

Prisoner's drawing of Oflag 64, reproduced from The Item of January 1, 1945

BY JAMES BICKERS

Drawing does not show the three, high, barbed wire fences surrounding the 900 feet by 1200 feet area of the P.O.W.-Camp; nor are the eleven guard towers shown.

VOLUME XXV # 2

POST OFLAG ITEM

JUNE 1991

GLADWYNE, PA

Included in this newsletter are the reservation cards for your hotel rooms at the next reunion in October, at the Holiday/Waterside Inn, Norfolk, Virginia. The dates are October 10th, 11th, 12th and 13th, and we look for you all to be there.

You Received a copy of the program in last month's mailing and we certainly hope that you enjoyed reading about what we have in store for you. It's a great little city and it is a place where I know you will all have a great deal of fun and relaxation.

When you send in your hotel reservations, it would be helpful if you would send your registration fee also but send this to:

Wilbur Sharpe
7810 Fulbright Street
Bethesda, MD 20817

There are certain of the parts of the program which will require money up front, and we would be very pleased to be able to do without digging into the postage fund to help us out, so please keep in mind, when you send off your reservation for the hotel, to also send your reservation fee of \$95.00 to build up a little bit of money for prepayment of certain activities which we now have on the program. We're sure looking forward to seeing all of you fellows in Norfolk this coming October. It will be a great reunion!

ENTERPRISE, AL

Clayton Metcalf sent me a copy of a letter which was written by the late Peter G. Graffignino, of Columbus, Georgia, and I thought you might all like to read this letter, as it brings back a lot of memories and it will be interesting even to those who may not have gone on the trip back to Shubin in '71.

Society Journal, had its headquarters in Columbus, Georgia, in May of 1971.

Thanks Clay, for this little missile and hope to see you in Norfolk, even though you're not traveling too well, it's not that far and it would be a real great pleasure to see you again.

WEST END, NC

Herb Garris sent a review of "The Roads to Liberation From Oflag 64" by Clarence Meltesen, which was submitted to the local newspaper by Herb Garris, who has been a great correspondent with me and which I have tried to convey to you. He was tremendously impressed by the book written by Clarence. So, if you haven't gotten your copy, follow Herb Garris' example and send an order to Clarence by using the enclosed order blank, and start the book that he has gotten together on "The Roads to Liberation From Oflag 64!"

Incidentally, it's also interesting to note that Dr. Herbert Garris of Pinehurst North Carolina, is a member of the adjunct faculty in Government and Politics at Central Michigan University. Robert Levin is a new name to be added to our list, sent in by Dr. Herb Garris, for which I am very appreciative. I also would like to say that Herb had identified the five people in the photograph which I had sent out, and they are Captain Ed Anthony, deceased, of Charlotte, North Carolina, Captain Bill Patti, of Waiula, Hawaii, and Captain Roy Smith, deceased, of Bucks, Alabama. The

ottom row is first Lieutenant Herb Garris, and
 econd Lieutenant Carl Be deint of Wichita, Kansas.
 hanks for all of this great information and also
 hat Robert Levin was with the 36th Division in
 ount Casino and Salerno times, and left Stalag
 B in Stuttgart to open Oflag, as Herb understood
 is conversation with him.

ALEXANDRIA, VA

Nice letter from Bob Reppa, who was
 one of our Hammelberg additions to our mailing list
 and indicated that he was real pleased that he has
 been able to meet up with a couple of the Oflag
 54'ers and was able to meet them and chat with them
 at the Northern Virginia Ex-POW Chapter. He also
 said he knew Dr. Herb Garris at the University of
 Maryland, and although he never had met him, he
 feels as though he also knows Clarence Meltesen.

