

THE KRIEGIES LOSE A FRIEND

By Frank Diggs

The Welcome Swede is dead. Henry Söderberg, the best friend of Oflag 64 kriegies during World War II, died on September 21, just a month after attending our last reunion in Newport, Rhode Island.

He had just turned 81. He died in his sleep in a Stockholm hospital, apparently of a heart attack.

Everybody called him Henry. As one of the half-dozen foreigners permitted to travel unescorted anywhere in Germany and occupied Europe, he visited Oflag 64 every few months as a YMCA representative. He was the one who arranged to ship in tons of things that kept us relatively sane—thousands of books, baseballs, musical instruments, theatrical gear, Bibles, even paper for our monthly *ITEM*.

Henry hated the Nazis, but coped with them well enough to get our badly-needed supplies space on the over-crowded German rail lines. He had several run-ins with the impatient German officials. He travelled extensively on standing-room-only German trains and survived a number of bombings while huddled in German bomb shelters. As a YMCA REP, he was certainly a young man—about the same age as most of the lieutenants at Schubin—and indeed a Christian, although he didn't make a big deal about it.

After the war, he came to America often, looking up kriegie friends across the country. He soon began to attend our bi-annual or annual reunions, spoke at most of them and was the featured speaker at one or two. On three occasions, Henry arranged complicated trips for Oflag 64 kriegies back to Schubin, in 1971, 1985 and 1990, usually including side-trips to Warsaw, Stockholm, Copenhagen, Vienna, St. Petersburg and

Paris. All were well attended. By this time Henry was a vice president of the SAS Airlines, which helped lower the cost.

At one recent reunion, Henry was presented with a plaque making him an "Honorary Kriegie, With All the Rights and Privileges Adherent Thereto." He was amused, but touched. The plaque now resides with most of Henry's wartime memorabilia in the "Söderberg Room" of the POW section of the Air Force Academy at Colorado Springs.

Henry is survived by his wife, Clair, a pretty and talented Swiss lass who also served with the War Prisoners Aid group of the Y during the war and married Henry soon after World War II. She also attended the Newport reunion this year and several kriegies noted that she is still pretty. They have two sons.

He will be sorely missed by this group of aging kriegies.

* * *

Claire's Letter to Herb Garris Concerning Henry's Death

VÄLLINGBY, SWEDEN:

Dear Herb,

This is a very sad occasion for me to write to you.

First I have to tell you both Henry and I enjoyed immensely being with you all at the reunion in Newport. Henry said so many times, though he was very tired then.

We arrived home on September 7th and then spent some days at our summer place, Henry still feeling unusually tired but happy to be there. It was his heart. We had to return to Stockholm where he suddenly had to be taken to hospital and where he died peacefully in the early morning of September 21st.

The funeral will take place on October 3rd in a small circle of family and friends.

I hope you will be able to communicate this sad news to our friends of Oflag 64. As you may well understand I am still in shock and cannot grasp what happened.

I thank you in advance for what you can do and send you two pictures Henry wanted you to have but was not able any more to send himself.

Yours ever,

Claire

* * *

HENRY'S LAST MESSAGE

This year Henry Söderberg was unwell and did not expect to attend the Newport reunion, so he wrote out a last message that might be read to the assembled kriegies. He did attend and the message was never read, but his wife Claire sends us the following copy of what he wrote:

Message from Henry Soderberg to the 1997 Oflag 64 reunion in Newport.

Dear Oflag 64 friends,

Only circumstances and events completely outside my control have prevented me from participating in your reunion. This time I was firmly set to come and had very much been looking forward to once more be with you. I hope that your reunion so far has been good and that what follows will be successful.

It has been said that this is your last reunion. In a way, from a formal and official point of view, this may be true. However, I am convinced that as long as there are living members of this great group you will continue to congregate - in one way or another - until there is only one left of you.

As prisoners of world war II you played a significant roll. You endured hardship and brutality with dignity and with the determination to live on. You never gave up. You used your time behind the wires to improve your knowledgge an increase your common sense. And you learned how important it is to be considerate and understanding for the needs of others and to share with them your own limited resources - including space. You also learned how important small and simple things could become as the basis for dignified living: a soap, a toiletpaper, a razor blade, a piece of paper, a pencil, a book and so on. You also found that time is an important capital which can be profitably unseed when there is a will to survive and to plan and prepare for the future. You also found out that phsyical and mental occupation is necessary in order to sustain healthy living. And above all you learned during the time as prisoners to treasure freedom.

