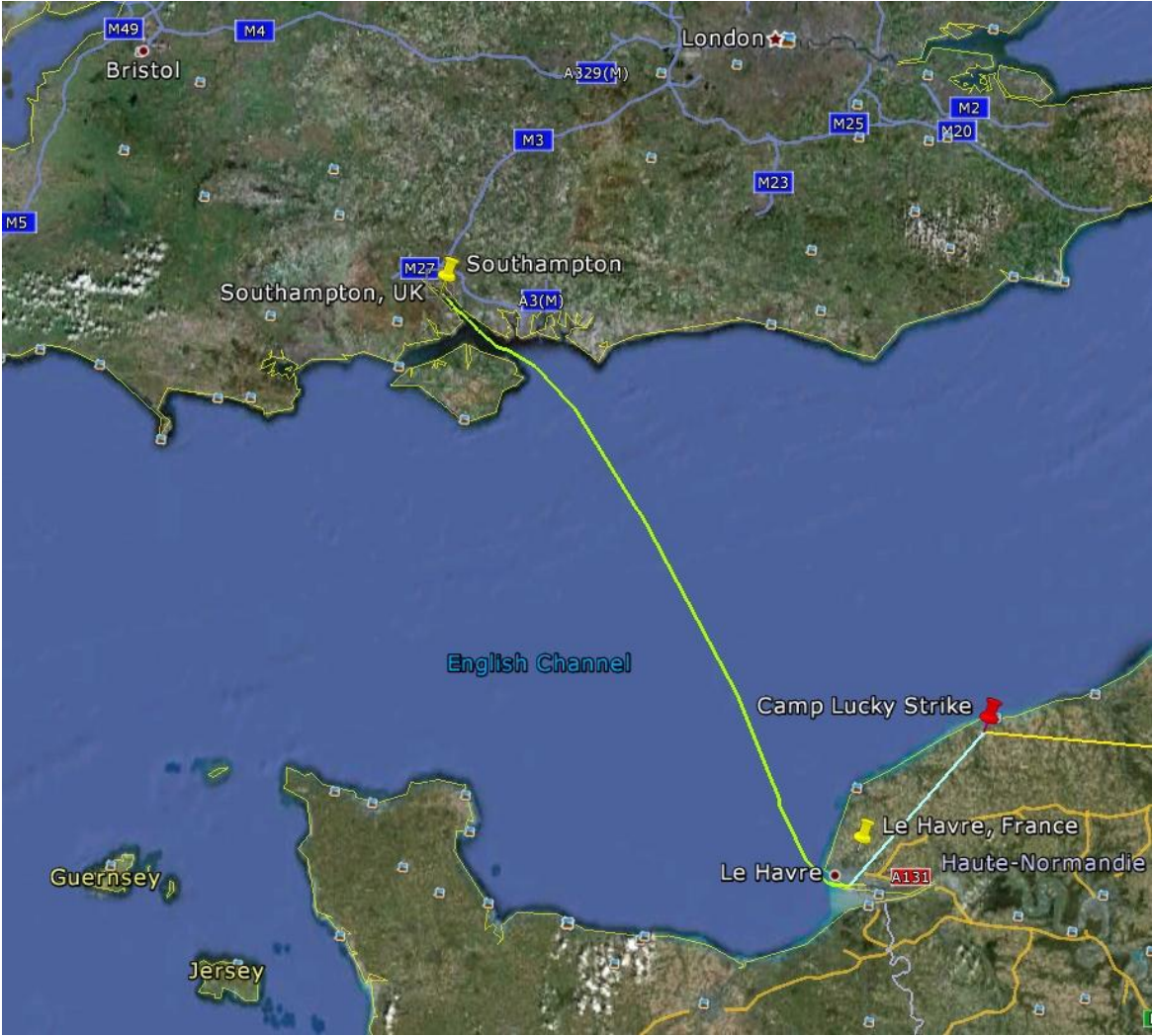




Watching the ETO (European Theater of Operations) disappear over the horizon had to be a welcome site for the POWs coming home.



The John Ericsson arrived in Southampton, England on May 17, 1945, taking on additional passengers before returning to America.