SWARTHMORE, PA

Although this is directly in my own
 backyard, I still got a letter from Tom Miller saying
 that he's been in Florida since the 15th of January
 and came north on the auto train on May 15th. He
 got all the mailing because he has the mail forwarded
 to him in Florida. He indicated that Norfolk is one
 of the favorite towns on the golf tour on the East
 Coast, and he played a lot of golf there. He will
 not be able to join us at Norfolk, however, because
 he is involved in the administration at the Rangers
 Group, of which he was a member during WW 11, and
 they are meeting in Fort Smith, Arkansas this year,
 or near there, and that is the hometown of the late
 Commander William O. Darby, when they were in Africa,
 Italy and Sicily. He is also buried there, where
 there is a monument and museum to him. Fort Smith
 I have since talked with Tom and chatted with him
 on the phone after he got back from Florida. Thanks,
 Tom, for this nice letter, as well as your fine
 contribution to the P.F.

ROSELLE, PARK

I don't very often talk with or
 receive a memorandum from Charlie Eberle, but,
 Charlie, I sure do appreciate hearing from you and
 certainly more than appreciate your fine contribution
 to the Postage Fund. He blames not writing to people
 on his arthritis and hypertension. I don't know about
 the hypertension, why that slows you down from writing
 but I do know that arthritis has its effect, and
 I'm sorry to hear about that, Charlie, but hope
 that you will be able to join us in Norfolk anyway
 Thanks again for your wonderful contribution to the
 Postage Fund and I look forward to seeing you in
 Norfolk, in spite of your arthritis.

STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN

This will cover two letters which
 received from Henry, and it is always a real
 pleasure to hear from our great friend in
 Sweden and who is known to practically all of
 Kriegies in both Oflag 64 and Stalag Luft 3.
 SAS not doing too well on the bottom line.
 They naturally have cut back on any freebies
 that they may have previously been able to
 arrange. He also mentioned the current Swedi
 Military Attache in Washington, Brigadier
 General Per Arne Ringh, and he is going to be
 relieved of that assignment in the not too
 distant future, which will not be so good for
 us, I don't think, but that's the way of the
 Governments and the operations of the embass
 they change people around.

It may be that we can get another visit out
 General Ringh before he returns to Sweden, b
 that is still up in the air and we're not sur
 about it. And, of course, Claire, Henry's go
 wife, joins Henry in sending the best regard
 to all of Kriegies on the list. He added
 a P.S. that his former colleague, Christians
 has just got a book published in Denmark,
 "Seven Years Among Prisoners of War!" It is
 good book but, unfortunately, only available
 in Danish, for the time being. So it is
 anticipated, I assume, that it will be
 translated into English in the near future.
 reminded me that I had met Chris Christians
 at the Stalag 3 reunion in 1990 and that
 Chris had been picked up by the Russians at
 the end of WW 11 and had spent a whole year
 prison in Russia, and only by the grace of
 God, was released and returned to civilizati
 back in Sweden. It's always nice to hear fr
 Henry and he always has some new ideas and
 new friends or something to comment about
 in his letters. I am fortunate to have many
 of his letters and perhaps someday I can ma
 a book of them, which would be very
 interesting reading.

TULSA, OK

The letter starts out, from Bob
 Thompson, that he had an interesting
 conversation a couple of weeks ago that mi
 be of interest. It certainly was, Bob, and
 real joy to read that other people than
 own Oflag group had the same opinion of
 General Johnny Waters that we did. And
 comment came from Colonel Ray Smittle
 who retired from the Air Force and was Ger
 John Water's personal pilot in the Pacific
 when he was over there during the Vietnam
 War.

Sure hope you can make Norfolk and
 look forward to seeing you and chat a litt
 bit more about Colonel Smittle.

SOUTH YARMOUTH, MA

Very nice letter including a contribution to the P.F. from Jean Gever. You'll remember Gabe Gever and she was very nice. I'll send me the obituary on Bill Rudel, which will find enclosed in this newsletter. It's my pleasure to have you on our mailing list, Jean, certainly hope that you feel qualified to certainly welcome to attend any reunion which you can conveniently travel to. Thank you very much for letting me know that Gabe received and enjoyed the years of the newsletter that we sent to him. It was always a pleasure to see him. Sure, we'd like to see you at Norfolk at all possible, in October.

