

VOL. XXXIII

POST OFLAG 64 ITEM

AUGUST, 1994

**KERRVILLE, TX:** Nina and Bob, the mail-out with some specifics for the Reunion will be in your hands soon. Am so pleased that you plan to come, and we'll do all we can to make your stay a pleasant and enjoyable one. Your spring 1994 KRIEGIE was excellent. Will try to figure out how to join you at the 1995 Reunion of Stalag Luft III and have the chance to meet Neil Armstrong. Irv Baum's "Incident at Dachau" was a rude awakening for him just released from Stalag VII A at Moosburg, just to see first hand a concentration camp. Thank you again for all assistance that you have given me over the past two years. **BOB WEINBERG, PRES., STALAG LUFT III ASSN.**

**HAMILTON, GA:** Jane, it is always a pleasure to submit another of Peter's human interest stories for our readers. It concentrates on the 1970 return trip to Poland with some very touching and emotional memories. Many have told me that it was one of the best planned even with an abundance of Communist interference. We thank you again for the use of these precious manuscripts. Hope to see you in Fort Worth. **JANE GRAFFAGNINO.** See P. 5

**SAN FRANCISCO, CA:** Clarence, what a nice story that was shown in Aug. issue of The Amer-EX/POW Bulletin. The venue is set in late January, 1944 with the 1st Ranger Bn. following its assault on Anzio Beach. It vividly describes F Company's unfortunate capture near Cisterna in a strong German counter attack. Your map covered the movement northward through Rome to Laterina and a successful night escape from the train heading to Germany. Gus Schunemann, the co-author, with considerable ingenuity and in good condition, reached a "safe harbor" in a small village of Bruccianese, just west of Florence. It is a fascinating story of survival under the extreme winter conditions along the Arno River among the tall and forbidding Apennines Mountains. Gus and Clarence, a nice piece of writing! If you would give me permission, I would like to make up a small monograph of it to accompany three other escape stories. **GUS SCHUNEMANN AND CLARENCE MELTESEN.** See p. 6

**ATLAMONT, KS:** Norm, a copy of the January ITEM is on its way by separate mail. My apologies for the oversight. Hopefully, with your assist, we can persuade Tony Liberatore, and others you mentioned, to come to Fort Worth in October. You are right and I did confuse you with an 82d Airborne trooper, and fully realize now that you, too, were with Darby's 1st Bn. of Rangers. Thanks for the check for the Postage Fund. **NORMAND L. ALLOWAY.**

**KANNAPOLIS, NC:** Tom, thank you for your note alerting me on Tom Piddington's migration to Florida. His letter to me follows and for our readers his address is shown. Hope all is well with you. **THOMAS H. WINGATE.**

**ENGLAND, AR:** Billy, what a nice person your friend, Alden Nance, over in Savannah, MO, seems to be. He needed a copy of Joe Freylinghuysen's CIRCLES OF HELL which I found for him. In his letter, he told me that both of you served together until you were captured. Give him my best. Hope to see you in Forth Worth. **BILLY BINGHAM.**

**TULSA, OK:** Bob, glad that you had a nice visit to Fort Sill and Lawton. The magazine article came back. Thank you. Regret that you could not make it back to Italy but you may be better off with the loads of traffic, the same prevailed in Normandy. Even missed Gordon Smith, who planned to be there. How could this happen? Martin Heisler surely seemed glad to see you. Best to the brothers of yours, **F.A. OCS products, out there. BOB THOMPSON.**

**WILLIAMSBURG, VA:** Harvey, have read and reviewed Stephen Ambrose's D-Day June 6, 1994: The Climactic Battle of W.W. II. Just recently read his The Bridge of Pegasus, a fine story of a glider borne infantry company reinforced which seized and held two vital bridges near Caen on the Orne River. Harvey, you picked a town that is familiar in its analogy of a garrison town with all the trappings that Fayetteville can give, warts and all. You could have done worse with Phoenix City, AL.

Am still amazed in the long stay over there that you didn't call me or come by, it isn't far. Best to the lady. HARVEY PATTERSON.

**BAKERSFIELD, CA:** Stan, thank you for the check to the Postage Fund, which was sufficient. Our paths did cross on the morning of January 22, 1945 as we left the hayrick after the appel and the column departed. We stayed a day or so and the Malchowski's treated us very well. The rest of the story is the same - on to Odessa. Stan, make a note that my mailing address is Box 1693, Pinehurst, NC, 28374. I'll bring along a copy of The Tour of Russia for you at Fort Worth. Thanks for such a nice letter. STAN SEGAL.

**WICHITA, KS:** Carl, glad that you made the mini-group meeting of the 506th Prcht. Inf. Regt., out at Colorado Springs and know that you enjoyed it. Real glad that Dick Graham from Pinebluff, NC was able to go, too. One of his neighbors spoke to me recently and Dick is taking his wife's loss very well. We still have some of her beautiful African Violets on the back porch here. Your extended visit to Wyoming really sounded good to me. Our best to your brother who had the stroke recently - you were so lucky! Your telephone call this past week was so welcome and we are both hopeful that Mary can get a fix on the migraine headaches. So much to do with Fort Worth and south to winter in Texas. You have to feel good with such traveling in store. Our best wishes. CARL BEDIANT AND MARY ARNOLD.

**PUEBLO, CO:** John, thank you for the check for the Postage Fund and your request to make a slight change in the mailing list. It is simply folks like you who make the system work better, thanks.

Glad you liked the ITEM. With news coming in from time to time, it is fairly easy to come up with a copy. Sorry that with the 1992 reunion at Colorado Springs that you could not make it. It was very nice. John, my records show that you were a Red Leg with the 91st F.A. Bn., of the 1st Armd. Div., and were captured at Lesanda, Tunisia on February 17, 1943 and reached Szubin on June 9, 1943 with almost 125 POW's that day. Since your name doesn't show in the Odessa, you must have taken the long march ending up in Moosburg and liberation. Thank you again. JOHN R. MILLER.

**PHOENIX, AZ:** Charles, thank you for your check for the Postage Fund. Our records show that you came in from Best, Holland and escaped in early January and made it out to Odessa and repatriation. Thank you very much. FRANCIS AND CHARLES MOORE.

**OWINGS MILLS, MD:** Louis, thank you for your generous check for the Postage Fund. Since

you didn't send a note, perhaps we can get to see each other when I will be in the DC area in September. There must be a dozen nearby so maybe we might be hold a mini-meeting. Will get in touch as soon as I get up there. LOUIS TANKIN.

**LEESBURG (by HAWTHORNE), FL:** Jack, this is simply an addition to the note in the June ITEM to let our members know that you are recovering from a triple aorta by-pass procedure. Keep it up, Jack, and our prayers are with you. A brand new book has been referred to me that you will find very interesting, MOSCOW BOUND by John M. G. Brown, Veteran Press in Petrolia, CA. It is even more comprehensive than SOLDIERS OF MISFORTUNE, but is of the same sad story of MIA's held by the Russians. Even a part of Katyn is described and our general conclusions seem to be in unison on that fiasco. Looking forward to seeing you at Fort Worth. JACK AND LYNNE VAN VLIET.

**ANTIOCH, IL:** Kelly, thanks for the kind letter you sent to me for my recognition of the excellent project done by your students in the Huntley Grade School. My awareness of the card signed by a student of yours came while at Colleville Cemetery in Normandy on D-Day 6th of June. Attached to the card was a small American flag and a metallic flower bouquet. It was sent to the battlefield site in appreciation by the students for those who fought there.

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Kelly, a copy of this ITEM is being sent to you and your class for such a fine patriotic bit of work and dedication. We deeply appreciate it. KELLY BAIRD, Principal.

**CALIFON, NJ:** Jim, thanks for the mercy mission that you did for me over at Ridgefield recently. I will follow up on it from here. Know that by now you are getting better acclimatized to the life on the fast trail as "His Honner" requires! We are real proud of the stunning landslide that you went in with like one vote! My best regards. WIN AND JIM BALL.

**SPRING HILL, FL:** Tom, what a nice letter from you, thanks. What I liked best about it was your description of the beach assault on Southern France 50 years ago on August 18th. Later in this issue, a short narrative of Tom's recollections is shown as well as his new address in Florida. Thanks very much. TOM PIDDINGTON See P. 17

**OCEAN SHORES, WA:** Hugh, your nice letter was a joy to read. Glad you liked "the Tour of Russia", in sharp contrast to the long march that you took to reach Moosburg and liberation. I thought of

your appreciative remarks about the kind ways the Oflag 64 folks treated you as a USAAF pilot, who fell through the cracks and didn't go to Stalag Luft III, nearby. Hope you'll enjoy the 448th Bomb Group reunion this fall. My best wishes. JOANNE AND HUGH HARRIES. See P. 12

**WOODLAND HILLS, CA:** Paul, thank you for the splendid letter to let me know about your Dad, Chaplain Robert Scott, who lives in Scottsdale, AZ. There is good reason to believe that Bob Scott is the only living Chaplain that we knew at Oflag 64. The note, Paul, is so very emotional that it is found in full later in this issue. Thank you again, and my love to your Mother and Dad! PAUL SCOTT.

See P. 13

**MINNEAPOLIS, MN:** Eddie, congratulations on your new home and your getting all settled in soon. Hope that you and Charlie Jones will try to come to Fort Worth in October. Got so much catching up to do with you, and one other, in the same boat, Bob Cheatham. So proud of your achievement of the 9000 hours of Volunteer Work at the nearby V.A. hospital. As I mentioned awhile ago, Bob from nearby Asheboro, NC goes each Thursday as a volunteer, like you, to the VA Medical Center in Salisbury, NC. The photos of yours are right here on my desk and just came from John Creech, where he and Bob have done some yeoman work in tracking down many names of those in the photos. Will get them out shortly and I do so much appreciate the use of them. My best regards. EDDIE SAGER.

**ORCUTT, CA:** Robert, your name is now on the the right track. Did you recently move? A small favor, would you please write to me and tell me something about yourself for I can't find a thing on when you came in our old rosters, kept so diligently at Oflag 64. Please bring me up to date. ROBERT W. RIVERS.

**CENTREVILLE, VA:** George, thank you for the May letter and a couple or three recent phone calls. Your recent angioplasty procedure sounds like a real winner -- and we surely hope so. Especially with two big reunions scheduled in the fall. Thank you for the Andersonville story and you will find it enclosed in this issue. What a great service that you are doing with Amer-EX POW MIA on it. See you in September and let's have a lunch again as I do the Walter Reed trek. GEORGE JUSKALIAN. See P. 21

**PORTLAND, OR:** S.A., in my letter to you I thanked you for the check for the Postage Fund but forgot to ask you to please send some news about you. We would like to know and tell our members. Or, how did you become acquainted with the ITEM? Best wishes. ROSA AND S. A. BORQUIST.

**FALLS CHURCH, VA:** Al, you are the single most active correspondent of the Oflag 64 total members of mine. Our mutual interest in golf and certainly the recent Seniors held here have made for some very interesting letters. I fully realize that you have visited and played here, but even so, I will send you some elegant new booklets on the Village and life not only now, but in days gone by. Will see you again in September, when I come up to Walter Reed on that mission. Let's have lunch again. Part of that visit will be to tell you only a small part of the Normandy visit in June. H. ALEXANDER CASNER.