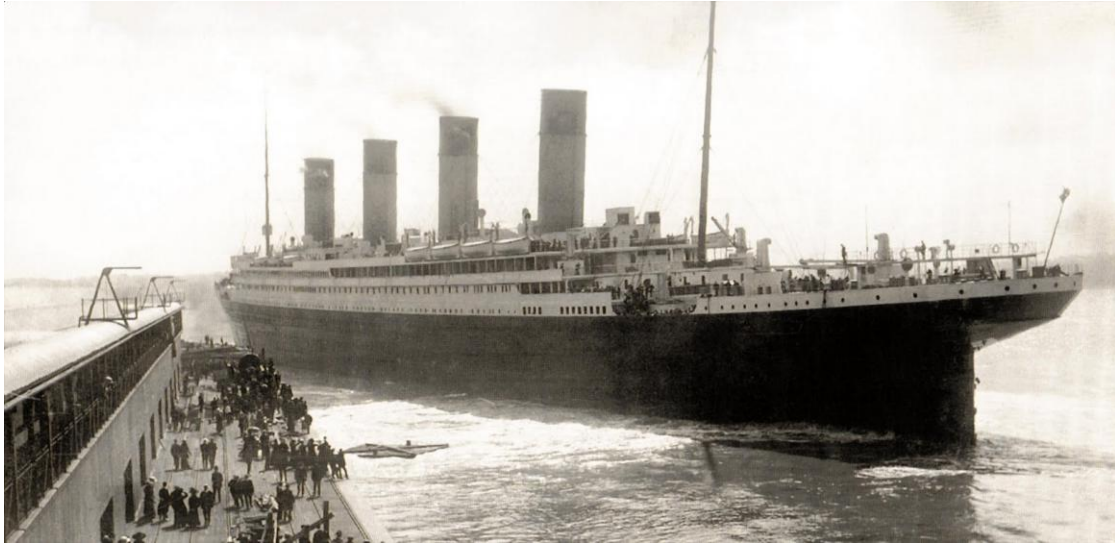


Port of Southampton by AgentPat1985

The decaying royal dock at Southampton



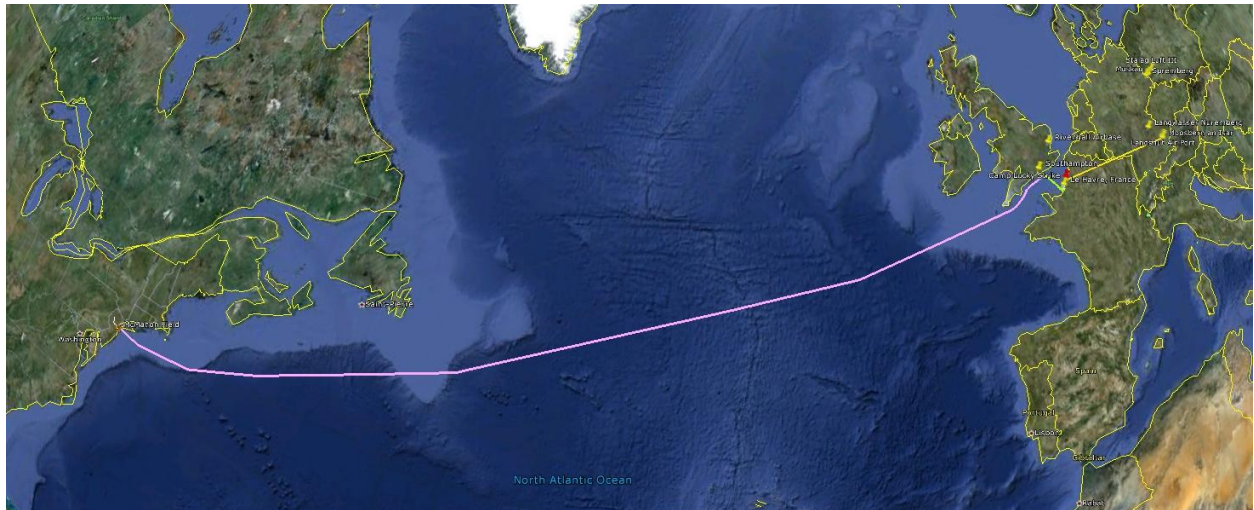
Southampton is one of the busiest ports in the UK able to support a very large number of ships. Thus, the large convoys of ships returning to the United States could be provisioned, embarked and set sail in a matter of a few days. It was also the also the point of embarkation for the maiden and only voyage of the RMS Titanic on April 10, 1912.

