

## Chapter 14 – ACT 2 - The War Goes On – The Long Road of a POW Begins [v5]

Bombing missions from Rivenhall continued without missing a beat. By the end of May a total of 36 missions had been flown with no men wounded or killed and no additional aircraft lost – a remarkable record (see Appendix C for the remaining declassified reports for the 397<sup>th</sup> bombardment group.)



Some of the airmen had flown their expected 25 missions and were ready for stateside R&R but for many they were about to be informed the Army Air Force Command increased the number to 35 and then to 50.

The Schuch and the Hofmann families and all of their friends would continue to search the newspapers for any word – any word or image at all!



**War Prisoners Issue Papers**

*From the Herald Tribune Bureau*

WASHINGTON, Aug. 10.—The American Red Cross has just received two "home front editions" of camp newspapers issued by American prisoners of war in two compounds of Stalag Luft 3d, the German camp for Allied airmen, it was announced today. The newspapers, called "Kriegie Times" and "The Circuit," are typewritten and illustrated by pen and ink drawings. Because only one copy could be made of the "home front" editions, intended for the men's families in the United States, the American Red Cross has reproduced the two newspapers in the August "Prisoners of War Bulletin," and has made extra copies, which will be distributed to Red Cross chapters throughout the nation, where the relatives may see the camp papers.

*"I received part of this paper through the Red Cross P.O.W. Bulletin"*



**CAPTIVE AMERICAN AIRMEN.** This photo, obtained through a neutral source, according to the German caption, purports to show U. S. fliers who are being held as Nazi prisoners. They bailed out when their bombers were shot down in a recent raid over Hitlerland. (International

*Some say one of these boys is my George. I have my doubts*

While they did their best to maintain a sense of humor with their hope, a new prayer entered the scrapbook –

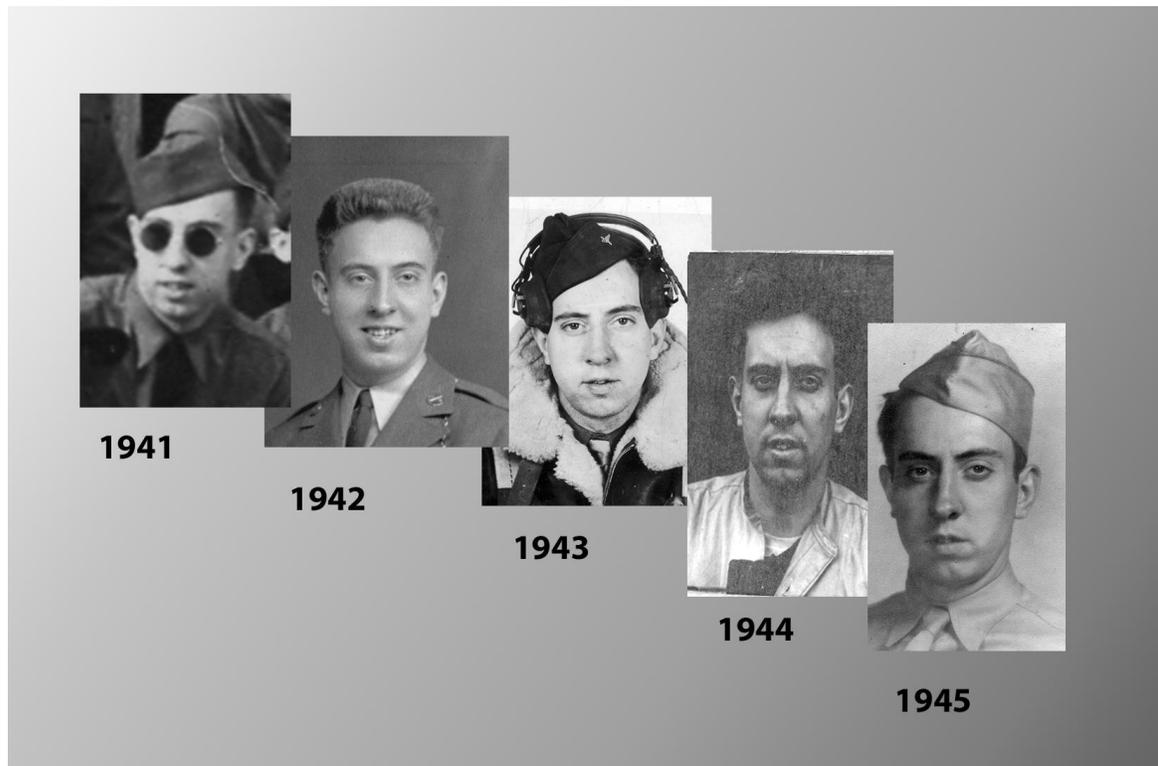


"Prisoner of War"

Y our dear one, you say, is a prisoner of war?  
It is hard for him and for you,  
But God has a key to all prison gates  
And God to all prisoners gets through.  
Through doors and past guards will the Lord God come,  
As long since He came to Saint Paul  
Bring courage and cheer, and even a song,  
To those back of each prison wall.  
By day and by night, He stands by their side,  
Unsleepingly guarding each one;  
His presence pervades where evil invades,  
As father He watches each son.  
Whatever condition any may face  
As for crimes, not theirs they atone,  
This great fact remains eternally true,  
God never leaves prisoners alone.  
For God has a key to all prison gates,  
This fact is most gloriously true.  
No gates or barbed wire can keep the Lord out,  
And God to all prisoners gets through.

For the next several chapters I will be using The Story of Stalag Luft III that I found archived at the United States Air Force Academy as a roadmap. I will complement this outstanding historical document with items my parents accumulated through this brutal period in their lives. Perhaps my efforts here will add some value to the narrative put together by the POW's themselves.

So what happened to this man along the way?



He had been to Hell and back.



# THE STORY OF STALAG LUFT III

"For you the war is over." That was the almost universal greeting to shot-down American airmen when they fell into the hands of the German enemy, a statement as far from the truth as any lie concocted by the Third Reich's propaganda

machine. The war was not over for the new POW; it just became a different war, a war not without its own brutal casualties.

