

"Maybe we're dead, and this is Hell"

- Joe Klaas - Maybe I'm Dead

Very little information regarding the POWs was making its way back home to the next of kin. Letters had completely stopped. The March edition of the YMCA "War Prisoners Aid News" devoted a single paragraph to subject not mentioning the atrocities that were underway and the suffering and dying that was happening daily.

WAR PRISONERS AID NEWS

Y.M.C.A.

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. 2 403 MARCH, 1945 No. 3

Y.M.C.A. Increases Aid to Prisoners in Germany: Truck Fleet Carries Supplies; Workers Defy Bombers



LONDON—A new fleet of Swedish-built trucks and trailers is being used by War Prisoners Aid of the Y.M.C.A. in an endeavor to overcome disrupted German transportation facilities and get badly needed supplies to war prisoners in the Reich.

The trucks, charcoal-burning Fords, also are being used to move men and materials from camps being evacuated from the battle zones. Drivers for the fleet, which has become a "sanity life-line" for the prisoners, have been provided by the German authorities. To facilitate their passage, all the trucks are clearly marked in German, "War Prisoners Aid of the Y.M.C.A." with the "Y's" Red Triangle insignia also prominently displayed.

Service Being Increased

Service to American prisoners in Germany is being increased in order to help ease the hardships being brought on by over-crowding in the camps, Dr. Tracy Strong, general secretary of the World's Committee of the Y.M.C.A., under which War Prisoners Aid operates, declared. Neutral workers of the "Y" are continuing to visit the prison camps, many times at great personal risk, he said.

Many Y.M.C.A. representatives have had narrow escapes from death as the roads along which they were traveling were attacked by Allied war planes. The constant stream of refugees along the highways adds to their difficulties, forcing them to drive their automobiles at a snail's pace. The snows and rain that have hampered military operations also have turned the roads to the prison camps into quagmires, presenting another obstacle that must be overcome before the prisoners are reached.

Headquarters Moved

Headquarters of War Prisoners Aid in Germany have been moved from Sagan to Meissen, near Dresden, the London offices of the organization announced. Sagan, and Stalag Luft III which is located near it, have been over-run by the Russians, but not before the prisoners were moved to other camps.

(Continued on page 3)

Y.M.C.A. TRUCKS AID PRISONERS IN GERMANY: In the photo above Hugo Cedergren (left), the associate general secretary of War Prisoners Aid of the Y.M.C.A., is shown with two other "Y" officials in Stockholm as they took delivery of the fleet of Swedish-built Ford trucks and trailers now being used in an effort to overcome the disrupted German transportation system. The trucks carry badly needed supplies into the camps and in addition have been aiding in the evacuation of men and materials from those camps in the paths of the Allied armies. The trucks have become a "sanity life-line" to the men, for without them, the "Y" would be seriously handicapped in its efforts to aid the prisoners.

Yanks Win Sports Badges While at Stalag Luft VI

Six Americans were among the Canadian, Jamaican, South African, Australian and British prisoners of war in Germany awarded Y.M.C.A. badges for sportsmanship in athletics while at Stalag Luft VI.

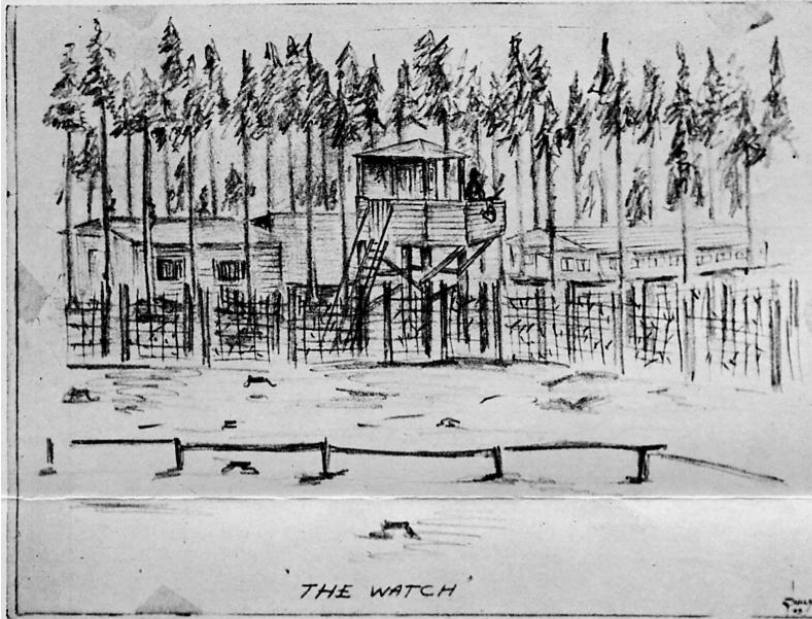
American winners of the awards are: S/Sgt. D. E. Kirby, 1672 South Fourth Street, Columbus, Ohio; T/Sgt. G. A. Houser, 1100 Second Street, Monessen, Pennsylvania; T/Sgt. R. E. Doherty, 483 Linden Street, Fall River, Mass.; S/Sgt. A. J. Donatelli, Box 38, Bakerton, Pennsylvania; V. J. Pesature, Jr., 3030 Heath Avenue, Bronx, New York, and S/Sgt. W. M. Beach, 94 North Fifth Street, Northwood, Iowa.

Red Cross Keeps Prisoners Fed

Many an American "soldier out of luck," a prisoner of war of the Axis nations, becomes an expert cook during his enforced stay behind barbed wire. His skill is born of grim necessity. For often, those who would eat must cook.

Don't let an American lad whose life is bounded by barbed wire feel that he is forgotten because he's a soldier without a gun. Help keep him fed and clothed.

Food and clothing packages reach American prisoners of war through the auspices of the Red Cross. Give now to the 1945 Red Cross War Fund.



DIARY OF AMERICAN PRISONERS OF WAR: "A Wartime Log," combination diary and photograph album, is one of the most unusual books to come out of the war. It's the story of the war for the "soldiers out of luck," the human and compelling record of the life of prisoners of war in a German camp. The Log is the moving, day by day story of the slow, dreary life of the constantly shuffling stream of humanity behind barbed wire enclosures. It's typically G.I. in humor, American in slang, and displays unbeatable Yankee ingenuity.

"A Wartime Log" is published with blank pages by War Prisoners Aid of the Y.M.C.A. and furnished to Americans so that they may keep a record of their days of captivity.

Each log is a handsome book, with the Liberty Bell, symbol of precious freedom, printed in red on a tan linen cover. There are 150 pages of fine quality paper suitable for sketches, 40 pages of gray paper for mounting photos, a page of handy cellophane envelopes for inserting stamp collections and similar projects, a pocket flap inside the back cover for holding larger items, a packet of stickers for mounting photos easily, and a lined contents page.

The books are used not only as diaries, photograph albums, and sketch books, but for short story writing, and to hold the letters home that can't be mailed now because of wartime restrictions of censorship and space. Each book is an invaluable morale builder for its

Hard Working Britons Get Rest From Labors at "Holiday" Camp

Stalag III D, Special Kommando 517, is known among British prisoners of war as a "Holiday Camp." Those who have been in captivity the longest, and who have been doing the heaviest work have precedence, and are allowed to rest there for six weeks, according to a letter received from John H. O. Brown, British Camp Leader. The men come from war prison camps throughout Germany, and are comparatively free of restrictions at the "Holiday Camp," which has a capacity for about 400 prisoners. They are not compelled to do physical work of any kind.