**LAWTON, OK:** Martin, I surely appreciate the recent letter and the story of the limestone quarry right there on Fort Sill. It is included in this issue. Also, regret the very sad news and obit that you sent on my mentor there in Education, Mrs. Winfred Ross, who is mainly responsible for sending me out to The University of Omaha for my degree in 1959. I spoke to her brother this past week and he was real helpful in the appreciation that will be mailed out soon. Still plan to go to the Reunion and then a few days afterwards to Lawton. See you in Fort Worth, and again many thanks. MARTIN KEISER. See P. 16

**ALEXANDRIA, VA:** Bob, my copy of the book, MOSCOW BOUND, came this week. It is truly a compelling story, and I thank you for bringing it to my attention. As soon as I finish it and do a review on it, as I promised the publisher, we can do some serious talk about it and study some likely ways we may help in the search. The short promo that you mailed me is shown in this issue. So good talking to you recently on the phone. My best to you and Jane. ROBERT R. REPPA.

**TAMPA, FL:** Michael, we thank you for your nice letter and the obit for your father, Paul A. LaChance. You will find it in this issue of the ITEM. MICHAEL LA CHANCE.

VALLINGBY, SWEDEN.: Henry your nice long newsy letter just came on 8/4/94 and many thanks for it. I have a nice surprise for the two of you coming under separate cover. In a magazine which we subscribe to called TRAVEL in the June issue there is an eleven page story of your homeland. It is not only well written, but has some magnificent photography. Entitled "Sweden Talk".

Our best wishes and I look forward again to the reunion in October. Henry Soderberg.

CLEVELAND, GA.: Jim, thank you for the phone call, so good to hear from you again. Know that you are having a slow time in the move up in the "red clay" part of Georgia, it's an area we love, like Helen and Toccoa. Have an engagement down at Fort Gaines in the last week end of September and hope to see you and Mary somehow on the way. Enjoyed the book very much. Jim Wood.

HENDERSONVILLE, N. C.: John, many thanks for your speedy delivery of Eddie Sager's photos to me. Also appreciate the good work that you and Bob Cheatham have done in little "names and faces" game for me. Hope to have it finalized and on display at Fort Worth for some show and tell. Am very anxious to hear in detail the news of your recent trip to Japan. Please write it up so it can be run in the next ITEM.

Now I come to the escape story which you sent and asked me to stir up some interest by others. Yours is in this issue and I have enclosed a small map of the area in which you were taken. Hope you like it. See P. 14 P. 15 Best wishes to Elaine and you. John Creech.

SAN FRANCISCO, CA. & HOOKSETT, N. H.: Clarence and Gus, there was room in this issue to include the fine story that you both prepared called "Safe Harbor". Was so impressed with it and I am sure will be by our readers. Awhile ago Shell Oil Co., Intl., sent me a European Atlas, which is the best one in my library, so I overlaid your tabs on this one and it is shown. Thanks again for such fine work. Clarence Meltesen and Gus Schunemann.

OCEAN SHORES, WA.: Hugh, you took the bull by the horns and we surely appreciate the two quick responses to my questions of concern. They made your presence much clearer to this reader. Many thanks for that effort on your part. You are a fully accredited old time and a new member, welcome Hugh J. Harries.

TEQUESTA, FL.: Delores, we received a note about the loss in April of your husband, Otto, Please if you have a copy of the obit or a eulogy mail it to me and it will be carried in the next ITEM. Our condolences and prayers go out to you and your family. Mrs. Otto C. Amerall

## The Washington Times

PAGE A6 / MONDAY, MAY 30, 1994 \*

### MOSCOW BOUND

Policy, Politics and the POW/MIA Dilemma  
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## DOCTORS' LOUNGE



## Poland Revisited

"What I like about Americans is that they are always so relaxed." Tade Dominik, a thin, wiry man of about forty, dressed in sandals, dark pants and a sleek open-necked purple shirt waved a hand to include all his countrymen and add "The Polish people are always worried and so tense." (If he had been more familiar with current slang, he would probably have said "up tight".)

The Poles have every reason to be up tight. For hundreds of years they've led precarious existence as a nation of conglomerate peoples caught between Russia and Central Europe. They have been buffeted, battered, occupied, reoccupied, divided, subdivided, liquidated, deported and resettled in almost every European war since the 10th century. At the end of World War II, when the western allies failed to support their independence, they disappeared behind the Iron Curtain where they continue to exist in uneasy equilibrium under Russian domination. They have no reason to be grateful or trusting of the West; they are even more distrustful of the Russian overseers who have "liberated" them before. The future offers little promise.

Four of us, tourists all, were sitting around one of the low tables in the no-long elegant lobby of the Hotel Europejski drinking bottled plum juice and brown beer. While waiting for the bus to take us to the Warsaw airport and the plane for Vienna we had been trying to communicate (unsuccessfully) with a young Polish student until his professor, Mr. Dominik, arrived. In fact, during the five days we'd spent in Poland the opportunities to talk directly with any Polish citizens had been limited.

However, Professor Dominik (he apologized for his un-Polish surname, theorizing

that some time in the past his ancestors must have come from southern Europe) was eager to talk. He was head of painting in the School of Fine Arts at Warsaw University and ten years ago had spent six months touring the United States on a Ford Foundation scholarship. In the next half hour he answered all questions freely—about the school system, about medical care, about housing, about his own Communism and new opportunities in the "People's Republic". He insisted that on our next visit to Warsaw he would personally be our guide and show us the real Poland.

Our stay in Poland had been most interesting. Thirty of us, all former prisoners of war (along with 21 wives), had returned to see the prison camp at Saubin which we left in late January 1945 when the Russians overran it. The group tour had been well planned and organized by the Scandinavian Airlines System in conjunction with Wanda Rudzinski, representing a Long Island travel agency, and the super-efficient Orbis Agency (Poland's equivalent of Russia's Intourist, which runs the major hotels, the busses, car-rentals, guide service, tours and tourist shops). We had arrived in Warsaw on a Saturday afternoon, spent the night at the Europejski, and travelled by bus the next morning westward for 150 miles through the Polish countryside to the Hotel Mercury in Posnan, stopping on the way at Zelazowa Wola to visit Chopin's birthplace. We went by bus again the next day for 50 miles to Saubin where we spent two hours at the old camp, Oflag 64, before going on to nearby Bydgoszcz for an official luncheon and speechmaking. We returned to Warsaw that evening over another route paralleling the Vistula to spend two more days there at the Europejski.

Of course, just the visit to the old camp itself in company with others who had shared past experiences was worth the trip. Most of the buildings were still there—and in much better shape than when we had occupied them, for the camp is still in use as a reform school for problem boys. Only some of the old wooden barracks,

the double fences of barbed wire, the sentry boxes and searchlights were gone. The sole familiar face belonged to the ancient Pole janitor who, in our day, drove the horse-drawn "honey-wagon" which pumped out the 12-holer, open-air latrine and then spread the nightsoil on the fields across the road.

Nearly all of the countryside through which we travelled going from Warsaw to Posnan, Bydgoszcz and back (in fact, most of northern Poland from East Germany on the west to Russia on the east) is a vast, flat, fertile farmland. We were told that 85% of the farms are privately owned—at least, they are government allotted but privately run with the produce sold on the open market. But the average size of the "private" farm is only 15 acres and no more than six in a family may live on it. The acreage of the 15% of collective farms was not disclosed, but the ones we passed were extensive operations and only on these is any mechanized equipment in evidence. Each farm has its small cottage, its chickens and pigs, its potato mounds, its small orchard and its planted main crop or crops (the raspberry farms are said to be most profitable). They are farmed by hand and horse power and each seemed to have a standard, all-purpose, rubber-tired, wooden farm wagon pulled by one or two horses. There is little commercial fertilizer industry in Poland, and nearly all of the neatly plowed and planted fields were dotted with lines of manure piles and, in the evenings, solid farm women wielding pitchforks methodically spread them out. Each year most of the trees along the farm borders are trimmed severely back to the trunk, and their stubby, thick-crowns of new growth are favorite nesting sites for Poland's many old-world storks. There is no wasted or unused land and, in this section, practically no forestland except for small patches of neatly planted government forests. There are no super-highways, and no need for them as the traffic load is minimal; but the two-lane main roads are quite good, well kept and free of litter.

There are no visible gas stations, only an occasional roadside pump in the larger villages or along the streets of the large cities, and nothing comparable to our own service station extravaganzas. At the infrequent rest stops along the roads there is sometimes a small government-run concession stand where you may buy a pallid, weakly carbonated orange drink and stale cookies, and where plumbing facilities are rarely present except for the woods which serve both sexes (ladies to the left, men to the right—and step carefully.)

Twenty-six years ago Warsaw was reduced to rubble. In 1944, on order from Hitler, the Germans had methodically destroyed 85% of the city by shelling, dynamiting and fire. As the Russian army approached, its generals had called for assistance and urged the Poles to rise and resist; but for the next 63 days the Russians waited patiently on the other side of the Vistula and did not move in to "liberate" the city until they were sure the Germans had done a thorough job. Still, today, Warsaw is very impressive. At least half of the city, and almost all of what is called the Old Town, has been restored from pictures and old plans exactly as it was in the past. The rest, too, has all been rebuilt, but with wide streets, parks and many large open plazas and squares. On the outskirts and on a number of city buildings whose outer walls survived, sprays of rifle and machine gun bullet marks can still be seen. New housing projects are scattered throughout with shining, modern, high-rise apartments; the open areas between buildings are paved with walnut-sized pieces of rubble painstakingly hand-laid in intricate design. The old, 100 block, walled Ghetto into which the Germans had crowded 500,000 Polish Jews is one of these present open projects now and there is a hauntingly sculptured bronze monument commemorating the heroic leaders of the Jewish Resistance; there is a smaller even more impressive sculpture covering the sewer through which supplies and guns had been smuggled into the Ghetto and, eventually, through which a handful of survivors escaped.

Warsaw is a compact, clean and orderly city and now its population is back to more than a million. There are flower beds everywhere, and when we saw them it may they were filled with pansies in full bloom. Eighty-five percent (the standard statistical figure, it seemed) of its businesses, even the small shops, are government controlled. There is one large modern shopping mall and center in mid-town opposite the tall, monstrously ugly, Russian-built Palace of Culture and Science, where there is a large amount of merchandise, expensively priced and poorly displayed. Housing is still in short supply, and apartments are assigned according to family size; a six room apartment is a tremendous one. A young couple getting married is allotted two rooms, but must sign and go on a waiting list for three years. There is no pollution and no traffic problem in Warsaw. Automobiles are scarce enough that people gather in knots about any unusual car like the one from Switzerland parked by our hotel; there are no German or western-made cars to be seen; the most common car now is the Polish-made Fiat. (The Poles call one Russian-made car, "the Philosopher's Car"—if you buy one you think you own an automobile.) It is everyone's ambition to own a car, but only bureaucrats and officials can afford one. The Warsaw streets are safe and there is no rowdiness; there are no "hippies". The women are liberated, equal and plainly dressed; they work as doctors, officials, and guides; they drive cabs, push wheelbarrows, lay sod, sweep streets, dig with shovels and mix cement. Everyone seems industrious and busy—but, like Professor Dominik said, tense. There is not much joviality or open friendliness. Generally, the Poles avoid tourists and strangers and, it seemed, even each other.