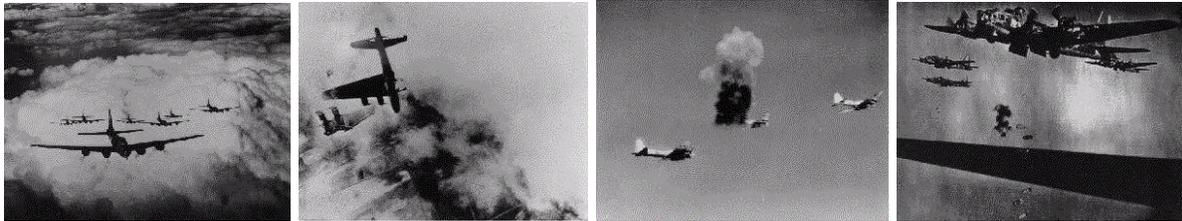
For the average World War II flier who ended up at Stalag Luft III -- the prison camp for downed airmen run by the Luftwaffe -- his last mission became the Longest Mission. Typically, his mission began before dawn at an airfield somewhere in England, North Africa, or Italy. It ended months or years later with the liberation of Stalag VIIA on April 29, 1945.

While at Stalag Luft III, his mission continued unabated, but not his role. He went from flier to prisoner of war in a matter of minutes. His new task was to contribute to the war effort as a *Kriegge*, from the German term for prisoner of war, *Kriegsgefangener*. His duty now was survival, communication, and escape. He no longer engaged his enemy in the air, but met him in the isolation of an interrogation cell at Dulag Luft or at another enemy installation. He met him behind the barbed wire at Stalag Luft III, on a forced-march in the dead of winter, or in the mare's nest of Stalag VIIA.



Statistics published after the war by the Army Air Forces tell a dramatic story about the air war against Germany. During the course of the war, 1,693,565 sorties were flown -- a sortie defined as one aircraft airborne on a mission against the enemy. Of these missions, 89% were deemed effective. Mission accomplished! Flying these missions were 32,263 combat aircraft. Fifty-five percent of these planes were lost in action. On the other hand 29,916 enemy aircraft were destroyed. On the human side, there were 94,565 American air combat casualties. Killed in action accounted for 30,099, with 13,660 wounded and evacuated. The remaining 51,106 were missing in action, POWs, evaders, and internees. Miracles of survival were numerous. Stalag Luft III held many fliers whose planes exploded in the air -- disintegrated -- yet one, two or more crew members survived. Some were

blasted unconscious into the sky, and came to on the ground, their open parachutes beside them. Others were literally dug out of the wreckage of their crashed airplanes -- horribly injured, yet survivors.



Here are some Airmen's recollections of being shot at and shot down.

**Foster Chapman** *"Well we got to the target and the flak was heavier and more accurate than it has ever been before. It was terrible. The sky was absolutely black and B-24s were going down all over, exploding, burning and just spinning. The sky around us was a mass of flames, black smoke and falling debris. I was in this little radio compartment with the door shut, so that I could concentrate on my work. The ship was rocking and pitching violently due to the flak and I could hear it pounding on the sides of the ship. I saw a B-24 going down so jumped up to try to get the number on it. Just as I left my stool, there was a terrific noise in my compartment that left me deaf for a few seconds, I turned around and right where my head would have been, had I been sitting down, was a five inch hole- in one side of the ship and out the other. If I hadn't stood up just a few seconds before that, I wouldn't be here now.*

*By this time the flak guns had our range perfectly and I saw huge holes blossoming all over the left wing. Finally I heard the call "BOMBS AWAY". Those were wonderful words, as I was riding right on top of the bomb load. It wasn't but a few seconds after "BOMBS AWAY" our ship gave a terrible lurch, shot straight up in the air and then fell off on the left wing, headed straight for the ground, right over the target. I had just sent the bombs away message back to headquarters when we went into the dive so I started right out of the compartment. You have to go out through a little door on your hands and knees. I had my chute on and, with the ship in a straight dive, I was trying to climb uphill. One of the waist guns tore loose from its mount and headed to the rear of the ship just missing Kozak, the tail gunner, who was standing by the escape hatch, then the ship started to spin, a long "flat" spin. Stuff- ammunition, radio tuning units, extra flak suites, headsets and everything was flying all over the ship. I had my helmet on and the strap buckled, it was ripped right off my head by the centrifugal force. Every one was thrown to the floor and banged up against the side of the ship and our headsets were torn loose from their connections so no one could hear directions for bailing out. There wasn't any time for directions, we were just waiting for the (warning) bell to ring, it seemed like an eternity, but it all happened in just a few seconds."*

**Ira Weinstein** *"In my plane, the battle was going on and raging at such a pace, I didn't even know that we were hit. All of a sudden my navigator gave me a yank and I turned*

*around and he was going out the nose hatch. So I bailed out. My parachute, I had a backpack on that day, my parachute caught on the bomb site. So the plane by that time was in a flat spin with great centrifugal force, but I pulled myself – I chinned myself -- back into the airplane, unhooked my parachute, and finally got out at about 2500 feet, so I had barely enough time to enjoy the parachute trip down when I was on the ground. ”*

**Buford Balay** *“They hit the ball turret with a 20mm which didn’t explode. It blew my ball turret gunner’s arm off. They had to get him out of the turret and pull his chute and toss him out of the aircraft. I turned around and saw these fighters coming at us and I told Pat, the top turret gunner, that these fighters about 6:30 high and he said “What are they?’ and I didn’t have a chance to answer because they had already opened up on him. I emptied my guns and noticed my interfone was pulled out of the socket. So I reached down and plugged it in. Just as I plugged it in, the pilot said ‘Bail out!’”*

**Roger Armstrong** *“One thing, out in the air, there was absolutely no sensation of falling. There was no reference point, no feeling of falling. Once I straightened out... I fell free because I knew we’d been at 27,000 and I had nausea pretty bad. One of the reasons I could do some the things [I did] was that there was absolutely no fear of bailing out.”*

**John Wranesh** – *“It seemed "forever" coming down in the chute, but in the last few hundred feet the ground seemed to be coming up at me and then there was the abrupt STOP!*

The high flying B-17s had the additional challenge of altitude – it was a long, long way down.