"We expect a new party here in a few days," said Mr. Brown, "and I plan to have a full school program in operation with classes in English, German, mathematics, history, geography, psychology, theology, Diesel

engineering and musical appreciation. We also anticipate the arrival of a well-known prisoner of war military band, and a comprehensive entertainment program of gramophone recitals, whist drives and table tennis tournaments is contemplated.

"In addition we are planning a series of lectures by competent speakers on such subjects as medical research, scientific advancement and other non-political matters."

The camp library was reported by Mr. Brown as "fast assuming satisfactory proportions, for we have been fortunate in obtaining a number of good books, both classical and fiction. There is still room for improvement, but we can at least say that progress has been made, thanks to the Y.M.C.A."

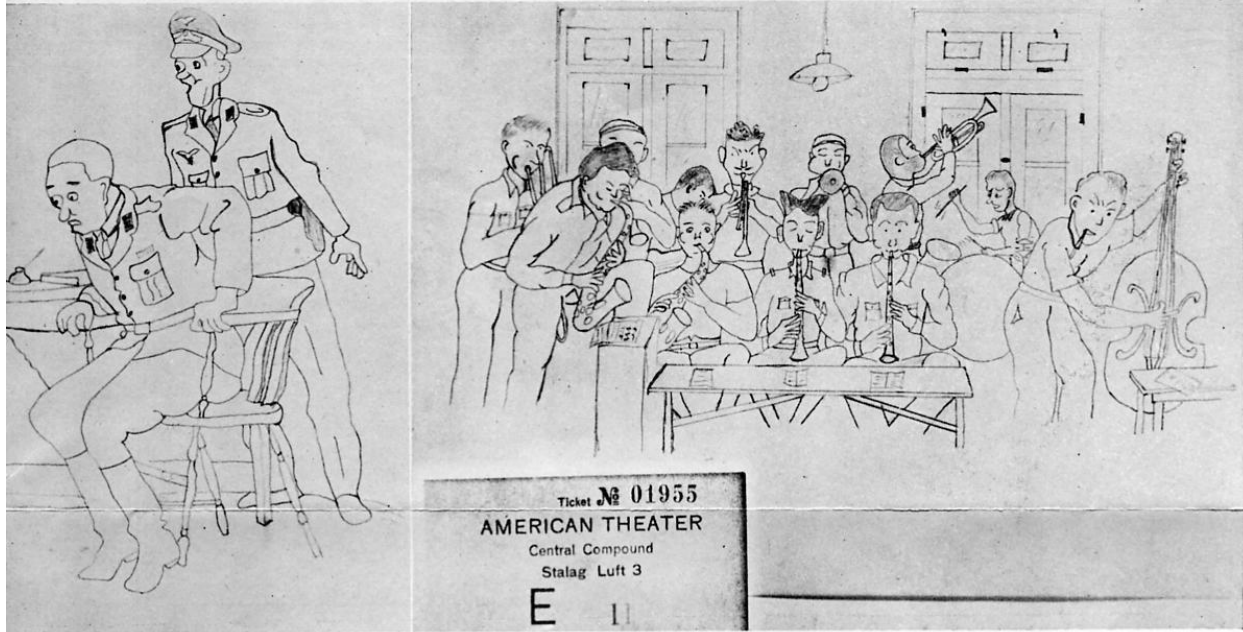
There is a very active interest in sports at this camp, which has a foot-

ball field and two handball courts available. The men are given sports outfits such as tennis shoes, slacks, football shoes and other athletic equipment.

United Church services conducted each Sunday by laymen are attended regularly by both Protestants and Roman Catholics. Church candles, hymn books, theological books and other religious articles have been supplied by the Y.M.C.A.

"It is to the Y.M.C.A. that I would give my deepest thanks," the letter continued, "for it is through them that this camp has become possible. Freely have they given us all that we have asked for, and nothing seems to be too great for them. It is truly gratifying to find that the Y.M.C.A. is increasing, rather than diminishing its wonderful work."

Stalag III D, situated not far from Berlin, is located in the midst of a pine forest. The camp is reported to be clean and airy with a large open space in the center, used as a playing field.



owner, for it is not only a reminder that he is not forgotten by those at home, it is a tangible evidence of that one great freedom still left to a prisoner of war: freedom of thought. (But perhaps not of expression if German censors see some of the Logs!)

Some 25,000 copies of the book have already been distributed to prisoners through the American and a special Canadian edition, and an order for 40,000 more books has recently been placed. The Canadian edition substitutes the Maple Leaf for the Liberty Bell. There also is an edition for British prisoners.

When the boys come home, the one memento of prison life which they usually wish to carry back with them is the Log Book, for it has been a constant com-

panion to their days of imprisonment, many valuable hours have gone into its making, and it contains names and addresses of fellow prisoners.

Pictured above are drawings of camp life at Stalag Luft III, preserved in the Log Book of Lt. Stewart Cooper, of Cedar Grove, New Jersey, during his 11 months there before repatriation. At left is a general camp scene, showing the pine forest in which the camp was located, the center drawing depicts the plight of two prisoners whose escape tunnel came out in the German commandant's office, while a band with Y.M.C.A.-supplied instruments is at the right. Inset is a ticket for the American Theater at the camp. The "Y" provides many materials for prison camp shows.

"Great to Be Alive," Reports "Y" Worker

From Gosta Lundin, director of War Prisoners Aid services in Germany, comes this message:

"It is great to be alive. The 'dangerous life' has always had its attraction for me, and now I am beginning to understand that there are terrible realities behind that charming phrase. But it is a great thing to be alive, to stay in a work which has as its object to get the force of goodness to function against the larger and smaller devils of evil which are warping and destroying the possibilities of human life.

"If what man calls the worst should happen and I should be taken away by death in the final terrible phase of this war, that is by far not the worst. To leave the stage of life on this earth is something that has to be done sooner or later. If only you have the

grace not to be 'overtaken by evil' you can meet death without fear.

"I pray to God that he will by His grace let me be and remain a good man, serving Him and His cause unto the last and testifying of 'one world' which is not yet."

Phonograph and Records Bring Smiles to P. O.W.'s

A phonograph and records which reached them together with books and Christmas tree trimmings from the "Y" just before the holiday, brought joy to six American prisoners hospitalized at Sandbostel Reserve Hospital.

Because these prisoners are particularly isolated, the phonograph and records were more than usually appreciated, the visiting Y.M.C.A. worker reported, adding that the wounded men were in good spirits and their health improving rapidly.

Truck Fleet Helps Americans in Reich

(Continued from page 1)

With the jamming of prison camps as a result of men being moved from battle areas, the need for educational, recreational and religious supplies to help the captives forget their surroundings is becoming greater daily, according to Dr. Strong.

"Even experienced 'Y' workers are surprised by the constant use the men make of our supplies," he said. "There are no seasons in a prison camp, and our workers report football being played every day of the year!

