

Chapter 18 – ACT 5 - Stalag XIII-D, Nuremberg-Langwasser [v3]

A brief history of Nuremberg POW camps

For the imprisonment of captive enemy enlisted men, a net of "Stalags", an military abbreviation for "(Mannschafts-)Stammlager" (regularly allocated POW camps for enlisted men) spread over the territory of the Reich, counted by Roman numbers according to the "Wehrkreis" (martial district) they were situated in and additionally differentiated by capital letters if there was more than one camp within the district.

According to the Geneva Convention and the Warfare Ordinance of The Hague, captive officers had to be treated in different ways - as long as their country had signed these treaties. Hence there was another category of German POW camps, the "Oflags", i.e. "Offizierslager" (POW camps for officers), for logistical reasons often attached to a "Stalag," but with its own guarding personnel and administration.

The archival sources for the life in these camps are scarce. Many records have been destroyed during or immediately after the war or confiscated by the Allies. This fact aggravates research and applies also to the situation in Nuremberg. The only coherent description of the development of the local "Stalag," for which the installations of the "Reichsparteitagsgelaende" (Nazi party rally grounds) were utilized, has been written in 1949 by the retired colonel Pellet, last commanding officer of "Stalag XIII D Nuremberg-Langwasser" (the latter is a creek used for the denomination of the then undeveloped area, today of the suburb covering large parts of the rally grounds). Of course the tendency of Pellet's military memoirs is far from being self-critical, at least the dates and figures he gives can claim a certain reliability.

Immediately after the German aggression against Poland in September 1939, the grounds of the former "SA-Lager" (Nazi Stormtroopers' camp) at Langwasser were used by Wehrmacht as prisoners' camps, at first as "Ilag" (Internierungslager, "camp of internment) for enemy civilians, but in the very month being converted into a "Stalag."

Until its dissolution in August 1940, the number of inmates grew enormously to a peak of approx. 150,000 housed in barracks with a maximum capacity of 200 men. All the nationalities of the invaded countries were held captive here: Poles, Dutchmen, Belgians and French, but obviously no British soldiers, who as well as later on the GIs were concentrated in other camps, mostly in the eastern part of the Reich. They came to Nuremberg only at the end of WWII when the eastern "Stalags" were evacuated before the approaching Red Army.

Right from the beginning the captive soldiers' working power was made available to the German war economy. Particularly the Western European inmates, skilled in trades useful to the industry were divided into "Arbeitskommandos" (work details) and 'lent' to the companies by the "Wehrmacht." Others had to work as farm hands in the rural areas of the martial district.

The dissolution of the "Stalag" Nuremberg-Langwasser in August 1940 took place for reasons of creating smaller entities easier to control and dislocated in remote areas of the "Wehrkreis". The result were 3 new "Stalags:"

- ♦ Stalag XIII A Hohenfels, military training area (Upper Palatine), moved to Sulzbach (Upper Palatine) in November 1940
- ♦ Stalag XIII B Weiden (Upper Palatine)
- ♦ Stalag XIII C Hammelburg (Lower Franconia)

After the camp area had been cleared of enlisted men - of course the numerous work details remained with the armament industry in the city, but were housed in camps owned by the respective companies - two "Oflags" (XIII A and XIII B) were established there. Their inmates were in their majority French and Serbian officers.

The German aggression against the Soviet Union changed the situation of POWs in German detention dramatically. Millions of soldiers of the Red Army became captive and after the Germans decided on making use of their working power for the German industry, the remnants of the wave of lethal diseases and starvation in fall and winter 1941 were shipped to the Reich.

The former Stormtroopers' camp on party rally grounds gained importance in this process by being used as "Dulag" ("Durchgangslager", transit camp) for Nuremberg being a railroad hub of great importance to the logistics of this undertaking. Also Soviet soldiers, enlisted men and officers, had to stay in Nuremberg assigned to work here - the USSR had not signed the Geneva Convention - but not before April 1943 an official "Stalag" had been reestablished here: "Stalag XIII D." The "Oflags" were moved temporarily to Hammelburg training area, but obviously were relocated as "Oflag 73" until the middle of the following year.

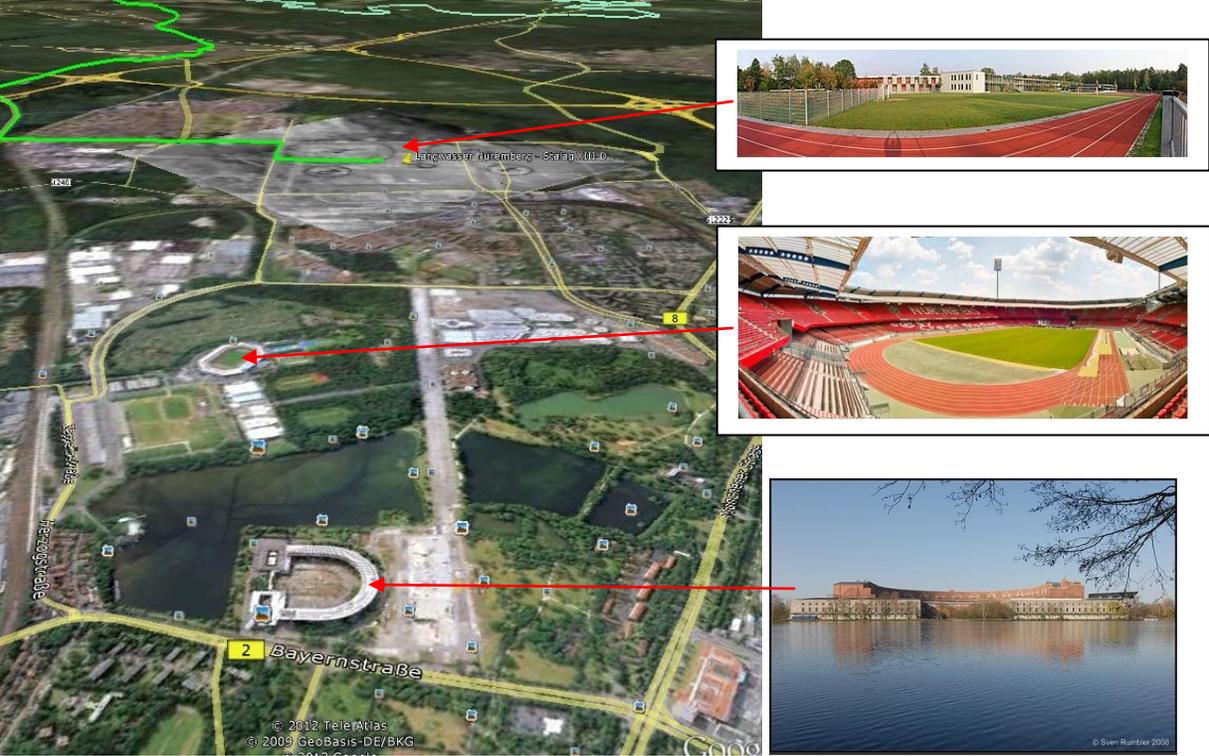
In his report colonel Pellet wrote that in August 1943 "Stalag XIII D" had been damaged heavily by an allied air raid. 2/3 of the wooden barracks burned down but only 2 Soviet soldiers were the casualties of this attack. The frequency of the bombings of Nuremberg, the density of the population within the barbed wire fences with, at the same time, merely symbolic sheltering facilities ("Splitterschutzgraeben", protective trenches, covered by a ceiling of wooden beams and a layer of soil) explain the precautions displayed in the surveillance photo (see below). Though Pellet reports no other attack against the camp, many POWs fell victim to the aerial warfare against Nuremberg during their working duty or other assignments in the city area, most of them Soviets, but also US-soldiers: During the raid of April 5, 1945 performed by US Air Force, a column of American officers at the periphery of the city was hit with 29 men killed.

When the allied forces closed in for the German borders from East and West in late 1944, "Stalag XIII D" and "Oflag 73" became the destination of the increasingly chaotic evacuation transports from other German POW camps. Entire camps moved in, e.g. inmates and staff of the "Luftwaffenlager" (air force POW camp) III Sagan in Silesia with approx. 6,000 US and British crew members.



The NAZI documentation center in Nuremberg featured a map that showed Hitler's Party Rally Grounds. Beige colored areas were less developed portions of the grounds. Stalag XIII-D was at the very top of the map.

This is a satellite view of the area today looking to the southeast.



Conditions at Stalag XIII-D, where POWs stayed for up to three months, were deplorable.

The barracks, originally built to house delegates to the Nazi party gatherings had recently been inhabited by Italian POWs, who left them filthy. There was no room to exercise, no supplies, nothing to eat out of, and practically nothing to eat, in as much as no Red Cross food parcels were available upon the American's arrival. There was no heat and ventilation in the buildings was poor.