As a former delegate of the War Prisoners Aid of the YMCA I am happy every time I get evidence that our work - which was concentrated on just the small basic needs of your daily life - in many cases could help prisoners to achieve some of the values which made life worth living. The Y services were in a way complimentary necessities; they were also a reminder that you were not forgotten by people outside the prison camp. Hundred thousands of people, your relatives and friends and countless persons who did not know you personally contributed to the Y work because they simply felt they had to assist in an important task.

I have told you, time after time, how happy and grateful I am that I was given the opportunity to serve the prisoners of war. Believe me, this was not a sacrifice for me, on the contrary, it was a great challenge and to a young man a great adventure. The contacts I made during the war have continued over the years and developed into a friendship of special kind. I regard this as something of the best given to me in life.

Some ex-POW friends have asked me - out of pure curiosity - how much money we were paid by the YMCA for our work; also if we got some retirement benefits when the war was over. This may be a fitting question today when the world is full of "professional" delegates of hundreds of organizations often paid with government money.

The salaries of the Y delegates were related to their civic and social situation at home. As a rule a delegate should have a salary identical what he had at home with allowances for children etc. (Fresh out of university without a firm income I got about 70 \$ a month - a good pay in my opinion!). The money went to bank accounts or dependents directly. All direct living costs when working, travelling and living in Germany were on expense account. (There was really nothing of value to buy!) The directives were to live as comfortable as possible in order to gather strength for the visits to POW camps. As time went on, the possibilities for "luxury living" in Hitler's Germany were nil. On our journeys we had to sleep wherever we found a bed or a bench; the food provided in restaurants was meagre - we, like you, could keep alive thanks to parcels sent from the Red Cross or from home. Of course when we stayed for some days at our German head office - in Berlin or Sagan - we could experience a more homelike atmosphere - but even here things came to an end. The last four months of the war each delegate had to live on his own and to improvise his living and work in all respects. Several of us ended up in POW camps ourselves - it was then more safe inside the wires than outside!

For us who had volunteered to the war service there were no post-war compensation or pensions whatsoever - something which was understood from the outset. However, the YMCA paid a life insurance for us; in my case, young, no firm position at home yet, no family or dependents apart from my parents, it amounted to the staggering sum of 3.500 US \$ - or roughly one year's salary - according to the exchange rate. But at that time, of course, the value was much higher though not staggering.

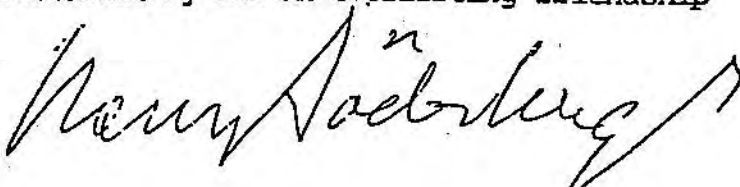
No, we did not get rich moneywise. And still I treasure more than anything else those four years which I could spend in the work for prisoners. The elderly gentlemen who were running the whole YMCA operation during the war were experienced and wise. They used to say: "This work will never make you rich. But after the war you will feel the gratefulness and friendship of those you served and this will mean much more than any monetary compensation." And this is just how I have experienced it at the meetings with you and exPOW from other camps during the whole post-war period.

Much more could be said at this occasion, but I shall end here with many thanks to all of you for the friendship and comradeship you have showed to me over the years. It has been a great source of inspiration. And my special thanks go to those of you with whom I was able to establish more personal contacts with our families involved - I cannot enumerate you all - but I am thinking especially of people (dead or alive) like the Drakes, the Burgesons, the Waters, the Slacks, the Diggs, the Holders the Garretsand so on.

Please let me know when and where the next reunion will take place since I am sure there will still be another.

My wife Claire, whom I met when I worked for you in Germany - she also worked for you both behind the stage in Germany and Geneva - sends her best regards to all.

Affectionately and in everlasting friendship

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Henry Aebler". The signature is written in dark ink and is slanted upwards to the right. There is a small "n" written above the "A" in "Aebler".

WHAT THE SWEDISH PAPERS SAID ABOUT HENRY

The following obituaries were printed in two Stockholm newspapers and translated for us by the Swedish Embassy in Washington.

Henry Söderberg

Henry Söderberg was the *Welcome Swede* among the American Prisoners of War in Germany during World War Two as a delegate for YMCA aid to the POWs. He met and helped innumerable prisoners of war during 1943-45. He said himself that it was the most important, the most dangerous, but also the happiest, time of his life. Experiences from that time shaped the rest of his life.