ROFTON, NE

This is from a Lloyd O. Hoefs, who is a new addition to our list, and I appreciate hearing from you. I'm glad that you enjoyed the "Welcome Home Swede" about the experiences of Henry Soderberg during World War II. As to how I got your name, I do not know off hand as I don't always remember all the pieces of mail that cross my desk, and all I can say is that perhaps some other friend of yours sent the name to me, or one of my own people who scan the ex-prisoner of war newsletters came up with your name and sent it to me and I've added it to the list. And you are a member of the group now on our mailing list as long as we keep sending these newsletters. Your name will be on the one of the master lists that I have but don't have them at my fingertips, so I cannot say one way or the other. We are sure glad to have you on the list and I hope that you will continue to make known to the other fellows and make a point of joining with us in our reunions, wherever they may be held. As you may well know by now, the next one is going to be in Norfolk, Virginia on October 10th, 11th, 12th, and 13th. It will be at the Holiday Waterside Inn and you will receive in this mailing, also, reservation cards for making hotel reservations, as well as what to do about registration. It sure is great to have you aboard and look forward to many pleasant corresponding letters with you.

MANANDALE, VA

Just received one of the longest letters, with one of the finest contributions that anyone has done for the Postage Fund.

John Davis wrote and said thanks for keeping me on the item mailing list. Well, John, it's a real pleasure and unless I'm mistaken, I met you several years ago and stopped to see you in York, Pennsylvania. Is that the right Davis? I know I stopped there and I met a Davis, and I've seen like that your first name was John.

John, you're not that far from Norfolk, Virginia, so I sure look forward to seeing you in October at the Holiday/Inn Waterside.

COLUMBIA, SC

Thanks much for your letter, Don Graul, of the 24th of April of this year. Sorry, but I have not received your postal gift and the check which you sent. I do not know what has happened to it but I did not receive it, to the best of my knowledge. The group picture taken in Warsaw was also not received and I don't know what ever happened to the letter. I have cashed your other check which you probably have received canceled from the bank by now. I hope this newsletter catches up to you in Newport, Rhode Island for your summer vacation. Thanks a lot for your contribution to the PF and looking forward to seeing you in Norfolk, Virginia in October.

CLEMSON, SC

It was a real pleasure to get a short note from Ellen Bryant and her appreciation of the part of the funeral services that were involved with Wright after he passed away. I was glad to hear, Ellen, that you're doing a little bit of traveling and getting around a little bit so as to get back in the swing of things, and I'm sure that you're going to keep on going for many years to come. And thank you for writing and certainly hope that you will be able to make it to Norfolk, Virginia for our October reunion. You know that you are indeed very, very welcome. Until Norfolk, take care.

BATON ROUGE, LA

It was certainly great to hear from Gordon Smith and Molly, his charming wife, with a nice letter telling about other things. Gordon, I also want to thank you very much for the nice contribution to the PF and know that I can always count on you to supply some funds to that particular and special operating kitty. Glad to hear that you are sending a note to Herb Garris and that you and he and Bill Patti all travel together from France to Oflag 64. I certainly hope the other reunion on October 16th 17th and 18th does not interfere with ours, as I will indeed miss seeing you. The reunion of the original 501st Parachute Battalion activated in 1940 at Fort Benning shouldn't really interfere with Oflag 64 although as President of the association, I can see that you definitely have a responsibility of setting up the reunion. I will try to get a copy of the list of those that attended Las Vegas and reunion and send along to you in this mailing.

So sorry that we won't see you at the Norfolk reunion, but understand that other responsibilities do supersede our great reunions.