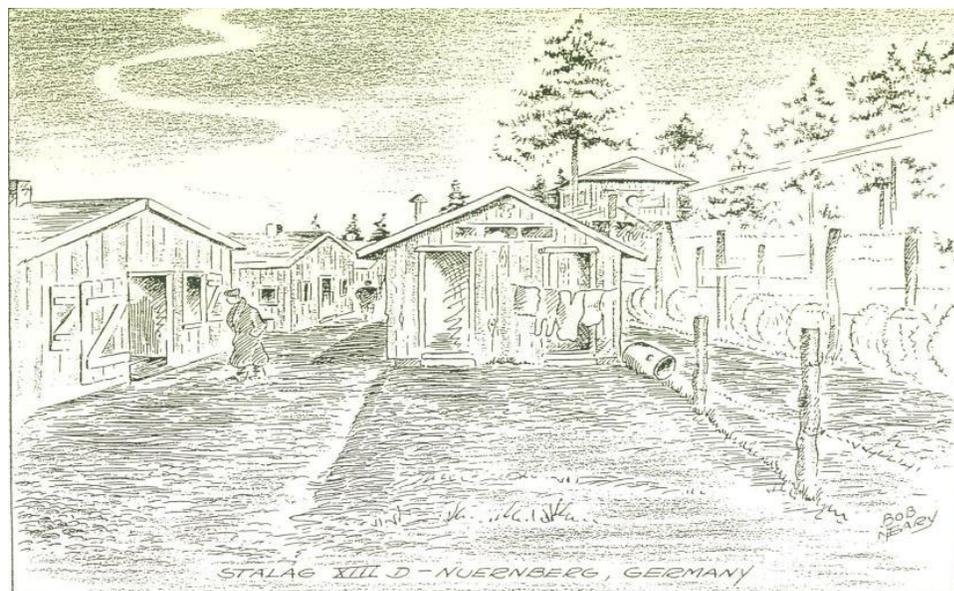


The German rations consisted of 300 grams of bread, 250 grams of potatoes, some dehydrated vegetables and a little margarine. After the first week, sugar was not to be had, and soon the margarine supply was exhausted. After three weeks, in answer to an urgent request, 4000 Red Cross parcels arrived from Dulag Luft. Shortly thereafter, the the Swiss came to make arrangements for sending parcels in an American convoy. Soon Red Cross parcels began to arrive in GI trucks.



Stockpile of Red Cross food parcels—Geneva, Switzerland
Transportation to the prison camps became the major
Problem of distribution due to allied bombing.

Sanitation was lamentable. The camp was infested with lice, fleas and bed bugs. Three thousand men, each with only two filthy German blankets, slept on the bare floors. Since many men were afflicted with diarrhea, the latrines had an insufficient capacity and men perforce soiled the floor. Showers were available once every two weeks. The barracks were not heated. Only 200 kilograms of coal were provided for cooking. Morale dropped to its lowest ebb.





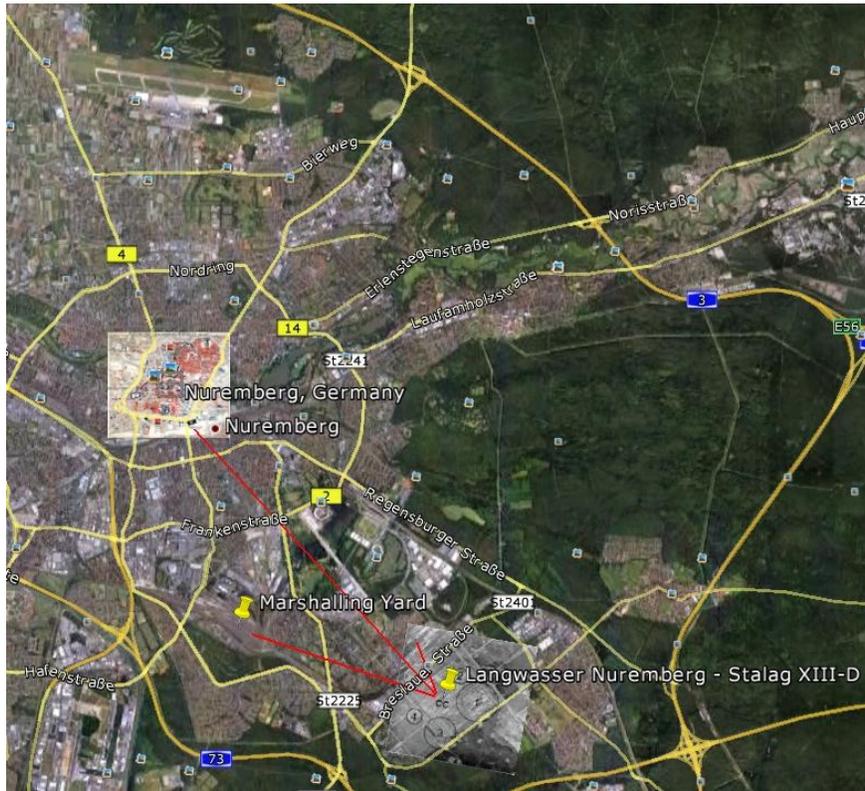
EXPLANATION OF THE ENCLOSED PICTURES WHICH WERE TAKEN
IN GERMAN PRISONER OF WAR CAMPS

NOTE: The enclosed pictures are not to be published in any magazine, periodical or newspaper. The pictures have not been cleared by the War Department for such a purpose. All pictures are in the process of being copyrighted.

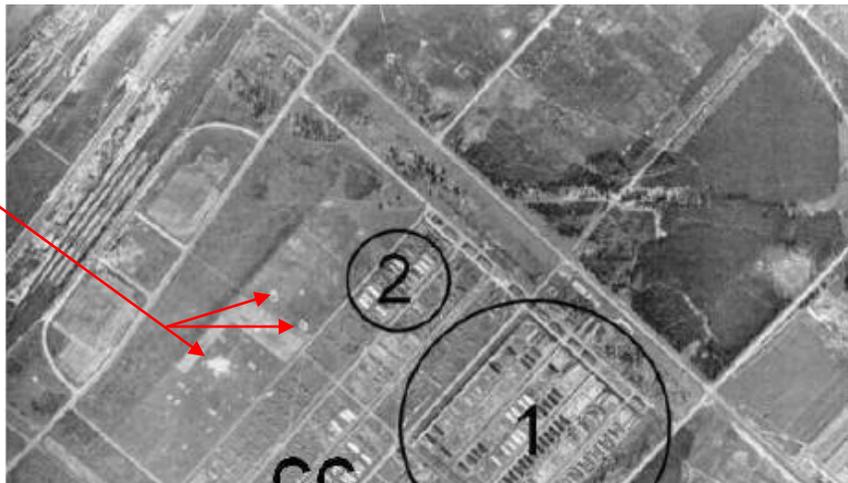
- 1 Appell at Nuremberg P.W. camp.
- 2 Sergeants compound, Nuremberg P.W. camp.
- 3 Bombing attack against Nuremberg.
- 4 American officer cooking meal on heater made from tin cans.
- 5 Water line at Moosburg P.W. camp. A single faucet supplied drinking water, washing and cooking water for 1,000 prisoners.
- 6 Second forced march showing American prisoner trading with German family.
- 7 March took place between Nuremberg and Moosburg.
- 8 Bombing attack against Nuremberg. Note POW sign on roof of barrack.
- 9 Halfful of Kriskey rations issued by the Germans.
- 10 Interior of box car showing crowded conditions which existed. Prisoners were loaded in during the entire trip which lasted 4 days.
- 11 Latrines at Nuremberg P.W. camp.
- 12 Camp scene showing exercise road and allied prisoners sunning. Nuremberg.
- 13 Brood which was used in sick quarters at the Nuremberg camp.
- 14 Interior of barracks at the Nuremberg camp.
- 15 Remains of barrack 103 in North camp at Stalag Luft #3, Sagan, Germany.
- 16 Beginning of first forced march. This march started from Sagan and ended at Nuremberg where prisoners were placed in box cars and moved to Nuremberg.
- 17 Hootey Game at Stalag Luft #3, Sagan, Germany.
- 18 Camp scene. Nuremberg, Germany.
- 19 Interior of barracks at Nuremberg P.W. camp showing the dispersal of cross parcels.
- 20 Guard tower at the Nuremberg camp.
- 21 Camp scene. Nuremberg, Germany.