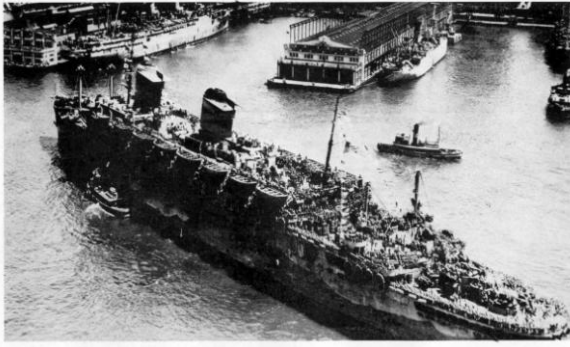


The John Ericsson and its passenger, 2nd Lt. George A. Hofmann, set sail from Southampton for the US on May 19, 1945 – twelve more days to home traversing the now safe North Atlantic as one of a large convoy of ships.

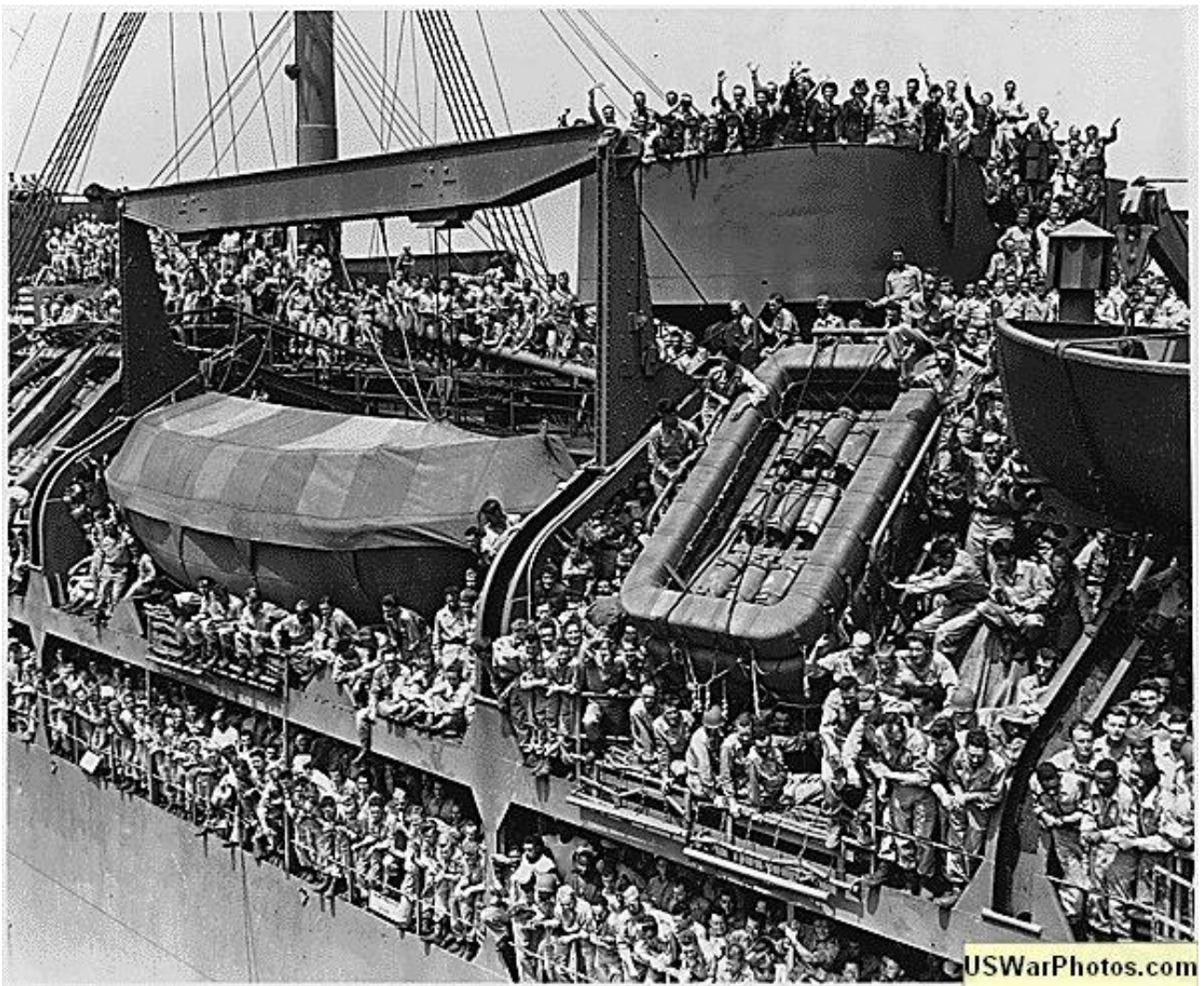


And then, George was finally home.