Henry Söderberg worked among the Allied prisoners of war and civilian internees in camps in the eastern part of Germany, in Poland and in East Prussia.

One of the prisoners of war, J. Frank Diggs, later a journalist, documented his work in *The Welcome Swede*, 1988. Among all the POW camps that he visited regularly was Stalag Luft III known for the Great Escape. Many times it was a dangerous task, but Henry Söderberg's enthusiasm and energetic personality helped him in finding solutions, even in a tight spot.

After the war, he continued his work among German prisoners of war in Belgium and Holland. After that, he worked all his career with air transportation.

His work involved a lot of travelling all over the world and gave him the opportunity to deepen his relationship with many of the former POWs, especially the Americans. He was an honored guest at many of the reunions that were arranged in the U.S. All his material and documents about his activity in Germany is now in the historical collection of the Stalag Luft III at the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs.

Henry Söderberg was also very active in working with senior citizens within the YMCA and YWCA in Stockholm. The Christian view of life remained his source of inspiration in his life work. He had a remarkable ability to create bonds of friendship and to build warm, human relationships.

- Svenska Dagbladet

AMONG PRISONERS OF WAR DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR IN GERMANY

Henry Söderberg, Stockholm, former director of Skandinavian Airlines (SAS), died at the age of 81. He is survived by his wife, Claire, and their sons Didrik and Olof and their families.

Henry Söderberg was born in Linköping where he graduated from "gymnasium" (high school) 1936. After graduation from law school at the University of Stockholm in 1942, he was in 1943 selected to be the Swedish delegate in YMCA International Aid to the Prisoners of War.

In that capacity he worked among the prisoners of war in Germany until the end of the war in 1945. After that, he worked for two years among the German prisoners of war in Holland and Belgium. He described his experiences in the book *Över gränser, genom spärrar* ("Over Borders, Through Barriers.") Five years ago, he and his colleagues were honored by dedication of a cantata of gratitude by the former prisoner of war, William Hilsley.

Henry Söderberg began his career in 1947, working with the civilian air transportation. Twice he worked with the International Civil Aviation Organization in Montreal (1950-53, 1957-59). In 1967 he began to work at SAS, mainly with international affairs. From 1969 until his retirement in 1981, he was in charge of SAS's air transportation political department.

In his youth, Henry Söderberg worked for the newspaper *Östgöta Correspondenten*, where he wrote articles and columns. After his retirement, he did research on the history of aeronautics. In the document, *Swedenborg's 1714 Aeroplane*, he accounted for the discovery that Emanuel Swedenborg had described in writing and sketches of a prototype of a flying machine that was heavier than air....

- Dagens Nyheter

(Translation from the Swedish kindness of Helena Franck, Georgia Rotary student from Sweden.)

Translation

AMONG THE PRISON CAMPS IN WORLD WAR II GERMANY

Henry Söderberg, Stockholm, former director of SAS, has died at the age of 81. His next of kin are wife Claire and sons Didrik and Olof with their families.

Henry Söderberg was born in Linköping, where he graduated from the upper secondary school in 1936. Upon completion of a law degree from Stockholm University in 1942, he was appointed in 1943 as the Swedish delegate to KFUM's international prisoner of war aid program.

In this capacity he worked among the Allied prisoners of war in Germany until the end of the war in 1945; thereafter a couple years among the German prisoners of war in Holland and Belgium. He described his experiences in the book, "Över gränser, genom spärrar" (Across Boundaries, Through Barriers). Five years ago former prisoner of war William Hilsley dedicated a "Tacksamhetskantat" (Cantata of Gratefulness) to him and his colleagues.

In the aviation board Henry Söderberg began in 1947 a professional life entirely dedicated to civil air traffic. In two cycles he served at the international organization for civil air traffic, ICAO, in Montreal, 1950-53 and 1957-59, the second time as Sweden's representative in the ICAO Council. At SAS, where he started in 1967, international questions became his main task. From 1969 until he retired in 1981, he was head of SAS's air traffic policies section.

In his younger years, Henry Söderberg collaborated with columns and articles in Östgöta Correspondenten. As a retiree, he carried out research on aviation history, among other things. His discovery that Emanuel Swedenborg in text and sketches had described an air ship "heavier than air" was reported in his book "Swedenborg's 1714 Aeroplane".