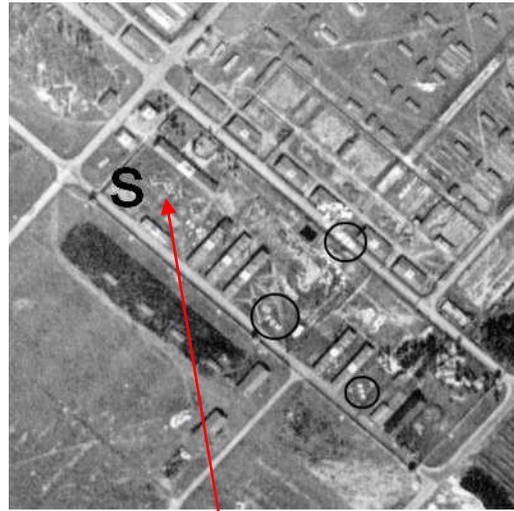
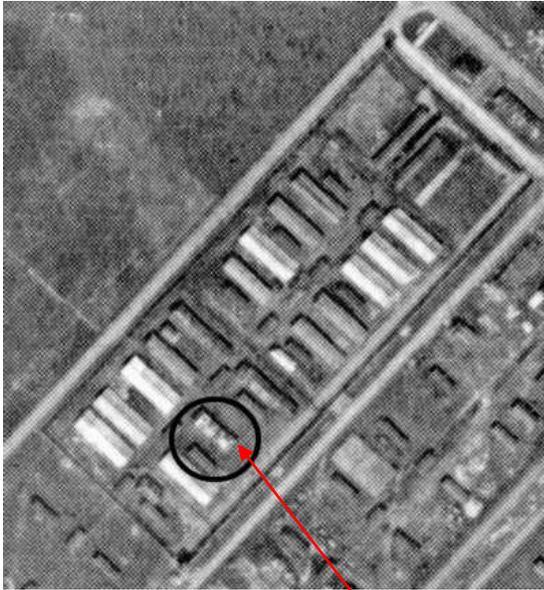


During World War II, Nuremberg was the headquarters of Wehrkreis (military district) XIII, and an important site for military production, including aircraft, submarines, and tank engines. A subcamp of Flossenbürg concentration camp was located here. Extensive use was made of slave labour. The Nuremberg POW Camp, Stalag XIII-D, was located less than 3 miles outside the railroad yards which the Germans knew were prime targets of the American and British Air Forces and therefore it was an illegal camp under the Geneva Convention.



Nuremberg was the target of many attacks by Allied bombers throughout the war. While the camp was directly hit and partly destroyed in 1943, remarkably pilots and bombardiers were careful in avoiding the POW camps where the prisoners were industrious in keeping their buildings clearly marked. On one roof of the barracks in Block 8, clearly readable for the allied bomber pilots approaching the city of Nuremberg from the southwest in most of the cases, there was the inscription "POW."

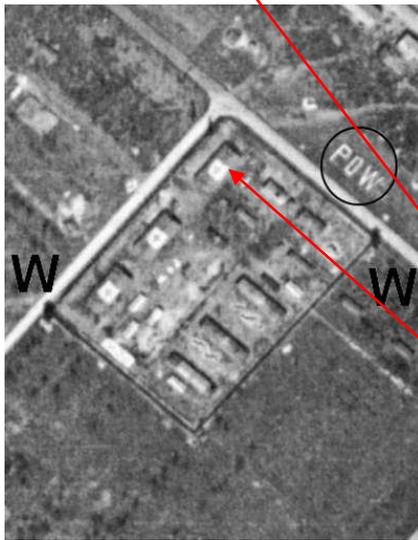




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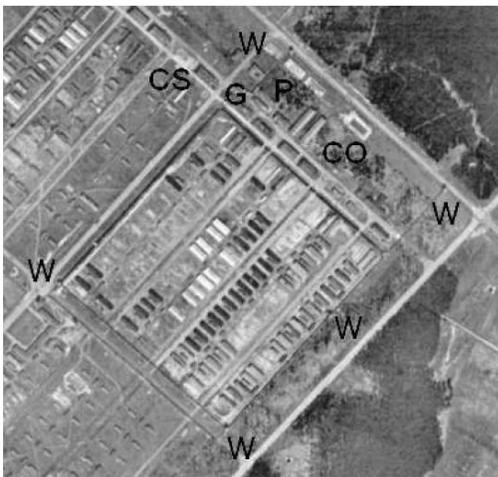
To the right of letter "S" one can see the zigzag-structure of a "Splitterschutzgraben." (covered bomb shelter trench). Otherwise the details match the elements of the other parts of the camp: Warning signs for the allied bombers, fence and position of watchtower (W) emphasized by a British pencil, 2 covered trenches between the barracks to the southeastern corner. Their zigzag form was supposed to break the power of a blast close to the shelter. In the case of a direct hit, these trenches offered no protection at all.



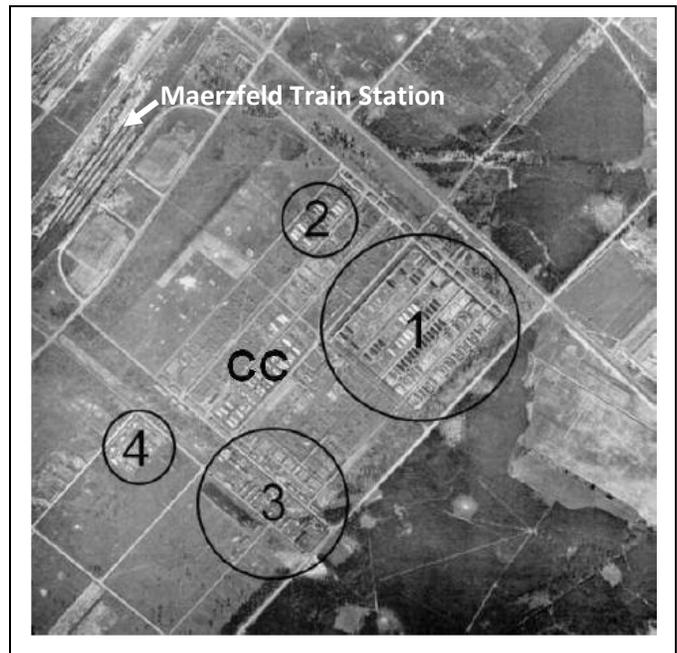
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The same precautions could be found at the two POW hospitals, but not within the limits of the main camp.

The roofs of the barracks are marked by red crosses to prevent them from being bombed, to make it sure in addition the triple warning "POW" (see circles) on the ground.



1



In spite of these markings, POWs lived with anxiety and fear of the frequent bombing raids by the Americans by day and the British by night. This only compounded the misery of hunger, freezing cold, lack of adequate clothing, poor sanitation and no medical supplies or facilities. Many times the raids were successive saturation raids lasting for days. 2nd Lt. George Hofmann recalled attacks almost every night and it seemed to him they were only ½ mile away. Indeed, the Maerzfeld train station with its clearly visible bomb craters was immediately adjacent to the camp.

During his imprisonment at Nuremberg, Col. Arnold served as commanding officer of one camp compound. It was during this period that yet another bombing raid created an indelible image in Col. Arnold's, and I am certain, in my father's mind as he was also there that night.

The raid by the Royal Air Force occurred during the night of February 27, 1945. A curfew was in effect and all prisoners were inside their blockhouses. Lights had been turned off and the men were preparing to bed down for the night. Suddenly, sirens sounded, warning of a bomber attack. Soon Col. Arnold could hear the sound of bombs exploding in the distance.

Col. Arnold: - "The bombing got louder and louder, closer and closer. You could see fire from the explosions through the cracks in the walls and through small windows. The blockhouses were trembling and vibrating each time a bomb exploded. I arose from my bed and walked to the door at the end of the blockhouse, to get a better look at what was happening outside. When I turned the door knob and opened the door to a slit, a huge explosion occurred, shoving the door closed, then sucking it out and me along with it. I quickly glanced at the guard tower. If spotted by a guard, I would be shot; however, there was no guard and the tower was empty. The sky was bright as day with fire and smoke, and the compound was in chaos."

The German camp commandant gave permission for the prisoners to leave their blocks during the raid. Col. Arnold organized his men and ordered them to dig slit trenches with whatever tools they could find. Soon, all prisoners were digging trenches, until there was a long slit trench.

Col. Arnold: - "I passed the word to lay low and for the men to cover their heads with whatever they could find to avoid being hit with falling debris. The sky was being lit up. You could see airplanes on fire, breaking apart. You could see parachutes coming down, some in full bloom and some in streamers, that is, parachutes on fire."

Fear, fright and panic swept through the men and Col. Arnold worked his way up and down the trench trying to bolster the men's nerve.

Col. Arnold: - "I saw men crying, yelling, wailing and praying out loud and on their knees in silence. While working my way up and down the line, a young airman came weaving up to me. He was whimpering and crying. He threw his arms around my

waist and fell to his knees, hugging my legs. Soon two other men came up to me. They were in the same distress, completely lost and frightened not knowing what to do. They needed help, condolence, assurance, and pacifying. As the camp commander, they came to me. I gathered the three boys in and hovered over them. I put my hands on their heads, hugged them in and told them that all is okay. Nothing is going to happen to you, Jesus Christ is here. He will protect us, He will help us, and we will not be harmed."