THE 35,000-TON NAVY TRANSPORT, *West Point*, (SS *America*) BEING BY THE NEWPORT NEWS SHIPBUILDING AND DRY DOCK COMPANY JUDGES INTO NEW YORK HARBOR WITH 7,607 VETERANS ABOARD, JULY 31, 1945.



M. S. "John Ericsson"



Captain John W. Anderson, Master
Colonel Ward P. Schrantz, Transport Commander



This is to certify that

Lt. George A. Hoffmann 0-741310
Rank Name ASN

has returned to the New York Port of
Embarkation from overseas service on the
M. S. "JOHN ERICSSON"
which left France on May 16, 1945 and
the United Kingdom May 19, 1945.

John B. Campbell Major #C.
Detachment Commander

May 30, 1945.

CLASS OF SERVICE This is a full-rate Telegram or Cablegram unless its deferred character is indicated by a suitable symbol above or preceding the address.	WESTERN UNION A. N. WILLIAMS PRESIDENT	SYMBOLS DL = Day Letter NL = Night Letter LC = Deferred Cable NLT = Cable Night Letter Ship Radiogram
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Time of receipt - STANDARD TIME at point of destination

WA 246 23 GOVT WASHINGTON DC 30 352A
MRS HAZEL J HOFMANN
69 WEST 104 ST NYK *NOR* 1945 MAY 30 AM 5 51

THE CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE ARMY DIRECTS ME TO INFORM YOU YOUR HUSBAND 2ND/LT HOFMANN GEORGE A HAS ARRIVED IN UNITED STATES.
BY A ULIO THE ADJUTANT GENERAL.

2ND/LT.

THE COMPANY WILL APPRECIATE SUGGESTIONS FROM ITS PATRONS CONCERNING ITS SERVICE

Remarkably, 2nd Lt. George A. Hofmann had traveled home with the man who led the evacuation of Nuremberg and drew the card that brought his men home first.

Recollections from Major General W.E. Arnold

LUCK OF THE DRAW - It was left to Col. Good to decide the best way to evacuate the Americans. Col. Good decided to leave the camp one battalion at a time. Col. Arnold said, "He called the seven battalion commanders to a meeting and I was battalion commander No. 7. He told us the battalions would leave by a draw of cards. He held up a deck of cards, and said the highest card would go first, the next highest second, and so on."

Two British padres were each asked to shuffle a deck of cards. They placed the shuffled decks on a long table, where the battalion commanders one through seven, were sitting next to one another in numerical order. Col. Good selected one of the decks, and asked the padres to shuffle the deck again and place it back on the table. Col.

Good cut the deck and then took the top card and placed it in front of the commander of battalion No. 1. Col. Arnold was the last commander to get a card and when his turn came, Col. Good drew the king of spades. It was the highest card, thereby giving Col. Arnold and his men the privilege of leaving the camp first.

GOING HOME - U.S. Army trucks started the evacuation (early the next morning). They drove the troops to a small airstrip at Landshut, about ten kilometers northeast of Moosburg. From there, U.S. Army Air Corps C-47s flew the former prisoners to Paris, where they went through a U.S. Army processing center called Lucky Strike. After they had been processed through Lucky Strike, the ex-POWs traveled back to the United States aboard ship.