"Lately, in addition to requests for regular 'Y' supplies of athletic equipment, musical instruments, books, religious articles and other leisure time materials, the prisoners are asking for and receiving items like toothbrushes, razor blades, hairclippers and cups."

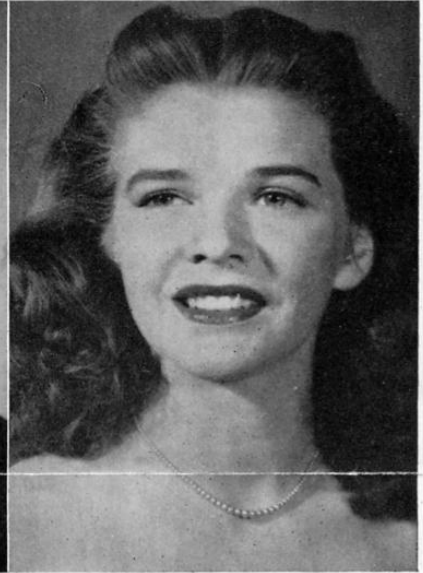
They Win Beauty Votes of Imprisoned Americans



Nancy Reid



Marie Benzel



Clare Van Syckle

It takes more than barbed wire to stop the good old American custom of holding beauty contests, as the three pretty girls above can tell you. They were the winners in a picture beauty contest held at Oflag 64 before that camp was over-run by the Russians.

The winner, Nancy Reid of Evanston, Ill. (left), was entered by Lt. John Glendenning of New York. Second

prize went to Marie Benzel of Lincoln, Neb. (center), while Clare Van Syckle of Ft. Lee, N. J., proved that motherhood was no bar to rating in a beauty contest by taking third prize. Mrs. Van Syckle is the mother of two children. The story of the contest was brought out of the camp by a visiting Y.M.C.A. worker.

Zulu and Xosa Songs, Ankle Bells, Feature Orders from Prisoners

Among the never ending mountain of requests received by the Geneva Y.M.C.A. War Prisoners Aid office in one day are such varied items as vocal music in Sessuto, Zulu and Xosa, high school textbooks in Afrikaans, copies of "Cours de Litterature Arabe," religious literature in Hindustani and Gurmukhi, Korans, German ABC's, New Testaments in Swahili, ankle bells, stage pistols, and English/Urdu/English dictionaries.

These particular items were sent to East African, South African, and Indian prisoners of war interned by Germany.

Action in Stalag IIIB Little Theater



"UNHAND THAT GAL": That might be the command given by the gent brandishing the tommy gun as he draws a bead on the two sailors in a play presented by Thespians at Stalag III B. The picture was brought to this country by Cpl. Edward J. Zayd of Cleveland who spent a year in the camp following his capture at Salerno where he suffered 150 shrapnel wounds. Cpl. Zayd said the dramatic activities at Stalag III B, many of which were made possible by materials supplied by the Y.M.C.A., went a long way towards relieving the monotony of life behind barbed wire.

Camps Are Changed As Allies Advance

Due to the rapid advances of Allied Armies, war prison camps in Germany are at present undergoing constant shifts in location.

Latest word as the News goes to press indicates a change or probable change of location for: Stalag 357, Stalag XX-A, Oflag 64, Stalag VIII-B, Stalag 344, B.A.B. 20, B.A.B. 21, Stalag Luft VII, Stalag Luft IV, Stalag 344, and Stalag Luft III.

Until next of kin are advised by the Office of the Provost Marshal General of a change of address, they should continue to use the old address.

In April 1945, the war was coming to an end and prison camps in northern and central Germany were being evacuated south to avoid advancing American and British forces. Stammlager VII-A at Moosburg, Germany, was a collection point, and the camp was a large one, holding 130,000 U.S. Army Air Corps, French and British POWs.

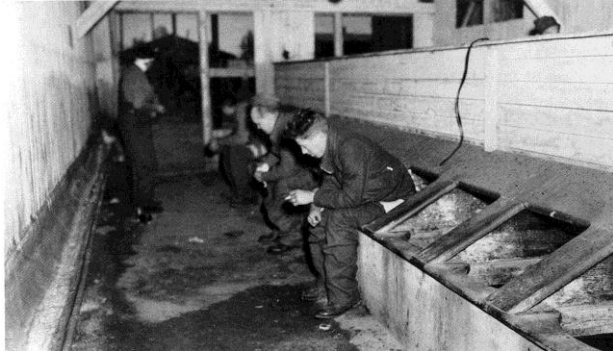
MOOSBURG



Stalag VIIA was a disaster. It was a nest of small compounds separated by barbed wire fences enclosing old, dilapidated barracks crammed closely together. Reportedly, the camp had been built to hold 14,000 French prisoners. In the end, 130,000 POWs of all nationalities and ranks were confined in the area.



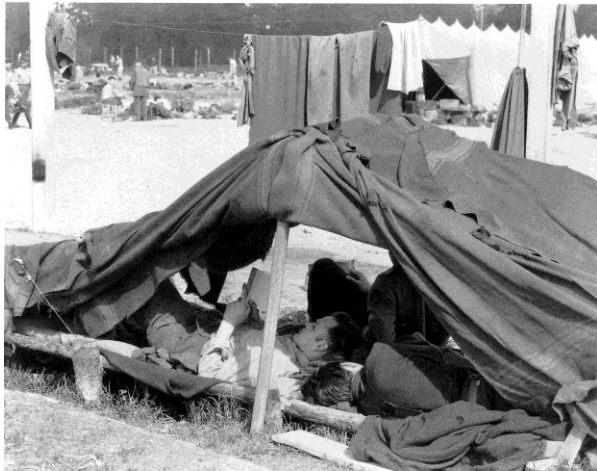
In some compounds the barracks were just makeshift tents or empty shells with dirt floors. In others, barracks consisted of two wooden buildings abutting a masonry washroom with a few cold-water faucets.



Wooden bunks were joined together into blocks of 12, a method of cramming 500 men into a building originally intended for an uncomfortable 200. There was a single coal-fired stove for heating, for which there was no coal!



All buildings were hopelessly infested with vermin. As spring came to Bavaria, some of the more enterprising Kriegies moved out of the barracks into tents that had been erected to accommodate the stream of newcomers still coming in from other evacuated stalags. Some men chose to sleep on the ground, setting up quarters in air raid slit trenches. The camp resembled a giant hobo village.

