

James Bickers

VOL. XXIX

POST OFLAG 64 ITEM

NOVEMBER, 1993

LOUISVILLE, KY: Bill, a note of recognition for the way in which you handled the Reunion in Louisville last month. My specific observations follow:

The Hospitality Room filled with so many momentos brought in by Bob Bonomi and Jerry Alixis and many others made it into a nice place to visit and quietly chat about the days gone by. Even today, a nice note from Jane Graffagnino reinforced the point that she made earlier as we sat and spoke of the great respect that all of us had for Peter, her husband, and the devotion he held for this 45th Inf. Div. She sent some items which I will share with the members in a next issue. The same thoughts were in the mind of Mary Jane Barkovic as well talked easily on Saturday as I began to pack up the load of mine. The maps made it an even easier place to gather and to "show and tell".

The enlarged blow up of Oflag 64 Camp was constantly being observed by many who tried to recall precise places, events and the appropriate times.

The pleasant trip on the "Belle of Louisville" along the Ohio River was so relaxing and with such good service and a delicious lunch prepared for us. My table was perhaps like yours in that we, in a short hour plus, got to visit and know someone we seldom see. For example, Mary and Vince DiFrancesco and Duane Kennedy, my mailing service and computer mentor, were so engaging and pleasant to be with. While the weather was not all that cooperative, we still had a good time. Your letter which came from Elaine and John Creech said it all about the professional singing group which we heard on Saturday night. Their Irving Berlin selections were well chosen and equally as well presented.

My tour of the Historic Churchill Downs and the Farmington Home were most enjoyable and interesting. Not ever having been to either, made it unique for me. Am told that the Fort Knox group was treated just as nicely by the usually courteous and thoughtful military.

The Memorial Service was the highlight of the entire weekend. It was truly touching and a very respectful and attentive audience that these soldiers performed before with such professional precision and ability.

There were a few glitches, and they are inevitable when you are dealing with that large a crowd. However, you did a great job. We not only thank you, but, Mrs. Susan McCracken for her "Yeoman Girl Friday" assist. Bill Cory.

FAR HILLS, NJ: Joe, so good hearing from you again this week. Thanks for your mention of Father Brach in our search list. He was so very well known and respected that his name was added much earlier. Thank you also for the check for the Postage Fund. What a coincidence for me, at least, to have joined a lady for Sunday breakfast recently as she was going south to Florida. She had been one of the best students for Central Michigan University over near you at McGuire AFB, and her home then was Scotch Plains, not more than 10 miles from you. Even at the risk that you will read it again later in this issue, I was handed a new book this week for review and it is titled Circles of Hell: The War in Italy in 1943-1945, by Eric Morris. It surely looks good at first glance. Best wishes and let's stay in touch. Joe Freylinghuysen.

SILVER SPRING, MD: Mary, I appreciate your nice letter with your corrections that you pointed out to me. Yes, we did see and speak to Peg and Ed Graf at Louisville. Their address is: Ed and Peg Graf, 1929 Lotus S.E., Grand Rapids, MI, 49506-4409. I still plan to call you and say hello at Thanksgiving while we are in Olney with our youngest daughter. Mary L. Kallander.

VALLINGBY, SWEDEN: Claire and Henry, so good seeing you in Louisville. Glad that you enjoyed it as much as we did, and others too. I will save some of the details in your recent letter to stress an important point to our readers.

Henry has a fair amount of copies of the Frank Diggs version of The Welcome Swede which he retrieved from the publisher. Many at Louisville approached him in search of a copy. An arrangement has been made between us to: (a) Send \$14.00 to The Post Oflag 64 ITEM Postage Fund, and (b) send \$6.00 in U.S. cash to Henry in Sweden and he will gladly sign it and mail you a copy. His address is: Henry Soderberg, Brackegatan 2,X, 162 25 Vallingby, Sweden.

Your letter of 9-16-93 was so welcome with fine photos of your country home in RIMFARSA. The copy of (a) the Douglas Tanguy Reunion, your old friend and internee from KREUZBERG, ILAG VIII/Z and (b) your narrative of people and events especially relating to Oflag 64 is priceless. I will shortly begin some editing for you, like Frank does, though not as exceptional, and go with it either in The Newsletter or Monograph prints as IN OFLAG 64 AS I SAW IT.

They are all great and many thanks. Best wishes and keep in touch.
L a i r e and Henry Soderberg.

FAYETTEVILLE, GA: Richard, have here your letter following your recent retirement. Welcome to the Oflag 64 Group and hopefully you will enjoy the ITEM and looking ahead to 1994 plan to meet us at DFW. For our readers who may not know you and for some who do, he was taken captive at the same vicinity where many of the 101st Airborne were in widely dispersed Normandy positions far from the designated drop zones. We were in the same Artillery Battery and have not seen each other since 1945. His career, a very successful one, has been as widespread as those in the military have to face. Recently, he completed 34 years with Ford Motor Co., with eight locations across the U.S., Hawaii, and Alaska, as well as the two Western Provinces of Canada. Welcome aboard, and I hope we will see each other soon in one of my frequent trips down there to Norcross near you. Many thanks. Best wishes. Richard C. Soliday.

EAST FALMOUTH, MA: Anne, thank you for your letter of 10-15-93. The photo of Bill was in a copy of The Golf Magazine which I mailed to her. It came from John Slack. His address is: John Slack, Box 170, Gladwyne, PA, 19035. I am sure he will be glad to hear from you.

The Village of Pinehurst, as you said, is a very beautiful community as it was when you used to visit here. The Median from the Circle to the Village is lovely with the daily landscaped and manicured rye grass. Bill's mother lived here some time ago. Warm regards. Anne Rudel.

FORT KNOX, KY: Chaplain David Bates, many thanks for your recent nice letter with the names of the Memorial Service participants and with your well chosen remarks to us. It was so professionally done and for our readers, the message is enclosed in this issue. Hopefully, by now, the letters of appreciation to each of

your Commanders has reached you. With many heartfelt thanks for such a fine and respectful service. Chaplain (Major) David Bates.

BATON ROUGE, LA: Gordon, so good to see and spend some time with you in Louisville but the visit here early in November to Pinehurst with Mary was super. He was attending a reunion of the 501st Prcht. Bn. over at Bragg that weekend.

Your nice story which was carried in The Ex-POW Bulletin back a couple of years ago is enclosed for our readers in this Issue. In the photo, you will recognize Bill Paty from Hawaii and who was at our reunion in October. Your thank-you note came on 11-13-93. Best wishes. Gordon and Mary Smith.

HAMILTON, GA: Jane, your letter came and I will only say how glad that you took time out to write and send me some of the momentos that you have. Many thanks, Jane and I will be back in touch. Her address is: Mrs. Jane Graffagnino, P.O. Box 387, Hamilton, GA, 31811. She would like to hear from any of our readers who were in the 45th Inf. Div. and knew her husband, Peter, one of the Battalion Surgeons in Italy and later with our marchers in Luckenwalde.

EL PASO, TX: Eva, appreciate your letter of 8-24 and the info which you sent to me about your late husband, Milton Moore. It was dispatched and as you notice when you read your copy of the Memorial Service program, you can be proud to see his name there. I sent in John Cook's name at the same time. Are you giving any thought to travel with one of the EX-POW Groups to Normandy in June, 1994. I am taking my son-in-law and hope you will come. Thanks. Eva J. Moore.

ASHEBORO, NC: Bob, so good seeing you twice lately in Salisbury, NC. and at Louisville. Appreciate your book suggestions and the first chance I get I will bring up a couple of good ones I have enjoyed reading and reviewing. Best wishes to you and Frances. Bob Cheatam.

BEAUFORT, SC: Earl, thank you for the check for the Postage Fund and giving me the correct zip code. Regret that you could not make the Louisville affair, but soon you can start planning for D/FW. I hope. Earl A. Smoak, Jr.

STANDWOOD, MI: Jay, got your note via Cory. Also real pleased that you found the announcement in the DAV Bulletin. I used ten service magazines and they, about all, came through for me on the advance of the meeting in October. Best wishes. Jay A. Drake.