PENN VALLEY, CA

Henry G. Phillips, 14002 Hemlock Drive in Penn Valley, is interested more about the activities of Colonel Oakes as commanding Officer of the 2nd Battalion, 39th Infantry, and events leading to his capture by the Germans in Tunisia in the spring of '43. If anyone has knowledge of his behavior as a POW, Mr. Phillips would like very much to be in touch with that individual. He also mentions the Company Commanders, who were Captain Warren E. Walters and Second Lieutenant Robert L. Ashim and Sid Waldman. Of the three that you mentioned, Henry, two of them, to the best of my knowledge, are still living. I believe Captain Walters has passed away. Robert Ashim may be reached at 4558 Apple Orchard Lane, Rockford, Illinois 61108, and Sid Waldman can be reached at 6809 Mayfield Road, #170, Mayfield Heights, OH 44124. I'm sure each of them would be glad to talk with you or write to you about Colonel Oakes. Of course, another way to do it would be to come to our reunion in Norfolk and you may be able to contact others who were close to Colonel Oakes in Oflag 64, with whose names I am not familiar. Thank you very much Henry for your inquiry and I hope this will be some assistance to you. If I can be of further service, please advise.

WENTWORTH, MO

Thank you very much, Bob and Evelyn Oshlo, for sending me the Photocopy of the SAS Headquarters new building in Stockholm, Sweden. Also, thanks very much for your contribution, a very nice one, to the PF and for the little note that you attached to the photocopy of the building. We certainly all will look forward to seeing you and Evelyn at the reunion in Norfolk, Virginia, at the Holiday/Waterside Inn. I am sure we will have a great time, as it is a very great place for having a reunion. We were glad that you were able to make the trip to the Scandinavian countries and return safely to the good old U.S.A.

ARLINGTON, VA

I previously mentioned that I had a very brief note, along with John Davis' contribution to the Postage Fund, and I thought that was a short note, but I got one from [unclear] and it

said, 'for the PF, Marcellus. He didn't even sign his name, but I took it from the envelope. anyway, thanks, Marcellus, for your nice contribution to the PF, and sure hope that you can make it down to Norfolk to be with us in October.

SAN ANTONIO, TX

Very nice again to hear from Colonel Williamson, The great historian of the 36th Division, who called to my attention the fact that in the talk given by Deputy Secretary of the Army, Eric A. Orsini, he made several references to "peeps". he did not identify what the reference was but the assumption made by "Chum" Williamson is that this name "Peep" later became known as a "jeep" and they were used in place of the recon cars that were used in the early part of the War. I think I have that correct and hope that this meets with your approval. He also indicated that he has two copies of the "Roads to Liberation From Oflag 64" by Clarence Meltesen, which is the content of the order blank and a review which is part of this newsletter. He indicates that he's going to donate one copy to the library at Fort Sam Houston, which many of us visited when we were in San Antonio for the reunion a couple of years ago. Thanks, "Chum" for the informative letter, and hope you can make it to Norfolk in October.

BRENTWOOD, TN

Jim Bates writes and tells me that he left the group on the second day after they started marching west from Oflag 64. He says he can't remember the fellow's name but he was a big chap from Oklahoma. Maybe this was John Shirk or Bob Thompson. Perhaps one of you will recognize Jim's name. He eventually wandered through Poland, spent three days in Warsaw, then on to Kiev and Odessa. He got on the British ship, Alexandria, and arrived in Boston on V-E. He stayed in the Army for thirty years and retired as a Colonel. He is still working for a family-owned business in Tennessee. He says the only POW that he spent any time with was Hutchison, who you recall just passed away two years ago when he was De [unclear] at the school at the University of Tennessee. He spoke of the possibility of a reunion in Atlanta or Charleston, and we also have another person that suggested Atlanta, so maybe between the two of you we can get something going for Atlanta after Colorado Springs.

Let's put this on the list and keep this in mind. It sounds very interesting. Thank you very much also for your kind donation to the P.F., and hope that you continue to receive the mailings which are sent out from this office, and I look forward to seeing you again.

GLADWYNE, PA

This is the final paragraph to our newsletter, and I just want to make sure that everyone understands about the upcoming reunion. I am enclosing a card for your hotel reservations, and as indicated on the reverse side of the card, it gets sent directly to the hotel in Norfolk, Virginia.