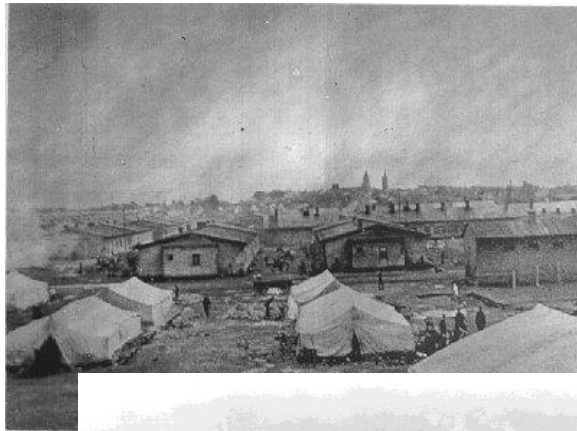


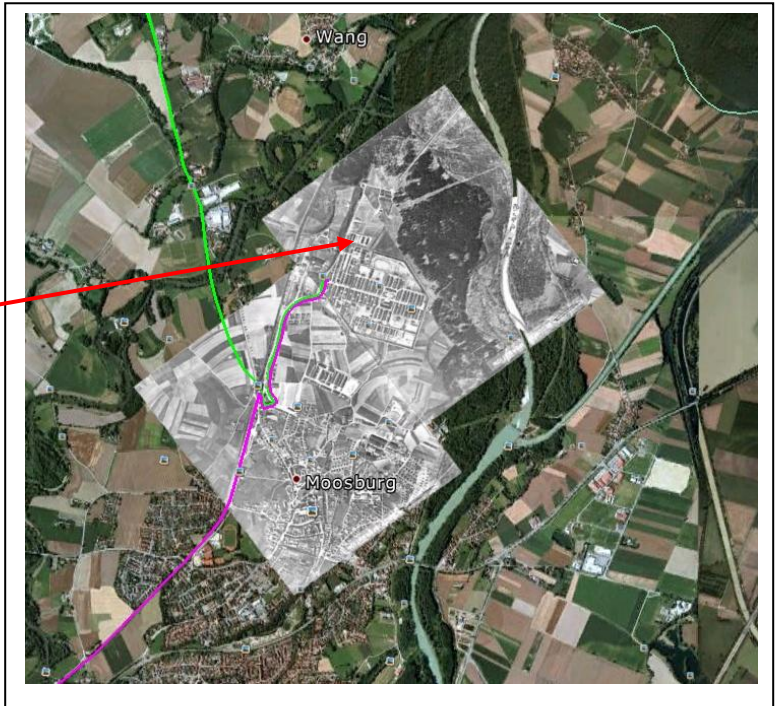
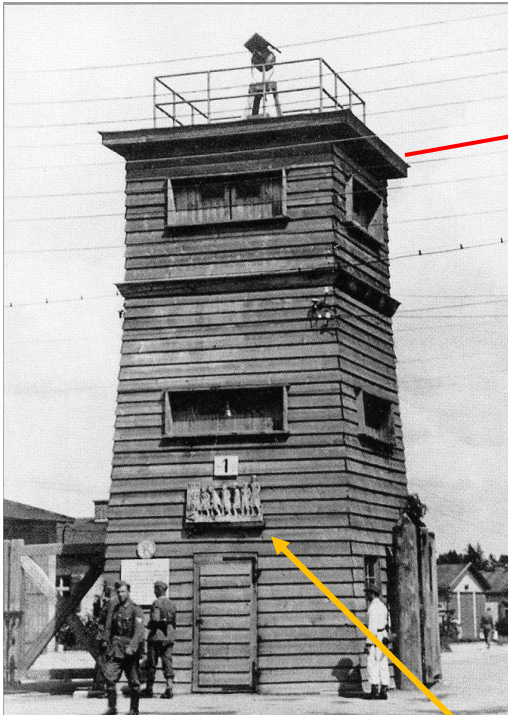
Stalag VII-A
Moosburg, Bavaria

Germany, 1937

Type	Prisoner-of-war camp
Coordinates	48.4887°N 11.9435°E
In use	1939-1945
Controlled by	Nazi Germany

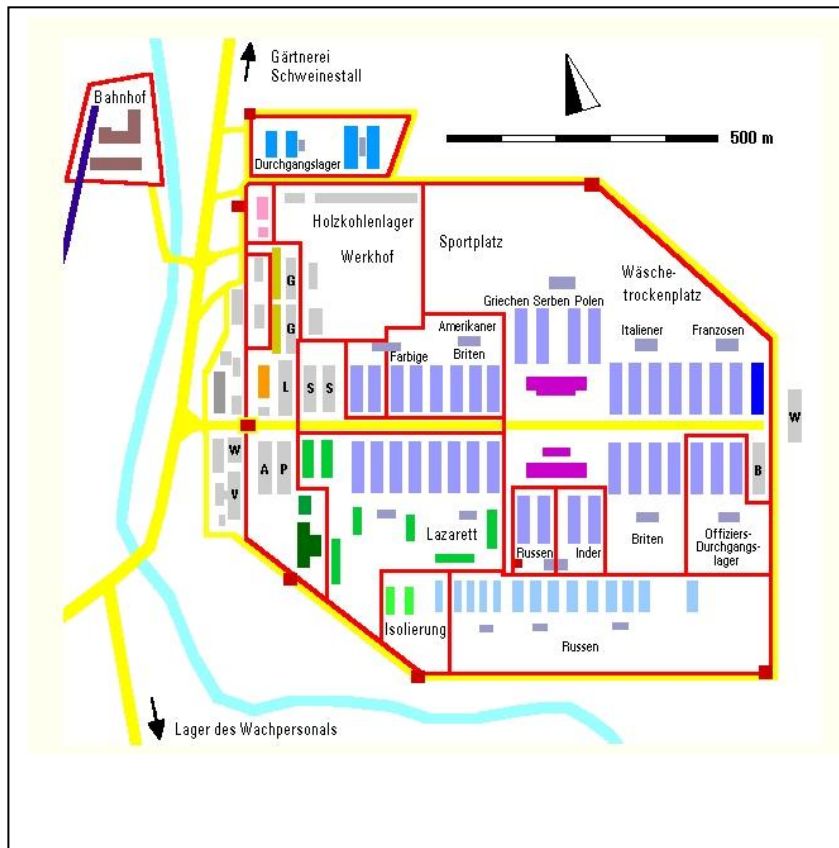
ID tag as worn by POWs. Name and service number are on the brown disc.







MEMORANDUM
U.S. AIR FORCE
[Handwritten notes]



These are the original plans for the construction and use of Stalag VII-A in 1940. Doing the math – 39 barracks for 400 men and 14 barracks for 200 men – underscores the 7 to 10-fold growth the camp experienced before it was all over.

- Brook Mühlbach
- Streets, paths
- Railway line
- Railway station
- Parcel post office
- Red Cross
- Barbed-wire fence
- Watchtowers
- 39 barracks for 400 men
- 14 barracks for 200 men
- Women's camp
- Transit camp
- Sanitation facilities
- Kitchens, canteen
- Theatre, church
- Hospital
- Isolation
- Delousing
- Dentist
- Red Cross
- Arrest
- Commander
- W Guards
- V Administration
- A Registration
- P Post office
- L Food
- G Tools
- S Tailors
- B Clothing



In her book Rhapsody in Junk, Marilyn Jeffers Walton recalled her father's story of entering Moosburg.

Thomas F. Jeffers: *"When the massive wooden boxcar doors finally opened at 8:00 a.m., February 3rd, the filthy men, gaunt and unshaven, many with sunken eyes circled in black, peered out. They blinked against the sudden light as the boxcar doors were pushed back. With their last ounce of strength, they stumbled down stiffly from the cars, helping down the weak and sickly. Slowly, they made their way down the muddy road between the train track and long barbed-wire fence to the rows of green-shuttered beige stucco buildings on the other side. They marched through the single gate, bore to the left past a tall wooden tower and in a grey mist delivered themselves into the hands of the Wehrmacht-no longer somewhat protected Luftwaffe prisoners."*

Upon arrival in dimly-lit Moosburg, many men trudged another half mile through another gate to an area that looked like and smelled like a stockyard. Horse stalls and barns and a sixty-foot slit trench for a toilet greeted them. It was in constant use due to the deteriorating condition of the men. Soup was handed out that was hardly more than a puddle of grease and weeds, and bread was in short supply for everyone.