ATLANTA, GA: Jim, thank you for your list you sent me on the Memorial List and as you glance at the one made for the Louisville reunion. They have been entered. Hope you and Peggy will try for D/FW in 1994. Thanks. Jim Bancker.

COXSACKIE, NY: Lew, appreciate your recall of Harvey Ford and as you notice, it is properly entered. Thanks. Lew Warren.

WACO, TX: Paul, thank you for your nice letter and your concern for Francis Stevens in Washington, DC. I am taking your letter and a couple of others up to him at Thanksgiving along with your short extract from Two Hundred Fifty Days. You are a good writer and I look forward to the whole book when you get around to it. Best wishes. Paul A. Marable, Jr.

HOT SPRINGS, AR: Mervin, your nice letter of 9-2-93 came and it was good hearing from you and your interest in Francis Stevens. Your nice words said about the ITEM production were not so much done by me, but the fine correspondents out there, like you, who help make the news. Mervin Danielson.

ARLINGTON, VA: Frank, thank you for your suggestion for a last chance for orders for the Anniversary Book. It is enclosed in this issue. Will see you and have a lunch at Thanksgiving. Frank Diggs.

PADUCAH, KY: Sam, thank you so very much for coming to Louisville and renewing a friendship which dates back to Normandy in France in June, 1944. So proud you went away and finished college and graduated from law school and became an attorney for your county. The single most vivid and touching thing about this Reunion was the small paper you showed me of the list of those of us in a French box car (the 40 and 8) in which we travelled from Rennes east to Tours and Chalon and finally to Limburg and Stalag XII A. Your loss of W. W. Smith a fellow officer in their 9th Inf. Div., and best friend, is a sad loss to me, for you two were close as I was to Carl Bedient. We call it **BONDING** and perhaps in the survival game it is the most vital single strength. Sam Carlick.

GREEN COVE SPRINGS, FL: Hervey, we finally got it right! Your note came this week and the nice check for the Postage Fund were appreciated. Surely enjoyed getting to know you at the reunion and am glad you liked the The Grand Tour. It was at first an amateur effort until Clarence Meltesen got his hooks on it. And, he is an extraordinary writer and he put some elegance into it for which I am very proud.

Speaking of Lloyd Shoemaker's book The Escape Factory, which is a peach of a story, you may write or call him and hopefully he has a couple or so stashed away from us. His address is: P.O. Box 12694, Salem, OR, 97309, Tel: 503-364-0651. Good luck and I believe he might help you, especially since we are in fairly regular touch. Hervey Robinson.

NORWELL, MA: Ralph, thank you for your nice letter and the recent articles about you. The prestigious Genesis Award merited my placing it along with your letter in this issue. But the true highlight for many of our readers will be the Grand Proclamation which you lifted from the wall at Szubin as you headed out to the East and Odessa.

A short explanation will assist the readers in why it was placed on the bulletin board in the first place. Not very far southwest of us in the town of Sagan was located Stalag Luft III, an Air Force camp with mainly British and American officer prisoners. A massive escape took place on the night of March 24-25, 1944. It was such a shock to Hitler that of the eighty who escaped, fifty were shot and killed by the Germans. It was called the Sagan Order and the Proclamation shown in this issue is the result of the embarrassment to the German Government.

Appreciate the nice check for the Postage Fund which came along. Our congratulations to you and your family in the very successful career that you have enjoyed in the supermarket enterprises that you have developed. While you are enjoying some free time, finally, please do us the honor and press along on those memoirs. If you hit a snag on the way and need a name or an address from our roster, please drop me a card. John Creech was mailed the wedding reception photo today and you should be hearing from him soon.

The telephone call was helpful this week for your address in Fort Lauderdale. We wish Madeline and you a nice and pleasant winter in the Southern sun. Bless you. Ralph Tedeschi.

ATLANTA, GA: Barbara, thank you very much for the interesting letter and the many items of memorabilia that you had saved from the records. Her father was Dalton Y. Medlen. the diary which I appreciated the most is fascinating and so well portrays how he coped with the twenty or so months that he was in German hands. The reunion went very well! Barbara Medlen Dobbs.

SAN FRANCISCO, CA: Clarence, thank you very much for the items that you kindly mailed to me on Italian POW camps. Now to explain to you and the readers what I became involved in from the time I got home from Louisville until even now. At a Community College near me, a tremendous program was

assembled and it is titled The Holocaust Series. It took almost a year of planning to extend through the fall until December 2d.

It is without doubt one of the best planned productions of guest speakers, an academic symposium of scholars, and a weekly film presentation either by film or VCR on certain well thought out parts of the Holocaust. The fine material in the Issue shows you the different places and events with an idea to create an interest in and to give the attendees a better understanding of the horrible and dehumanizing story.

Well, Clarence, and this is where your help was so beneficial, they asked me to do the fifth lecture. Right away I had right much latitude and quickly seized on a presentation which I have given a few times before entitled "The Road to Liberation from Oflag 64". Using your book, I trace the events for us in a Nazi POW Camp from the January 21, 1945 march on to our repatriation and liberation respectively. That was a cinch and I have improved upon it and in this case had far more than the usual 20-22 minutes allowed at service club meetings. Used a lavalier mike and had great freedom and with 35 mm slides gave a good account of two vastly different tracks followed.

Then a ringer was given to me to take in the second hour into a discussion after a VCR entitled "Kitty Hart Returns to Auswitz". I had some doubts about it but began a study only to show the outlines of the camp and the main features of it. The VCR did the rest and it went well.

Then the other presentations seemed to draw me in and they have been so very worthwhile and interesting. For example, a Brig. Gen. Fran Roberts, here in the Village, gave a fine account of his troops liberating Belsen-Belsen, and then a film on how the British came in and supplied water, DDT, and medicine and cleaned the place up and buried the thousands lying on the ground.

By far the most outstanding speaker was on this past Tuesday night, Nov. 8th, thirty-five years after the eve of Kristallnacht. And here the main speaker was Major General Sidney Schachnow, the Commander of the J.F. Kennedy Special Forces Center and School over at Fort Bragg. He was living in Lithuania and at ten years of age was brought into a concentration camp and remained for four years until the Russians overran the camp just north of us at KOVNO, in Lithuania. His slideshow was articulate and clear with an audience of nearly 400 present.

Clarence, I often wondered why we knew so little of the concentration camps and horrible happenings within them. Or worse yet, the Germans disclaimed any knowledge of them and speaking of their locations I did visit the cleaned up version of one we can see today at Dachau which is only ten miles from Moosburg, Stalag VII A.

In short, you will find the program and the principal speakers and a small book mark. And while this is a small version of the subject compared to the Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC, it does appear to be one of the best thought out ones of its kind in the country.

Again, many thanks for the fine support that you gave me, and I hope to assist in your Men of Oflag 64. Best wishes.
Clarence Meltesen.

HOUSTON, TX: Thank you Ted for your letter of 9-23-93 which I so inadvertently overlooked until after the Reunion. I mailed you a copy of The ITEM with the obits of two of your friends. In the case of Vic Danylik, the date of his loss was traced, but if anyone of our members know of his family and their location, please let Ted and me know. Also from Houston came a nice article with before and after photos of the "Big Three": Tony Vetrano, John Jones and Ted Roggen. Ted Garrett sent it in and when Ted sends a better company from the Houston Chronicle, a wrap-up on it will be published by us. His address is: Ted Roggen, 1800 Augusta Drive, Suite 224, Houston, TX, 77057. Thank you so much. Ted Roggen.