The city was severely damaged in Allied strategic bombing from 1943–45. On January 2, 1945, the medieval city centre was systematically bombed by the Royal Air Force and the U.S. Army Air Forces and about ninety percent of it was destroyed in only one hour, with 1,800 residents killed and roughly 100,000 displaced. In February 1945, additional attacks followed. In total, about 6,000 Nuremberg residents are estimated to have been killed in air raids. The following images show the city center and an April 1945 overlay map of damages. The legend is: **bright red**: total loss old, **dark red**: total loss new, **blue**: grave damage old, **black**: grave damage new.







Historic Photographs / Historische Fotografien

V like Vintage



Historic Photographs / Historische Fotografien
Foto: Hamann | Oktober 1944



Historic Photographs / Historische Fotografien

V like Vintage



Nuremberg was a heavily fortified city that was eventually captured in a fierce battle lasting from 17 April to 21 April 1945 by the US 3rd Infantry Division, 42nd Infantry Division, and 45th Infantry Division, which fought house-to-house and block-by-block against determined German resistance, causing further urban devastation to the already bombed and shelled buildings. Despite this intense degree of destruction, the city was rebuilt after the war and was to some extent, restored to its pre-war appearance including the reconstruction of some of its medieval buildings. However, the biggest part of the historic structural condition of the old Imperial Free City was lost forever.

The intensity of the battle for Nuremberg was reported by the press back home.

GAULEITER MAKES NUREMBERG FIGHT

NUREMBERG, Germany, April 17 (U.P.)—A tough Elite Guard leader and Gauleiter named Neumeister, who, prisoners say, is such a fanatic that he outdoes Adolf Hitler, kept this city of 430,000 people fighting today against three American Seventh Army divisions.

It looks as if he had doomed the city. For the last eighteen hours the 179th Regiment of the Forty-fifth Division has been held in a tiny segment of the suburbs by a combination of rifle, machine-gun, 88-mm and anti-aircraft gun fire. The 179th is attacking between the river and the railroad tracks on the east side of the city.

The 180th Regiment is fighting in the eastern factory area after having overrun a prison camp that contained 13,000 men, including 450 Americans. The 157th Regiment is on the southern rim. The Third Division is on the northern edge of the city. The Forty-second is three miles west of it.

Hence the Germans have only one way of escape, to the southwest. They know that, if they do not give up, the city will be leveled, but Neumeister is boss and he wants to fight it out.

**ESTIMATED
GERMAN SITUATION
1 MAY 1945**

100 200 300
STATUTE MILES

TOP SECRET

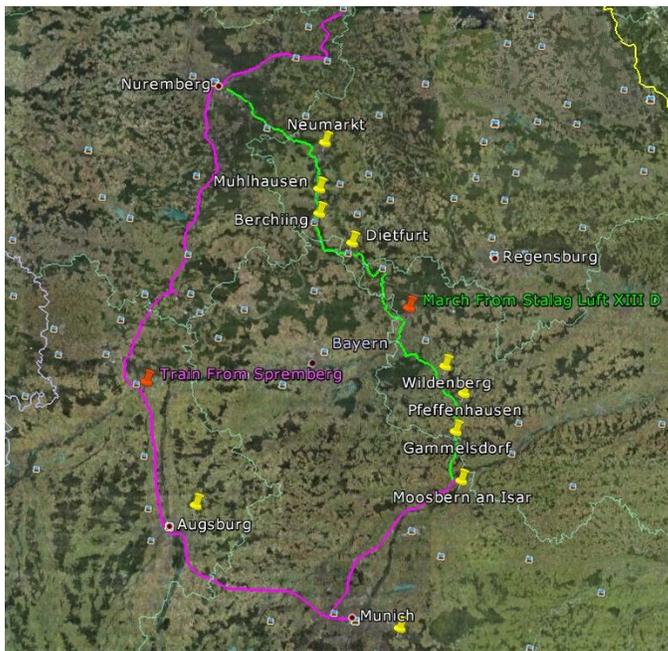
3 APR 1945

**TOTAL GERMAN STRENGTH
120-137 DIVS**



LEGEND
LESS LIKELY POCKET
MORE LIKELY POCKET
FRONT LINE

In anticipation of the battle for Nuremberg George and his fellow POWs were to face yet another forced march!



The POWs detained at Nuremberg marched in early April 1945 when all of Stalag XIII-D was evacuated to Moosburg – fortunately in spring weather - but still 95 miles by foot. As one of the marchers explained, *“In late March, early April 1945 I was with a group of American Air Force POWs who were marched from Nuremberg to Moosburg as Allied troops were beginning to surround Nuremberg. The weather was getting warmer and American airplanes were overhead almost every day. By then all able-bodied German soldiers were at some combat post and our guards were old,*

wounded types, mostly Czech, Rumanian and such, and were losing their belligerence. As we were marched along we would leave the march and trade cigarettes and soap (we didn't have much) for potatoes, onions and sometimes even eggs. Germany was in chaos and there were German refugees on the roads fleeing west. The cities were mostly rubble and the Germans themselves were beginning to starve. It was a terrible time for your beautiful country, but the Nazis would not quit.”

Many POWs dropped out of the march en route to Moosburg and the German guards made no serious attempt to stop them. Others continued on – some died. A recollection documented by family member Sharon Nicholson tells of this last march.

Cameron Garrett – “We had arrived at Stalag VII-A, well most of us. Numerous POWs had died during the march to Moosburg. One of the German officers, told us that we should feel fortunate. “You are lucky that you are not in the boxcars that your planes are bombing, yeah?” And then he laughed.

Approaching Moosburg, Stalag VII-A at the end of the long march through the last village, German youth ran through our columns to hit us with sticks and rocks, then turned and spit. Our guards were joined with the “home army” of Germany - the men too old young and boys too young to fight on the front. Suddenly the German guards stood a little taller, more arrogant and abusive.

The citizens of Moosburg: Russian, Italian, French, British, American, Indian, Greeks, Serbians, Poles, and Colored men were just as crowded, just as miserable and sick with diseases as we had left in Nuremberg.”

Although he was somewhere in this story, 2nd Lt. George A. Hofmann never spoke of it. However, the following article by Major General W.E. Arnold, diary of Bill Ethridge and notes from an unknown marcher are clear and detailed accounts of the experience.

EVACUATION OF STALAG XIII-D – Recollections from Major General W.E. Arnold

By April 1945, the Allied stranglehold on Hitler's Third Reich was drawing tighter with each passing day. On April 1, the U.S. 9th and 1st Armies joined up at Lippstadt, closing the circle around the rich industrial region of the Ruhr, trapping Field Marshal Walter Model's Army Group B and two corps of the 1st Parachute Army. On the Eastern Front, the 3rd Ukraine Front captured Sopron, a major road junction between Budapest and Vienna, near the Austrian frontier southwest of Lake Neusiedler. As the Allies advanced into German-held territory, Hitler's armies were forced into an ever-shrinking perimeter.

Thousands of Allied POWs were caught up in the confusion of the Nazi's mass retreat. The Germans evacuated the prisoners deeper and deeper into their own territory in order to keep clear of the battle lines that were closing in on Berlin. By early April, it was apparent that the massive prison camp at Nuremberg would have to be evacuated soon.

At 1700 hours on 3 April 1945, the Americans received notice that they were to evacuate the Nurnberg camp and march to Stalag VII-A, Moosburg, another prison camp located 160 kilometers (100 miles) from Nuremberg.

Col. Arnold commanded one of the Nuremberg compounds and in his charge were 1,875 POWs, all downed aviators including approximately 500 members of the British Royal Air Force. When the march orders came down, Col. Arnold was asked to supervise the evacuation of his compound by his commander, Col. Darr Alkire. "He asked me if I could handle leading the march because I was wounded and had a bad leg. Because my leg was stiff, there was a question whether I could walk that far. I had lost a lot of weight, but I was healthy." Col. Alkire, concerned about Col. Arnold's physical condition, wanted to put Col. Bill Kennedy in charge of the group. Col. Kennedy, who was planning to escape, didn't want his plans foiled by having to supervise an evacuation. Colonels Kennedy and Alkire agreed on a compromise. Col. Kennedy would go along on the evacuation for one day and if Col. Arnold was physically able to handle the job, Col. Kennedy was free to make his escape attempt. Col. Arnold quickly demonstrated that he was capable of commanding the evacuation and subsequently, Col. Kennedy made his

escape attempt. However, Col. Kennedy was eventually re-captured, and spent the rest of the war imprisoned at Moosburg.

At this point, the POWs took over the organization of the march. They submitted plans to the German Commander stipulating that in return for preserving order they were to have full control of the column and to march no more than 20 kilometers a day. The Germans accepted. On April 4, with each POW in possession of a food parcel, 10,000 Allied POWs began the march.

REFUSING A RIDE

As commander of the compound, Col. Arnold roused and organized the prisoners into blocks (a platoon-sized group). Each block had its own commander responsible to Col. Arnold. The prisoners were to be escorted by 87 German guards and about 20 to 25 sentry dogs. The Germans provided a wagon with two horses to carry equipment for the guards. They told Col. Arnold he could ride in the wagon if his leg gave him problems; however, Col. Arnold eschewed the offer and marched along leading his command. "I gave the order to march and we marched two to three miles, then we halted. The German commander of my column, Capt. Galadovich, started talking to me and I asked him where we were going. He said, 'We're taking the column down to the railroad station where we're going to get on boxcars, and take the POWs to Moosburg.'