The men were shown to a desolate barbed-wire enclosure with two long empty sheds where there was only floor space. For four days they stayed in what they called "The Snake Pit" trying to tolerate overcrowding, cold and mud. The shack provided no beds, fuel or food. Most men were sick, cold and damp, and everyone was covered with fleas and lice. From the second to the sixth of February, the men settled where they could before going into the camp proper. For the third time, there was not enough room to have everyone lie down at once, so many did not sleep.

In the Nordlager (North Camp), small groups were taken to be deloused and sent to the main camp. They eyed the showers again with the same trepidation they felt in Muskau, but to their relief the men had the luxury of their first warm-water showers with soap. The showers were brief but an unbelievable luxury.

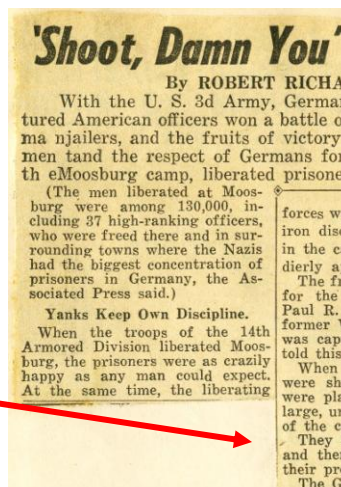
The transferred prisoners were finally moved to the main camp. There was no coal in the camp. The men burned bed boards for heat, and many stayed under blankets in bed all day to keep warm.

Bunks in the stucco buildings had filthy vermin-infested burlap palliasses on the beds. By filtered light coming through the cracks, the men could see bedbugs, lice and fleas crawling everywhere. Men's bodies were livid with welts from insect bites, and many men hung their meager blankets out all day in hopes of ridding the fabric of the biting beasts.

An aisle six-feet wide ran the full length between rows of three-high, twelve-man bunks. Four-hundred instead of two-hundred crowded into each barracks. Tents supplemented the crowded buildings, and some men opted to sleep in air raid trenches rather than stay inside.

The four hundred in each barracks obtained water from one faucet and one hand pump. Sanitation measures were totally inadequate. There was no hot water, and the men were left to wallow in the filth of living in severely over-crowded and totally inadequate conditions."

In a news article written just days after Moosberg was liberated, the experience of one group of new arrivals was described.



More and more POWs arrived every day. After endless hours of waiting another of the men recalled being “processed in” –

Vernon Burda: *“On February 11th, after supper, we went through a search, which was a farce. We’ve saws, hammers, maps, nails, wrenches and everything else we had picked up along the way--especially at the brick factory at Muskau. We were deloused, and we took a shower.”*



Then we were taken to the East Lager and we were put into barracks--and what a hole! We were put in tiers of 12 men-3 bunks high, with 6 bedboards per bed. The beds had straw palliasses and were full of lice, fleas and bedbugs. Our life in Moosburg started--and what a miserable life it was.

... It was not unusual to find one hundred or more bedbugs in one bed. Gould became so infected with flea bites he had blood poisoning. Several fellows had their whole bodies

covered with bites. The bites weren't so bad, but they itched so that one could hardly keep from scratching them. As soon as the bites were opened, infection set in.

For some reason I wasn't bothered too much. I could feel the little devils running over my belly and legs, but they rarely bit me. As Tipton said, it probably was because we were so filthy. A lot of the fellows had not had their clothes off in four to six weeks and hadn't washed in just as long. We had only the clothes we wore and no facilities for laundry and it was too cold to sleep out of our clothes."

Thomas Jeffers: *"For four to six weeks, the men kept on their same filthy clothes without benefit of any washing facilities. There was no sanitation system in place, no cooking facilities and increasingly, straw was spread over the floors of the barracks to be used as bedding."*

Cameron Garrett: *"The guards were no longer crippled old men. These guards had a cruel attitude, better guns, and more German shepherd dogs pulling on the handlers' leashes. The German officers were quicker to demonstrate their brutish nature on a weakened prisoner for entertainment." At Moosburg we were ordered into a large area where we were commanded to put up large tents. At the first opportunity we all tried to hit the fresh water spouts in the area. There wasn't a one of us who didn't want to strip down in the cold air and rinse off the stench of our own filth. Three large tents, and rows of straw on the hard ground. No other accommodations were provided. We were lucky if we still had the two lice ridden blankets that we had carried from Nuremburg.*

The radio blared out the supposed heroics of the German Army continuously. It seemed improbable to sleep in these conditions."

A. L. Lindsay: *"We had a single water faucet located outside which was turned on only during certain daylight hours. There was always a line at the faucet waiting to suck out the water when the pump was idle. The person sucking on the hydrant would place his thumb in the opening until the next Person in line was in position to suck, an activity which would give a member of the Department of Health a fit of apoplexy. Actually just about everything which happened in Stalag VII A would have the same effect on a Department of Health employee. Sanitary conditions were minimal with not enough water to wash our hands or eating utensils, such as they were, consequently diarrhea was a constant problem.*

Our latrine facilities were not in the open, but were covered, and consisted of an open pit with perhaps six stations not unlike the primitive outhouses of rural Texas in the thirties. One report which I read after the war indicated the Germans had issued rolls of toilet paper: however, it must have been earlier in the war as I saw none in Stalag VII A. You made out with what you could scrounge from the Red Cross parcels or other sources, or did without. The open pit cesspool was sucked out only when in danger of overflowing by a vehicle which we dubbed "The Honey Wagon." I was told the honey wagon then utilized its contents as fertilizer for farming, a common practice in Europe, I understood."

Not everyone had access to covered latrines and in time the open pits went unattended.

Vernon Burda: *“The Germans refused to clean out the outdoor latrines--one latrine for about 2,000 men. It finally filled up and overflowed. As everyone was still sick with the "runs", you can imagine the mess it created. We were practically wading in human excrete. It overflowed into the parade ground, so when the Germans told us to fall out for appel--to be counted--we refused to go. Finally, after several hours of tension, they promised to clean the latrine out, so we fell in.*



Pneumonia, diphtheria, pellagra, dysentery, bacterial infection, blood poisoning and other diseases spread readily. Typhus was carried by body lice.

Thomas Jeffers: *“Dysentery was the norm as the men wallowed in the filthy make-shift accommodations. Some of the men, who had been the strongest on the march, now began to lose hope. Disease ran rampant, and medical treatment was practically non-existent.”*

Food was barely adequate at the outset, then, by the end of February, partially due to the bombing of the railroads, supplies of the Red Cross parcels were cut off in Moosburg. Now all the kriegies had was goon bread, margarine, some blood sausage, and of course the infamous "Green Death soup" The kriegies were literally starving.