PINEHURST, NC: A NOTE OF APPRECIATION. In the past year, your mail has been very complimentary about the ITEM - the style, composition and content. It is, therefore, a pleasure for me to introduce you to the two fine people who have been of such great assistance in the detailed composition of each issue. They are Pat and Bob Shenkle from here in the Village. Both have excellent and interesting records in management of diversified groups. Just recently, they have developed an accounting firm in their lovely home which show lots of promise. They are active in The Sandhills Chapter of TROA. He is presently one of its officers. Aside from being good tennis players, they are highly skilled in computer science and have printed the final drafts of each issue of THE ITEM. They have an array of computer and allied equipment such as the fax. They have run off the mailing stickers and these are mailed to John Slack who then assembles, reproduces the copies, stuffs them and places stamps on and mails them out to you. These folks will not accept any money or payment of any kind from me. I am able to persuade them to take some money for the fax bills on the telephone bill and from time to time bring in some items like address stickers and bond copy paper. We appreciate the dedication and patriotic service of these two U.S. Coast Guard professionals. Many thanks and our best wishes. The Editor.

CHUNCHULA, AL: Roy, what a nice letter of 11-14-93. Roy was a very close friend and one who helped the rapid departure of Oberst Schneider on the journey he provided in January, 1945. He had come to Szubin about the same time, mid-September, 1944, with a DSC for his duty with the 9th Inf. Div., as did so many

from Normandy. He stayed on active duty and had the good fortune to be assigned to Berlin where he met Karin, Roy Smith.

KERRVILLE, TX: Nina and Bob, your two recent letters were so welcome and helpful. They, in part, led to a decision supported by John Slack, to try to follow your successful pattern in your leadership role with Stalag Luft III, which is considerably larger than ours. That led to the preparation for our members of a Treasurer's Report, a copy is included for you and one to our members.

The energy and enthusiasm which you two have shown to the Stalag Luft III Group is remarkable and I know how proud they are of you.

Glad you enjoyed the trip to Canada and we all hope that next year you may consider D/FW only a seven hour drive from your home in 1994.

John Slack and I join in many thanks for your great assistance to us. Nina and Bob Weinberg.

LA GRANGE PARK, IL: I want to thank you for your letter with an apology for me to have gone from 8-22-93 and not replied. But on the good side you are 74 years old and still here to meet some more appells. If your name made my mailing list, there is hope that it won't in the 50th Anniversary Book as deceased. Spoke to Mary Clardy in Skokie, IL, where it is being printed and she will try to catch it if it hasn't been done already. Here again, I am asking the members to let Bob and me know when Jack Pontitz passed away and the address of any of his family. Charles Eberle came to the reunion and we spoke together a time or so. His address is: Robert C. Plummer, 23 Brewster Avenue, La Grange Park, IL, 60525. Thank you Bob and let's plan on D/FW next year. Robert C. Plummer.

HENDERSONVILLE, NC: Elaine and John, thank you for your nice letter to Cory which reached me with your kind remarks about your impression of the reunion. I concur completely with all of the enthusiasm about Mr. Brown, above, and the fine entertainment group which did so well on Saturday night. Of course Chaplain Bates' ceremony on Sunday was extraordinary in every way. Glad that John Slack and I were able to get the wall maps up, which was a neat suggestion from you, John. At almost any time in that room, someone was tracing, searching or finding a place where he had been. Will do it again in 1994. One member asked me the source of them. All were my own saved from many years subscription with National Geographic Society and the one large map was one issued by the military during my last tour in Germany and which was a must as we rambled all over the place on every spare week and or leave. By now you have received my note and a photo from Ralph Tedeschi in which you are included in a 1945 wedding reception up in Worcester, MA. When you get a chance and call where the others are

located, please let me know and I will include it in another issue. Elaine and John Creech.

ROSWELL, NM: Walter, thank you for the correction of the address and to have you back in the fold after a little absence. Also, appreciate the check for the Postage Fund. If you will let me know which ITEMS you have for 1992 and 1993, I will mail you the missing copies. Welcome back and our best wishes. Walter Gill.

FREDERICKSBURG, TX: George, thank you for the check for the Postage Fund. Now that we are heading to Texas in 1994, why not try to meet us at D/FW. It looks about the same mileage for you as it is from the Weinbergs at Kerrville to the Hospitality Room in Big D. Missed you at Louisville. Thanks and my best wishes. George Greene.

NORTH FORT MYERS, FL: Nan and Jim, so good seeing you at Louisville. It was truly a great time. Appreciate, too, the check for the Postage Fund. Your card arrived on 10-8 and we do have Russ Ford's new address corrected. Thank you for that. Nan and Jim MacArevey.

HOUSTON, TX: John (or J.T.) in my September issue of THE ITEM a couple of errors were made. One, I wrote your name wrong at the end of the entry. Second, your submission of James Fraser was taken care of and you will note it in the Memorial List we received at the Service on Sunday morning the 10th of October. Liked the nice article in The Houston Chronicle and hope to carry it on the next issue. John (J.T.) Jones.

WASHINGTON, DC: John, thank you for coming to Louisville to our reunion. All along I thought of the one that I had attended in Salisbury, NC where Gene Konik, the Medical Center Director, gave such a fine account of himself and what the VA stands for as they welcomed about 350 Ex-POW's at a very thoughtful and impressive brunch for them. My tour of that fine facility made such a nice imprint on me and the dedication and care that was observed there. Your one short speech was well received and we thank you for coming and the insight it gave us of what leadership we have in you in Washington. You are doing a great job and it is recognized and appreciated. John Vogel, Deputy Director of Veterans Affairs.

ATLANTA, GA: Boomer, thank you for your fine and calm conduct as the Chairman of the Business Session on Saturday morning 10-9 in Louisville. You struck me as a kind and willing listener who had full control over what may have become a noisy crowd. The final vote on the question and the many events which

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followed were most reassuring to John Slack, especially, and to me as well. Your most generous check for the Postage Fund was another strong indicator of the sense of the majority of the assembled quorum, and I thank you very much for a job well done. It was also good to see Clementi and you, as always, each year. Boomer Holder.

MONTGOMERY, AL: Ed, so good seeing you and Barb again. I missed you both at Colorado Springs and hope you will plan on D/FW next year. By now, I hope that you have made the trip down to Enterprise, Al., to visit the family of Jerry Sage. Know you will be a good and welcomed representative of all of us who had such high regard for Jerry. Please let us know of any assist that we can give them in your next letter to me. Thank you so much for your check for the Postage Fund. Ed Rinehart.

LAWTON, OK: Martin, thank you for coming to the Louisville reunion. It was so nice to be able to see and talk to an Okie again, having been away from Lawton and Sill for so long. We are already trying to work out that D/FW trip and make a side trip south to Killeen and north of there to Lawton to see it again. Thank you very much for the check for the Postage Fund. Martin Keiser.

WEST BOYLSTON, MA: Ormond, what a nice long letter waiting for me when I returned from Louisville. I regret that you could not come. I, too, was a bit disturbed at the obit of General Waters for the inaccuracy of the one line that you and many others, no doubt, surely detected. That sort of thing gives me pause to think, for if there is anything that goes in THE ITEM I hope and pray it is correct and done in good taste. I will be in DC in the Thanksgiving season and hope to try to call and even visit the two authors of the obit. Certainly, not chide them but to quietly set the record straight.

Your concern and thoughtful remarks about Col. Pop Goode are shared by all of us who knew him. The last time I saw him he was on the assignment at The Soldier's Home there in DC.

Your suggestion to be in touch with Joe Matthews up in Raleigh, NC, has been done with a recent copy of one of the ITEMS and a welcome note to join in with us, if he wishes.

All of us join in with prayers and condolences for you and the loss of your wife, Dorothy, recently. If you would send me a copy of the obit, I will place it in our next issue. As you are finding out estate settlement is a long and tedious legal matter and we surely understand that. We missed you in Louisville and hope that you may find it convenient to try for D/FW in 1994. Thank you very much for the check for the Postage Fund. Our best wishes. Ormand A. Roberts.

MIAMI BEACH, FL: Sid, we surely, as always enjoyed our numerous short talks with each other in Louisville. hope that you can speed up the reunion with your brother up in Banner Elk before long. You have already passed my muster as a new Tar Heel, so that is in your favor and an incentive to get on with it. The large and generous gift that you gave me while on board the "Belle of Louisville" for the Postage Fund is deeply appreciated. Noticed that outside the sun came about that moment as a sort of breakthrough. Still was a pleasant and happy cruise with such good company. With many thanks. Sid Thal.