Thinking back to the horrible crowded conditions on the boxcars and the two bombing raids he had endured in previous evacuations, Col. Arnold adamantly refused to go along with the German evacuation plan. "I didn't want to do that because I thought it was too dangerous based on my previous experiences. I told Capt. Galadovich our job is to get everybody to the destination safe and sound." The refusal surprised Capt. Galadovich, who told Col. Arnold he would have to confer with his commander, Oberst (Colonel) Braun, who was waiting in a town about a half-mile down the road.

Col. Arnold ordered his men off the road to seek cover under the forest while they waited for Capt. Galadovich to return. When he did return, he informed Col. Arnold that Oberst Braun wanted to meet with him in the town. "He told me Oberst Braun would be in a restaurant and for me to come in there." Capt. Galadovich, his assistant Oberfeldtwebel (master sergeant) Reilman, Col. Arnold and two assistants walked into the town. "When I got there, I told them I'm not going in the restaurant because I may not come out alive. This was understandable at the time, and doesn't need any explanation because you couldn't tell what might happen. I told them I would meet Oberst Braun out in the street."

To Col. Arnold's surprise, Oberst Braun came out. Capt. Galadovich had informed Oberst Braun that Col. Arnold did not want to transport his men in boxcars. "We went over that again, and why. Oberst Braun understood and said that marching to Moosburg would be okay because he didn't think there would be enough boxcars anyway. There would be some delays and we would be in the boxcars for who knows how long before we got moving. He agreed with me and gave us every assistance he could. He gave us maps and told us of the perils and dangers of the SS troops, who would murder anyone, and also told us about the retreat of the German Army." After the conversation, Oberst Braun and his staff got into their cars and drove away. Capt. Galadovich and his staff, who were supposed to accompany Col. Arnold and his men on the march, got into their cars and also drove away. Col. Arnold never saw either man again, leaving Col. Arnold and Oberfeldtwebel Reilman to supervise the march to Moosburg.

MR. REILMAN

Although Mr. Reilman was a member of the Nuremberg staff, he and Col. Arnold had only a passing acquaintance. During the march, however, the two men worked closely together. Col. Arnold kept his men moving in an orderly fashion and Mr. Reilman did what he could to facilitate the needs of the column. "Mr. Reilman would go ahead of the column and smooth things out with the townspeople along the way. He would scout out places for the men to sleep, which was a big help to me." Each night Col. Arnold and Mr. Reilman would make sure all the men and their German guards had a place to sleep. Then they would find a place for themselves and plan the next day's march. "We shared a blanket the whole trip. We worked together well and I considered us fortunate that a man like Mr. Reilman was in charge of the guards. He was a good man."

THE PLAN

Avoiding the retreating Germans and the aggressive American fighter pilots, who strafed anything moving on German roads, were Col. Arnold's two main concerns. "I talked it over with Mr. Reilman. I said our job is to go through the back roads, where there's forest to give us cover. I said we'd proceed at a moderate rate because we wanted to get everybody there alive. He agreed."

Col. Arnold marched the column of prisoners through a little town and found a good place in the forest to bivouac for the night. "That gave me a chance to have a meeting with my block commanders. I told them how we would march and every night we would stop before reaching a little town. Mr. Reilman would ride his bicycle into town to talk

with the mayor. He would tell them who we were and assure them there would be no danger. I also wanted the men to stay in barns and sleep on hay to keep warm." The next day, the column marched approximately six miles. At the end of the day, as planned, Mr. Reilman rode into a nearby town to talk to the mayor. "He introduced me to the mayor and everything went okay. They weren't belligerent, we weren't belligerent, and we all got along fine. We moved into the town quietly with 1,875 guys, the dogs, and the German guards. The people received us and we were put up and bedded down in old buildings, barns and stables."

THE MASSACRE

Two days into the march, Oberst Braun's warning about the retreating German Army and roving bands of SS troops proved to be prophetic. Mr. Reilman, who scouted ahead of the column on his bicycle, reported back to Col. Arnold with some disturbing news. "He told me at the town ahead, the German Army was retreating through. He said we had to stop the march and get the men off into the pine trees and hide. He would go back and look at the situation and I told him I wanted to go with him."

Col. Arnold, his assistant, Bob Cox, and Mr. Reilman went back to town. Just outside the town, the three men got on their hands and knees and crept up to a vantage point where they could assess the situation. "The Germans were retreating and Mr. Reilman said we could tell they were Army from the yellow patches on their lapels. Mr. Reilman also saw SS troops in the town, who wore red patches on their lapels. In the middle of town, some of the army troops were retreating; however, the SS troops were telling the soldiers to stay. The army troops wouldn't stay and suddenly we heard a lot of machine gun and rifle reports, and one group of maybe a dozen army soldiers fell to the ground. We saw a massacre, a helpless killing."

The three men hurried back to their column. They spent an anxious night waiting to see whether the army retreat or the SS troops would run into them. "We stayed in the trees and gave orders to keep quiet. We couldn't do anything but stay there." By the next day, the retreating German Army and the SS troops were gone and had missed the column. "Once they were gone, we knew the town was open and safe. We proceeded into town and marched through there pretty damn fast!"

TYPICAL AMERICAN GI

By the third day of the march, the German guards and their American prisoners realized they were in this ordeal together. "These guards were older men who had

fought in the war, and now were back on guard duty. They were getting tired. Their food was getting low, and feeding the dogs was a chore."

To no one's surprise, the American prisoners soon took their German captors in. "The typical American GI is ingenious and adaptable. He is understanding and friendly as heck. It wasn't long before the German guards were part of us, and the dogs, too. We all went as a group and there were no more sentries or dogs to bother us. We were now just one big group."

Denver Garrett: - *"The lax security by the German guards and friendly German civilians gave great hope that I would be successful in my escape attempt. This optimism, however, was dashed when I and my companion walked headlong into a German SS officer and an enlisted man. The German SS had the reputation of shooting first and asking questions later and my friend and I wanted to take no chances of being listed as casualties rather than prisoners of war. The German SS officer also perhaps knew that, with the end of the war in sight, execution of escaped prisoners of war would not be a smart thing to do. The SS officer told us if we would re-join the march of the prisoners, he would take no further action against them. I knew a bargain when I saw one, and we rejoined the march of the prisoners."*

THE MASS

Four days into the march, Col. Arnold noticed that on either side of the road were statues of the Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ. Curious, he asked Mr. Reilman about the significance of the statues. Mr. Reilman told him there were a lot of Catholics among the local residents who were very religious. "Being an Episcopalian, I felt good about that."

The column entered the town around midday on Sunday. The significance of the situation wasn't lost to Col. Arnold, realizing it was the Easter season. "I felt there was a need for some kind of prayer. I decided to stay in that town for the night, and told Mr. Reilman I wanted to find a church." The two quickly found a church, but the door was padlocked. "I asked Mr. Reilman to try to get the church open. I wanted to give the boys an opportunity to go to church."

Mr. Reilman located two Catholic priests and brought them to the church. Col. Arnold asked them for permission to use the church, and asked if the priests would say mass. "They were apprehensive, suspicious, and wouldn't open the church. They also refused to give mass. I was disappointed and didn't know exactly what I was going to do. I told them there were many Catholics among us who would like to receive mass. I said this church was a house of God and should be open to all and they had no right to deny us the chapel and prayer. I told them it would be a sin not to open the doors and they

were committed to say mass." Despite Col. Arnold's words, the priests remained reluctant. "I said, okay, if you won't give us mass, unlock the doors, open the church, and I'll give the sermon."

By that time, word had spread among the column there was going to be a church service. The men began to gather around the church. "I knew I'd be a poor substitute for a Catholic priest or Protestant minister, but I felt I could give a lot of comfort to everybody once we were inside the church.

It wasn't too long before the priests relented and opened the church doors. They filled the fountain with holy water, welcomed the men into the church, and offered worship to the congregation of many religious backgrounds. The men filled the church and overflowed into the courtyard. "It was a glorious day. The men felt good to be in the Lord's house, even though they were in a foreign country during wartime. Afterwards, the priests apologized and told Mr. Reilman they had never given mass to so many. The typical GIs had made their impression."

FEEDING THE MEN

While the column was passing a freight marshalling yard near the highway, some P-47s dive-bombed the yard. Two Americans and one Briton were killed and three men seriously wounded. On the following day, the column laid out a large replica of an American Air Corps insignia on the road with an arrow pointing in the direction of the march. Thereafter the column was never strafed.