Delivering potatoes

Thomas Jeffers: *“The German food ration consisted of one-half cup of warm water for breakfast, one cup of thin, watery soup for dinner and a little black bread for supper, with extra issues of cheese, marge [margarine] or blood sausage.”*

Now, the men had to rely on what little German food they were given and were reintroduced to Green Death soup. For nearly three months, their meals were extremely meager. There was constant trading amongst the prisoners, with some prisoners assisting others who had lesser trading skills, and prized possessions were bartered away in the interest of filling an empty stomach.”

Major Lee E. Tinker – as told by his son: *“Like a lot of veterans, he did not want to remember or talk about the worst aspects of his experiences in the War; instead he would talk about events he remembered as humorous.*

Every holiday, my mother in law would make a congealed salad using green jello. He laughingly referred to this as "Green Hornet". After several years he told me that the guys in the camp used that name for the thin beet soup they would receive because the maggots in the horsemeat (what little there was) would float to the top - dyed green."



These little stoves appeared at Moosburg because there were few proper cook stoves and little coal to operate them. With one man operating the blower and another feeding small bits of wood and paper into the fire, a pot could be brought to a simmer quickly. The smoke made it necessary to use them only outdoors.



Finally arrangements were made through the International Red Cross for volunteers to drive a small convoy of trucks to Moosburg. The convoy, called "The Great White Fleet," carried vital parcels of food—enough perhaps for quarter parcels per kriegie but at least enough to stave off starvation.





Thomas Jeffers: "The "Great White Fleet" of emergency provisions arrived at Moosburg one day, much to the jubilation of the hungry men. One third of a parcel per man was all that was allowed, but even a fraction of a parcel was better than none. Intestinal ailments became a reality that evening for men who ate too much after being on reduced rations for so long. With the arrival of the Red Cross parcels, the Germans further reduced each man's German rations."

A lively trade in food developed with enlisted men of all nationalities who were in and out of the camp on work details. As security loosened towards the end, some German-speaking American kriegies made nightly forays outside the wire, foraging and trading.

Articles were written regarding the POW cuisine.

That is a natural and probably sensible attitude and it shouldn't take too long. That is, for released prisoners of war who have not been wounded as well as starved, or half starved, on German cabbage soup and black bread. On the days, this is, when they had cabbage soup and a small hunk of black bread but worse by far than the black bread are the black thoughts these men, many of them educated and sensitive, have suffered in the long hours and days and months when they knew little except filth and hatred and bestiality. Discount the hunger and the terror of being bombed by Allied bombs, which many were, and which must have a special flavor of terror, and you still have the bitter mental torture.

A torture made worse by lack of news and the hope that even a jailed criminal has of a sure hour of liberation. They cannot even count the days.

Five Years With Nothing to Read:
Betty Winkler, of INS, told me of a young French scholar in the group of released prisoners she had gone to meet at the station. Since POW's are apt to have a common look and stamp, especially those who have been long in Germany, Betty did not realize at first that this one might not be a farmer or average workman.

It was only when she asked him what was the worst suffering he had endured and he replied, "The lack of something to read," that it came out that he was a graduate of one of France's great universities.

He had been in Germany for five years and had been assigned to work on a farm with a peasant family. Physically he had not fared too badly, since, of their own little, the hausfrau and her husband had given him enough to eat. But for all those years in a supposedly civilized world, he had been without so much as a newspaper to read. Only the few censored letters from Paris that were permitted him, nothing else in all that time.

On One Thing They Agree:
All in all, I have talked with some thirty or forty released prisoners, American, British and French officers, war correspondents and enlisted men. And have talked with them at the front, where they still were dazed by their good fortune and here in Paris, when they had had more time to realize it.

There was a difference of opinion among these men as to their treatment, varying from brutal to passable. But on one thing they agreed. That was that their captors and guards had softened up perceptibly as the roar of Bradley's and Montgomery's guns grew ever nearer.

One British war correspondent, who had become practically an old resident in the former boys' school where he was imprisoned, told how the German colonel in charge of that camp had been a mythical figure to the prisoners until the last few days before they affected their escape.

Then he suddenly showed up in person, very correct and military and Prussian in bearing in spite of actually being an Austrian, and began making inquiries as to their treatment and comforts. Inquiries that it had not occurred to him to make in all the previous months he had been in charge of the camp.

Austrian or no Austrian, that was typical German behavior of the German of World War I. Whether it is now the rule or the exception, the writer isn't competent to say. Except that he has had trouble, personally, in believing that any people can wholly and completely change their spots in a quarter of a century.

The Fraulein Finds U. S. Cold:
More like the Germans of the other war and the other American occupation of the Rhineland was the pretty blond girl in a liberated city, who plaintively inquired: "What is the matter with the Americans? They are so cold to us. My mother used to tell me that they were such jolly people."

Sometimes you have to wonder if they don't, as a people, suffer from some racial blind spot that leads them sincerely to believe such things. That somehow, somewhere they have been forever sold on the idea that whatever they do is all right as long as they do it.

This time they are learning differently the hard way. They have had to drape their houses, street upon street, mile upon mile of them, with white flags and lace curtains and sheets and table cloths until every street and road is its own White Way. If they can learn at all, this must be the lesson. For in the bright Spring days they are having it—and good.

BLACK BREAD AND BLACK THOUGHTS

SUPREME HEADQUARTERS, Paris, April 6.—Was the last steak you had a little on the thin side? Do you suspect that your butcher is giving all the good cuts to his relatives or close personal friends?

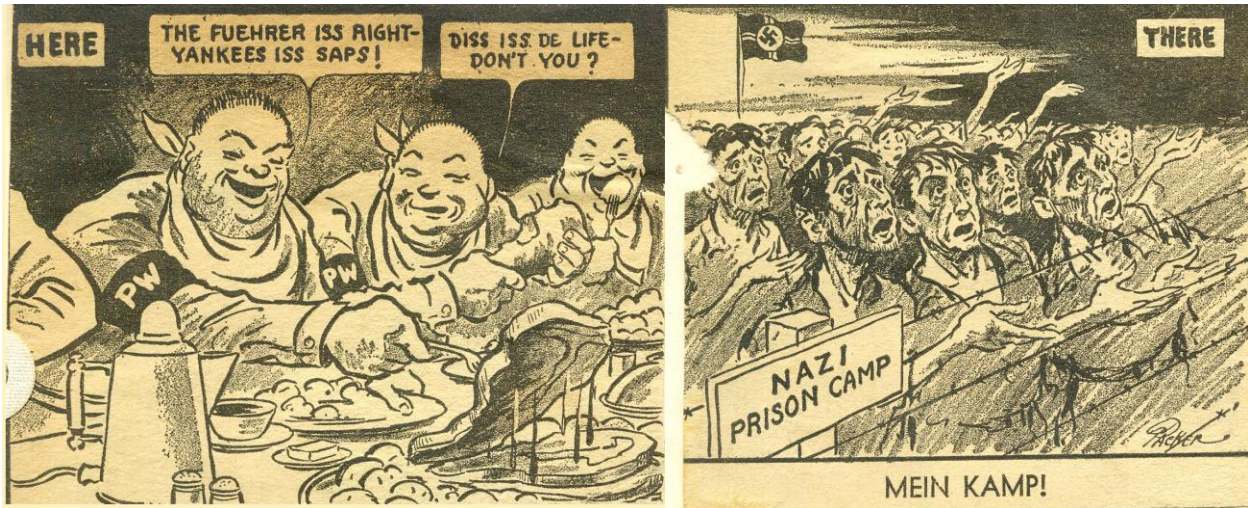
Then come to dinner with me and some fellows I have met recently who have spent from four years to as many months in those prisoner of war camps that the Germans call stalags.