Still, when you remember Polish history, that its boundaries have been constantly changing for 10 centuries, that some 250,000 Poles who fought with the west were never able to return home after World War II, that a million or so were eliminated by the Germans, another million by Russians, that an additional 3½ million Polish Jews (who once made up 11% of Poland's population) have all but disappeared, and that a large number of its present inhabitants have been moved about and resettled by decree of the Russian dominated "People's Republic", you begin to understand why the children look serious and why the adults are wary of strangers.

An old aunt of one of our group (still living as a pensioner in Warsaw) said, "Yes, things are much better now. We live in a nice large concentration camp instead of a small one."

P.C.C.

# Gustave E. Schunemann Finds a Safe Harbor

by Gustave E. Schunemann  
with Clarence R. Meltesen, Lt. Col. USA Ret.

The narrative was written by Gustave E. Schunemann, Sergeant Major, US Army Retired, combining his memory with a two-weeks family visit to the village of Bruccianese in Italy in 1950. Clarence Meltesen added a map, a summary of early service, and a little editing. It's a happy story of a great gamble and a great ending.

## BACKGROUND

*Gus was drafted 2 April 1943, went to basic training at Camp Blanding, Florida, with the 66th Infantry Division and on to Camp Joseph T. Robinson, Arkansas, for advanced individual training. In mid-August he was one of five allowed to volunteer for overseas duty. This sent him on to Camp Patrick Henry, Virginia, and a 1 September convoy to Bari, Italy, after 45 days at sea. He heard a pep talk by Capt. Shunstrom and joined the Rangers with 14 others.*

*After a week of training with F Company, 1st Ranger Battalion, Col. Darby's Ranger Force moved north to Venafro and San Pietro. The 1st Ranger Battalion moved on 8 November to the base of the high ground north of Venafro and reconnoitered in between German air and artillery strikes. On 11 November they began an all-day climb making ground contact at nightfall. The Germans counter attacked by fire and at noon the next day the Rangers assaulted the ridge line defense.*

*The position was held until mid-December with the battalion returning to the rear area camp site on the Bay of Naples at Lucrino. Rest and recuperation quickly changed to preparation for the landing at Anzio. The battalion boarded the Princess Anne and after sundown the speed was increased for arrival off Anzio before midnight. The battalion was in the first wave, preceded only by the combat engineers who cleared a gap through the beach line minefield.*

*When the assault wave was half way in, the rocket ships fired their barrage with concussion waves felt for miles around. The beach was not defended except for some anti-aircraft guns firing over the water. For the next few days operations proceeded to secure the beachhead. Then, on the night of 29/30 January 1944, F Company became the point of the Ranger attack on Cisterna. Moving in a column of battalions, silent march, single file the force reached the edge of Cisterna at dawn and made contact. Gus describes the situation:*

It was near dawn, about 0500, when we came upon a lone sentry, sitting under an olive tree. As our 1st Sgt., Frank Medtvi, tried to silence him, the sentry managed to break free of the grip over his mouth and let out a scream that transformed a peaceful rural setting into a living hell. Machine gun fire opened from all directions. Unknowingly, we had walked into a well camouflaged airborne division position. They had dug trenches six feet wide by three feet deep, cov-

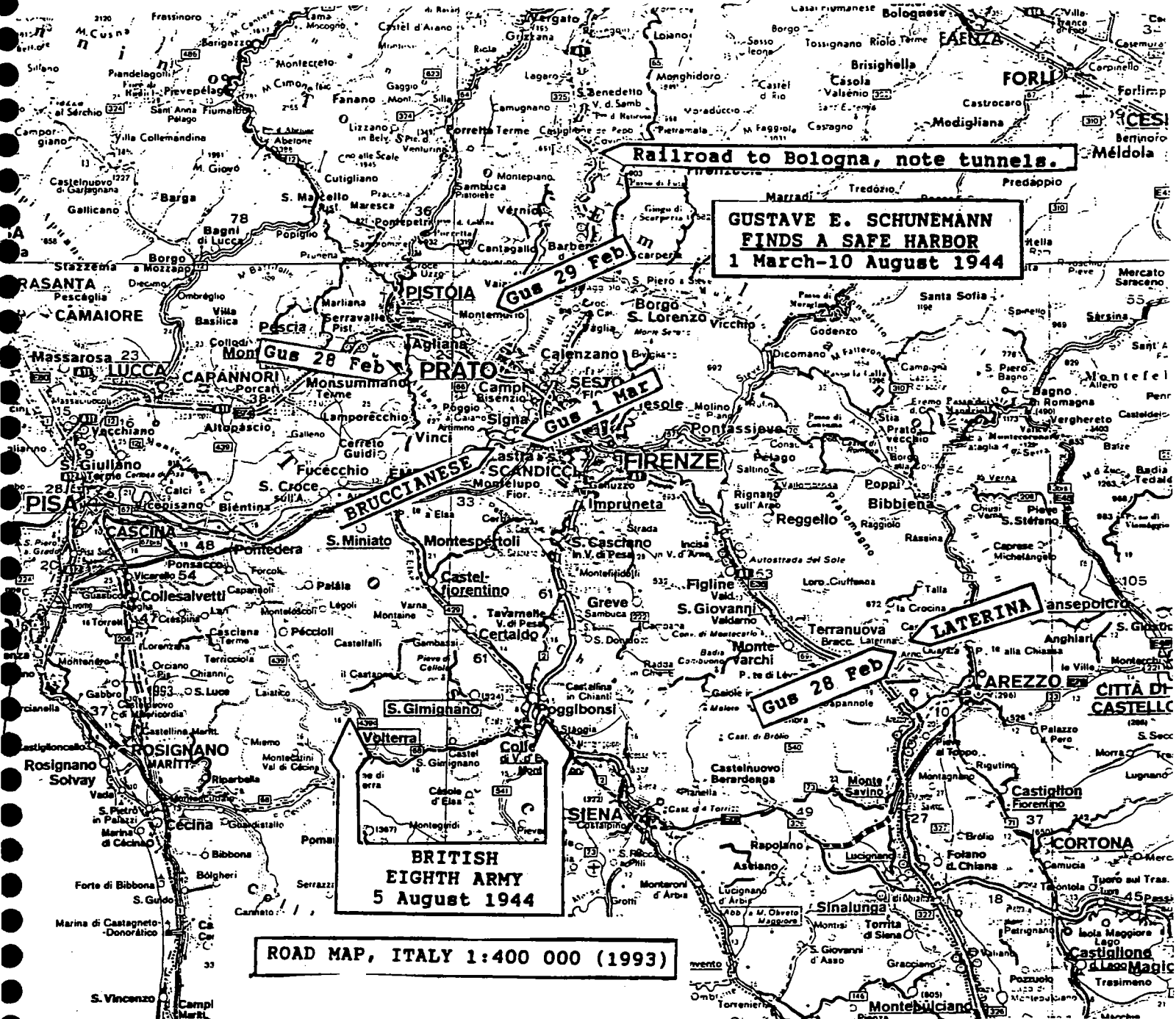
ered them with planks, dirt, and planted cabbage in rows. Except for small openings at each end of the trenches, they were invisible. We caught them asleep, but they woke in a hurry. We were completely surrounded. The air was alive with bullets whizzing over our heads like a swarm of mad hornets. Colonel Darby was on the radio, frantically calling for us to direct artillery fire to enemy positions. The battalion commander told him we couldn't use artillery support as we were in a hand-to-hand situation. We were pinned down in a cabbage field and the Germans were making sauerkraut out of it with machine guns. We were also firing in all directions; however, they were so well hidden, they were difficult to spot. We managed to inflict heavy casualties on the enemy, even though we were greatly outnumbered.

*F Company was captured by the German counter attack driving surrendered Rangers ahead of the guards and promising to shoot the prisoners if they were fired on or they didn't obtain a surrender. Gus describes the follow on activities:*

The Germans herded us out onto the farm road and marched us, hands raised high, out of the area. We carried our wounded with us, some piggy back, a few in our arms, and others just needed someone to hang on to. We walked about a mile to an open field, with a deep ravine running through it. After getting us all into the ravine, the enemy set up machine guns along the banks on both sides. We thought for sure this is it. All they would have to do after the massacre would be to push dirt over us with dozers and it would be all over. The Germans were very angry with us, to say the least, because they suffered many more casualties than we did. All sorts of things crossed my mind. They called for all the wounded to come out of the ditch. Some hesitated but they were convinced that it was the only way they would get medical attention. They were soon loaded onto trucks, displaying red crosses, and were hauled away.

*The remaining men, officer, noncommissioned officer, and enlisted ranks, were marched through Cisterna and out the Velletri road to Castel Romagna. The estate did have a "castle", but the men were held in an open barnyard and the adjacent buildings. The next day they were strafed by American airplanes. The attack was ended when the POWs were recognized, but a latrine was destroyed and an enlisted man killed. The soldier was buried in the flower bed of the "castle". Gus describes the propaganda march in Rome on 2 February 1944.*

That evening we were loaded onto trucks like sardines



in a can. We rode all night, arriving on the outskirts of Rome early in the morning. There we dismounted and were marched through the streets of the city. Motion picture cameras photographed us as we flashed "V" signs with our fingers, along with other finger salutes. We also shouted obscenities they didn't understand. Some of the locals cheered us, others wept openly. The Germans were getting as much publicity as possible over the capture of American Rangers, a tremendous victory for them. They had suffered one defeat after another since the Americans entered the war in North Africa.

After the march, on the other side of Rome, they were packed, standing up, into trucks and moved to the vicinity of Ferra/Sabina about 25 miles north northwest of Rome, according to Capt. William R. bond 1/Hq. to a transient camp

called "the Holiday Inn" in bitter jest. The POWs were issued the equivalent of a half blanket and here they stayed for a week. On or about the 8/9 February they were loaded onto trucks and moved north again to another transient camp always spoken of as Laterina (PG Campo 82), a starvation camp, that had buildings with both doors and windows. Gus describes conditions at Laterina:

One or two buildings, even had a stove, which we crowded around. I have no idea where that camp was, except that it was somewhere between Rome and Florence. Here we met prisoners from all the allied countries. It was a final processing center before the last ride to Germany. We filled out forms identifying ourselves and sent an official post card home announcing our POW status.

**SAFE HARBOR, cont'd...**

est problem was getting enough food to eat. For breakfast we were given 200 grams of black bread, a slice about an inch thick, and a little marmalade. We also got a cup of ersatz coffee that tasted more like boiled combat boot. Some said it was burnt barley. But it was hot, and as time went by we learned to love it. In the evening we got a cup of potato soup, which was very thin. If you were real lucky, you got a piece of bone. One of the guys got one and he chewed on it for days. We were hungry all the time; losing weight fast. We soon cleared the entire compound of everything edible — weeds, grass, etc.

After a few days at this camp, the Germans brought in a load of hay for us to sleep on. Ordinarily this would have been a fine gesture as it was better than sleeping on concrete floors. Unfortunately, the hay was infested with lice who immediately took up residence on the bodies of the prisoners. These lice were so big they were immune to the louse powder that the Krauts gave us. All the itching, scratching, and squirming took our minds off the hunger, at least for a while. Sleep was nearly impossible with the lice running all over our bodies. They seemed to sleep during the day and raise hell all night.

**GUS SCHUNEMANN ESCAPES**

*Gus tells the story of his escape and other activities from 28 February to liberation on 10 August 1944:*

On 28 February we prepared to take our last ride, this time by train, to permanent POW camps in Germany, called stalags. As we filed out of the compound, we passed through a small gate house. One by one we were frisked on the way out, making sure we had no knives or weapons of any kind. Ray Sadowski, a buddy from my squad, had an Army pocket knife that he tossed over the fence to a man who had gone through the gate house. I was fortunate enough to end up in the same boxcar with the knife.