**John H. Chaffin** - *"How strange this is." I'm in a parachute, drifting downward at a thousand feet a minute toward German territory. My left boot came off when the parachute opened, my helmet, goggles and oxygen mask are gone. I can hear the sound of machine-gun fire fading away into the west.*

*"Well, damn, there is a P-47 [fighter]. - You guys are a few minutes too late."*

*Just a few short minutes ago I had been fighting a roaring inferno in the cockpit of our B-17r, "Fritz Blitz," and Broman pulled my arm and pointed down. Our communication system was not working, our oxygen system was feeding the fire and, although the plane was still flying, it was time to leave before it blew up...*

*"Think, now." I remember fastening my chute on my harness and tugging at it to be sure it was secure. I remember thrusting my feet through the nose hatch and falling - falling and pulling with both hands at the sides of the chute pack to be sure that one of them pulled the "D" ring. - And that is all...*

*"And now, here I am at twenty-four thousand feet minus a little. It is 1635 and I hope to hell that a German fighter pilot doesn't use me for target practice. I wonder what happened to the other guys. - These damned buckles are digging into my groin and hurt like hell."*

*The parachute harness has two large buckles which end up right against my groin - each side. The upward pull of the parachute riser lines forces the buckles, painfully, into my groin.*

*"OK, now, just take ahold of the harness straps and pull the buckles out away from your body. There that is much better. - What-thu-hell, now I'm swinging back and forth and it is getting to my stomach. That's odd. I've never been airsick before. OK, let go the buckles, raise your arms up over your head and pull on the risers. Good! That stopped the swinging..."*

*"Damn, I wish I hadn't lost my boot. My foot is about to freeze. Pull it up and rub it a little! Oh, hell, I've got to do something with those damned buckles again. Maybe this time I won't start swinging."*

*A pattern was established. Rub my foot, lift the buckles for a moment and then pull on the risers to stop swinging. This will continue for twenty-four minutes!*

*"Damn, but it is quiet. Not a sound. No sensation of falling. I can't see another parachute anywhere; no planes now. This is about as alone as I have ever been in my life. My life! What am I going to do...?"*

*"They have told us that we must try to escape if we are shot down. Try to get into the hands of the underground. How in the name of hell do I do that? Can't speak German. Don't know where I will be or which way to go..."*

*"I wonder if there will be soldiers waiting for me to hit the ground? What if there is no one? What do I do? Hide? What if I can get away and I do somehow get into the underground in Belgium or France? It will be months before Mama and Dad know that I am alive..."*

*"They will be told in a few days that I am missing in action, but they will have no way of knowing that I am alive and not seriously hurt. They are going to be so worried. Ruth will be worried for awhile but she is a college girl and shouldn't have any trouble finding some one else..."*

*"Gawddamn the luck anyway. Only three more missions. We should have gone to the rest home. Get off that, you dummy. Broman and I agreed that we wanted to keep flying..."*

*"What am I going to do. I guess I will try to escape. Hell, I don't even know how to go about giving myself up. I will have to find a place to hide."*

*The German countryside was beginning to come into sharper focus. I could see the groves of trees, the fields and finally I saw a little barn.*

*"Ah, there's a hiding place. Not good. They have told us that a barn is the worst place to*

*hide because it is the first place the Germans will look. But damn! I can't see any other place. That will have to be it. Looks like I am going to hit pretty close to it. I had better get ready to hit the ground. I'm going to hit right by that grove of trees."*

*Whoosh! Bam! Suddenly with a roar of wind in my ears, I am on the ground. My parachute caught in the pine trees at my side. The ground is soft sand but I have hurt my ankle - the one with the boot; not the bare one!*

*"Come on, now. Get that chute down. Get the Mae West off and hide them. You've got to hurry. There are a bunch of people coming down that road. Hurry! Hurry! Cover this stuff up with leaves; now run. The barn is there across the road, about two hundred yards from here. You once ran two hundred and twenty yards in just under twenty-three seconds, now run like hell for the barn. Never mind the bare foot nor the ankle. - Gawd, it hurts..."*



As survivors reached the ground, captivity began for most. Those who did not survive were frequently buried at the crash site. This transcription from a German newsreel as a member of the 96th Bomb Group has been laid to rest depicts initial captivity.

[German airman] "Is it painful?"

[American airman] "No, it's not painful."

[2nd American airman] "Gibbons"

[German airman, check with another] "Gibbons. Are you wounded?"

[2nd American airman] "Twisted ankle."

[German airman] "Twisted ankle, but that's all? You can walk, after all?"

[2nd American airman] "Yes."

A downed airman describes the moment.

**John Wranesh** - *I had landed in a kohlrabi (turnip) patch and was immediately captured by the overseer of the German farm. I was an intruder entering his territory from the sky above, didn't speak the language, and just how far could I run in flying boots dragging a parachute? He motioned for me to come forward which I did and then and there became a "Kriegie." This is the short term for the German word kriegsgefangener*

*meaning war prisoner. Americans are always finding nicknames and shortened versions of words.*

*Five of our crew landed in what we estimated to be a seven-mile radius. The navigator and top turret gunner bailed out immediately as we were hit and were not assembled with us. The five of us; pilot, bombardier, tail gunner, ball gunner (Shef) and myself were assembled by the local police and trucked to Brunswick, Germany. It was after dark and we were herded into an air raid shelter. The British were doing their nightly bombing performance - it was quite an experience, being bombed and in an air raid shelter with Germans who would have executed us right away had we not had police and German guard protection.*

*Following the air raid, Brunswick was pretty much in flames and the guards were very upset to say the least; however we were taken by a small truck to a German Air Cadet Center to spend the rest of the night. In the morning we were placed on a train under guard and transported to the interrogation center at Oberusel where we were placed in solitary confinement for several days.*

*Following interrogation we were transported to the nearby Dulag Luft #1 at Wetzlar where we were provided minimal personal care items and some different clothes like shoes provided by the International Red Cross Service and limited personal care items.”*

Airmen such as these were fortunate enough to have fallen into the hands of the Luftwaffe. Their safe arrival at an air prisoner of war camp was virtually assured. It was far different for others. The airmen prisoners were confined to four principal camps, known as Stalag Lufts. Officer prisoners were taken to Stalag Luft I at Barth on the Baltic Sea and Stalag Luft III at Sagan southeast of Berlin. Noncommissioned officers were imprisoned at Stalag Luft VI at Heydekrug on the border of East Prussia and Lithuania and Stalag Luft IV at Kiefhiede in East Prussia.

There were countless instances of men surviving the catastrophic destruction of their aircraft high in the sky. The accounts of explosion and fire which left men unconscious in the air only to have them land safely by parachute were so common that in Stalag Luft III such survivors had difficulty finding an audience for the story.

In the last year of the war the German leadership actually encouraged enraged civilians, who had captured Allied airmen who were destroying their cities and killing their women and children, to wreak their vengeance on them indiscriminately. How many men died this way is known only to God. Fortunately, and to their credit,

German military personnel aggressively defended shot-down airmen from such outrages.

The journey from capture to internment was horrendous. Most captured airmen were transported in the French "Forty and Eight" boxcars - a discomfort they would revisit several times during the war, sometimes under better circumstances but sometimes under much worse.

Armies became reliant upon railroads for supplies and men and supplies flowed to the occupied and front lines in railroad cars. A familiar sight to the American military was the French "forty and eight" railroad cars, which had been in service since WWI. These cars received their names because they could carry 40 men or eight horses, as was clearly painted on each boxcar.