DES MOINES, IA: Bob, thank you for the very generous check that you gave me for the Postage Fund. Hope you and Lillie had as much fun as I did out there, for it was a real nice reunion. Best wishes. Bob Eckman.

OAKLAND, CA: Jim, thank you for two things regarding the visit to the reunion. One, is you brought Jeff along and it was good to see him so cheerful and full of good spirits. Second, was the very generous check you gave me for the Postage Fund. Being with you reminded me of about five years ago when we came in from Hawaii, where we had seen Bill Paty and landed up in Martinez for a solid week of wall-to-wall side trips from Napa south to Carmel. We loved every minute to include the quiet and peaceful Muir Woods. Wow! Know how proud you must be of such a beautiful place. Ethelene and I many years before had taken US 101 north from S.F. thru Eureka on to Seattle and what a scenic trip it was.

All the best to Jeff and you. With many thanks. Jim Sherman.

WORCESTER, MA: Irving, thank you for your note and the check for the Postage Fund. Like you, I got away from the brunch at about 11:00 and drove straight on thru to Pinehurst, so I missed telling you how good it was seeing you even if you didn't perform with a blessing. Save it until next year. Irving Yarock.

CAZENOVIA, CA: Bill, thank you so much for the check which came today 11-13-93 for the Postage Fund. As you read this copy, you will gain some idea of the esteem that I hold as do many of us, for Clarence Meltesen, the author of the book which I managed to get for you, THE ROADS TO LIBERATION FROM OFLAG 64. Appreciate your prompt response. Bill Barnum.

LAGUNA, TX: Bill, while I didn't see or visit with you in Louisville, it isn't that I didn't plan to. For the search for you over the past year from Garvin Fitton to your lovely Oncology Doctor daughter led me finally to the new address in Laguna was fruitful. As I study the map of Texas, you went about as far south as you can go and stay in the U.S. It is an area which I am not familiar with and maybe the next years' D/FW reunion is a time to get that on my Service record. Thank you very much for the check for the Postage Fund. Just hope that Margaret and you had as good a time as I did. Best wishes and thanks again. Bill Fabian.

MANKATO, MN: Royal, thank you very much for the Postage Fund check. It was so good to see both you and Harriet at the reunion. Best wishes. Royal Lee.

NORTHFIELD, VT: Jerry, thank you for the generous gift by check for the Postage Fund. Was glad that you came and while I didn't spend much time with you, I know that you must have enjoyed it like I did. Many thanks again. Always recall many years ago a trip that Gen. Ted Brooks made to speak to the Cadets there at Norwich University and he called for me at Fort Bragg to join him and we were

treated royally. The next day or so we spent at their cottage on Lake Winnepesaukee just a few miles to the east. What a great trip and such beautiful country. Best wishes Jerry. Jerry Hatch.,

GALDWAYNE, PA: John, I can't close this issue without a prayer and hope for Mary in these days. She, with her nice friendly smile, was missed in Louisville. Our hearts turn to you and the fine service which you have rendered over these years and with such a lovely wife along beside you. God bless the both of you. John Slack.

GENEROUS APPRECIATION NOTE: In addition to the above checks so freely and openly given the Postage Fund, shortly after the Business meeting was adjourned by Speaker Boomer, a real touching few moments came to my attention. It was the outflow of cash for the Postage Fund and money for the books sales, which all came together up near the rostrum. My record on a sheet from a small yellow tablet list below showed a giving and generous group of members.

This list, I hope, includes everyone and if I have been remiss, please call it to my attention:

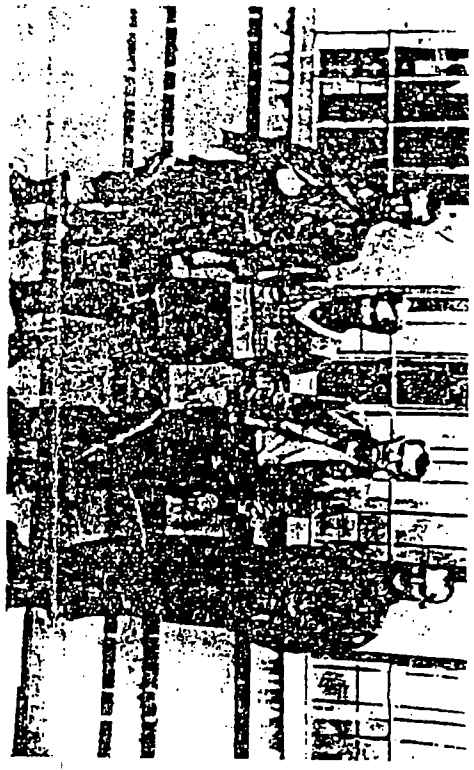
Joe Ainsworth, Joe Barrett, Billy Bingham, Sam Carlick, Vince DiFrancesco, George Durgin, Ed Graf, Bill Gray, Bill Harrell, Walt Heisler, Hugh Hogan, Charles Jones, Duane Kennedy, Herm Littman, Don Lussenden, Tom Mitchell, Al Moss, George Muehlbauer, Fritz Muller, Ted Pawlow'ski, Rod Peeples, Stan Peters, Matt Smith and Jack Van Viet. Plus one anonymous gift for slightly less than \$1,000.

To me it was a very compelling moment and a dynamic example of your trust and confidence in me and the mutual leadership shared by all of us. It, to me, spoke to the term of endearment I use often in speaking to audiences of which we treasure and employ bonding which has made all of us survivors. What a great moment it was and I share it with you.

Finally, as this issue reaches you at Thanksgiving, may Ethelene and I wish you one of the nicest ever.

Respectfully submitted

- Herb Garris, Your Editor, Box 1693, Pinehurst, NC 28374
Phone (910) 295-6290 (New Area Code)



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12113 Chester Drive
Baton Rouge, LA 70810

EDITOR'S NOTE: Gordon Smith writes, "The photo... was taken at the German POW hospital in Rennes, France, on July 2, 1944 (my birthday) by a French medical attaché. He arranged for the four of us to stand where the photo was taken and, as he walked by, opened his coat and took the picture with a camera he had concealed under the coat. Several days later he left the photo under each of our mattresses. From left to right are: Major Phillip S. Gage Jr. (Bx. Ex. 501st Parachute Inf. Regt., 101st Airborne Div.); Capt. Nalq Solan Singh (India, taken prisoner in North Africa with the British); Major Gordon K. Smith (507th Parachute Inf. Regt., 82nd Airborne Div.); Capt. William W. Pary (501st Parachute Inf. Regt., 101st Airborne Div.) Corp. Singh and several of his comrades gave food and drink to these three officers and many others in the hospital. These Indian troops (now POWs) had saved over the years their Red Cross parcels and used them in this way. For one, as do Gage and Pary, I feel indebted to these people, especially Singh, who also was the one to arrange for the photo being taken. Perhaps others who see my article will know the names of the other three lieutenants who were with me... I have heard that Bull (correct spelling?) after the war returned to the Philippines. His parents had been interned by the Japanese during the war. I would like to contact him."

After landing by parachute in Normandy on the morning of June 6, 1944, Major Gordon K. Smith was later than day wounded by a German sniper. The small group of paratroopers he was with were on their way to Amfreville after crossing the Matorret River southwest of a small village of Fresville. Major Smith was left in an apple orchard where someone later the Germans picked him up, taking him to an Aid Station. Later he was evacuated to a German hospital and then to Rennes German Hospital where he was held until mid-July. After going through various stages, he finally arrived at Olltag 64 in mid-September.