Unfortunately, I cannot introduce these men by their names in print because some of their families have not yet been notified that they are liberated. Nor would some of them like their folks to know how near to skin and bones and how everlastingly weary they are just now.

"Anyhow, you'll be going home soon," somebody remarked to one of them.

"Not," he replied with an oath, "until I have put on twenty-five pounds somewhere and have some pep again. I've been in Europe this long and in Germany eighteen months, and my family will have to wait to see me until they will recognize me."

BILL CORUM



Two months passed for the first arrivals from Stalag Luft III and they were surviving deplorable conditions. It was hard to imagine that it could get much worse or more crowded when they were reunited with fellow POWs detained at Stalag XIII-D in Nuremberg – and many, many others. Major General W.E. Arnold recalled his arrival after two weeks of marching through hostile territory.

ARRIVING IN MOOSBURG – Recollections from Major General W.E. Arnold

The column reached Moosburg on April 15, 1945, after a 12 day march of avoiding allied bombers and fighters and the retreating German army. Led by Col. Arnold, the prisoners marched through Moosburg up to the gates of the enormous prison camp. "When we came to the main gate, Mr. Reilman talked with the German guards. He came back and said to me, 'They have barracks and they have tents.' The barracks were old, dirty and crowded so I told Mr. Reilman we weren't going to stay in those buildings. I said we wanted the tents; however, I wanted a lot of straw and hay brought into the tents. They did that and brought us large bales of hay that they distributed to each tent. We marched in and that's where we stayed until the end of the war." The American commander of the camp was U.S. Army Col. "Pop" Good. He had organized the American POWs into six battalions. When Col. Arnold's column arrived, it was designated the 7th Battalion.

Another new POW arrival had the same first impression of the camp as his fellow POWs from Stalag Luft III had back in February.

Bill Ethridge: - *"The camp was a mess. As far as we could see throughout the camp there was nothing but mud and hundreds and hundreds of prisoners. The first order of business was to register. Record-*



keeping was a fetish with our hosts. All of our names and prior camps had to be listed and verified. This took hours but finally our combine was cleared and we were escorted by a guard to a large tent. The tent had seen better days as was obvious from the many holes in the top and sides. All bunks were taken but we found enough space on the floor to accommodate six men and their baggage. It was past the evening meal so we ate from our packs and with the help of a few friendly souls found a pot of coffee.

I was seated against the wall in preparation for sleeping when I heard my name being called by two familiar voices, Mateyka and McCall! They had been checking the recently arrived prisoners and had just spotted Sobolof and me. We were happy not only to be reunited but most importantly to know that the four of us were okay. They had arrived in Moosburg about two weeks earlier and agreed that this Stalag was worse than any they had seen, both from the standpoint of being overcrowded and dirty.



We talked briefly about places we had stayed during the past month. None of us had any idea of the whereabouts of our enlisted crew. An older prisoner came to our combine and announced that he had seen us enter the tent and wondered if we were new arrivals. I told him that we had come into camp today with the contingent from Nurnberg. He introduced himself as Captain Somebody, saying that he was the senior American officer in this tent. He then handed us a pail of hot soup he had obtained from the central kitchen. We accepted his word and enjoyed the soup. An April shower passed over during the night, some of it entering the tent through the holes we observed earlier. The next day Sobolof and I were assigned to one of the standard German Army barracks.

April 22 to 27. This camp is much worse than we had expected. Everything is pretty disorganized and the Germans are arrogant and edgy. There is one centrally located cooking facility operated by prisoners and supervised by a German non-com. They provide hot water for coffee or tea and soup on an irregular schedule. There is no wood available for use by the prisoners in their Small make-shift stoves. To make matters worse, the grounds are ankle-deep in mud despite the fact that it rained only one day this week! We were informed that this had been a swamp at one time and that it was always wet. Further, the mosquitoes breed here by the millions during the summer months. Something great to look forward to. However, we plan to be out of here this month! Our beds are the typical triple bunks with mattresses filled with straw and all of the Same little critters we have met before. My mattress was mysteriously wavy with what felt like steel rods supporting it about every two feet. I soon discovered the reason. Wood for cooking had been so scarce that someone had shaved the bed slats to obtain kindling, and the original three-inch-wide bed slats were down to about an inch and a half. I was surprised that they had not broken, but it seemed that they were made of a kind of tough hardwood. During the ensuing week I managed to cut these slats down to about one inch and they still held.



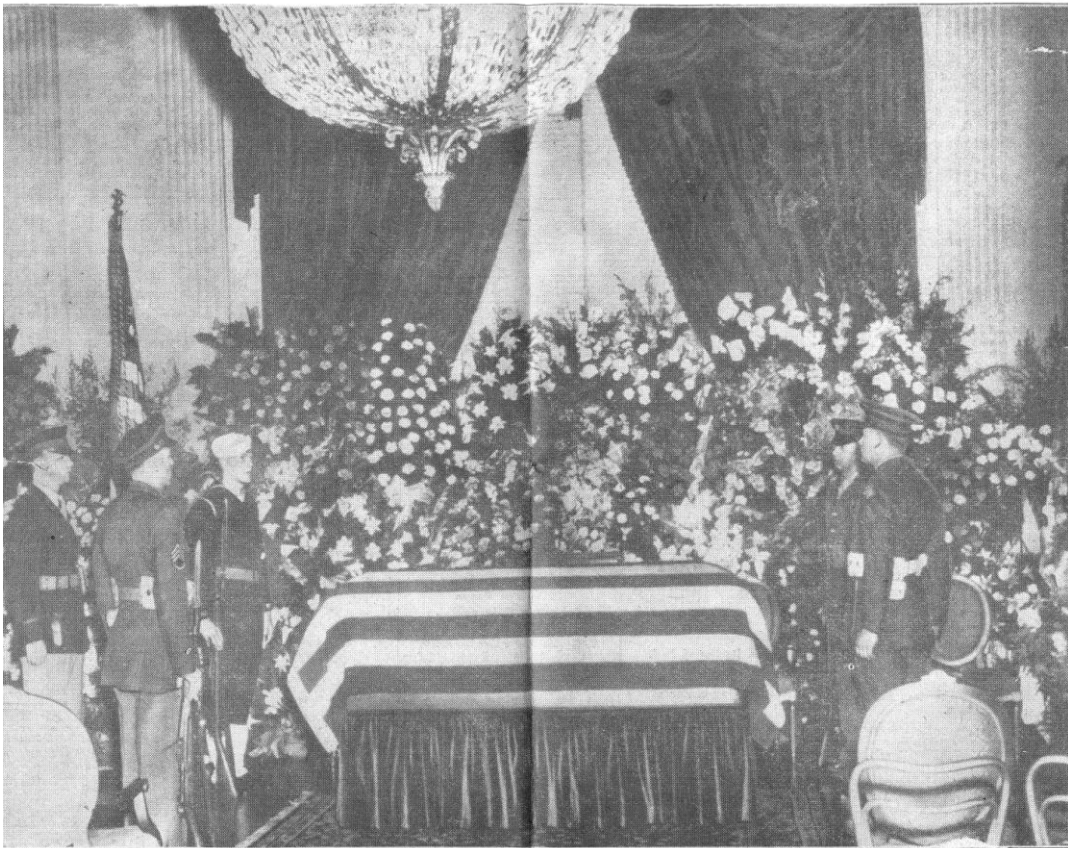
Things were bleak but the men were subsisting on clandestine radio communications and rumors that the end of the war was near. Then the news came from home – Commander in Chief, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt was dead.