They put about fifty men in each car and locked the doors. European freight cars are unlike anything in the States. They have a small wooden window at the top of the wall on each side with two small, round ventilating holes. The window is a little smaller than one of our basement windows. It was nailed shut and covered with barbed wire on the outside. We had the knife, but at this point, we were not sure how we could use it. We first tried to cut through the floor but soon gave up. The floor was made with thick planking and cutting through would have taken too long. We then went to work on the window. It was about 4:00 pm when we began. Removing the nails and barbed wire with a knife was no easy task. To complicate matters, the train stopped every 15 or 20 minutes. When it did, the guards, who rode in a coach at the end of the train, would get out and walk up and down the length of it with flashlights, checking the doors and windows. Each time we had to put the barbed wire back in place and begin again when the train started to move.

After six hours of work on the window we were able to get it open. We tied a few pieces of blanket together and threw one end out the window, anchoring the other end around

the biggest guy in the car. It was after 10:00 pm when the first man got out. I was the fifth one to go (only the small ones could squeeze through). The only other man I knew who escaped ahead of me was Bill Samara, a BAR gunner in my squad. He was picked up while walking down a road.

I got out the window and hung on the outside of the car. I was terrified at what I saw. There, just ahead, were dim lights and people standing around on the platform. Among them, I saw German soldiers with rifles slung over their shoulders. We were passing through a railroad station! Most of the people didn't notice me. Others just stared, agape in disbelief.

The electric train accelerated very quickly and I just hung on until I was clear of the marshalling yards. By now the train was moving very fast. Out of desperation and a strong will to survive, I kicked away from the boxcar and went head over heels on the railroad bed. I realized later how extremely lucky I was. I could have been over a bridge or passing through an underpass. It was so dark, I had no idea where I was. I picked myself up and found that I had only sprained my thumb a little. Again, I thanked God.

Right now my main objective was to get out of there, and fast. I had to get into the hills before daylight. I knew the railroad ran through the valley parallel to the Apennines, so I headed straight away from the tracks. I made my way through vineyards, back yards, over roads, etc., spurred on by an occasional barking dog.

By daylight I was well into the foothills, away from everything. I walked all day long in an easterly direction, toward the Adriatic coast. I thought that if I could reach Livorno (Leghorn), I might be able to get a ride on a boat back to allied territory. As I passed near a city, I saw a sign that read "Pontevecchio", which is just south of Florence. By that evening I had crossed the Arno River at a town called Lastra a Signa. I spent that night sleeping in a haystack, far from the highway. My lice were delighted to meet some of their relatives, most of whom joined their friends on my body.

**REACHING A SAFE HARBOR**

Walking through the woods the following morning, I heard someone chopping wood. As I eased closer and got him in view, I saw an old man, in his sixties, hacking away at briar stumps. This wood is used for fuel in fireplaces, it burns slowly, like charcoal. I watched him for some time and when I was sure he was alone, I approached him. In broken Italian, I told him I was an American, had just escaped from the Germans and was hungry. (One of the guys on the train spoke Italian and, through him, I learned a few key words). The old man, whose name was Ugo Paci (Pashee), motioned for me to follow him, which I did. He led me down a path to a small farmhouse, the Gradi place. After some hurried explanations, in mile-a-minute Italian, to the lady of the house, he again motioned me to come in. They very graciously sat me down at the table. There, hanging over the fireplace, was a black iron kettle full of minestrone soup. Mrs. Gradi ladled out a bowlful of the soup and cut off a slab of freshly baked bread. She motioned for me to "mangiare", i.e., eat. To this day, I



### SAFE HARBOR, cont'd...

have not tasted anything as good as that soup! It was good to eat again. My stomach had shrunk a lot since captivity, so I was not able to eat as much as I thought.

Our conversation was limited to sign language on my part as I knew no Italian and they knew no English. I managed to convey to them, however, that those blasted lice were eating me alive. When I opened up my shirt, they saw all the louse bites and quickly found some civilian clothes for me to wear. Once I changed into my new garb, the lice were gone forever. What a relief! Mrs. Gradi showed me how they had laid eggs in the seams of my trousers. Those little buggers were well on the way to creating a full-fledged population explosion. The only thing I kept was my combat jacket because it was nice and warm.

I spent the next couple of days getting acquainted with the people of this small village of about 200. They came to the house singly or in pairs, to meet the "Americano" and ask all sorts of questions. One of the villagers presented me with a tiny book, about 2x2 inches square and an inch or so thick. It was an English-Italian dictionary which helped me tremendously. My high school French also helped me to learn the language. There is a very close similarity between the two languages. I stayed with the Gradi family for about a week. They had two children: a girl 8 and a boy 6. Although allied lines were two or three hundred miles away and enemy traffic in this area was very light, it was still very risky for anyone to harbor an escaped POW. For this reason, I felt it was imperative that I should move on. If caught with me in their home, these good people could be shot, to say the least.

Ugo, the old woodchopper, begged me to stay in the area. He and others were quick to explain that I would certainly be recaptured if I tried to get back to allied control. They had stories of escaped prisoners who were shot when discovered. I wasn't too sure of the credibility of their stories but, then again, I gave it a great deal of thought. I had met a lot of friends here who were willing to keep me in their charge and protect me, at great risk to themselves. I decided that, under the circumstances, my chances for survival would be much better if I remained in this area, at least until our lines got a little closer. Here I could keep my finger on the pulse of the war's progress and monitor enemy activity.

The weather was getting milder as the days passed. I fixed myself a real nice pad inside a stack of cornstalks that had been piled in tepee fashion, the customary way of drying the stalks for fodder. The inside center of the stack was an open area about six feet in diameter, easily accessible by spreading the stalks apart. Once inside, the stalks returned to their normal position: the camouflage was perfect. I spent most of my nights here in a field, high above the Rossi farm, on the edge of the village of Bruccianese.

One of the villagers, whose name escapes me, had a radio. This was a real luxury in those parts, as no one else had one. About once a week, Geraldo (Ugo's son) and I would go to the man's house and, in a small upstairs room, listen to the news on BBC. It was the only English I heard until my liberation. In June I learned of the D-Day invasion of

Normandy and the subsequent landings in the south of France. I also heard about our new superfortress, the B-29. The news was getting better as time went by. Our forces had broken through the Gustav line in the south and linked up with the allies north of Rome.

### JOINING THE RESISTANCE

In mid-June we learned about a band of partisans operating in the area about ten miles away. The partisans were a group of civilians who were organized to disrupt enemy activities any way their capabilities would allow. Supposedly they would cut communication lines, blow up supply dumps, etc. Word got to them, somehow, that there was an escaped American Ranger in the area. I was contacted by one of their leaders and asked to join their outfit. After some thought, I felt I might be able to contribute something to the war effort, so I agreed to join them. Several other young men of the village, including Geraldo (who was the same age as me), also came along. We set out to meet the partisans who were holed up in the hills above the city of Prato.

Following a few brief introductions, we were issued an Italian rifle of World War I vintage, and some ammunition. I doubted very much whether either would work. These guys had not military training whatsoever. They knew nothing about tactics, much less survival in enemy territory. That night, with a blazing bonfire you could see for miles around, they were roasting chickens and rabbits that were either given to them or were stolen. They had plenty of wine and soon began singing at the top of their voices and raising all kinds of hell. Not very smart, and I was feeling real uneasy.

The following morning we prepared to move out of that area to parts unknown to me. As our little band of fearless desperados made their way down the mountain, we encountered a half-dozen or so German soldiers on their way up the hill to investigate what was going on. Our leader, upon spotting the Germans, shouted, "Via ragazzi!", i.e., "Run, boys!" I couldn't believe what was happening. We must have had over 100 people in our unit and they scattered, helter-skelter, in all directions. Down the mountain we went with the krauts taking pot shots at us as we fled. That ended my brief experience with the partisans. The Italians, it seems, are much better known for their romanticism than their ability to wage war. Our leader used the code name of Toscano. He has neither been seen nor heard of in those parts since that day.

As the days passed, Geraldo, my best friend and companion, taught me Italian to the point where I could speak, read, and write it enough to get by. We both worked with his father every day, chopping briar stumps in the hills. In the evenings we made the rounds, visiting farms and families living in a wide area. I enjoyed these visits as I got to know a lot of different people; good people. They had all kinds of questions about life in America; their knowledge was so limited. We talked about many things, including politics. Communism was coming of age in Italy at this point in time. Although the system had not yet taken roots in the country, it was becoming increasingly popular, especially among the young and the poor. The idea that all would share in the wealth

### SAFE HARBOR, cont'd..

whether they worked or not seemed to have a lot of appeal. The older folks were not as optimistic. Some were deeply concerned and worried. As one elderly man said to me, "Gustavo, senza Dio non se va", ("Gustave, without God it won't work"). I couldn't argue with that.

Everywhere we visited, the people gave me a few lire; money they could ill afford. I turned the money over to Marietta, Geraldo's mother, as a contribution toward my support. She prepared all the meals for me and the family. Every noon we looked for her to come up the trail carrying a lunch basket. We worked hard and were hungry. She was truly a saint. Everyone was so good to me! I could only thank God for having them on my side.

### LIBERATION

The local people had an established grapevine, the likes of which I had never seen. We were kept informed of the whereabouts of the Germans and the Republicanos (fascists who were pro-Nazi). Through a system of whistles and code words, we knew immediately who and where they were. By mid-July enemy presence in the area had become so intense that I had to confine myself to the woods. The Germans made periodic sweeps through the villages in an effort to shanghai able bodied men to work on their mountain line of fortifications. Twice I narrowly escaped being nabbed. More precautions were in order. In the forest, a small distance from the village, was a deep gully with a brook running through it. Along this brook grew thick, heavily thorned brambles that looked like large raspberry bushes. An ideal spot for a hide-out.

Very carefully, we tied the bushes back and began to dig a cave. Here we could safely stay at night. Digging was painstaking and the progress slow. As we shoveled the dirt out we put it in the creek to be washed away. We dug in about six feet where we struck a solid granite wall and had to stop. We made the cave comfortable with pine boughs and straw. One of the local boys, a sculptor by trade, chiseled out a beautiful scene of clouds, angels and roses on the stone wall. It helped him to while away the time during the long hours of our confinement.

I had developed a bad infection on the toes of my right foot. The holes in my socks and wet boots aggravated the condition greatly. The only therapy available was soaking my foot in the cool mountain stream. The rushing water helped cleanse the area and ease the pain. The constant throbbing was getting worse by the day.

By the first of August, allied lines had advanced to within thirty miles from my location. Each day the artillery became louder and enemy activity in the area grew more and more intense. Day by day I watched the Germans as they set up gun positions, ammo and supply dumps. I also made notes as I watched them mine the bridges and roads.

On the morning of August 10th, I crawled out of the cave and, lo and behold, there on the hilltop was a jeep with the familiar "bullseye" of the British Army on its hood. They had advanced nearly thirty miles during the night. Without a

second thought I hobbled up the hill where I met a soldier who spoke exactly like me! He was a member of a Canadian tank battalion. We were in the British Eighth Army Sector. I identified myself and explained my presence there. He took me to a command post about a mile away. Here I met the battalion commander. I briefed him with all the military intelligence I had learned about the enemy. He had well defined maps of the vicinity. I was able to pinpoint the gun positions, supply and ammo dumps and locations of mines and booby traps. I knew who in the community was responsible for aiding and abetting the enemy. I even told him where he could cross the Arno with tanks. The bottom of the river was rocky and shallow just behind the village.