Henry Söderberg said himself that the years in KFUM's prisoner of war work was the most important and even the happiest period of his life. The experiences and adventures he had there left an imprint on the rest of his life.

Henry Söderberg worked among the Allied prisoners of war and civil internees in the camps which were in the eastern part of Germany, Poland and East Prussia. One of the prisoners of war, J. Frank Diggs, who later became a journalist, documented his work in the book "The Welcome Swede" (1988). Among all the prisoner of war camps which he regularly visited was Stalag Luft III, famous for the big tunnel escape, "The Great Escape" (Trähästen). Many times it was a dangerous assignment, but Henry Söderberg's enthusiasm and his enterprising personality led him to find ways out of very tight spots.

Henry Söderberg's travels gave him the opportunity to deepen contacts with many of the former prisoners of war, especially the Americans. He was often a sought after guest at many of the frequent "reunions" which were arranged in the U.S. His collected materials and writings concerning his activities in Germany can now be found in "The Historical Collection of the Stalag Luft III" at the library of the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs. Henry Söderberg was also very active in the senior programs of KFUK-KFUM headquarters in Stockholm, and collaborated frequently in many organizations with speeches. The Christian view of life was the inspiration for his life's work. There are two characteristics of his life which we particularly remember. He had an unusual capacity for striking up friendships and building warm human relations. In his enthusiastic, almost explosive manner, he spread encouragement and appreciation.

KFUK-KFUM's National Association
Jan-olov Söderberg
KFUK-KFUM Central
Sven Gunnar Lindblom
Chairman, The Senior Group

Translation

DEATH NOTICE
HENRY SÖDERBERG

*Henry Söderberg, former director of SAS, Stockholm,
81 years old; his next of kin are his wife, Claire and
his sons Didrik and Olof and their families*

Henry Söderberg was born in Linköping, where he graduated from the upper secondary school in 1936. After getting a law degree at Stockholm University in 1942, he was appointed in 1943 as the Swedish delegate to KFUM's international prisoner of war aid program.

In this capacity he worked among the Allied prisoners of war in Germany until the war ended in 1945. After that he spent a couple years among the German prisoners of war in Holland and Belgium.

In 1947 he was employed by the national aeronautics board and thus began a professional life entirely dedicated to civil air traffic. In two cycles he worked at the international organization for civil air traffic, ICAO, in Montreal, 1950-1953 and 1957-1959, the second time as Sweden's representative in the ICAO council.

At SAS where he arrived in 1967, his main assignments were international questions. From 1969 until he retired in 1981 he was head of SAS's air traffic policies section.

In his younger years, he collaborated on columns and articles in the Östgöta Correspondenten. As a retiree, he conducted research on such topics as the history of aviation. In the pamphlet "Swedenborg's 1714 Aeroplane", he reported that Emanuel Swedenborg had described an air transport that was "heavier than air" in text and sketches.

Gunnar Dalgren

Svenska Dagbladet October 7, 1997

Translation

HENRY SÖDERBERG

Henry Söderberg, former director of SAS., as previously mentioned, has passed away at the age of 81.

Henry Söderberg was "The Welcome Swede" to the American prisoners of war in Germany during the Second World War. As a delegate for the KFUM (YMCA) prisoner of war aid program, he met and helped countless prisoners of war during the years 1943-45. He said himself that this was the most important, the most dangerous, but also the happiest period he had experienced. The experiences and adventures he got there left an imprint on the rest of his life.

Henry Söderberg worked among the Allied prisoners of war and civil internees in camps which were located in the eastern part of Germany, Poland and as far as then East Prussia.

One of the prisoners of war, I. Frank Diggs, later a journalist, documented his work in the book "The Welcome Swede" (1988). Among all the prisoner of war camps which he regularly visited was Stalag Luft III - famous for the large escape tunnel, "The Great Escape". Many times it was a dangerous assignment, but Henry Söderberg's enthusiasm and his enterprising personality led him to find ways out of very tight spots.

After the war he continued his work among German prisoners of war in Belgium and Holland. Thereafter he dedicated his working life to positions within air traffic.

These duties meant many flights around the world, and gave him an opportunity to deepen contacts with the former prisoners of war, especially the Americans. He was a sought after guest for many of the frequent reunions which were held in the U.S. His collected material and writings concerning his activities in Germany can now be found in "The Historical Collection of the Stalag Luft III" at the library of the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, U.S.

Henry Söderberg was also very active in the senior operations of KFUK-KFUM headquarters in Stockholm. The Christian view of life was the inspiration for his life's work. He had an unusual capacity for striking up friendships and building warm human relations.