Cameron Garrett: "It was here that we heard for the first time that our Commander in Chief, Franklin D. Roosevelt had died suddenly "back home" on April 12th. I'm sure the Allied Forces on the "outside" were just as shocked as we were. Many of the POWs from many nations shared our grief over his death. The Germans heckled those who openly wept.

Suddenly an increased number of Red Cross bundles mysteriously appeared. Not in the camp, but outside the barbed wire fences where no prisoner could get to them. Several tried to find a way to get at the bundles, but ended up as targets for the dogs. The German guards thought this was a great joke on every starving POW on the inside of hell.

German music blared continuously from the speakers throughout the camp. The guards were brutish and obnoxious until rumors of the approaching Allied Forces ran rampant through their own ranks."

Back home, America mourned the man who had promised the world a lasting peace.



Site of Service. Four members of our armed services stand stiffly at attention at the corners of the flag-draped casket of our departed President in the East Room of the White House. At 4 P. M., the Right Rev. Angus Dun started the brief ceremonies. Today, F. D. R. will be laid to rest in Hyde Park. (NEWS photo by Wallace)



In the final weeks before liberation the kriegies came very near to being pawns in one of Hitler's final gambits. He was determined to hold the "Luftgangsters" hostage either to force a separate peace with the Western Allies, or else in one of his violent fits of temper, to liquidate them.

His first plan was for the kriegies to be taken to Berlin and put in cages on Unter den Linden — there to be bombed by their own planes.



Unter den Linden, Berlin

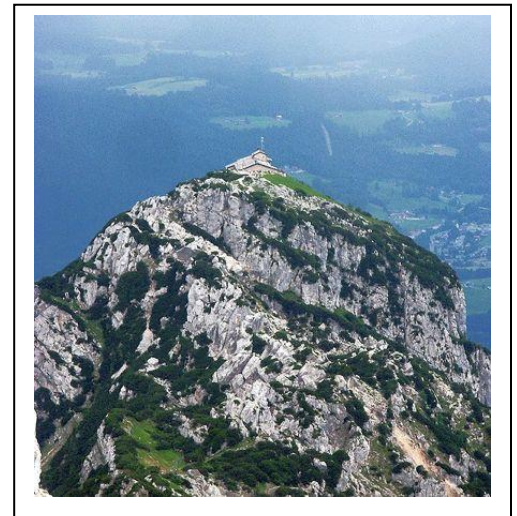
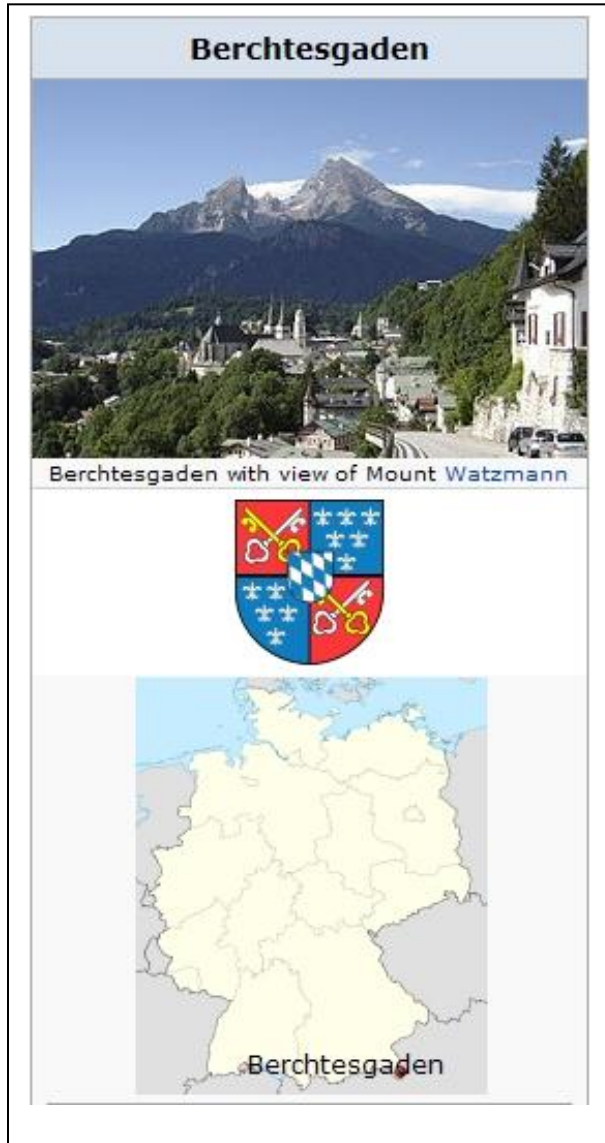


Berlin – April 20, 1939



Berlin - 1945

The other plan was to march them into the Alpen Redoubt near Berchtesgaden and Hitler's Eagles Nest headquarters and home, there to be held for his disposition.



Eagles Nest





GERMANY'S COLLAPSE

Crushing the enemy, Allied troops are shown as blue arrows swarming from the north, east, and west on a March 25, 1945, SHAEF markup of "Germany and Its Approaches" (above). Red hatching

reflects fear that routed Germans would establish a redoubt in the Alps, delaying surrender indefinitely.

As the liberators rolled across Europe, they posted thousands of copies of this map.

Even in a remote French village (below) convoys could get their bearings without asking directions.



SISSE BRIMBERG AT NATIONAL ARCHIVES (TOP AND RIGHT); U. S. ARMY SIGNAL CORPS

Late one night on April 18, 1945, the prisoners were ordered by the Germans on to prepare for yet another march south that would take place in three days. But within the dismal confines of the camp, Lt. Colonel Clark and his men were operating their clandestine radio monitoring the BBC and Radio Luxembourg. They heard of a new Allied agreement broadcast on Radio Luxembourg. The agreement had been reached through the Swiss Protecting Power between the Allies and Germany. It forbid the transfer of Allied prisoners to Bavaria to Hitler's Alpine Redoubt and also prevented the Allies from moving German prisoners out of Europe. On April 22nd, the new Allied agreement was accepted, but the German administration in the camp had not been told.

On April 23rd, the Germans told the prisoners to line up at the gate.

"You'd better check," Clark said defiantly, "There's been a new deal, and we ain't going."

The Germans did check, and no prisoners were moved. Kriegies would stay at Moosburg until the bitter end.

Abominable conditions continued at Stalag VII-A, but they mattered less and less in the last days of April as the sight of American aircraft overhead and the sound of American artillery in the distance signaled that the end of their longest mission was near.