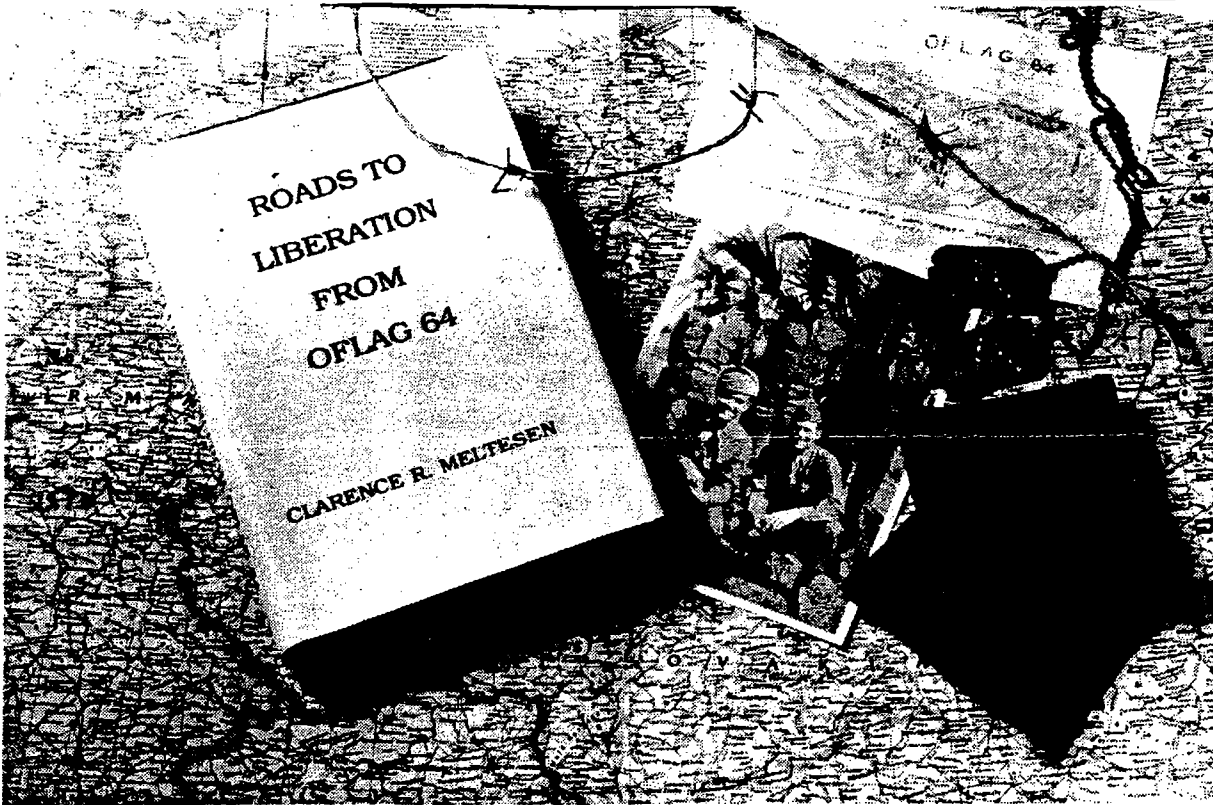
The other item that I would like to call to your attention is the registration fee, \$ 95.00 which should be sent ASAP to Mr.

MR. Wilbur Sharpe
7810 Fulbright Court
Bethesda, Maryland 20817

The registration fee we are asking in advance because we will probably need some funds available to pay for certain advance reservation which will be required, such as the bus trip and a couple of the other functions that we are planning. The program still remains pretty much the same. There are no additions at the present time, but as things develop further as we get closer to the dates, you will receive a adequate information about any changes which may occur.

Your editor,

John F. Slack



STORY OF ESCAPE - The photo shows the dust cover of the book being reviewed overlaid on a North German map. The string of barbed wire is a reminder of the captivity, as well as the dog tags which soldiers wore, and the black bread that was issued. The photo is one taken at Port Said, Egypt, of five of the escapees enroute to Naples, Italy.