He thanked me for the information and ordered me transported to a field hospital and supply area about thirty miles away. Here I took a much needed hot shower. They issued me a complete British uniform, hobnailed boots and all. The medics cleansed and bandaged my foot and the next thing I knew, I was on a lorry (truck), heading south.

At this point I felt a great deal of remorse for not having had the opportunity to say farewell and thanks to all those people who were so good to me and actually responsible for saving my life. Only God knows what I might have done without them. As we bounced along the dusty road toward Rome, I thought about the people of Bruccianese constantly and wondered how I could ever repay them.

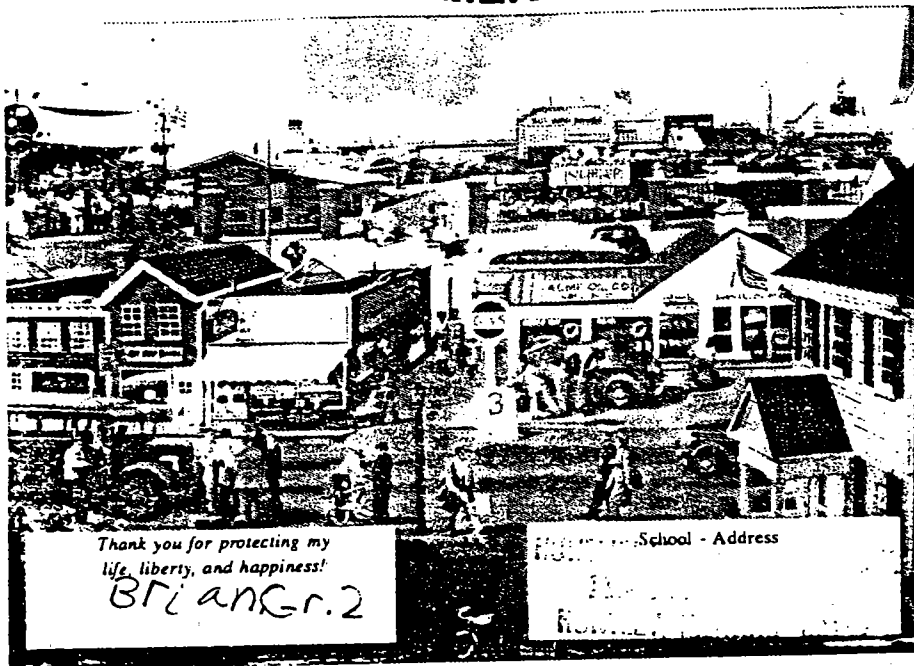
At Rome I was turned over to American control and taken to Fifth Army Headquarters in Naples. There I was debriefed by military intelligence people and whisked over to the Army General Hospital in Caserta. When the doctor peeled the sock off my right foot, pus just poured out of all five toes. The foot was very swollen, which accounted for the tremendous pain I experienced all the way. I remained in the hospital about ten days, soaking my foot in a violet solution. My toes were purple for six months afterward. While in the hospital, I wrote a "V mail" letter home, explaining what had happened and that I would soon be on my way home. I was soon released by the medics and put on a ship, headed for the good old USA. The trip seemed to take forever.

### REST AND RECUPERATION

*Gus arrived in the States and went to Ft. Devens for processing in his one suit of khakis. He was given a complete issue, a complete physical examination, nine months pay, and extended leave orders. He called home that night, younger sister Theresa answered the phone and almost fainted when she heard his voice. His parents were at a movie. With his orders cut, he went home the next day and a tumultuous welcome from family, excepting his five brothers in the service, and including, most especially, his fiance, Rita St. Laurent.*

*It can be noted that he spent two weeks leave in July 1950 with his family at Bruccianese, where he toured the farm houses and dined in a different house every day. He brought gifts of things he knew were still in short supply at that time and was most afraid that they would steal his kids, everybody loved them so much!*

HEARTS FROM • The Home Front • 1941 - 1945



"A salute to World War II Veterans"  
A.D.A. AMERICANS with  
DISABILITIES in ACTION

Mr. Larry Baran, Director  
JOB TRAINING PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM  
Homewood-Flossmoor Community High School  
999 South Kedzie Avenue  
Flossmoor, Illinois 60422



*This 50th Anniversary of World War II  
Commemorative Flag Tribute is  
produced by American students to help  
honor and thank the veterans of World  
War II, their families and those who  
served on the home front.*

*It is hoped that this resource will  
encourage the study of the history of  
this era, so that this knowledge will  
help ensure a safer and better  
tomorrow.*

Kriegis of Oflag 64, Sagan, Poland.

HUGH J HARRIES  
1291 CHANNEL AVE  
OCEAN SHORES MA 980

Sir:

I have just read the TBCA magazine covering  
and saw your "Reader Exchange" for the above  
vignettes. There is nothing in the ad to  
denote price, size or where this may be  
purchased. I still have the paper published  
by the camp listing myself and the Miendorf  
as new arrivals; however as the detaining  
power incorrectly identifies us as either airborne  
infantry or paratroopers, we were sent to Oflag 64.  
In actuality we were airmen from different  
crews that were ~~sent~~ in that particular  
purge. After a short stay, we were sent  
to Luft III camp at Sagan.

I do not remember any persons at Oflag  
64, but do appreciate receiving some clothing,  
shoes and especially some food as we had  
been hither & gone for 2 1/2 months, before arriving  
at your camp. I had long since worn out my  
flight boots and the shoes were most appreciated.  
Remember the epson salts for my ~~antibiotic~~ ~~antibiotic~~ ~~antibiotic~~

Sincerely,  
Hugh J. Harries

Portland, Oregon  
August 1, 1994

Dear Herb,

In response to your query letter of July 8th.

I served with the 88th Division in Italy and  
was captured along with a number of others in Sept-  
ember 1944. My Bn CO, Lt Col WE Bare, myself, and  
several other staff officers were initially sent to  
Oflag VIIA in Moosburg, and then in December 1944  
were sent by prison train to Oflag 64.

Our stay in Oflag 64 was short as you know.  
Lt Col Bare had been injured and was left behind in the  
camp hospital. A Captain Ritts and myself made the  
long trek to Oflag XIII B in Hammelburg.

After liberation by a unit of Pattons 3rd  
Army, and recapture by the Germans, we trekked on  
to Oflag VIIA in Moosburg where we were finally liberated.

Granted that my stay at Oflag 64 was short,  
I don't understand why my visit was not recorded.  
For clarification my statistical details are:  
Captain Sterling A. Borquist, Infantry, Serial No.  
1285364.

Yours Sincerely,

Sterling A. Borquist  
STERLING A. BORQUIST  
13 S. E. 70th Ave.  
Portland, OR 97215

July 22, 1994

Dear Dr. Garris --

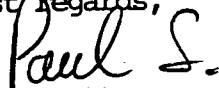
Please forgive me for this very belated response to your letters of January and February of this year to my father, Chaplain Robert Scott. My dad has had two quite severe strokes and has been bedridden for over two years now. He's lost the use of his arms and hands, so he is unfortunately unable to reply himself.

I visit my folks whenever I can and help them catch up on all manner of things, including some of the correspondence which even my mom finds increasingly difficult to deal with. Be assured, however, that your letters have been read to my dad, and he's very appreciative for being remembered and for the kind words of support you have offered. I can also assure you that my dad did receive a copy of the 50th Anniversary Book, and he has enjoyed it a great deal. In addition, I was particularly interested in your plans to be in Normandy for the June activities there. Without question, that visit must have had a tremendous impact on you, so I'm glad you had the opportunity to go.

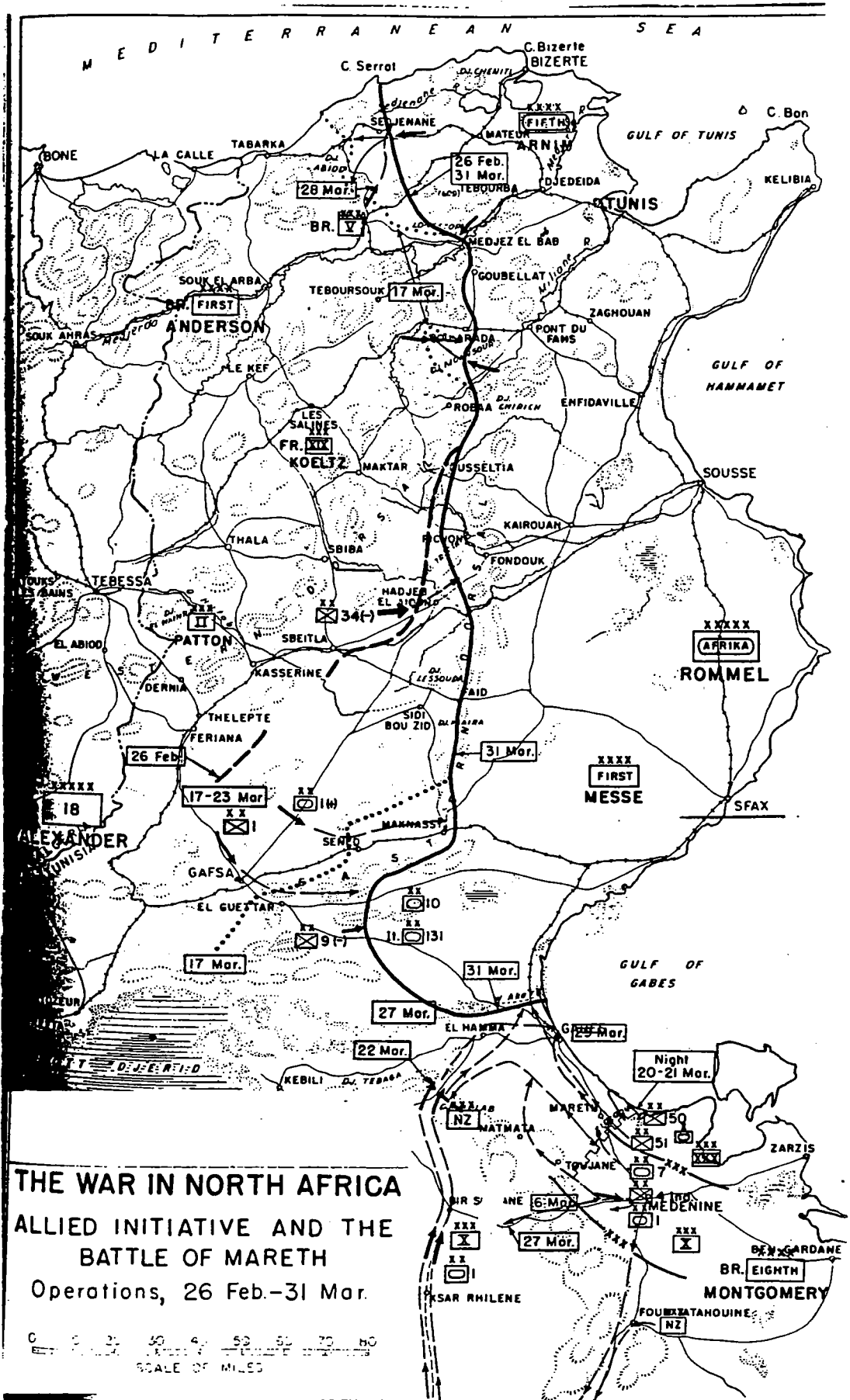
You might be interested to know that I have, on occasion, been in touch with George Thomas, and on one of my visits back to Scottsdale, we were able to arrange a short phone conversation between George and my dad. Even though my dad's speech has also been affected by his strokes, his mind remains, for the most part, quite clear, and he has very fond memories of his Oflag buddies.