Although the column did not have an abundance of food, there was never a serious problem providing the men with enough to sustain them. "Everyone knew how to handle the food situation." Midway through the march, the food situation improved greatly once the column managed to have Red Cross packages diverted its way. It proceeded to Neumarkt, to Bersheim, where 4500 Red Cross parcels were delivered by truck; then to Mulhauser, where more parcels were delivered. "We missed a couple of days of Red Cross parcels, being trucked from Switzerland on the autobahns, because we were taking the back roads. Once we discovered this, we got some trucks diverted our way and pretty soon we had more Red Cross parcels than we could carry."

The prisoners used the extra parcels to trade for eggs, fresh vegetables and such, with the local townspeople and farmers. Sometimes, the prisoners just gave the locals their extra parcels. "It created a lot of good will. From that point on to our destination, we had a lot of food."

THE CASUALTY

Col. Arnold divided his time between leading the march and monitoring the progress in the middle and trailing ranks. "I would go off on the side and let the column go by," he said. "I wanted to talk to the rear point and see how the boys were doing." Near the end of the march, it became apparent that one of the men was suffering badly.

"There was a navigator in the column who was really hurting. The boys had been taking care of him, but he was getting awfully tired and sick." Col. Arnold had the ailing navigator sit down on the edge of the road to rest. "I sat down with him and stayed with him, maybe an hour or so. He died right there in my arms. I blessed him."

The boy's body was wrapped up and loaded onto the wagon. It was taken into Moosburg that ironically, was only one days march away. His was the only death recorded during the march. On April 9, the column reached the Danube, which Col. Alkire flatly refused to cross, since it meant exceeding the 20-kilometer a day limit. With his refusal, the Germans lost complete control of the march and POWs began to drop out of the column almost at will. The guards, intimidated by the rapid advance of the American Army, made no serious attempt to stop the disintegration. The main body of the column reached Stalag VII-A on 20 April, 1945.

The Road to Bavaria – Recollections of Bill Ethridge – April 4-25, 1945

It was the kind of day when Nature invites everyone to take in large gulps of air that she has warmed with sunshine and spiced with spring growth from the countryside. It was great! The guards occasionally showed signs of being relaxed and now and then a hint of a smile would seem to say "this will soon end and we can all go home." I had referred to the winter march from Sagan to Spremberg as a forced march but now this one headed towards Bavaria showed all the signs that a race horse displays when the rider turns him towards the barn. The conviction that our forces would liberate us this very month was enough to renew the strength we needed for this walk-a-thon.

I adjusted my back pack so it rode high an my shoulders and alternated my hand bag from side to side. I was determined



to carry it all. Most of it was food and I was not going hungry again! Across the top of the back pack I had placed a tightly bundled great coat. It was the same type that the guards were issued, was all wool and ankle length. This was a prized possession as it had cost me several packs of American cigarettes. It would be invaluable in shedding both rain and cold. All told I was carrying about 45 pounds - not heavy by U.S. Army guidelines but it was about all I could muster after weeks of intermittent diarrhea and short rations.

We had gone close to five kilometers when we first heard the sound of airplanes. We expected to see a flight or two of our own P-47's or P-51's just as we had recently seen several 51's with no, Jerries in the air anywhere. We had also been told that our radio men had received confirmation of their broadcasts to friendly receivers who, in turn, confirmed their knowledge of our impending march out of Nurnberg and that our fighter squadrons were being alerted to watch for us. In the time it took to think about all this the planes were upon us and firing! I was walking on the outside of the left column and I hit the ditch as soon as I heard the fire. It seemed like a half dozen POW's fell on top as we went down. Bullets rained down along the road where we had been and some clipped leaves off the trees above our heads. Our guard fell in beside us. I was too buried to see the planes but they were identified by others as three P-47's. I suppose they hadn't received the word and mistook us for a troop movement. Several men were hit and subsequently bandaged with socks, twine and whatever strips of cloth could be made. I helped with the wounded from our group and didn't realize that there had been any fatalities until that night at camp when word was passed that a Sergeant by the name of Bill Logan had been killed. I had known of him only as one of the few non-commissioned bombardiers wearing an 8th Air Force patch. We were most fortunate that the pilots had not made a second pass. Apparently they had recognized us after the initial bursts and pulled up early. Throughout the following days whenever 47's appeared overhead they would come down on the deck and wiggle their wings, a sign of recognition. We felt safe again. We continued for twelve or fourteen more kilometers before the guards obtained permission for us to stay on a farmstead for the night. Our combine took shelter in a machine storage shed where we were fairly sure we would not find any animal droppings.

April 5. The morning sounded like home on the farm! At least one rooster was crowing at daybreak and not having a watch in the group, we had no idea of the time. Wilson and I started a fire outside the machine shed in preparation for the combine's breakfast. We had agreed the night before that it was our turn to cook so our goal was to have something hot to eat before starting on the road again. I fried one can of Spam sliced into seven pieces as Wilson mixed in diced potatoes. This, with coffee and seven chunks of bread, made a good breakfast and everyone was prepared for

the next leg to Bavaria. Our guard appeared after everyone had eaten and announced it was time to put out the fire and that he wanted us on the road in "das kleine minuten." (*a short minute*)

The Germans abandoned their marching routine and we walked rather casually but with a purpose: to get to the next village as soon as possible. We travelled about eight kilometers and to our surprise, found that a soup kitchen had been set up alongside a picturesque old farm house. Apparently this was not a village but just a small grouping of houses. The wives of the local farmers had prepared several pots of vegetable soup. This was a treat and our first real soup since the horsemeat stew in Spremburg.

We then walked to a point about two kilometers from the soup kitchen where for some unknown reason, the guards decided we should camp until they found a place for us to stay the night. After four hours and after it started to rain, we were on the road again. Apparently no accommodations had been found. We passed through the village of Neumarkt and then on to Berching where we stayed for the night. Everyone was soaked to the skin from the downpour of rain and there was no let up in sight. There was no inside shelter for the night so we huddled together in groups of three and four. With my heavy coat and blankets from my friends covering all of us, we actually slept enough to feel rested the next morning.

April 6, Berching to Plankstetten. The rain had stopped sometime during the night and daylight found us laying in all directions. After a cold breakfast of canned Australian corned beef, bread with margarine washed down with a can of coffee, we were ready to move out. Everyone was assembled around 0930. Our guard announced the next stop to be Plankstetten, where the German officer-in-charge had made arrangements for us to stay the night in a variety of buildings on the outskirts of town. My group was assigned to the barroom of an old inn. Most of the fixtures and part of the bar had been removed, leaving adequate space for everyone to spread out on the floor.

Outdoor fires were not permitted because of the close grouping of the buildings, so we ate a cold evening meal and a cold breakfast the next morning. The German guards did prepare a large kettle of hot water and we made tea and coffee from packets of soluble mixes. Typically, our food rations during this march from Nurnberg to Bavaria consisted of a mixture of whatever was left over from the Red Cross issues, whatever we managed to scrounge along the way, plus whatever the local people and the German guards came up with. Two staples of our diet on this march became potatoes and grain from the farm stays along the way, most of it taken without permission. We were eating better than during the previous winter months.

April 7 and 8, Plankstetten. Plankstetten was picturesque with buildings that appeared to be constructed by craftsman who planned to live in them forever. The structures were for the most part heavily mortared stone with a mix of materials used for roofing. Some roofs appeared to be thatched, as one would expect to see in the English countryside, others were a type of slate and the newer ones were covered with heavy shakes. Several buildings appeared to be intended for multi-family dwellings. Rather than being two stories or more they were laid out as long, narrow structures with each family unit separated by heavy stone walls that extended above the roof lines and apparently served as fire barriers as well. The buildings were squat and solidly built as if to defy the elements of nature. The many barns were of similar material. What residents we did see were either of grandparent age or very young and all appeared friendly. I estimated the village was home to no more than 300 people.



We found little material to build small fires for cooking, consequently anything hot or warm was either coffee or tea, neither of which tasted anything like British or American. I realized how fortunate we were to be Americans where we can have about anything we want to eat and drink. Following breakfast this morning, we moved out for our next stop in Pendorf, some fifteen to twenty kilometers farther south.

April 9, Pendorf to Neustadt. Arrived after dark Last night. Traveled only eighteen kilometers as it was slow going all day. We had moved off the road several times to allow traffic to pass. Military trucks and occasionally farm wagons and livestock. No one seemed to be in a hurry either. Unfortunately a rain cloud unloaded about the time we were looking for a place to stop for the night and soaked my clothes that had just dried from the previous rain. This was most uncomfortable but much preferred over the freezing rain and snow encountered during the winter march.

It was time for food. I made a quart container of stew using potatoes, cracked wheat, powdered milk and a part can of corned beef, then joined two others who had found shelter under a large tree. We decided to sit back against the trunk to eat and sleep there for the night. No roosters crowed in the morning but we awakened early from very uncomfortable positions. After eating and making certain our fires were out, we moved onto the road and headed for the village of Neustadt, an estimated fourteen or fifteen kilometers distance. It turned out to be a good day to walk; sunny but not hot and no traffic. We arrived at our designated camp site about 1600. Although we rarely ate our evening meal this early, everyone was hungry and wanted food before sunset.