(SEE OVER)

TO ORDER:

SEND A CHECK FOR \$20.00 TO:

CLARENCE MELTESEN

810 GONZALEZ DRIVE

SAN FRANCISCO

CA 94132

Escape From German Prison Told

BY HERBERT L. GARRIS
ROADS TO LIBERATION FROM OFLAG 64. Clarence R. Meltessen, 2d ed., Oflag 64 Press, 810 Gonzalez Dr., San Francisco, Calif. 94132, \$20. 1990.

With the current interest in Desert Storm this new book will provide a compelling and poignant parallel, even today, to soldiers captured and their treatment in WWII.

It is dedicated, as the title suggests, to the officers held in Oflag 64 in Western Poland. Their movement was made on January 21, 1945 a few days ahead of the Russian advance and involved about 1500 personnel.

The preface is an enlightening framework of the events which follow capture to liberation (or repatriation) and the subsequent trip back to the United States. The author's research was from primary sources and included responses from about 2300 officers which made it a fair and balanced sampling of the varied experiences.

The glossary will be invaluable to those readers unfamiliar with German and the common terms used in that field. Likewise, the bibliography is splendid with a wide coverage of works from the panorama of the overall European campaigns with an emphasis on the prisoner of war genre. The maps and illustrations, though black and white, are easily readable, germane and displayed in a convenient and chronological sequence.

The work then follows two main themes; one, the saga of the large number of officers from those in North Africa in November 1942 and elsewhere on through their stay in Oflag 674. The second theme and primary thrust of the book covers the departure from Oflag and the split into two directions after the first day of marching. The first and larger element was marched westward across the North German plains south of Berlin (about 360 miles) to Parchim just southeast of Hamburg. From there, they were moved by train southward (about 200 miles) to Hammelburg, which lies east of Frankfurt. Finally, they made the last leg to Moosburg, northeast of Munich, and liberation on April 5, 1945. An element that fell behind remained in Luckenwalde and was liberated on May 12, 1945.

The second group, which was Odessa bound, was composed of those who began their escape on the second day of the march. This group was the one to which the reviewer belonged. The first night out some 18 miles from Szubin (Schubin) provided the most opportune "escape window." The prisoners were quartered in a huge

dairy barn and simply dug deeply into the hay and failed to show up at the next morning roll call. The Germans were nervous and ever fearful of the Russian drive and did not take time to search for those missing and continued the march. After a discreet time the escapees dug out and found themselves in the hands of friendly Polish people, and shortly the Russian advance party. They moved by foot and lend-lease trucks to an assembly camp in the suburbs of Warsaw called Rembertow and later to Brest-Litovsk from where they were sent by rail to Odessa on the Black Sea.

The freezing weather of the Russian steppes through the Ukraine was not a deterrent and the evacuation was scheduled with the arrival of many transports bringing war supplies for an Odessa departure on the 7th of March 1945. The route was through Istanbul, to Port Said, and on to Naples, Italy. With a few exceptions the majority sailed to Boston for a one-grade spot promotion and shipment to the United States on April 9, 1945.

It is a touching story of many fine men, several of whom the reviewer knew well and served with since. The work is well organized and easy to read with many tales of heroism and exemplary conduct under some inordinate stress and the demands of a cruel winter and its costly environment. Simply stated, it is a composite of how with great ingenuity, resourcefulness and determination they survived.

The author's descriptions of the many bold escape attempts, as well as the way in which camp boredom was managed are most interesting, especially that of "the bird is going to sing" to alert the prisoners that a BBC broadcast was imminent on the secret camp radio. One memorable experience with a few moments of hoped-for-freedom took place at Hammelburg (soon after the arrival) when a costly and abortive attempt was made with a penetration into the camp by a U.S. Armored Task Force to 60 miles behind the lines. The tortuous march across the North German Plains in severe cold, shortage of food and very poor accommodations was led by some of the Army's finest senior American officers.

(Dr. Herbert L. Garris of Pinehurst is an adjunct faculty member in Government and Politics at Central Michigan University).