On January 21, 1945, he left on the march out of Olltag 64 with the others. At Flawou on January 26 Major Smith with other march casualties (some 90 in all) were loaded into one boxcar and an open gondola car covered with a tarp. The more seriously injured were in the boxcar. Smith was in the gondola car. On the 30th of January, the train arrived at a railway yard on the outskirts of Stettin. It was decided that a group of five POW officers and Gefreiter Bull (a German guard who was born and raised in the Philippine Islands and spoke English) would go to find food, hot water or anything else for their comrades on the train. This small group found a German Red Cross hut and secured hot crabs, tea and bread. On return to the siding where the train had been there

EX-POW BULLETIN, SEPTEMBER, 1990

First In Berlin?, cont'd...

was nothing. The train had left. So the group of six marched into Stettin and arrived at a German Transport Installation. Major Smith and Bull met with the German colonel who was commanding the unit. The POWs were put in quarters on the second floor and given the key to the room which contained only five beds. Bull was to sleep on a pallet on the floor. The key was to lock the door from the inside so other Germans would not disturb the POWs. Trips were made to the railway station after Bull conferred with the Colonel to determine where the other POWs had been taken. Bull was unarmed, had no papers to identify him, and speaking German with his English accent at times was a problem.

The D-Block had bars, soap and cigarettes that all the five POWs had, proved them and later to be a great asset in helping them get information and food. It had been determined by the German colonel that this group would not be safe in Stettin, which was to be attacked by the oncoming Russians, so they had to leave.

On the evening of February 1, the six crowded into a compartment on a train heading for Berlin, then on to Luckenwalde. The six men stood in the center of the compartment with others, like sardines in a can. Others getting out of Stettin were sealed around the sides of the compartment. About midnight the train stopped at a small station and all rushed into the small refreshment area to get a hot drink, slice of bread and piece of cheese. Upon returning to the compartment, Major Smith, who was standing in front of a sealed German sergeant, felt a tug on his coat. The sergeant stood up and motioned to Smith to take his seat. The sergeant had bandages on arm, shoulder and face. Bull explained that the sergeant was a parachutist. Bull had told those in the compartment who they were and that Smith was an American parachutist and a major. The sergeant stated to Bull that the major should be sealed and the sergeant should stand.

Sometime about daylight the train came to a sudden halt. Word was given that due to a suicide attack by Russian tanks, the rail line had been cut and the train could not proceed. After considerable milling around, it was found there was another train on a track some quarter of a mile away which was enroute to Berlin. The six men walked the distance and boarded this train. It was not crowded at all. While enroute to Berlin, Bull came to Smith and said he had an aunt and brother in Berlin that he had not seen for several years. He asked if it would be okay with the POWs if he stopped to see them. The five all give their okay. Upon arriving at an underground station in the north area of Berlin, the six left the train and walked some blocks to a partly bombed out apartment building. They entered at a door on the

EX-POW BULLETIN, SEPTEMBER, 1990

second floor which was opened by an elderly woman. She greeted Bull and then shouted, "America comes!" This was Bull's aunt and yours, ago, had played with the German woman's Tennis Team in the U.S. After some talk it was decided that there was not room for all six to stay there. Smith, Lt. Wilbur Davis (from Chicago) and Bull went to Bull's brother's home for the night, a considerable walk. His place was located in a nice section of Berlin, far Bull's brother was a "Brown Shirt Engineer" on the Reichstag Staff. He was quite alarmed that Bull had brought POWs to his home. In fact, he at once strapped on his pistol, although he later decided to be a good host and quite friendly. After a small dinner and listening to the radio until about 8:00 p.m., a number of male visitors arrived. These men were Key German government officials in Berlin. Beer and schnapps were served and quite a discussion of the war went on, sometimes quite heated. Bull, of course, was the translator. It was well after midnight when these men left.

The next morning, after good coffee, toast and jam, Bull and the two POWs returned to his aunt's apartment. Here they found a table loaded with canned meats, preserves, bread, coffee and some fresh eggs. Bull's aunt had used some of the POWs' cigarettes to obtain black market items for her guests, and neighbors had assisted in giving food. At 10:00 a.m., while still sitting at the table, the air raid sirens began to sound in the distance. Then they were heard much closer and all but the six left the apartment. Soon the thud and rumble of bombs were heard and the building began to shake. Bull suggested they go outside to see what was happening, where one could see many U.S. bombers in the sky over Berlin and the air raid wardens ordered all into the air raid shelter. The POWs discussed this and, with some trepidation, went into the shelter. A woman in the shelter, when she found out who the five were, showed that she had a son who was a POW in America and he had gained 45 pounds. Smith stated that her son had gained the 45 pounds that he had lost.

Sometime between 2:00 and 3:00 p.m. the all-clear was sounded and everyone went outside. The German people gathered around the POWs and begged them to say with them in Berlin, for they felt the war was lost and the American POWs could teach them and their children to speak English. With the Russians so close it was decided best the six be on their way to a safe POW camp. The German civilians loaded the POWs with foods and, after thanks and good-byes to Bull's aunt and others, the six departed for the underground rail station where they had arrived. That station had taken a direct hit and what had been above ground was now all underground.

39

First In Berlin?, cont'd...

Bull stated that he knew the way to the main train station (Tempelhoer SP), so on foot they went. Through the main area of Berlin the group had to detour around blocks on fire, falling walls of buildings, and crowds of people. Interned civilians were trying to clean up the rubble in the streets. Bull became quite anxious whenever the group would stop, for (as someone might do harm to these American POWs whose countrymen had just put the first major bomb attack (daylight) on the city. They were told that this was the first major daylight bombing of Berlin, Feb. 2, 1945). It was something to see. As they passed the Reichstag, part of the building caved in. Finally the group reached the train station about 6:00 or 7:00 in the evening. Bull had a problem getting the group identified and permission to board a train for Stalag III-A at Luckenwalde, but they arrived late that night and the next morning were united with the other POWs who had made the train trip from Flawou.

Major Smith, several other American POWs, two Norwegian officers, and three French officers, found a German truck which they got running. On May 5, 1945, left Stalag III-A to the crossing at the Elbe River. After a wait being held by the Russians on the East Bank, they were permitted to cross into U.S. hands late in the afternoon.

Were these five POWs the first U.S. troops in Berlin or not?

DEAR HERB,

RECEIVED YOUR NOTE AND COPY OF OHLG ITEM.

THANKS
MY RESUME:

BORN 17 DEC 19 AT MELROSTON, MI. A SMALL TOWN NEAR THE DEAD CENTER OF LOWER MICH. 2YR. COLLEGE AT EASTERN MICH U. ENTERED ARMY 7 JAN 42 - O.C.S. FT BENNING NOV 42 TO FEB 43 OVERSEAS 3L DIV CAPTURED NEAR CASINO - RAPIDO RIVER CROSSING 23 JAN 44. OHLG 64 FEB 44 TO NITE OF 23 JAN 45. WORKED MY WAY EAST WITH HELP OF POLISH OFFICER, UNDER RUSSIAN CONTROL FROM LUBLIN POLAND TO ODDESSA. RETURNED TO U.S. VIA PORT SAID EGYPT, NAPLES ITALY, AND BOSTON, FROM ACTIVE DUTY TO OFF. RESERVE FEB 46 TO APR 47 - MICH N.G. FROM 7 APR 47 TO 30 MAY 47.

MARRIED 29 SEPT 47 TO ARMY WIFE I MET IN ITALY. SHE DIED 6 AUG 66 WITH CANCER. WE HAD NO CHILDREN.

STARTED BUSINESS OF WEBSITE SAND & GRAVEL IN 1947 - ADDED EXCAVATING AND READY MIX BY 1960 - RETIRED IN 1983.

RE MARRIED IN 1972 - 23 DEC. SHE HAD 5 CHILDREN, I ADOPTED THE 2 YOUNGEST. RAISED WE STILL LIVE IN THE HOUSE I WAS IN AT MELROSTA. WE STAY HERE 8 MO EACH YEAR, APR. TO DEC, AND 4 MO IN CRYSTAL RIVER FL. DEC TO APR.

I SPEND MY TIME FISHING, GARDENING, MAINTAINING MY LAWS, TRAVELING, AND BEING LAZY. ALSO HUNTING.