During World War II, the little-changed "forty and eight" boxcars still transported supplies and troops to the front, but they also returned to Germany with new cargoes. Many Allied prisoners of war rode to German POW camps in these boxcars -- sometimes with as many as 90 men forced into each boxcar. Millions of Holocaust victims were herded into similar boxcars on their way to concentration camps. Boxcars such as the one in this photo carried 168 Allied POWs from Paris to the Buchenwald concentration camp in August 1944. Many POWs endured harsh conditions during their trips to POW camps, which sometimes included mistaken attacks from Allied aircraft.



Constructed in France in 1943, this "forty and eight" railroad car operated in occupied France during WWII, and it most likely transported human cargoes from France to Germany. Withdrawn from service in the 1980s, the French Railroad Company (SNCF) personnel painstakingly restored it to a near-original condition in honor of those American POWs transferred by "forty and eights." Assisted by the French military, the U.S. Air Force airlifted the 13-ton railcar from Istres Air Base, France, to the Air Force museum in Dayton Ohio in late July 2001.

The cars were stubby, only 20.5 feet long and 8.5 feet wide. Although memories of riding in them were not always pleasant, the cars nonetheless gave their name to a fraternity formed within the American Legion — La Société des Quarante Hommes et Huit Chevaux — in 1920. These infamous boxcars were used in WW I as well as during WW II to transport troops to and from the front. In 1945, many American troops (including liberated POWs) were transported from Germany to France for return to the States in a rough-riding 40 and 8. Veterans' memories of travel in the rickety, unheated cars are pretty vivid; some men even resorted to building fires inside them to keep warm on the long, slow trips. Here is one such story:

*Soldiers often boarded these cars and were given a ration of canned goods for their trip to various locations throughout Europe. Private John J. Fitzmaurice, a radar specialist from St. Louis, was stationed in Germany during the conflict and rode in a 40/8 car to La Havre France in the spring of 1945 after liberation.*

*He commented in a letter home to his parents that he did not know how one could fit forty men in one of the cars, "there were 16 of us and the boxcar was about twice as big as the bathroom at home...just enough room for everyone to get on the floor at night." He described the engine as "something from the Civil War." He went further to say "the train went so slow we were getting off and jumping from one car to other while it was in route...We were happy all the way...it was the nearest thing to home we'd ever been in 21 months."*

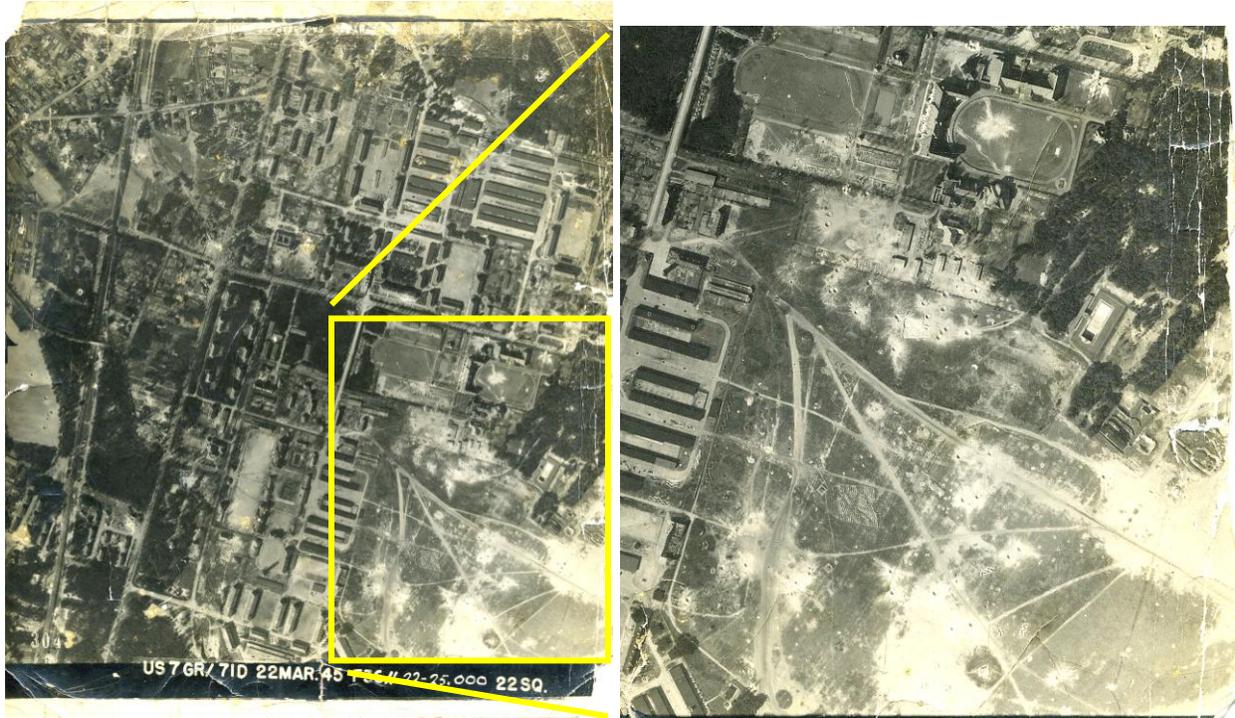
*He was closer to home than he thought - the war ended while he was aboard the train and he was back in St. Louis by October of 1945.*

George's initial journey within days of his capture on May 8, 1944, from St. Vaast d'Equiqueville, France, to his first stop Wetzlar, Germany, began with being paraded through local towns before he was loaded onto a "forty and eight" with God knows how many other captives.



They were locked in the overcrowded, dark, barely ventilated box that smelled of horses and prior human cargo. During the 322 mile multi-stop ride to nowhere there was no food, water and probably few if any bathroom breaks. One end of the boxcar was the designated toilet. It must have seemed endless and most likely took more than a day.





After the bombing the operations were moved 25 miles north to Oberursel-Wetzlar. That is where George first set foot when he stepped out of the “forty and eight”, but not until he and other prisoners were paraded around Frankfurt for two hours in front of cursing, spitting and hostile German civilians.

"Durchgangslager der Luftwaffe" or "Transit Camp of the Luftwaffe" was called Dulag Luft by the POWs. By May of 1944 it was located at Oberursel (13 km north-west of Frankfurt-am-Main with a population of about 20,000) and was recognized as the greatest interrogation center in all of Europe. Nearly all captured Allied airmen were sent there to be interrogated before being assigned to a permanent prison camp. While at Dulag Luft - Oberursel the prisoners were kept in solitary confinement. The average stay in solitary was one or two weeks. Some were kept in excess of 25 days!! According to the Geneva convention a prisoner could not be kept in solitary confinement for interrogation purposes for more than 28 days.