Adams and Riding scrounged enough wood to build a good fire. We added dehydrated soup mixes and a half dozen chunked potatoes to a gallon of boiling water and had ourselves a good stew. A loaf of black bread rounded out the meal. We were ready for the sack and it was still daylight! The guards had received permission to billet us in bareds for the night. This was great and the hay made for good bedding. We slept quite comfortably.

April 10, Neustadt to Muhlhausen. Walked from Neustadt to Muhlhausen, about ten kilometers, where we crossed the Danube at noon. Truly a beautiful river with its gentle sounds bringing to mind memories of Strauss and his famous waltz, An der schonen blauen Donau. To this point we are about 100 kilometers out of Nurnberg but can't get a fix on how much further it is to Moosburg, our stated destination. I'm experiencing a real mix in feelings. Mainly there is the feeling of exhaustion. It's been a much easier march than the winter one, both mentally and physically. But there is a certain anxiety of not knowing when or how this journey will end that seems to be a major problem. The spirits are ebbing from high to low. Haven't had any word from home since December. Miss that.

Sobolof and I, together with our combine, will be staying here in Muhlhausen with about 100 others for the night while another 400 or so will continue on. The Germans are dividing us into smaller groups of about 100 each with the reasoning that it will be easier for them to find adequate overnight shelter as well as reducing the concentration of traffic on the road. Today we have seen a sudden increase in both German military and civilian personnel moving towards Bavaria. One German guard told us that Bavaria is "safer for everybody." We camped in a grassy field outside of town, prepared whatever food we could put together and settled down to rest. It was a warm and sunny spot and proved to be one of our better rest stops.

April 1 and 12, Muhlhausen to Wildenberg. We broke camp around 0900 and walked to a private farm near Wildenberg. A man and wife, judged to be in their 50's told us they were the owners and had lived here and farmed this land for thirty years. They had two daughters, both of whom appeared to be in their late teens or early twenties. Apparently they expected us and had prepared kettles of hot water over outdoor fires. They invited us and our guards to help ourselves. They added that we would be sleeping in the hay barn, but there must be no smoking. Later they gained assurance from the German guards that we would not smoke. This was agreed to and enforced.

As Sampson and I were getting hot water for coffee, the farmer came by and asked us if we drank beer. He said that he did not have any beer to serve this many people but that he would like to show us something and motioned for us to follow him into the house. We followed out of sheer curiosity as he lead the way into what he called his game room and pointed to a

collection of beer steins neatly arranged on shelves placed around the perimeter of the room about head high. He said that he had about 500 and had obtained some from every country in Europe. He took several of his prized ones from the shelving and told how he had obtained these special ones. They were beautiful and obviously he treasured them. He then pointed to several of his game trophies. There were about six different heads, including moose, antelope and deer. He concluded the tour by saying that he hoped the Americans would not destroy any of this. It was obvious that he had foreseen Germany's collapse. We responded by telling him that we believed everything would be safe and we silently hoped so. We thanked him for inviting us in and left as politely as possible. It was another nice day and everyone, including the guards, enjoyed it. After the evening food preparation we hit the hay. I slept very well.

The next morning, the roosters crowed early and so most everyone was up and preparing breakfast by 0800. Sobolof spotted one of the farm girls coming from the chicken house with a basket of eggs and decided that he and I should have eggs for breakfast. I urged him to go ahead and talk to her. With his ability to speak and understand some German he succeeded in talking her out of two eggs and the promise that he would tell no one else. He handed the eggs to me to cook, saying that he never cooked anything in his life. I had already sliced potatoes into a pan and with the addition of the fresh eggs we enjoyed this breakfast like no other. The odor of frying eggs gave us away but we both swore that we had been carrying these for days and that we had found them at the last farm stay. At 1100 we watched a squadron of P-47's bomb a small highway bridge nearby. I wondered if Mary's brother was one of the pilots. There were no German fighters to be seen. In fact we saw only two German aircraft on this entire trip from Nurnberg to Moosburg.

As we were preparing our noon meal, the farmer brought two wheelbarrows full of potatoes and dumped them on the ground, commenting that we should help ourselves. We did. Some would be cooked, some would be eaten raw. We would be staying here a second night and the word got around that some of the prisoners were planning to burrow into the hay and stay on after the others marched out the next morning. Apparently this had been tried before because the Oberlieutenant in charge of the guards announced before we bedded down that they would call everyone out in the morning and take roll. Any one missing would be assumed to be hiding in the hay and the hay would be sprayed with machine guns. After roll call the next morning, even though it appeared as though everyone was present, the guards proceeded to empty two submachine guns into the hay! I suspect the farmer wasn't pleased. Two American officers thanked the farmer and his family for their hospitality. We were on the road by mid morning.

April 13, from farm to farm. Today's weather was a mixture of rain and sunshine with daytime temperatures in the low 60's. It was just about right for walking but as it turned out, we would not be going very far today. The rumor was that the Germans had been asked to leave the last farm because a guard had paid too much attention to one of the daughters. Whatever, the Germans had subsequently learned that the owner of a large farm outside of Mulhausen might be agreeable to letting us stay for a few days if we would cause no problems. The senior American Captain assigned to our group assured the Germans that they could expect appropriate behavior from us. The Captain reminded the senior German officer that his men were also expected to be on their good behavior.

The second farm appeared to be a prosperous one, a combination hay, wheat and dairy operation. Judging from the number and size of the buildings there must have been at least 500 acres at their disposal. The buildings were arranged in a U, starting with a two-story house on the right side of the wide entrance to the farm Yard. It was sort of Dutch Colonial in design and looked like it may have contained four upstairs bedrooms. It was painted white, trimmed in green and faced the central yard. Adjacent to the side of the house away from the road was a small building used for milk cooling and cheese making. There was a dairy barn with a hayloft, crosswise between the cheese building and a large machinery barn. Returning back towards the entrance from the road and directly across the yard from the house was the granary. A huge manure pile was discretely placed behind the barn.

The manure reminded me of stories by my maternal grandmother Herberer who told about how the Germans aged their Limburger cheese in their manure piles to take advantage of the heat they generated. I asked a German-speaking friend to find out if this was ever the practice and he was told that this had been done in past years but that they were no longer doing it the old way.

Our combine shared the machinery storage shed with other combines, and our seven men set up an independent cooking space in a covered area next to the granary. Being an ex-farm boy, I had seen an advantage of being close to the grain storage. We were permitted to spread wheat straw on the floor of the machine shed and this made for rather comfortable sleeping. One of the problems with sleeping amongst a large group was that invariably someone would have to get up during the night and stumble over a dozen people before arriving at his destination. To get out of the traffic I had the brilliant idea of sleeping under a cultivator. I was out of the way, had plenty of straw and was really very comfortable, but during the night I had to go for the outdoors. The night was black and I somehow forgot where I was. As I sat up, my head struck a metal cross member on the cultivator. Slightly stunned, I managed to find my way outside and return

without much of a problem. The next morning I was awakened by a roommate asking if I was alive. It turned out that my face was covered with blood from the blow on the cultivator and he thought that I had been wounded.

One of our combine, Edward Riding, had developed a sore throat a few days before arriving at the farm and was running a temperature. He was a close friend from Room 5 in Sagan and a former pinochle Partner. He was always one of the "up" roommates, the first to help cheer up anyone in need. Hack Wilson, our leader and first aid man, was certain that Riding's temperature was dangerously high. Wilson and our Captain Barnett convinced the German commander that Riding should be seen by a local doctor. The commander agreed and Ed was taken to the local clinic. The examiner's diagnosis was strep throat with a critically high temperature. We were advised that Riding was put to bed and given the medication that the German doctor always used for these illnesses. This was on the 13th. Over the next two days we were advised that the fever had improved, but then on the 16th we were told that Ed had died.

We were shaken by the loss of our friend, and skeptical of the treatment he had received. Captain Barnett spent some time with our combine and assured us that he had been permitted to talk with the doctor in the clinic. He was convinced that the MD and his assistant had done all that was possible to save our friend. We accepted Barnett's assessment then asked him to obtain permission for those of us in Riding's combine to attend the burial. The Germans granted our request and set the burial date for the next day, the 17th.



All six remaining members of the combine were designated as pallbearers. The closest cemetery was on the grounds of the local Catholic church, just a few kilometers west of the village of Ober Rummelsdorf. The casket was carried by a small military truck. We walked behind the truck and were followed by three soldiers carrying rifles. A grave had been prepared alongside of the church adjacent to the roadway. From this point we could look back down the road we had walked and could see the village. A proper place, I thought. Six of us were directed to line up along side the casket after it had been positioned above the open grave. With three on a side and Captain Barnett at the foot of the casket, the priest moved to the head of the casket and opened his Bible. The soldiers fired three volleys from their rifles, the priest read in English from his Bible, we each saluted and then picked up a handful of the fresh dirt and sprinkled the casket as it was being lowered. This ended the ceremony and we walked back to the farm.