TO 7 OCT 93, TO VISIT THE POLISH OFFICER THAT HELPED ME IN 45. I ALSO VISITED SCHUBIN AND SPENT 3 HOURS AT THE OLD POW SITE. SADLY, I GOT NO PICTURES, AS MY CAMERA WAS STOLEN ON TRAIN BEFORE I ARRIVED.

THE SITE IS NOW A REFORM SCHOOL TYPE. MOST OF THE OLD BUILDINGS ARE GONE, AND SEVERAL NEW ONES HAVE BEEN BUILT. THE "CHAPEL" ^{PART OF} THE "WHITE HOUSE" - BOTH IN SOREY NEED OF REPAIR AND SOME OF THE OLD BARACKS STILL STAND. THE ENTRANCE IS THE SAME, AND THEY HAVE BUILT A MONUMENT TO POW'S ON THE RIGHT SIDE AS YOU ENTER. ACROSS THE STREET STILL STANDS THE 2 GERMAN BARACKS & GUARD HOUSE, THE BARBED WIRE IS GONE.

ALL TOLD A VERY MEMORABLE TRIP.

Don Whelple

OUR FLORIDA ADDRESS:	MICH ADDRESS
DON WERNETTE	DON WERNETTE,
1145 N. GADSWAN WAY	PO BOX 143
CRYSTAL RIVER FL. 34429	MELROSTON, MI. 49834
PH (904) 795-1056	PH (616) 972-8705

To all Prisoners of War!

The escape from prison camps is no longer a sport!

Germany has always kept to the Hague Convention and only punished recaptured prisoners of war with minor disciplinary punishment.

Germany will still maintain these principles of international law.

But England has besides fighting at the front in an honest manner instituted an illegal warfare in non combat zones in the form of gangster commandos, terror bandits and sabotage troops even up to the frontiers of Germany.

They say in captured secret and confidential English military pamphlet,

THE HANDBOOK OF MODERN IRREGULAR WARFARE:

"... the days when we could practise the rules of sportsmanship are over. For the time being, every soldier must be a potential gangster and must be prepared to adopt their methods whenever necessary."

"The sphere of operations should always include the enemy's own country, any occupied territory, and in certain circumstances, such neutral countries as he is using as source of supply."

England has with these instructions opened up a non military form of gangster war!

Germany is determined to safeguard her homeland, and especially her war industry and provisional centres for the fighting fronts. Therefore it has become necessary to create strictly forbidden zones, called death zones, in which all unauthorized trespassers will be immediately shot on sight.

Escaping prisoners of war, entering such death zones, will certainly lose their lives. They are therefore in constant danger of being mistaken for enemy agents or sabotage groups.

Urgent warning is given against making future escapes!

In plain English: Stay in the camp where you will be safe! Breaking out of it is now a damned dangerous act.

The chances of preserving your life are almost nil!

All police and military guards have been given the most strict orders to shoot on sight all suspected persons.

Escaping from prison camps has ceased to be a sport!

RALPH D. TEDESCHI
TARA DRIVE
NORWELL, MASSACHUSETTS 02061

September 23, 1993

Mr. Herb Garris
P. O. Box 1693
Pinehurst, NC 28374

Dear Herb:

PLEASED TO REPORT I AM STILL ALIVE AND READY FOR THE NEXT APPEL.

TO DATE I HAVE NOT TAKEN ANY PRESCRIPTION MEDICATION AND I WILL BE 80 IN NOVEMBER.

Thank you for your very thoughtful letter. I apologize for not responding sooner. I am sorry to report that I was not taken POW in Normandy in June along with you, Brooks and others. I shared a cubicle in camp with Brooks. I was captured on July 31, after the Normandy - St. Lo breakthrough. I was Battalion S-4 in the 38th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division, landing on Omaha June 7.

Herb, I wish I could report that I speak German, but don't, except for those few words we picked up as a POW. Strangely enough, Tedeschi is the Italian word for Germans. Every time I went through a German POW camp, they always reminded me of it and wondered why I was over there fighting against them.

Ben Amato, Norman Spitzer and I left the Oflag Group March on Wednesday January 23, after walking for three days. We hid in a barn on a farm with the animals for 7 days and finally went across to a town on the German/Polish border where the Russians had just arrived. We then walked back to Oflag 64, stayed there for 7 days and then onto Warsaw (Praga). From Praga to Odessa to Port Said to Naples to Boston.

After two months recuperation leave, I reassigned to Fort Ord, California and I was separated from the service on January 16, 1946. I opened my first small market on November 7, 1946 and since then have been most fortunate.

Herb, I have taken the liberty of enclosing several articles which I hope you will find of some interest. Among them will be a poster I removed from prison camp when we returned after escaping.

Please extend my best to your wife, whom I enjoyed my conversation with on my recent call. I am enclosing a small check for postage, etc. Congratulations on the excellent job with the Item.

Sincerely,

Ralph D. Tedeschi

P.S. If you are ever in the Boston area June through November, please call me (617) 659-4444 or in the Ft. Lauderdale/Palm Beach area from November through May (305) 563-1057. We will plan to have dinner.

PROGRAM

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

Master of Ceremonies
Richard P. Flavin

♦ ♦ ♦

National Anthem

♦ ♦ ♦

Invocation
Father Wilfred J. Raymond, C.S.C.
Campus Minister

♦ ♦ ♦

Dinner

♦ ♦ ♦

President's Remarks
Father Bartley MacPháidin, C.S.C.

♦ ♦ ♦

Presentation of President's Medal

♦ ♦ ♦

Presentation of Genesis Award

♦ ♦ ♦

Dancing

Music by Bob Kowner Orchestra

GENESIS AWARD

Presented to

Ralph D. Tedeschi

Ralph D. Tedeschi, patriarch of one of this region's most successful supermarket families, is currently Chairman of the Board for Tedeschi Food Shops, Inc., a chain of 60 convenience stores between Boston and Cape Cod, and of Tedeschi Realty Corp., a real estate holding and development firm. Mr. Tedeschi's career in the supermarket business has spanned more than 45 years, beginning in 1946 when he returned home from active military service.

While in the service, he was captured in Normandy and later escaped from a German prisoner of war camp in Poland. Mr. Tedeschi was separated from the service with the rank of Captain and was awarded the Bronze Star Medal and the POW Medal.

The first Tedeschi supermarket was opened in Rockland in November of 1946. The business expanded to a six-store chain, which at one time was considered to be the largest volume per store chain in the United States.

Mr. Tedeschi is the former Chairman of the Board of Angelo's Supermarkets Inc., named in honor of his father, which were operated with his brothers and brother-in-law, and grew to 18 stores, from the South Shore to Cape Cod.

Mr. Tedeschi and his wife, Madeline, have been good friends of Stonehill College for many years. Mr. Tedeschi received an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from Stonehill in 1961. He is a member of the Executive Committee for Development, and previously served as a member of the Board of Advisors. Mr. and Mrs. Tedeschi are long-standing members of the Century Club, and were actively involved in planning for the testimonial dinner held in honor of their dear friend, the late Father William F. Gartland, C.S.C.

Mr. Tedeschi is also very involved in his church and in many other charitable endeavors. Many special honors have been awarded to him over the past years. In 1959, he became a member of the Knights of Malta and, in 1960, a member of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre. Mr. Tedeschi has received the Star of Solidarity from the Italian Government, the Gold Medal Award from the Italian-American Charitable Society, the Michelangelo Award from Boys Town of Rome, Italy and the Outstanding Native Born Citizen Award from the Massachusetts State Dept. of the American Legion. He served for ten years on the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Art Commission and is former President of the Massachusetts Retail Grocers Association.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

GENESIS AWARD

The Stonehill College Genesis Award, as the name suggests, is given in special recognition of talent and creativity. The award, a bronze, depicts Adam and Eve before The Tree of Knowledge, and was fashioned by Enrico Manfredi of Milan, Italy. It was modeled after the last work of art commissioned by the late Pope Paul VI, which now stands in the Mary Joan Glynn Library of Anglo/Irish Literature at Stonehill.