James Richard Williams, Jr. son remembers his father's descriptions all too well.

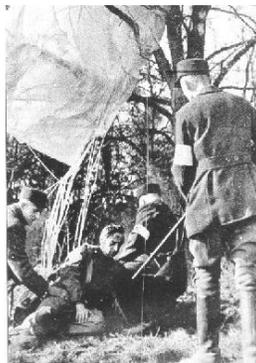
*“We can still see him shaking his head and saying how horrible solitary confinement was. He was locked all alone in a dark cell with nothing to do, see, read or listen to for 24 hours a day, day after day !!”*



**Solitary confinement cell at Dulag Luft**



With the large Bomber crews they would typically pick a few of the crew to hold longer and press for information and rapidly process the other crew members through and on to a permanent camp. There each new prisoner, while still trying to recover from the recent trauma of his shoot-down and capture, was skillfully interrogated for military information of value to the Germans. The German interrogators claimed that they regularly obtained the names of unit commanders, information on new tactics and new weapons, and order of battle from naive or careless U.S. airmen, without resort to torture. New prisoners were kept in solitary confinement while under interrogation and then moved into a collecting camp. After a week or ten days, they were sent in groups to a permanent camp such as Stalag Luft III for officers or Stalag VIB for enlisted men. A nearby hospital employing captured doctors and medical corpsmen received and cared for wounded prisoners.



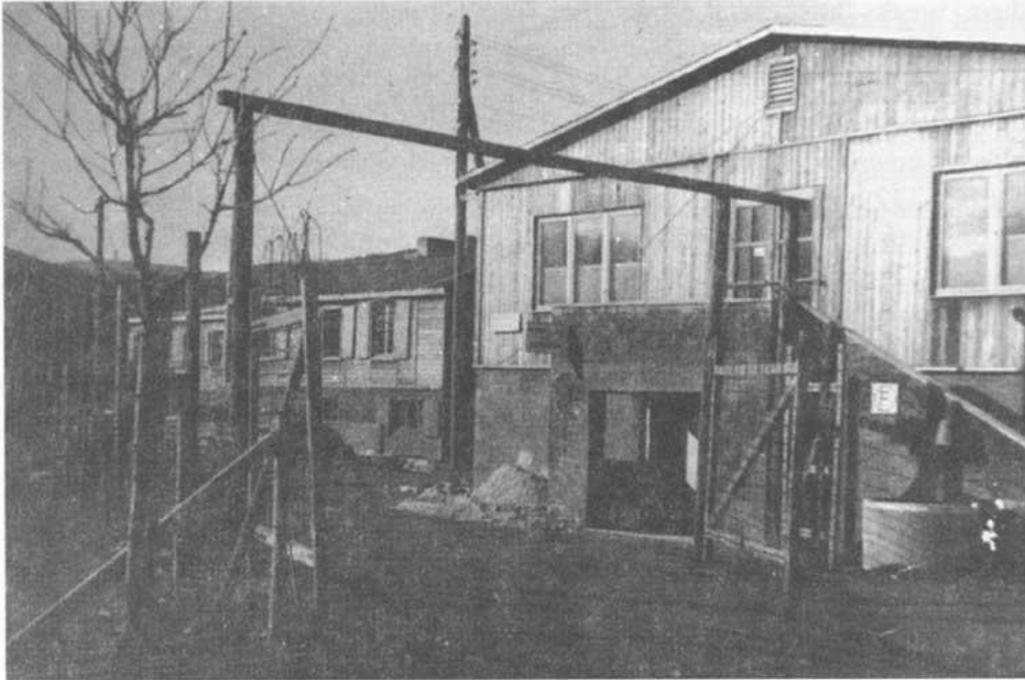


These two images from A.P. Clark's scrapbook showing the Dulag Luft Luftwaffe intelligence interrogation center to which all newly captured allied POWs were brought after capture.



New arrivals are marched into camp





**THROUGH THESE PORTALS . . .**

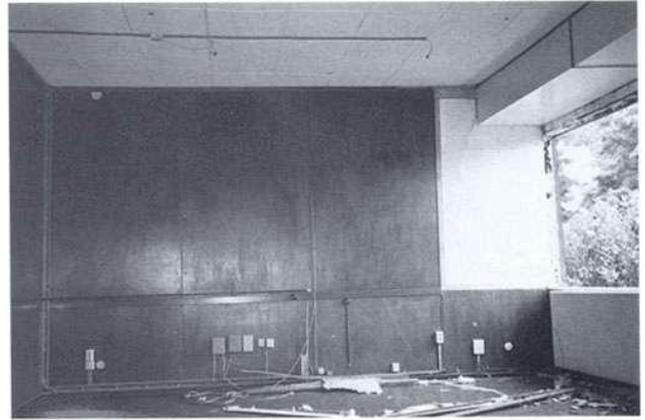
Some of the finest fighter and bomber crews of the Allied forces passed through this gateway to the cooler at the interrogation center based at Oberursel.



**ANXIOUS POWS ARRIVE AT THE INTERROGATION CENTER**

The future looks bleak for these American flyers who have been captured and are arriving at the Interrogation Center at Oberursel. Scharff took this photo from his office window.

Interrogation center for captured Allied airmen, Dulag Luft, Wetzlar. (U.S. National Archives)



Left: The main corridor and right Room 47 where prisoners were interrogated. The windows have been smashed by vandals.

### **The Interrogation Process –**

Excerpts from the book "Kriegie" by Kenneth W. Simmons, published 1960.

"At Dulag Luft each prisoner was studied by several psychologists in order to learn his likes, dislikes, habits and powers of resistance. The method of procedure was then determined, and the machinery was set into operation to destroy his mental resistance in the shortest possible time. If the prisoner showed signs of fright or appeared

nervous, he was threatened with all kinds of torture, some of which were carried out, and he was handled in a rough manner. Others were bribed by luxuries. They were traded clean clothes, good living quarters, food and cigarettes for answers to certain questions. Those who could neither be swayed nor bribed were treated with respect and handled with care in the interrogator's office, but were made to suffer long miserable hours of solitary confinement in the prison cells.

Nothing was overlooked by the German interrogators. They studied the results of each interview, and devised new methods to gain the desired information. Allied Air Corps Intelligence started a counter attack against Dulag Luft by training every flier in its command on how to act as a prisoner of war. Every method used to gain information from prisoners was illustrated with films and lectures. (see our Documents page for examples) Interviews between prisoners and their interrogators were clearly demonstrated to bring out the tactics of the German interrogators. Name, rank and serial number became the byword of the counterattack. Men were drilled and trained by Intelligence until they knew exactly what to expect and what to do. Patriotism and loyalty were stressed, and American airmen were shown the results of information the Germans had secured from prisoners at Dulag.