Again, I'm very sorry for this very late response, but hope that now you understand why you have not heard from my dad. I thank you, however, for remembering him and keeping in touch, and will again pass along your regards for his well-being. He and I both wish you and your family the very best, and please feel free to contact me directly at any time. My mom also sends along her best wishes.

Best regards,



Paul Scott  
22100 Victory Blvd., D106  
Woodland Hills, CA 91367  
(818) 348-3032



**THE WAR IN NORTH AFRICA**

**ALLIED INITIATIVE AND THE BATTLE OF MARETH**

Operations, 26 Feb.-31 Mar.

0 25 50 75 100  
SCALE OF MILES

December 6, 98

Dear Herb,

Thanks for the 1945 wedding photo. Al Ferry was an early friend from the 1st Division at Ft. Devens in 1941.

Herb, here's one for you to think about. How many POWs (mostly Oflag 64) made an escape at some time between capture and liberation. There would be no statistic in the U.S. military because there was no way for such events to be documented except as mentioned by the escapees.

For example, in 11 air injuria, I escaped from a train near Spay, along with Banckov, Berghart (dec) Ward (dec.) and Rogers (no info). Several others also jumped the train that night. Our escape was due to a flyer who carried a flepible saw in his belt and we simply sawed the door open. Eventually our 5 were taken by Arabs, tied up and beaten by their women and poked with sticks, robbed of all jewelry. Later we were turned over to Italians who kept us at their headquarters in a very friendly atmosphere. Finally, they reluctantly turned us over to the Germans and that ended our escape.

How many more had similar or different escape experiences. It would be interesting to know. Particularly since you keep coming up with unique reports, like in your latest Stern and exchange material.

What is your reaction!

John C.

P. S. Have a fine Christmas and  
expecting new year!  
Good success with your lecture!



A sign erected by the Fort Sill Museum stands a lonely vigil on the floor of a limestone quarry mined during the construction of old Fort Sill.

# Limestone quarry at Sill becomes museum exhibit

By STEVE METZER/Staff writer

On the walls of the gaping hole, in the pink and gray striations of tons of rock compressed upon rock, one can get a sense of the toil of nature — of the continuous passing of frigid winters into sweltering summers, of years of spring floods and of fall droughts.

On the floor of the quarry, amid the creviced boulders and scattered sharp-cornered limestone chips, one can get a sense of the toil of men — of Buffalo soldiers in the Army's 10th Cavalry Regiment, who 125 years ago used black powder to blast holes in the earth and then piled countless loads of stone on heavy wooden sleds to be hauled away by mules and used in the construction of old Fort Sill.

The location of large deposits of limestone was an important factor considered by Army officials looking to build a permanent post in this part of the Indian Territory in the 1860s. They also liked the area near Medicine Bluffs, southeast of the Wichita Mountains, because of its location atop a plateau and the strategic view of the region afforded by the bluffs. Other factors, according to Towana Spivey, director of the Fort Sill Museum, included the availability of a steady water supply and of timber for construction.

"The quarry deposits (were) the closest at hand and in prime areas for getting building materials," he said.

Spivey estimated that at least 45 buildings in the Old Post area of Fort Sill, and perhaps 45 more in other parts of the post, were constructed of limestone mined from the quarry, beginning in 1869. Structures include the historic Quartermaster Corral, the original post hospital and Spivey's office on the Old Post Quadrangle, which was Fort Sill's headquarters until 1911.

The quarry, located at the east end of Sheridan Road in an area now dedicated to the housing and basic training of raw Army recruits, was opened to the public recently after completion of a two-year restoration project undertaken by the museum. A wooden deck has been built to overlook the huge hole in the ground, and museum signs, describing native rock, vegetation, animal life and methods used by the quarry men, look as if they've been pitched in the middle of nowhere, giving the museum "exhibit" a unique appearance.

But the quarry is unique in other ways.

"No one else in Oklahoma has developed a quarry in a historical sense," Spivey said.

Spivey said members of the Oklahoma Historical

Society who recently held their annual conference at Fort Sill seemed impressed with the restoration effort.

"I've had several spend time over there. A lot of people have been enthusiastic about it and want to come back and study it more closely," he said.

People who visit the quarry can notice marks left by the drills of soldier-miners over a century ago. There also are cracks left by blasts of black powder and fading ruts cleaved by the iron runners of sleds used in the work. (Spivey said sleds were used because wagons were prone to break down under the extreme weight of the rock).

Many of the soldiers assigned to Fort Sill in the early days were kept working primarily on construction of the early buildings. Much of their time was spent at the quarry, mining limestone and loading it for transport to buildings being constructed to the west. Civilian mechanics, carpenters and masons also were hired.

"But it was Buffalo soldiers who did the physical work in the quarry and who transported the rock," he said. "The bulk of them were tied up in construction."

Speaking of the design and craftsmanship involved in building the old structures, Spivey said: "By today's standards, to do one of these buildings would be cost prohibitive."

He said the "hard" limestone mined at Fort Sill hasn't deteriorated as would "soft" limestone quarried in other parts of the country.

"The limestone hasn't really changed. Some of the mortar has worn down and had to be replaced," he said.

Interestingly, older limestone buildings at Fort Sill, such as those in the old cantonment area, are the color of cream, as rock found near the top of the quarry was of that color. Buildings farther west, constructed later, have more of a bluish or gray cast, as limestone mined nearer the bottom of the quarry was darker.

Spivey said smaller quarries on the post also were mined for limestone to be used in construction of later buildings.

The museum director said that probably the biggest change that has occurred in buildings on old Fort Sill in the last century is that they're gradually being buried, as it would seem Mother Nature is reclaiming her limestone. Tons of dust and dirt have either washed or blown into the area, raising the land around the buildings by as much as a foot, he said. As an example, he points to old pictures of a building that show its porch several steps above the building's front yard. Today, the porch is only a short step up.



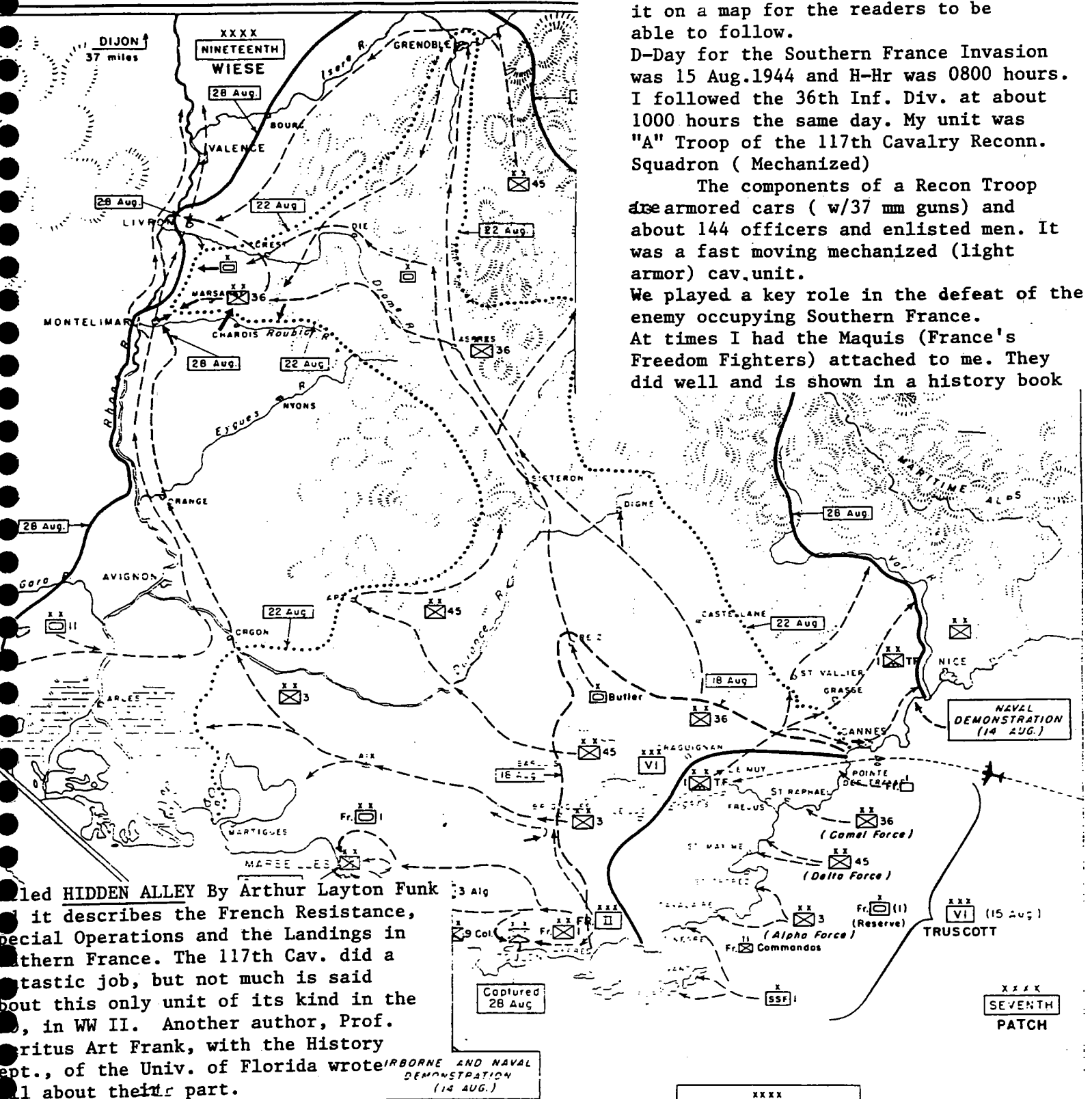
Tom:

I have extracted certain portions of the June 24, 1994 letter and show it on a map for the readers to be able to follow.

D-Day for the Southern France Invasion was 15 Aug. 1944 and H-Hr was 0800 hours. I followed the 36th Inf. Div. at about 1000 hours the same day. My unit was "A" Troop of the 117th Cavalry Recon. Squadron (Mechanized)

The components of a Recon Troop are armored cars (w/37 mm guns) and about 144 officers and enlisted men. It was a fast moving mechanized (light armor) cav. unit.

We played a key role in the defeat of the enemy occupying Southern France. At times I had the Maquis (France's Freedom Fighters) attached to me. They did well and is shown in a history book



led **HIDDEN ALLEY** By Arthur Layton Funk  
 it describes the French Resistance,  
 Special Operations and the Landings in  
 Southern France. The 117th Cav. did a  
 fantastic job, but not much is said  
 about this only unit of its kind in the  
 world, in WW II. Another author, Prof.  
 Martinus Art Frank, with the History  
 Dept., of the Univ. of Florida wrote  
 all about their part.

Tom came into North Africa and  
 then to Sicily where he was wounded  
 and returned to his own "A" Troop just  
 in time for D- Day!

Tom, many thanks for the letter  
 and we indeed are proud of you and your  
 part in events 50 years now!