William Rudel, 74

Machinery firm executive,
WWII prisoner of war

PUNTA GORDA, Fla. — William Escott Rudel, 74, retired vice president of a machinery firm and former Waquoit resident, died Wednesday at Manor Care Nursing Home in Sarasota, Fla.

He was the husband of Anne (Kiley) Rudel of Punta Gorda.

Born in Montreal, Canada, Mr. Rudel graduated in 1934 from Choate School in Wallingford, Conn., and in 1938 from Princeton University, Princeton, N.J.

During World War II, Mr. Rudel served as an Army captain in the 17th Field Artillery. He was captured by Gen. Rommel's troops in North Africa and taken prisoner for almost three years.

Throughout his career, Mr. Rudel worked for Rudel Machinery Co. Inc. of New York City. He retired as vice-president in 1972.

Mr. Rudel lived in Old Greenwich, Conn., and for about a year in Old Saybrook, Conn., before

moving to Waquoit in the mid-1970s and to Punta Gorda last fall.

While living in Waquoit Mr. Rudel was a Red Cross volunteer, treasurer of the Waquoit Bay Yacht Club, representative for former POWs to the Joint Veteran's Committee of the Massachusetts National Cemetery of Bourne, and a member of the Waquoit Congregational Church.

He was a member of the American Ex-Prisoners and the National Machine Tools Association.

Surviving besides his wife are a son, Thomas Rudel of Somerset, N.J.; two daughters, Joan Rudel of Seattle, Wash., and Betsy Mayer-son of St. Louis, Mo.; two brothers, John of Long Boat Key, Fla., and Thomas Rudel of West Park, N.Y.; a sister, Elizabeth Gatov of Kentfield, Calif.; and two grandchildren.

There will be a memorial service at 10 a.m. Tuesday in Waquoit Congregational Church, with burial at 2 p.m. in the Massachusetts National Cemetery of Bourne.

Memorial donations may be made to the American Red Cross, 286 South St., Hyannis, MA 02601.

SWANSON, William May a long-time Balboa resident, Mr. Swanson passed away on April 20, 1991 in Newport Beach, of complications from cancer, at the age of 76.