Hanns Scharff was primarily an American 8th and 9th Air Force Fighter pilot interrogator. He was considered the best of the interrogators at Dulag Luft. He gained the reputation of magically getting all the answers he needed from the prisoners of war, often with the prisoners never realizing that their words, small talk or otherwise, were important pieces of the mosaic. It is said he always treated his prisoners with respect and dignity and by using psychic not physical techniques, he was able to make them drop their guard and converse with him even though they were conditioned to remain silent. One POW commented that "Hanns could probably get a confession of infidelity from a nun." Hanns personally stepped in to search for information that saved the lives of six US POWs when the SS wanted to execute them. Many acts of kindness by Scharff to sick and dying American POWs are documented. He would regularly visit some of the more seriously ill POWs and arrange to make their accommodations more humane. At one time the Luftwaffe was investigating him. After the war, he was invited by the USAF to make speeches about his methods to military audiences in the US and he eventually moved to the United States. General Jimmy Doolittle was one of the first to extend the hand of friendship to Hanns after the war, inviting him to a luncheon where they compared notes. Later he was invited to the home of Col. Hub Zemke who thereafter would send Hanns what he called a "Red Cross Parcel" every Christmas. And 38 years after he was Hanns "guest" at Dulag Luft - Oberursel, Col. Francis "Gabby" Gabreski was a guest of honor at Hanns 75th birthday party. In the United States Scharff worked as a

mosaic artist. His works are on display in Cinderella's castle at Disney World.

Of course we must remember that Hanns was the exception at Dulag Luft and there were other interrogators that were nothing at all like Hanns, whose treatment of the prisoners was more of a physical and threatening nature.

There is an excellent book written about Hanns called "The Interrogator" by Raymond F. Toliver.



Major Waldschmidt - Bomber Crew Interrogator

A professor of Indiology at Gottingen University before the war, he became one of the best Bomber Crew interrogators at Oberursel.



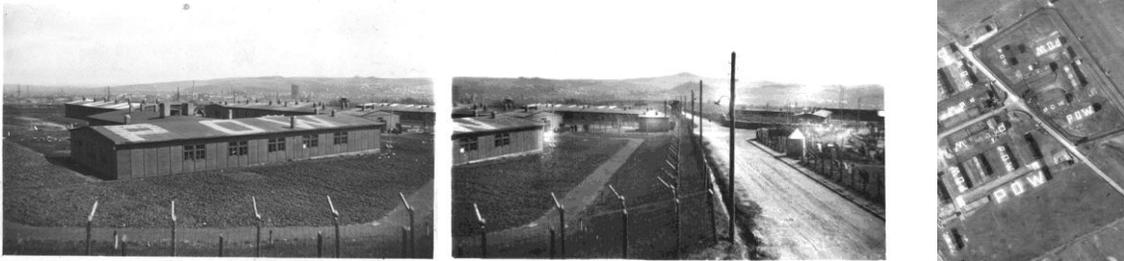
2nd Lt. Ulrich Haussmann - Bomber Crew Interrogator

My internet friend, Ed Kamarainen (an ex-POW from Luft IV and survivor of "The Black March" who was shot down the same day as my Dad, while bombing the same target) sent me his Seattle ex-POW chapter book in which the POWs recount their stories. In reading this I found this fascinating story concerning Lt. Haussmann written by Donald E. Hillman.

Lt. Col. Hillman was shot down in October 1944 and sent to Dulag Luft - Oberursel for interrogation. Lt. Haussmann, although normally a bomber crew interrogator, was his interrogator. Hillman spent the full 28 days there being interrogated once or twice a day by Lt. Haussmann. They became well acquainted, if not friendly during his stay. Haussmann would take Hillman to the radio communications center occasionally so he could listen to the progress of the air battles in an effort to loosen him up and also to impress him with the extent of their intelligence. Haussmann excitedly told Hillman, "We got Zemke" when the famous fighter pilot Col. Hub Zemke (and Senior Allied Officer at Stalag Luft I), was shot down and arrived at Oberursel. Hillman was later sent to Stalag Luft III in Sagan.

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The camp at Dulag Luft - Oberursel was built on level ground. There were large white rocks that covered the length of the front lawn forming the words "Prisoner of War Camp". The same identification was painted in white letters across the roof of nearly every building. Dulag Luft was of great importance to the Germans and they knew the Allies would never bomb it as long as it could be identified from the air.



The camp was estimated to cover about 500 acres, The boundaries of the camp were formed by two parallel fences ten feet apart and they stood 12 feet tall, with trenches and barbed wire entangled between them. Watch towers were spaced around the camp at one hundred yard intervals. Trained dogs prowled the outer boundaries and heavily armed pill boxes were scattered beyond the barbed wire."

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As revealed in the following declassified intelligence report written near the end of the war, the interrogation camp at Dulag Luft was indeed no picnic. It describes in detail what George and crewmember Marion Rose walked into when they stepped off the "forty-and-eight".

AMERICAN PRISONERS OF WAR IN GERMANY  
Prepared by MILITARY INTELLIGENCE SERVICE, WAR DEPARTMENT 1 November 1945

TRANSIT CAMP, SECTION OF DULAG LUFT

LOCATION

On 10 Sept. 1943 the Dulag Luft transit camp, where PW who had been interrogated awaited shipment to permanent stalags, was moved from Oberursel to Frankfurt-on-Main. Here it was situated in the Palm Gardens only 1635 yards northwest of the main railroad station - a location which was a target area and therefore endangered the lives of PW.

On 15 Nov. 1943 the Swiss stated, "This visit (to the camp) leaves a bad impression because of the new situation of the Dulag, so exposed to attacks from the air, which is not in conformity with Article 9 of the (Geneva) Convention."

Thus the following Swiss announcement in the spring of 1944 came as no surprise: "Dulag Luft, Wetzlar, is succeeding Dulag Luft, Frankfurt, which was destroyed in course of one of the latest (24 March) air raids on Frankfurt. The camp is situated on a slightly elevated position approximately 3 to 4 kilometers west north west from Wetzlar, a town some 50 kilometers north of Frankfurt-on-Main and is a former German army camp (Flak troops)."