FR. B  
 DE TASSIGNY  
 FR. II      FR. I

Tom Piddington  
 7041 Rowing Green  
 Dr  
 Spring Nw, Pa

34606-3664

17 Feb 94

Dear Herb:

Post

Taking a cue from the last issue of Oflag 64 Item, I am enclosing my experience at an attempt to gain freedom. Not very successful but at least I tried. The Post Oflag 64 Item was well assembled and written.

If all goes according to my present plans I will be in France this coming October to celebrate the liberation, 50th anniversary, of two towns near Colmar. Put just before this trip to Europe, I plan to attend the reunion of the National Order of Battlefield Commissions in Fayetteville and Fort Bragg, N.C. so I will be able to

kill two birds with one stone. I hate to miss the Oflag 64 reunion this year but '95 should bring forth more celebrations for the 50th anniversary of the end of WWI. It will be another busy year. It seems as though the older we get the faster these reunions roll around

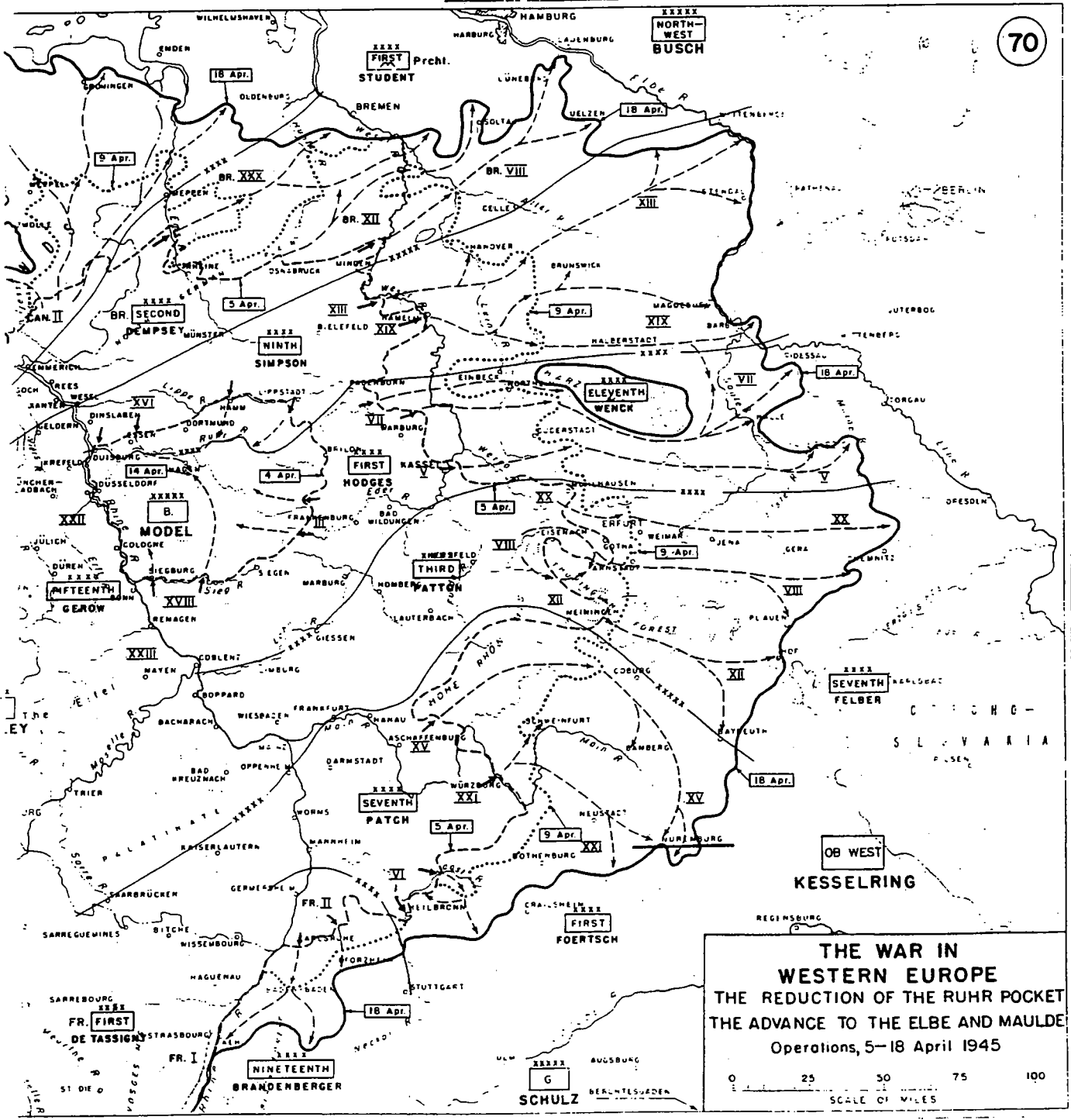
Herb, keep up the good work. I know how difficult it is publishing the Item and mailing them out to all of us. Keep up the good work.

A contribution toward the postage fund is enclosed.

Take care and stay healthy,

*James F. ...*

70



I ESCAPED BUT: This is my short experience in escape and evasion.

The relief from the watchful eyes of German guards was no respite for the constant state of alertness required to stay free was more of a drain on the mind and body than it was worth, especially when one's physical well being was wrecked with cramps, diarrhea and fever.

As the remnants of Oflag 64ites, now mixed with other U.S. POWs, watched the shuffling groups move out of the camp in Nuremberg at 7:30 in the morning, 4th of April, 1945, rumors were floating around that we were being moved to Munich and on to the Bavarian Alps and be held as hostages in a last ditch effort. U.S. Forces were closing in on Nuremberg by that time with sounds of ground and air attacks that could be heard off to the west. I did not relish the thought of spending any more time in captivity than necessary so when the platoon to which I was assigned finally moved out and joined the column around 1:30 P.M. I noted the direction, road condition, bridge, and anything that could be used as an identifying landmark. It was a wild shot but if I had the opportunity to separate from the column I would make an effort to hide out alone and let the U.S. Forces over run my position. It would be a matter of a few days at most, I thought. After all I had a Red Cross parcel that was only a day old and all I needed was a water source.

The chance of a lifetime arrived about 2 hours out of camp. The long column was strafed by our own fighter planes. I thought they were P-47s was told later that they were P-51s. Being on the far right hand side of the road, I ran as far as I could and jumped into a depression in the ground well covered with overhanging foliage. When the German guards ran around shouting for all to get back out on the road, I stayed put and didn't move. Just before it got dark I crawled out surveyed the situation, but before I did, I buried a Prince Albert can with a table knife, pictures and anything else that might incriminate me if caught. Nine(9) years later while stationed in Germany with the 1st Inf Div I located the exact spot in the woods and found the items that had not rusted away during that period.

As it was still semi-dark, I was able to locate the railroad line and the bridge across it which I wanted to avoid. I stumbled down the bank about 100 yards before the bridge and scampered up the other side, hid in the bushes for a few minutes catching my breath to see if anyone saw or heard me. Then I started to hike cross country toward the POW camp because that was where there was some security from hostile action. It soon became pitch dark and I couldn't see five feet in front of me. I stumbled in and out of gun emplacement and signal stations but managed to continue on without sounding the alarm. I could hear German troops talking in their blacked-out billets after supper without paying any attention to what was going on outside. I kept tasting the water quality of the creeks and small streams that I crossed by taking a sip without drinking it. They all had an acidic taste so I kept on walking. Seen as I found a source of water that was half way potable I was going to stop and hide out. Just before day-break I found myself in a grove of trees across the street from the POW compound we left the day before. There was a running creek with water that didn't taste too bad compared to the others so a couple of Halasone tablets from the Red Cross in a canteen of water should take care of it. The trees were planted in a neat symmetrical row for which the Germans were noted but didn't provide any overhead cover as they were only 5-6 feet tall. The bottom of the trees were all cleaned off so I could put my head to the ground and see for 100 yards in all directions. I had my water and a Red Cross box about half full by that

over run my position in a few days, I thought. I would crawl to the creek each day for my water supply, drop two instead of one Halasone tablets in the canteen, shake it and let it stand for 30 minutes like we were instructed in basic training.

The incessant air raids by both the British and U.S. Air Forces caused children to run through the grove of trees. I could see their feet as they ran around me but never stepped on me. If they did, I'm sure they would not have payed any attention for the anti-aircraft shrapnel was raining all around us. I picked up one piece that was still hot that landed near me, so from that point on I put the Red Cross box on my back as I layed on the ground. It could have provided some protection if a big chunk of shrapnel just happened to land on me.

Each day brought new hopes of being liberated but the bombing and artillery barrages continued day and night. How long can the Germans hold out? Maybe our side was getting tired too. After nearly a week of hiding out I decided to give myself up and become a Kreigj again. The fact that my Red Cross box was void of food and out of Halasone tablets had a lot to do with my decision. Also, my digestive system was rebelling to the point where one would think that I was blowing cigarette smoke out of my rear end for the nicotine stains on my shorts. After building up enough courage, I took a deep breath and in broad daylight walked out to the road about 100 yards from my hiding spot. I fully expected the Germans on the road would surround and recapture me but they did not pay any attention to this lone Oriental in a French split tail overcoat, not having bathed all winter, carrying an empty Red Cross box and shuffling toward the main gate of the POW camp about 500 yards up the road. I was somewhat apprehensive to say the least, but if I had know that I was going to be so inconspicuous and ignored I on bicycles passed me by without a second glance. Didn't I look out of place in their society or were they too preoccupied with the situation all around them to worry about this single odd looking character in their midst.

I walked up to the main gate of the camp and asked the guard to let me in. He didn't understand English and I knew that he didn't understand spoken Japanese so I asked him to get the Officer of the Day. Within a few minutes an officer arrived who spoke English and he had the guard open the gate to let me back in. As we walked back into the center of the camp, he kept asking me where I came from and what was I doing trying to get back into camp. I told him that I was in that column that departed about a week ago, got lost en-route to where ever and mumbled something about being kranken (sick) and tired. My story must have sounded half way plausible but his side glances at while we walked still had question marks. We reached a large ten next to the huge Russian POW compound where I was dropped off among 25-30 U.S. officers, mostly Army Air Corps who were shot down on raids over Nuremberg.

And that ends my short trip into freedom. I enjoyed every minute of it, to think for myself without being told what to do during the previous six months. And that's what freedom and liberty is all about. My parents, brother and sister were also in a camp in Idaho, guarded by sentries so how I know how they felt at that time losing their freedom to move about as they please.

*Jimmie Kanaya*  
JIMMIE KANAYA  
Von den Amer. Kgf. Nr. 3335

# Remembering agony of Andersonville POWs

By Frank Perley  
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

As the Civil War's deadliest prisoner-of-war camp, Georgia's Andersonville is remembered as a symbol of the sordid underbelly of America's internecine conflict.

Gone are the long walls of pine post that confined 45,000 Union soldiers in an enormous stockade filled with squalor, disease and death. Now neat rows of granite grave markers cover a grassy field nearby, bearing mute testimony to the ferocious human suffering that occurred there 130 years ago this summer.

Today, Former Prisoner of War Recognition Day, Americans gather at commemorative sites across the country to honor captive U.S. combatants from all of America's wars. Some former POWs are devoting their efforts to plans to build a national POW museum on the grounds of the old Andersonville camp. The museum is intended to portray the misery faced by Americans captured in service to their country, an enduring reminder to visitors of the value of freedom.