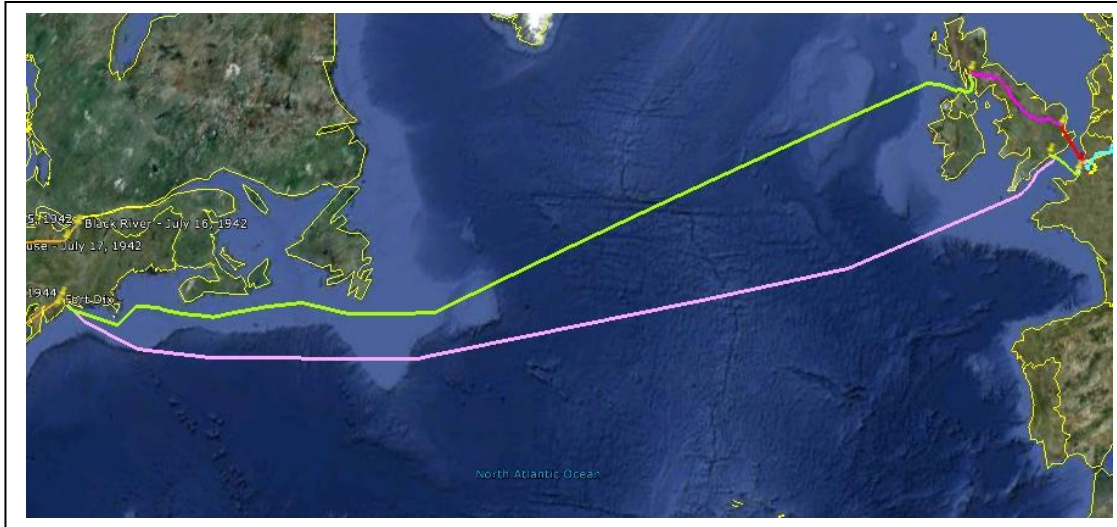
However, with transportation routes jammed and flights backed up due to the large volume of POWs, Col. Arnold found his own way out of France and flew from Paris to London with his good friend, Colonel Irving "Bull" Rendle, a Wing Commander in the 8th Air Force in England.

On May 19, 1945, Colonel Arnold, a liberated Prisoner of War sailed from England aboard the medical ship, M. S. John Ericsson, and arrived at New York, in America on May 29, 1945.

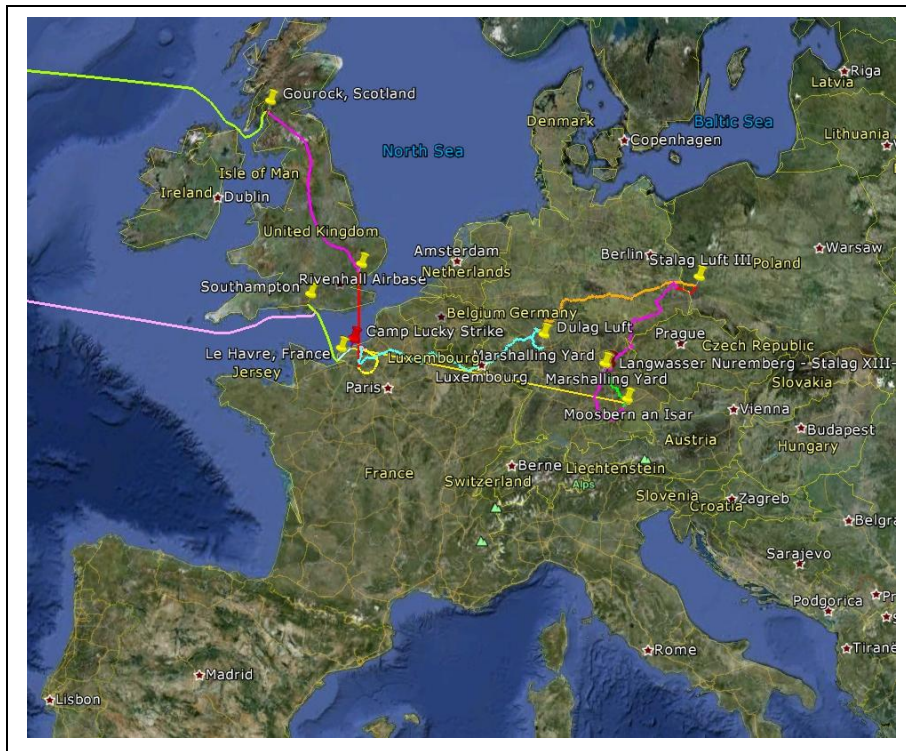
God Bless America! American POWs--Lest They Be Forgotten!

The long journey was finally over....

Across the Atlantic –



And across a continent at war.



Three friends went to war
– only one came home.