Conversation was muted that night. We thought about those makeshift graves hacked from the ice and snow by the civilians during our winter march and were thankful that our friend had at least been given a decent burial. My one major regret was that I did not record the name of the priest nor the church nor verify the name of the parish. I would have liked to pass this on to Riding's relatives in Macon, Missouri.

April 19. We have camped in the farmyard for six days and today we've been told that we must prepare to leave tomorrow. Beyond saying that we will be going further south into Bavaria, the guards have said little that would indicate our destination. There have been rumors to the effect that we may be on the road until General Patton's tank divisions drive into this part of Bavaria and overtake us. Other rumors have it that, regardless of what Hitler decides, Bavaria is about to set up a separate government and surrender to the Allies and we would be safe in Bavaria. I preferred to be on the road and let Patton liberate us.

The past few days fit has been difficult for our combine to accept the death of our friend. Not much of interest has transpired since his funeral. We have settled down to a daily routine of sleeping, eating and exercising and generally doing what we feel is necessary to help improve our strength and health. Our combine was visited by an American Major yesterday whose only apparent purpose was to ask questions about Riding. He stated that he would be passing any information along that might help prepare others to recognize and report the first signs of a serious illness. We described the symptoms our friend had described to us including what I thought was a very crucial point. Riding did not share his feelings of a high fever or of a sore throat to us until three days prior to his death. Riding was not one to complain, however, had we known more about his condition early enough, maybe someone could have helped. Purely speculation.

April 20, Neustadt to Pfeffenhausen. We assembled on the road between 0800 and 0830 this morning and walked from Neustadt to Pfeffenhausen, a distance of twenty-four kilometers. It was a quiet, warm, sunny day and the scenery was as beautiful as one might find in a travel brochure. I would like to bring Mary to this part of Germany some day. We had a pleasant surprise as we entered Pfeffenhausen. A group of German women had set up serving tables in the shade of a small storage building. They offered sandwiches made with a heavy dark bread and meat paté, and sandwiches made with lighter colored bread with what tasted like gooseberry jelly. Both kinds were delicious and excellent examples of home cooking. Plenty of coffee was available but it was not very good. Apparently fit had been made from roasted or burnt barley. Most of the women were talkative but one's remarks summed up what seemed to be the group's feelings when she said: "The war for us is over."

We were assigned places to sleep in various buildings and my group was assigned to the basement of a large house. Somehow it seemed as though our combine drew more basements than any other group, but with the threat of a rain shower, it would be better than sleeping outside. Although the basement was damp, by laying out several boards that had been loosely placed over a large cistern we had a dry pallet to sleep on. It didn't compare with the hay from our farm stay but the basement was dry.

April 21, on to Moosburg. Bread and butter washed down with hot Sanka was our breakfast. We hurried this one a bit because the Germans announced at 0700 that "we are going to Moosburg." No one knew where Moosburg was but an American Colonel told us it was very close to Munich and only about 25 kilometers away. This was great news! With the exception of three German military trucks and several farm wagons, there was almost no traffic and we made excellent time. The threatened rain of the night before had not materialized and the sun was out and the sky was clear. It was a beautiful day and everyone seemed to be in a happy mood. The news from our clandestine radios had been reporting the progress of General Patton's drive towards Munich and we now believed we were heading in a direction that would intercept his drive! Everyone hustled and we approached our destination just minutes prior to 1600. Our first glimpse of Moosburg revealed the twin towers of the cathedral. In fact it is one of few German cathedrals having twin towers. At 1630 our combine entered the main gate of Stalag VII A.

Brief notes from the diary of an unknown 392nd Officer courtesy of 392nd BG Mem. Assoc. Archives

Jan 25, 1945: Snow and cold for a week before evacuation ...Russians only 37 miles away.

Jan 28: Left Sagan Sunday, 3AM; walked till 7pm; covered 32 kilometers; slept in barn, started again, Monday AM; still snowing hard; town named Muscow; in horse stable, arrived 7PM.

Feb. 5: Monday, arrived at 13D; dirty nasty place!

April 3: tonite may be the night!

April 11: Wednesday; on road for eight days; left Nuremberg

April 4; Newmarkt (23K), Berching (21K), Ponsdorf (24K), Neustadt (23K), Pfeffenhausen (24K), Moosburg (25K)... 1 English parcel at Berching, 1 Belgian parcel at Neustadt, 1 American parcel at Holtzhaugen, 1/2 American parcel at Beilngries...

2nd day, slept in barns and church in Berching... 3rd night, Buching in barn; 4th nite at Josep Fuller-1000 acre farm; 5th nite Fetanagger near Mendestatten; 6th nite Beilngries with camp; Swinbach 2 nites...witnessed two fighter bombers attack two heavies;

April 12: slept at Sweinbach, left

April 13: 9:00 am, arrived at Holtzhaugen

April 14: Saturday, Holzhaugen

April 15: Ober Munchen

April 16: Gammelsdorf

April 18: Moosburg

April 23: very cold

April 24: Patton or Patch at Nurenburg

April 29: Sunday, Liberation! Flag up 12:40

May 1: Patton comes to camp

May 8, 1945: Left Moosburg to Englestadt

German rations at Nuremburg: 2 oz. beet sugar, 2 oz. jam, 1 loaf black bread, 4 oz. margarine, 6 lbs. spuds, 3 oz dry barley, 2 oz. ersatz cheese, 2 oz wurst, 3 oz. ersatz coffee. German rations on march: no food/no fuel; 1 tablespoon margarine; 3 slices bread; watery soup made from dehydrated garbage; 2 small potatoes, size of silver dollar

On April 17 while the evacuees were still in route to Moosberg, Stalag XIII-D at Langwasser was overrun and the sick and wounded who stayed behind were liberated.

200 Americans Freed At Nazi Plague Camp

LANGWASSER PRISON CAMP, Germany, April 17 (Delayed) (AP). —American ground troops freed some 200 fellow countrymen today from this typhus-ridden prison camp outside Nuernberg.

Most of the Americans were members of the air force. Among the men freed are:

LT. J. J. STAHL, of 103 Van buren st., Franklin Square, N. Y., the 8th Air Force, captured in Leipzig, Feb. 22, 1944.

LT. BERNARD TALLERICO, of 7431 43d ave., Elmhurst, N. Y., captured at Dieppe, April 25, 1944.

SGT. SAM WILENSKY, of 761 Blake ave., Brooklyn, captured in Berlin, March 6, 1944.

LT. ROBERT ASMITH, of 468 Redmond Rd., South Orange, N. J., 28th Division, captured in Luxembourg, Dec. 17, 1944.

LT. HAROLD LYNCH, of 64 North Field st., Greenwich, Conn., captured in the Brenner Pass, March 7, 1945.

LT. WILLIAM SING, of 527 North 6th st., Camden, N. J., captured in Frankfurt, May 12, 1944.



At the left wing of the western front the Canadians occupied most of Leer (1). The British advanced along both banks of the Weser toward the North Sea (2) and smashed across the Elbe at Lauenburg (3). The American Ninth Army captured Zerbst and drove on southeastward (4). The Third Army seized an airfield northeast of Eger (5). It also encountered some resistance near Passau, took Plattling and overran Moosburg (6). The Seventh (7) drove into Munich and plunged beyond Augsburg. To the west it took historic Oberammergau (8). The Russians, moving west above Berlin (9), conquered Neubrandenburg and Anklam. Other Soviet armies (10) were apparently forming another pocket north of Berlin and were forcing their pinners deeper into the capital itself (detailed maps Page 4). In Italy one American column captured Milan and was reported to have speared on to Vigevano, while another reached Como (11). Other American units advanced to the north end of Lake Garda and captured Vienna (12). The British took Padua, Mestre and Venice (13). The enemy's Ligurian Army in northwest Italy is negotiating to surrender.

The total number of US POWs in Germany was in the range of 93,000-94,000. According to a report by the US Department of Veterans' Affairs, almost 3,500 US and British Commonwealth POWs died as a result of the marches. A senior YMCA official closely involved with the POW camps put the number of Commonwealth and American POW deaths at 8,348 between September 1944 and May 1945. Official sources claim that 1,121 Americans died. It is possible that some of these deaths occurred before the death marches, but the marches would have claimed the vast majority.

Other estimates vary greatly, with one magazine for former POWs putting the number of deaths during the 500 mile march from the Gross Tychow, Poland, alone at 1,500.

The survivors had suffered immensely during the evacuations. Although unknowingly these men would be liberated at the end of April, surviving Stalag VII-A in Moosburg was another nightmare. In fact, a document written by the POWs for the Air Force Academy opens with the statement, "Stalag VII-A was a disaster."

Built to hold 14,000 prisoners, by the end of the war 130,000 prisoners of multiple nationalities were confined in the camp. It was a cesspool of disease.