There was little to forewarn Confederate leaders of the infamy that soon would befall them when they began building the Andersonville facility, officially called Camp Sumter, during the early months of 1864. With Union forces threatening from the North, they decided that federal prisoners being held near Richmond should be moved deeper into the South, where there was greater security and more abundant food.

The camp was carved out of a pine forest near the hamlet of Andersonville, about 100 miles south of Atlanta. A 26-acre rectangle was cleared to make the prison pen, with a 15-foot-high timber stockade, 1,620 feet long and 779 feet wide.

Sentry towers rose above the stockade walls at 30-yard intervals. The ground sloped downward in the middle of the compound toward a creek, which flowed beneath the east wall and out the other side. Eight small defensive forts were built outside the stockade.

The first Union captives arrived at Andersonville in February 1864, and as many as 400 new prisoners were added each day. By June, about 26,000 men had been squeezed into an area planned for 10,000. In August, the number swelled to 32,000 and the deadly disaster began to unfold.

The creek running through the compound was used for drinking, washing and human waste by prison guards camped upstream. The internees had no other source of drinking water, making disease inevitable.

When the merciless heat of

summer arrived, the men huddled under cloth canopies, trying to ward off the sweltering rays.

The stockade's high walls stifled any breeze. Seeking shade from the walls was forbidden: any prisoner crossing the "dead line" — a zone 19 feet from each wall — risked being shot.

Deteriorating economic conditions from the South's faltering war effort made food supplies scarce and hunger became endemic. The combined effect of overcrowding, heat and starvation contributed to the collapse of sanitary conditions and prisoners be-

gan to sicken and die by the hundreds.

Surviving records chronicle the enormity of the suffering: "There is so much filth about the camp that it is terrible trying to live here." John Ransom of the 9th Michigan Cavalry wrote in his diary: "With sunken eyes, blackened countenances from pitch pine smoke, rags and disease, the men look sickening. The air reeks of nastiness."

Recalled another: "Since the day I was born, I never saw such misery."

Gen. William T. Sherman's

Union army took Atlanta on Sept. 2, 1864, and the camp faced imminent attack. The Confederates then moved most of their captives to other locations in South Carolina and Georgia. The horror of Andersonville was over.

During the camp's 14-month existence, nearly 13,000 of the 45,000 Union soldiers interned there perished. Thus, Andersonville gained notoriety as the war's deadliest prison camp.

After Appomattox, public outrage in the North over the camp's 29 percent death rate led to the arrest of Capt. Henry Wirz, the

camp's commandant, who was tried for murder, convicted and hanged in Washington on Nov. 10, 1865.

Andersonville was donated to the federal government in 1910 and was given to the National Park Service in 1971. Today, the area is a 475-acre national historic site surrounding the area of the stockade.

Andersonville National Cemetery, in one corner of the park, contains 17,000 grave markers, including those for more recent veterans.

The planned \$7.9 million museum is designed to evoke the image of a prison camp, with three peaked structures resembling guard towers rising from the roofline. Exterior walls will be built of a variety of red brick common during the Civil War era.

Inside, exhibits will portray the hardship of prison life and feature artifacts from POWs in each of America's wars, including Desert Storm. Plans call for a depiction on one wall of the stooped figure of a Civil War-era POW.

For William Bearisto, national

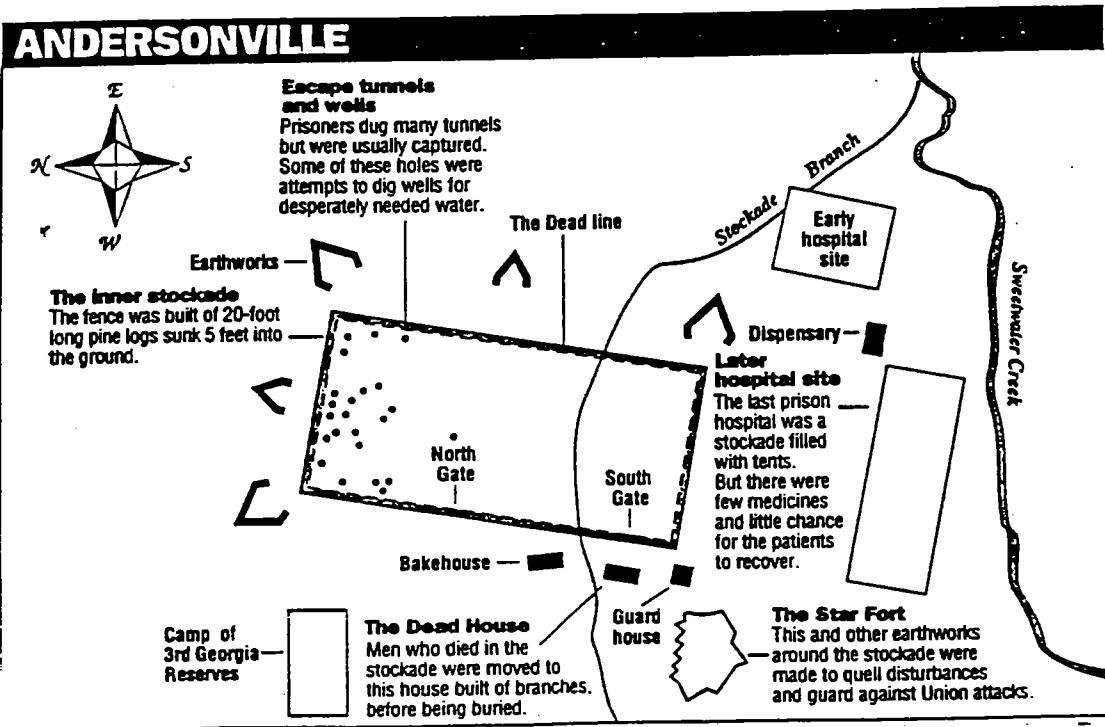
commentator of American Ex-Prisoners of War, who survived a German internment camp during World War II, the mission of a museum about imprisonment is to teach the value of liberty. "The message is freedom. People who have been interned find out what freedom really is worth. When you don't know if you'll be alive the next morning, you learn the value of freedom. It's something you never forget."

The 33,000-member POW organization is helping to raise the \$4.4 million in private contributions needed to complete the project. Sale of a commemorative coin is expected to bring in most of that amount. Supporters say construction will begin this spring and be completed in time for dedication one year from today.

Contributions to the project may be mailed to: Andersonville Fund of the American Ex-Prisoners of War, PO Box 92137, Albuquerque, N.M. 87199.

Frank Perley is articles editor for the Commentary section of The Washington Times.

A museum honoring all U.S. prisoners of war is planned on the grounds of the old Andersonville camp.



# Former POW Finds Fulfillment In Host Program

by W.R. "Bob" Windham

EDITOR'S NOTE: Andersonville NHS Guest Host Coordinator Amanda Rhodes states the "Mr. Windham is one of our most faithful AXPOW guest hosts. He served more than 500 hours last year and will go over that amount this year."

On one occasion, when we were host and hostess at the Ex-POW Museum at Andersonville, a WWII Air Force bomber pilot came to visit. He was still walking with crutches. Both of his legs and hips had been crushed when his B-17 bomber was shot down in a sheet of flames over Italy in 1944. His plane crashed into a huge tree behind an Italian farmer's barn. The farmer and his family rescued the pilot from the tree. When he was safely extracted and on the ground, his first question was about the condition of his crew members. The farmer told him that he could account for all but one of his crew. Many months later, the pilot received a phone call from the farmer in Italy, asking him to come spend two weeks with him at the farm. The farmer informed the pilot that he had located the remains of his missing crew member and wanted the pilot to accompany the remains to the United States where arrangements had been made for interment in Arlington National Cemetery. The pilot made the trip and accomplished his mission. His comment: "Now the family knows for sure..."

What a joy it has been for Inie and me to serve as guest host and hostess at the Ex-POW Museum at the Andersonville National Historic Site.

My first exposure to this historic area took place in June 1940. My senior class was on our way to Washington, DC. The first day of the trip was spent at Andersonville. My heart ached that day for those who had suffered so much misery in the prisoner of war camp and for their families and friends. Those feelings are still active in my heart today, and have multiplied many times over the past fifty-three years. As I viewed the camp in 1940, little did I realize that four and a half years later I would be in a prisoner of war camp in Germany.

The enjoyment for Inie and me comes from meeting people from all over the United States and many foreign countries. On one of our tours of duty, we had visitors from 46 states and from Canada, Australia, England and France.

Hosting at Andersonville has provided an opportunity for us to establish friendships with people from all over the world. Many of our new friends have written us nice letters, sent photographs, and have contacted us by fax and phone, requesting information about the historic site. We have received many requests for individual, family, and small group tours of the POW camp. If you or your friends are interested in the above mentioned types of tours, give us a call at 1(205)297-2715. Since we belong to the Valley Chapter in Columbus, GA, it is but a short drive to Andersonville, so we are always happy to respond to those requests.

Inie stays inside the museum most of the time to answer questions, asking everyone to sign the register and pointing out items of special interest. She also talks to the youngsters and may even babysit for a few minutes if a child decides it is crying time.

The system that seems to work best for me is to meet and greet the visitor somewhere between the parking lot and the museum. A handshake, a smile and a pleasant greeting will usually set the tone for questions and other dialogue. If we have a large number of visitors at one time, I open the door of the museum for the ones I greet first, then turn to those coming up the sidewalk and go through the same procedure with them. You will meet many interesting people that way — I promise — and you will have more time to converse with them.

If you are interested in serving as guest host, the staff at Andersonville will be more than happy to sign you up. If you only have a day, that will be a day well spent. For further information, call (912)924-0343.

We urge you to make plans to spend time as host and hostess at Andersonville. It will be well worth your effort and time. Enjoy!



With  
Sincere  
Thanks

Perhaps you sent a lovely card,  
Or sat quietly in a chair;  
Perhaps you sent beautiful flowers,  
If so, we saw them there.  
Perhaps you sent or spoke kind words  
As any friend could say;  
Perhaps you were not there at all  
Just thought of us that day.  
Whatever you did to console the heart,  
We thank you so much, whatever the part.

Berlenski Family

**LACHANCE**

Mr. Paul A. LaChance, 75, of Tampa, passed away Friday. Graveside services will be held at Sunset Memory Gardens at 10:30 a.m. Monday, June 6, 1994, which marks the 5th anniversary of the passing of his wife, Lucile. Survivors include a son: Michael LaChance,



Tampa; a daughter: Paula Parker, Tampa; three sisters: Irene Lamoureux, Leominster, Mass; Theresa Barney, Lunenburg, Mass; Lorraine DeBettencourt, Lunenburg, Mass; a brother: Ernest LaChance, Leominster, Mass; four grandchildren: Dwaine A. Parker, John W. Parker, III, Amy LaChance, all of Tampa, and Pamela Grinaldi of Sandpoint, Idaho; and three great-grandchildren. Family will receive friends from 2:00 to 4:00 P.M. Sunday at F. T. Blount Co. Funeral Home, Nebraska Avenue Chapel.

F. T. BLOUNT CO. FUNERAL HOME  
Nebraska Avenue Chapel

8 JUNE 94

Dear Sirs,

This is to inform you that my father, Paul A LaChance, Capt USA RET., passed away 3 JUNE 1994 and was buried 6 JUNE 1994. We buried him in his uniform and a DAV unit out of Sand O' Lakes did the honors.

Paul A LaChance 21 JAN 1919 - 3 JUNE 1994

Thank You

Michael W. LaChance