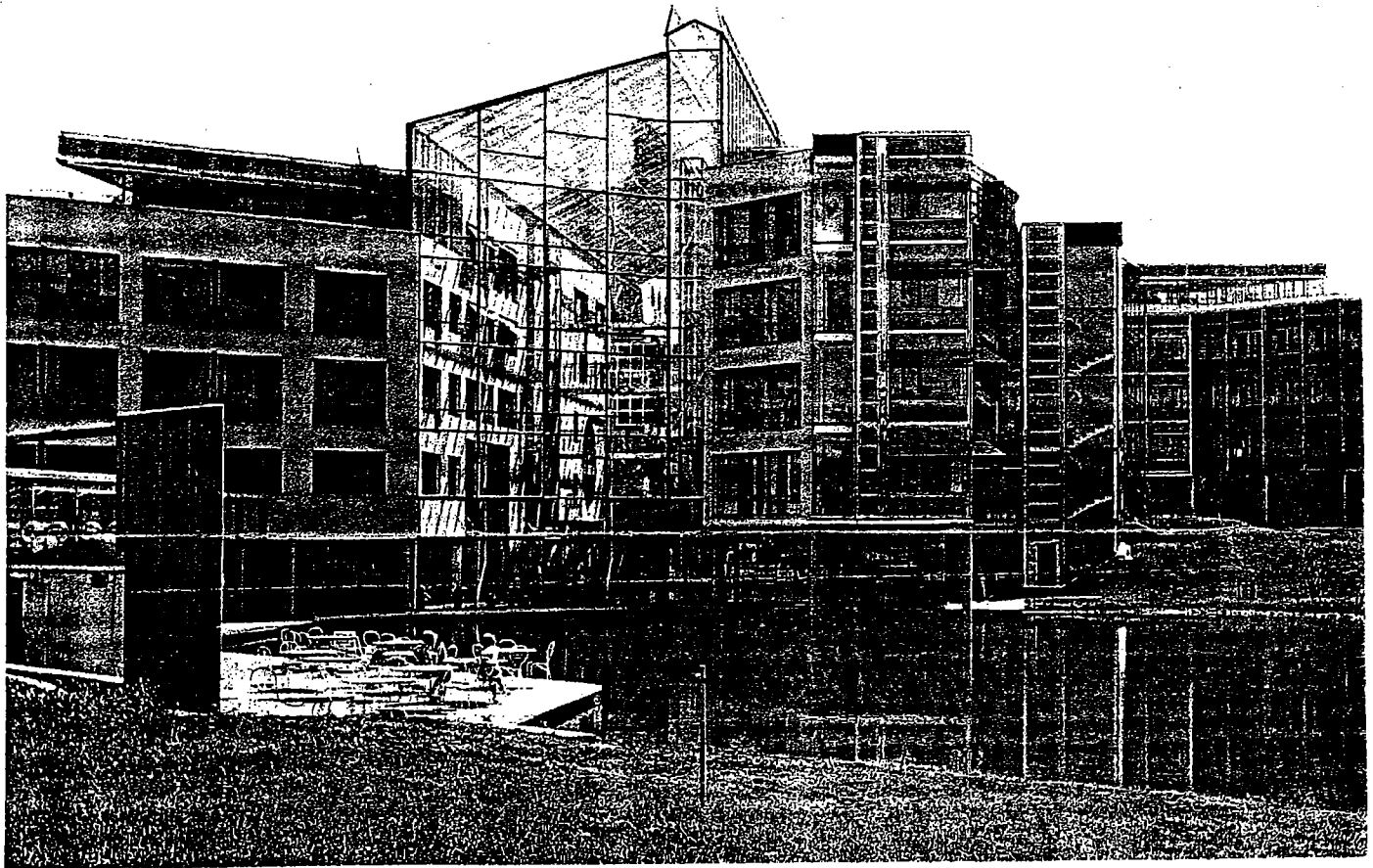
Born in Fremont, Nebraska he moved to California in 1929, graduating from Los Angeles High School in 1932. He attended UCLA pledging Delta Sigma Phi Fraternity. He traded in automobiles and cattle in the Imperial Valley and began active duty with the Army in May, 1942, where he served as an infantry officer with the 36th Division in North Africa and Italy and was a prisoner of war from September 1943 to March 1945.

After the war he established and ran the Monrovia Plastic Company in Monrovia, California, from 1947 to 1962. While residing in the San Gabriel Valley, he was active in many social and service organizations including: Los Ballerinos dance club, Glendora Little Theatre, Foothill Community Concert Association and Monrovia Kiwanis, where he served as President in 1955.

He moved his family to Balboa in April, 1963. He was actively associated with the Balboa Peninsula Point Assoc., the Balboa Island Sculling and Punting Society, and American Legion Post #291.

He is survived by his daughter, Sharon Higuera of Sierra Madre; sons: Peter of Ramona, CA., and Daniel of Laguna Beach; and his grandson, Matthew Dalany of Pasadena.

Following scattering of his ashes at sea, the family will be receiving visitors 11:30am, Friday, April 26, at the Newport Harbor American Legion Hall, Newport Beach. In lieu of flowers donations may be made to the American Legion Chaplain's Welfare Fund, 215 15th St., Newport Beach, CA 92663.



May 5, 1991

Dear John and Mary,

We are long overdue in sending you money for the Postage fund—Am enclosing a check. So very sorry that you had to miss the "TIL WE MEET AGAIN" Tour of Europe. It was a very enjoyable trip. Henry Soderberg thought of everything and it was an outstanding group of people that were on the tour. We renewed old friendships and made new friends. All the Scandinavian Countries were very modern, clean and interesting. Our brief trip into Russia was quite interesting, considering that Russia is in the news and there are so many changes.

We plan on attending the Reunion in October.

Bob and Evelyn Ashlo