The Twenty-Third Psalm
 The Lord is my shepherd: I shall not want.
 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:
 He leadeth me beside the still waters.
 He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the
 paths of righteousness for His name's sake.
 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the
 shadow of death, I will fear no evil:
 For thou art with me: thy rod and
 thy staff, they comfort me.
 Thou preparest a table before me in the
 presence of mine enemies:
 Thou crownest my head with oil:
 My cup runneth over.
 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow
 me all the days of my life:
 and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.



IN MEMORY OF

W. LEON AKIN

BORN

February 28, 1914
 Richmond, Kansas

PASSED AWAY

September 10, 1993
 Wichita, Kansas

MEMORIAL SERVICE

United Presbyterian Church
 Sterling, Kansas
 Tuesday, September 14, 1993
 10:00 A.M.

OFFICIATING

Rev. Glen Holman

ORGANIST

Margaret Calderwood

SOLOIST

Glee Faltzemeier

SELECTIONS

"My God and I"
 "Saviour Like a Shepherd: Lead Us"

CONGREGATIONAL SELECTIONS

"He Hideth My Soul"
 "Blessed Assurance"

SPECIAL MUSIC

Sterling College Choir
 "Jesus Is My Friend"

HONORARY CASKETBEARERS:

Bob Reed Maurice Reed
 Curt Bennett Duane Johnson
 Bob Calderwood Bill Calderwood

GRAVESIDE SERVICES

Richmond Cemetery
 Richmond, Kansas
 Monday, September 13, 1993
 11:00 A.M.

MEMORIALS

Sterling College or
 Sterling Presbyterian Manor



"The Body Commercial" Seesburg, Fla., Nov 7, 1993

Keeping a dark secret

Jack Van Vliet's war memories range from the battlefields of North Africa and South Korea to the bombed-out city of London and the prison camps of Eastern Europe, where he learned the truth behind a brutal wartime event.



Veterans Day has special meaning for Jack Van Vliet, a graduate of West Point Academy.

By Phil Kaplan
Special to the Staff

Jack Van Vliet knows more than most people about secrets, and how to keep them. As a prisoner of war in Germany during World War II, he was among a handful of Allied soldiers and civilians who were privy to one of the darkest secrets of the war.

German troops took Van Vliet and other POWs to inspect the unmarked graves of more than 4,200 Polish officers who had been executed in the Soviet Union's Katyn Forest. Germany wanted to prove to the world that the Soviets had killed the officers, although Stalin had blamed it on the Germans.

The physical evidence against the Soviets was undeniable: In Van Vliet's hands was an Allied country, so Van Vliet had to keep quiet about what he knew until his report to the Pentagon was declassified seven years later. Mikhail Gorbachev admitted the Soviet Union's guilt in 1990, 50 years after the fact.

Van Vliet, who lives in the retirement community of Hawthorne at Leesburg, says he was never tempted to reveal his secret, even though other prisoners in the camp were intensely curious about what he had seen. "I never felt like talking. It was too big a can of worms," says Van Vliet, 78. "I often wished I never knew it."

Keeping that secret is only one of many vivid memories from the West Point graduate's 22-year career as an Army officer. The memories extend from the battlefields of North Africa and South Korea to the bombed-out city of London and the prison camps of Eastern Europe.

"I have the dubious distinction of hearing the air-raid sirens in London, Paris and Berlin," he says. "I've been shot at by the armies of Germany, Italy, North Korea and France."

Area veterans plan events

Page C6

Van Vliet is one of many local residents who have served their country in war. More than 32,000 veterans live in Lake and Sumner counties, says the Lake County Veterans Services office.

Van Vliet had his first taste of combat on Nov. 8, 1943, when he landed in Algeria with the 168th Infantry. Three months later, he had been promoted to lieutenant colonel and was leading a battalion charged with defending a hill in Tunisia.

The troops managed to turn back attacks on the hill, but the Germans went around them and the Americans became isolated behind enemy lines. Van Vliet led the more than 1,000 men under his command on a desperate march toward Sbeitla, a town more than 35 miles away controlled by the Allies.

The battalion got scattered into three groups and the soldiers were dead tired and out of water, having covered 26 miles. When German troops attacked, the Americans were barely able to fight.

VET

Continued from C1
officers had been above ground for the previous three years, he says.

"None of us wanted to believe the Germans — they were our enemies and the Russians were our allies," he says. "But this time, they were telling the truth."

The burden of the secret was not Van Vliet's only problem. He was a "lean and mean" 155 pounds at the start of the war and dropped to a low of 122 pounds in prison. Malnutrition temporarily caused him to suffer poor eyesight.

But even in prison, there were some bright moments. He was lucky enough to be listening to the crystal-set radio when the prisoners had secretly made when the Allies broadcast the fall of Italy.

"I heard the 'Star Spangled Banner' being played," he recalls. "That was a glorious sound."

In April 1946, the Germans abandoned the prison where Van Vliet was being held in Ludenwald, Germany, as Soviet tanks were approaching. The Soviets were taking Allied prisoners to Russia, from where they would be returned to their homeland.

But Van Vliet was carrying pictures the Germans had taken of him inspecting the massacre site, and he couldn't afford to turn himself over to the Soviets with his secret. He and two buddies grabbed bicycles and made their way to the American lines 56 miles away.

'I heard the 'Star Spangled Banner' being played. That was a glorious sound.'

Jack Van Vliet

The secret played a role in his life again five years later. He was serving in Korea as an executive officer in the 2nd U.S. Infantry Division when he was summoned by Gen. MacArthur. A cable had been issued stating that Van Vliet must not be killed or captured, because his report on the massacre of the Polish officers was being declassified and the U.S. government wanted him to be available to discuss it.

He was transferred to Tokyo where he set out the rest of the war, a move he says may have prevented him from making general but also probably saved his life, given the weak position of United Nations forces in Korea at the time.

Van Vliet was raised to the sounds of reveille in the morning and taps at night, so Veterans Day has special meaning for him. His great-grandfather and father graduated from West Point before him, and his son followed.

50TH ANNIVERSARY
REUNION
OFLAF 65 EX-POW
OCTOBER 7 THRU 10, 1993
ATTENDEES

RUTH & JOE AINSWORTH
MARJ & JERRY ALEXIS
WIN & JAMES BALL
MARY & JOSEPH BARRETT
MARY BARKOVIC
HOLLY & JAMES BATES
ELIZABETH & ED BATTE
CARL BEDIENT & MARY ARNOLD
BESS & BILL BINGHAM
JEAN & BRAD BRADFORD CAROLYN & BOB BONOMI
GAIL BRADFORD BROWN
GEORGE BRITTO
GEORGE A. BROWN (NEW ZEALAND)
VIVIAN & ARTHUR BRYANT
SAMUEL CARLICK ELAINE & HARRIS MACHUS
AL CASNER
MARY FRANCES & CRAIG CAMPBELL
RUBY & ROGER CANNON
HELEN & ROY CHAPPELL
FAYE & MARVIN CHEVALIER
BARBARA & CARL CHRISTENSEN
ROSE & TONY CIPRIANI AGNES & RED O'CONNOR
CAROLINE & BILL CORY
NEAL CORY
NINA CORY NIXON
DOROTHY & JOHN CRAMER
ELAINE & JOHN CREECH
MARY AGNES & VINCE DIFRANCESCO
LIZ & FRANK DIGGS
VIRGINIA & GEORGE DURGIN
LILO & ALAN DUNBAR
CHARLES EBERLE LILLIE & ROBERT ECKMAN
EDITH & LESTER EDSALL
LELA & REID ELLSWORTH
SYLVIA & JOSEPH FRIEDMAN
MARGARET & BILL FABIAN
THURSTON GARRETT
HERB GARRIS
PEG & ED GRAF
JANE GRAFFAGNINO
DON GRAUL
JEAN & BILL GRAY
JOHN W. HAGAN & JEAN JACKSON (VA KENTUCKY)
DUNA & BILL HARRELL
HENRY DESMOND & LOIS HARTMAN
JEROME HATCH
GLORIA & WALTER HEISLER
BETTY & GEORGE HERR
LIZ & ORM HESSLER
CLEMENTI & BOOMER HOLDER
HUGH HOGAN