STRENGTH

During the first 9 months of 1943, 1000 PW a month passed through the transit camp. This increased to 1500 a month, half British and half American, in the last 3 months of the year. Statistics for Oct. 1944 follow:

<u>Incoming Personnel Total</u> .....	1963
Daily Average.....	63
Total American.....	1312
Officers.....	155
NCOs.....	739
Total British.....	651
Officers.....	155
NCOs.....	496

Camp strength fluctuated from day to day. On the Swiss visit of 10 Nov. 1944 it was 311; on 13 March 1945 it was 825. Except for the permanent staff of 30, PW seldom stayed more than 8 days.

DESCRIPTION

During May & June 1944, inmates lived in 18 tents pitched on the eastern side of the camp area. On 13 July 1944, they moved to the newly-constructed buildings: 5 barracks and one large bungalow which held the messes and the store rooms. Capacity of the camp was 784, with tents available in case of a sudden influx. Two of the sleeping barracks were reserved for officers, 2 for NCO's, and the remaining one accommodated the permanent camp staff, sick rooms and medical inspection room. The camp staff, the officers and the enlisted men ate separately.

Each room in the barracks held 6 to 8 triple-decker bunks - 18 to 24 men. Each bed had a mattress filled with wood shavings and one pillow. All barracks had special wash rooms with built-in basins and running cold water.

Unoccupied space within the barbed wire was somewhat limited after the erection of the last 2 barracks and the laying out of vegetable gardens cultivated for and by the PW. The area gave a neat appearance, however, with tidy paths and well-tended lawns.

U.S. PERSONNEL

Senior Allied Officer at Wetzlar was Colonel Charles W. Stark who enjoyed exceptionally friendly terms with the Germans and drew many concessions from them. Members of his staff were:

1st Lt. Gerald G. Gille.....Adjutant      2nd Lt. Arthur C. Jaros.....Adjutant  
2nd Lt. Herbert Schubert.....Mess Officer

In addition, the staff comprised:

1 Chaplain	5 Kitchen orderlies	4 Mess orderlies
5 Store orderlies	4 Barracks chiefs	3 Medical orderlies
4 Barracks orderlies	1 Gardner	1 Carpenter

A previous Senior American Officer was 1st Lt. John G. Winant.

## GERMAN PERSONNEL

The housekeeping organization consisted of:

Oberstleutnant Becker	:Commandant	Major Riess	: Camp Officer
Major Salzer	:Camp Officer	Major Heydon	: Camp Officer
Dr. Thomai	:Medical Officer	Dr. Wenger	: Medical Officer
Hauptmann Schmid	:Security Officer		

In Nov. 1944 there was reported the existence at the camp of an interrogation center. According to Col. Stark; treatment was good and correct in every way. Some PW arriving from Oberursel were in solitary and asked purely "political" questions for 2 or 3 days. Then they were admitted to the transit camp. Chief of this interrogation section was Major Ernst Dornseifer.

## TREATMENT

Treatment was better here than at any other American PW camp in Germany. German & American staffs seemed to cooperate with each other, resulting in favorable living conditions to both parties. The Senior Allied Officer operated Wetzlar as a rest camp where PW suffering from the harsh treatment at Oberursel might regain their strength and morale before traveling to permanent camps. As a result neither Germans nor Americans provoked any untoward incidents.

## FOOD

No food shortage existed at Wetzlar, even though the Germans repeatedly cut their ration until the daily issue per man was officially announced in March 1945 as:

Meat	35grams	Potatoes	320grams	Margarine	31grams
Butter	25grams	Sugar	25grams	Bread	75grams
Salt	20grams	Coffee (ersatz)	5grams		

For three days:

Barley	10grams	Millet	21grams	Hulsenfruchte	63grams
Cheese	14grams	White cheese	14grams		

The difference between this sub-sustenance diet and the good meals actually eaten by PW was made up by Red Cross food. One parcel per PW was drawn each week and 90% of all Red Cross food was given to the kitchen to improve German rations. Usually the stock on hand consisted of 4 month's supply. Even in Sept. 1944 when the order was given to cut food reserves to a very minimum, Wetzlar authorities allowed PW to keep 4 weeks' supply on hand. In March 1945, anticipating a possible evacuation from Wetzlar to the interior of the the Reich, the SAO authorized the issue of 2 Red Cross food parcels per man per week, both to strengthen PW for the march to come and to prevent the loss of food which would be abandoned in the event of a sudden move.

The kitchen - staffed by Americans - was well equipped with 2 large cooking ranges, 3 boilers, a dishwashing room, a potato-peeling room, a tin-opening room and an adjacent storeroom.

## HEALTH

The sick bays were able to accommodate 40 men in beds, 2 of which were in a separate room reserved for contagious diseases. The medical inspection room was described as adequate and all necessary medicines and instruments were made available either from Red Cross sources or - to a lesser extent - from the Germans. Good medical treatment was received from the German staff doctor who cooperated first with Lt. Anthony S. Barling, RAMC, and then with Capt. Peter Griffin during their brief stays in camp.

Each man received a hot shower upon his entrance to the compound and was subsequently permitted to take one each week. Although the barracks washroom taps ran only cold water, hot water could usually be drawn elsewhere some hours during the day. A 10-seat outdoor latrine was supplemented by satisfactory toilets of the modern flush type.

Although many men arriving from Oberursel were wounded and exhausted, the general state of health was considered good.

## CLOTHING

Large numbers of PW arrived without outer uniforms, and sometimes without underclothing or shoes. Each new arrival was equipped with at least the following articles - all of which were supplied not by the Germans but by the Red Cross:

1 shirt	1 pr. socks	1 blouse
1 pr. drawers	1 necktie	1 pr. shoes
1 undershirt	1 pr. trousers	1 set toilet articles.

Initially, the shortage of American stocks necessitated the drawing of British clothing. Later, however, most of the clothing issued was of American origin, and eventually it was possible to keep adequate stocks of British and American items separately. In March 1945 it was no longer possible to provide PW with neatly packed "captive cases" a sort of suitcase containing the articles listed above, for the supply was exhausted.

#### WORK

Since air force personnel consisted solely of commissioned and non-commissioned officers, no work beyond some of their own housekeeping chores were required of them.

#### PAY

PW received no pay, but when the camp opened in the summer of 1944, the finance committee of Stalag Luft 3, Sagan, sent the permanent staff a fund of over 4000 reichmarks.

#### MAIL

Transients were allowed to send their first letter or a postcard form informing next-of-kin of their status and address, but received no incoming mail. The permanent staff drew the usual allotment of letter forms and received incoming mail as well. Some air mail from the United States was received within three weeks. Average time for both air mail and surface mail was four months. As with all Luftwaffe camps, letters were censored at Sagan.

#### MORALE

The Senior Allied Officer agreed with statements of the Swiss Delegates and German camp authorities that Wetzlar was an excellent camp and that "such favorable conditions are hardly to be found elsewhere in Germany." Morale of men leaving Oberursel was usually at its lowest ebb, and it is small wonder after receiving food, clothing and mingling in comparative freedom with their fellow Americans, that their spirits soared back to a level approaching normality. Most of them left Wetzlar prepared to face the difficulties of their new lives as PW.

#### WELFARE

The Protecting Power visited Wetzlar in May, July, November 1944 and March 1945 - each time forwarding the complaints of the Senior Allied Officer and making a complete report on camp conditions.

The Red Cross supplied PW with practically all their food, clothing and medical supplies but made no visit until Jan. 1945, when they wrote a report of their inspection.

From the YMCA, the camp received most of its library, which eventually totaled 1500 books, and equipment for indoor games and outdoor sports.

#### RELIGION

For some months the only religious activity was the regular Sunday service conducted by Warrent Officer Hooton, RAF, a Methodist. Early in 1945 Captain Daniel McGowan, a Catholic priest, conducted both Catholic and Protestant services every Sunday.

#### RECREATION

New arrivals were usually in such condition as not to want strenuous exercise. Games, therefore, were as a rule limited to milder sports such as deck tennis. Once a week some PW were permitted walks outside the camp. The most popular indoor pastimes were reading, playing cards, discussing the new experience of being a PW and playing some of the table games provided by the YMCA.



## CAN YOU TAKE IT?

The following anonymous poem was found on the wall of a solitary confinement cell at Dulag Luft -

It's easy to be nice boys  
When everything's O. K.  
It's easy to be cheerful,  
When you're having things your way.  
But can you hold your head up  
And take it on the chin.  
When your heart is breaking  
And you feel like giving in?

It was easy back in England,  
Among the friends and folks  
But now you miss the friendly hand,  
The joys, and songs, and jokes.  
The road ahead is stormy.  
And unless you're strong in mind,  
You'll find it isn't long before  
You're dragging far behind.

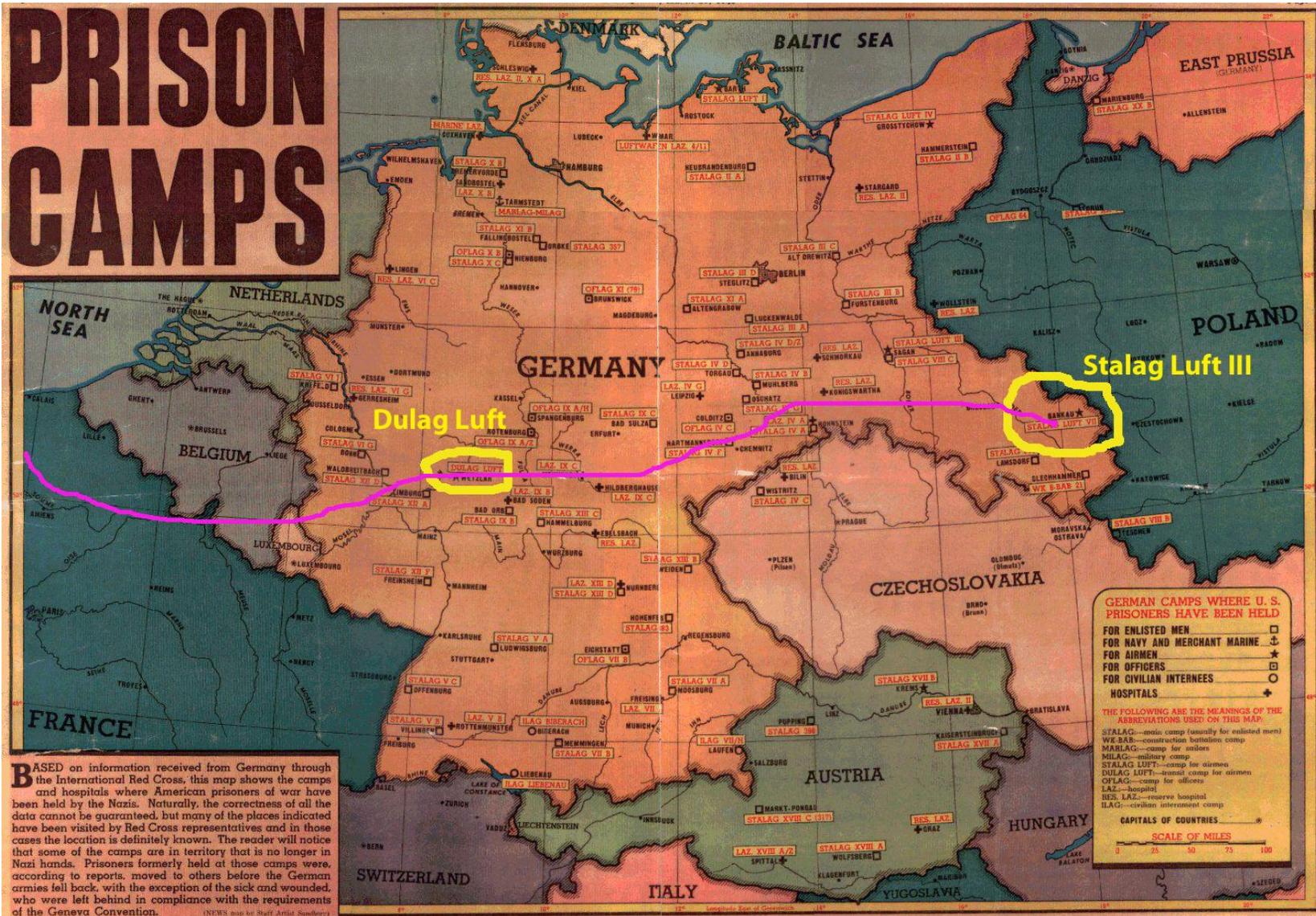
You've got to climb the hill, boys;  
It's no use turning back.  
There's only one way home, boys,  
And it's off the beaten track.  
Remember you're American,  
And when you reach the crest,  
You'll see a valley cool and green,  
Our country at its best.  
You know there is a saying  
That sunshine follows rain,  
And sure enough you'll realize  
That joy will follow pain.  
Let courage be your password,  
Make fortitude your guide;  
And then instead of grousing,  
Just remember those who died.

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# STALAG LUFT III



George's journey from the Dulag Luft transit camp to Stalag Luft III would involve another 320 mile boxcar ride, this time across Nazi Germany to what is now Sagan, Poland.









Once again in the “forty and eight”, it was dark, it was cramped ... and it was heading further away from home.

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