ARLENE & VERRIS HUBBELL
NORMA & CURTIS JONES
LEILABETH & LEROY IHRIE
GEORGE JUSKALIAN
RITA KASPER
MARTIN KEISER
DUANE KENNEDY
RAY KLINKENBORG
EVELYN & WILLIAM KORBER
LUCY & PAUL LAMPRU
HARRIETT & ROYAL LEE
LUCILLE & HERB LITTMAN
JANET & LEWIS LOWE
LUCY & DON LUSSENDEN
NAN & JIM MacAREVEY
SUSAN McCracken
✓MARY & CLIFF McKEON
THOMAS MITCHELL
AL MOSS
ELLA MAE & FRED MUELLER
EVIE & GEORGE MUEHLBAUER
EVELYN & BOB OSHLO
BILL PATY
ADELE & TED PAWLOWSKI
EVELYN & ROD PEEPLES
DOROTHEA & STANLEY PETERS
JOHN RATHBONE
BARBARA & EDMON RINEHART
HERVEY ROBINSON
ELIZABETH & LOUIS SALERNO
JOANNE & JOE SERINGER
MARY & WILBUR SHARPE
JIM & JEFF SHERMAN
LUCYL SHIRK
DORIS & JAMES SHOAF
JOHN F. SLACK
GORDON SMITH
BEL & MATT SMITH
CLAIRE & HENRY SOEDERBERG (SWED)
HAROLD TALLMAN
SID THAL
GLADYS & ROBERT THOMPSON
VIN THOMSON
LYNNE & JACK VAN VLIET
JOHN VOGEL (VA WASHINGTON)
CASSIE & DON WAFUL
JOE B. WARREN & MRS. JOHNSON
LEN WARREN
BILL WARTHEN
IRV YAROCK

OFLAG 64 POW REUNION
MEMORIAL SERVICE

INVOCATION: Let us pray:

Almighty and most merciful God,

You have indeed been gracious to us, and have protected us, and have delivered us from evil. And for these blessings we give you thanks. We thank you also, oh Lord, for your faithfulness to us, for being the same God of love and compassion yesterday, today, and forever. We ask you to be with us on this special day of reunion and remembrance. Enrich these moments, we pray, as we rejoice with old friends once again. Enable us to remember the experiences of war and peace which have bonded us together in loyalty and love. And comfort us as we recall the memory of those who have passed on from this world into the next. Guide us, we pray, during this service of worship, so that in our words and deeds, we may encourage the living, honor the dead, and give glory to your holy name. AMEN.

MEMORIAL MEDITATION

Psalm 33: 12-22

Before I share the words of meditation, I want to welcome each of you to Louisville, Kentucky. And I do so on behalf of Major General Paul Funk, the post commander, and the members of the Fort Knox community. We are indeed pleased that you holding your reunion in this area, for by doing so, you are helping Fort Knox to commemorate the 50th anniversary of World War II. These celebrations are important to our Army, because they help today's soldiers to understand the history of that War, and reinforce the virtues of patriotism, valor, and sacrifice which made America's victory possible. We are also proud to help you commemorate the 50th anniversary of your arrival at Stuzhin, Poland, as prisoners of war. While I'm sure you did not enjoy being "in the bag" for so long, it's important for us to remember that time of suffering, and to commend you for your honorable service before, during, and after your captivity.

Yes, these occasions mean much more than simply a time to renew old acquaintances or to make new friendships. They also give a new generation of Americans the chance to say "thank" for your personal sacrifices for our country and for the cause of freedom. My father is also a veteran of World War II, and from his stories of the war, I know that your time in captivity, as well as in combat, was a harrowing experience. It took its toll on each prisoner and each loved one who stood by you during those difficult months. Future generations can never fully repay you for what you have done for our nation and its people. But we can use occasions like these to honor patriots like yourselves, and to pay homage to those who have died since those turbulent years of conflict. I pray that our nation will always be grateful for what you have done. And I pray that you will always be grateful for what God has done for you, then as well as now.

Memorial services like this one are important for many reasons. First of all, they help to facilitate our reunion with loved ones and close friends. Let's face it. In spite of our good intentions, it's hard to get together with those we care about the most. Because Americans put more value on doing something than on being someone, we don't spend the time we should just being friends or family. Sometimes, we simply must schedule time to be together, to make plans a year or so in advance, and then make it a priority to be there to participate in the activities. And that is what you have done with this reunion. And although we may dread facing the hassles of making travel arrangements, choosing clothes, or eating weird foods, we usually find that we have a good time once we get there. Friendship and fellowship are important gifts from God that enrich our lives. Each other, as well as for Himself. And so, it's good for us to have times of reunion where we can renew old acquaintances, catch up on the news, and strengthen, comfort, and encourage each other for the days that lie ahead.

Memorial services are also important because they help us to remember those things which give purpose and meaning to life. Human memory is another of God's great gifts, one that helps us to recreate the important events and emotions of the past. Memory gives us a sense of who we are and of where we have been in life, and is important for nations as well as for individuals. As a country, America needs to remember the important events which shaped our history, and to celebrate our common values and beliefs. It would be tragic if our nation forgot the people and the events which have made her great. It would be tragic if our nation forgot the sacrifices which people like you have made to protect her way of life. It would be tragic if our nation forgot that as a prisoner of war, you gave up your freedom so that the folks back home could maintain theirs. And so, our national memory must include an accounting of the sacrifices of its soldiers and their families. In that way, future generations will cherish the liberty that has been handed down to them so that they may pass it on to others.

But memory is also important to us as individuals. Memory helps us gain a proper perspective of the past, so that we may find a greater purpose in the future. I hope that during your stay in Louisville this week, that you have taken time to remember the events that first brought you together, and the relationships that you have enjoyed through the years. I hope that your trip to Fort Knox has stirred some long slumbering remembrance of your training there many years ago, or of an assignment with the Armor School or the Training Unit. I also hope that it rekindled your sense of patriotism, pride, and duty. Of course, reunions like this one encourage you to remember your experiences during the war. Not all of those memories will be pleasant, and yet even as prisoners, you were already forming the bonds of loyalty that have brought you back together today. Your time in prison camps may seem like lost years to you, but even there, you played an important part in America's effort to defeat her enemies, and in God's plan for your lives.

But not all of the prisoners in OFLAG 64 survived that experience. Not all of the soldiers who were captured in Tunisia and Italy and France made it back home to Maryland and Indiana and California. And although most of them did, many have since died and gone on to their eternal existence. Part of our responsibility as citizens is to recall these men and women, to reflect upon their influence upon our lives, their contributions to our country, and their service to God. Having passed on from our midst, we must honor them in their absence. And so, we pay them special tribute through their contributions to our nation. May their examples of courage and commitment inspire others to fulfill their duty of patriotism and selfless service. And may their relationship with you be an example to all of faith, hope, and love. May their memories be precious to their countrymen, even as we offer them these special moments of silent tribute (pause for 30 seconds). For we ask this in your holy name. AMEN.

BENEDICTION:

Our Most Merciful God,

We ask your blessing upon us as we conclude this service of remembrance and memorial. We thank you for letting us share so many experiences of life together, and we pray that we will always cherish the memories of the people whose lives gave meaning to those events. As we reflect on days gone by, help us, we pray, to focus on the happiness and not the sorrow, on the joy and not the pain, on the comradeship and not the conflict. We commit ourselves into your care and keeping, oh God, and pray that we will leave this place with a new appreciation of life, of friendship, of patriotic service, and of your providential care. Grant us safety on our journey home, and guide us to live in ways which are pleasing in your sight. For we look forward to the new life in your presence. AMEN.

By

Major David Bates - Chaplain

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