*Jan-Olov Söderberg
Secretary General
KFUK-KFUM National Association
Sven Gunnar Lindblom
Chairman, The Senior Group
KFUK-KFUM Central*

LIVONIA, MI: Our Reunion in Newport, Rhode Island was a very enjoyable occasion, unless you don't like lobster, mussels, corn-on-the-cob and boat rides around marinas and beautiful weather. Gloria and Chris Heisler and their team should be congratulated for putting together and hosting a memorable and very successful Reunion. Most of all the Reunion did not turn out to be our last one! It became instead, by unanimous vote, the first reunion of the second epoch of Oflag 64. The former Governor of Rhode Island addressed our group and presented certificates to all ex-kriegies appointing us Honorary Colonels in the State's unorganized Militia.

At our business meeting, plans were made to hold our 1998 Reunion in Las Vegas, 1999 in Miami and 2000 in Laughlin, Nevada. We look forward to seeing everyone next year in Las Vegas. Thanks again, Gloria and Chris for a terrific Reunion.

DON LUSSENDEN

LAS VEGAS, NV: **LILLO** and **ALAN** thank you for your offer to host the 1998 Reunion and for the information concerning the dates for the 1998 Oflag 64 Reunion, which will be held at the Rio Hotel and Casino from September 14-18, 1998. All the rooms there are mini-suites, which sounds great. We will look forward to receiving mailings from you concerning room reservations and an agenda as arrangements are firmed up. We hope you can find members to act as support group. (More info. on Page 24.)
LILLO and **ALAN DUNBAR**

WYOMISSING, PA: **JOHN**, we are all so sorry to learn of the passing of your dear and beloved wife, Mary, on November 19 after a long illness. She will be sorely missed by you and your family and so many of your friends from Oflag 64. Please accept our deepest sympathy and know that you are in our prayers and thoughts. (See more details on page 24.) **JOHN SLACK**

BAKERSFIELD, CA: **STAN** thank you very much for the check to the Postage Fund. Stan asks the membership if anyone remembers the name of the officer who escaped with Stan from the Malchowski Farm. They made their way finally to Lublin, where they met up with 60 other officers.
STANLEY J. SEGAL

CENTERVILLE, VA: **GEORGE** your check for the P.F. is greatly appreciated. We, too, are sorry that you had to miss the reunion and then on top of that, had to postpone the trip to Germany to visit your son. It is interesting to learn that your son followed you into the Big Red One. **GEORGE JUSKALIAN**

MANKATO, MN: **ROYAL** thank you for the P.F. check and your kind words re. our staff. Yes indeed, Newport was a fine experience. We look forward to seeing you in Las Vegas.
ROYAL I. LEE

ELKHORN, NE: "**HANK**" *The Men of Oflag 64* is on the way. From your letter one might believe that 25,000 miles per year is a bit much, but if it keeps you healthy, more power to you.
KERMIT HANSEN

KAUFMAN, TX: HELEN and ROY thank you for the splendid Memorial Service you gave for us in Newport. The two of you always prepare such a fitting program of remembrance for our comrades.

HELEN and ROY CHAPPEL

RITTMAN, OH: GENE thank you for all the assistance in Newport and especially for your photo work which is very much appreciated.

GENE SHARICK

BETHESDA, MD: WILBER thank you for the Postage Fund check, and yes, you did miss a good time in Newport. We are pleased to know the health problems seem to have subsided and we look forward to Las Vegas.

WILBER B. SHARPE

SPOKANE, WA: LUCILLE and HERMAN thank you for the splendid photos of the Newport Reunion. See you next at the reunion in Las Vegas.

LUCILLE and HERMAN LITTMAN

GRAND JUNCTION, CO: SUE and TOM we do enjoy your warm and happy letters. It is so good that you have had such an enjoyable summer.

SUE and TOM LAWSON

CHEYENNE, WY: EVELYN thank you for the Postage Fund check and your nice letter. We are so happy you could be with us at Newport.

EVELYN KORBER

VIDALIA, GA: BILL we all appreciated your Hammelburg memories you wrote for Chris Heisler. Now that you are selling your Pecan business, how will you keep yourself busy?

BILL WARTHEN

OAKLAND, CA: JIM we think the article and interview are very special, and we are reprinting them in this issue. Donors to The Cerebral Palsy Center for the Bay Area in Oakland should earmark the check "In honor of The Members of Oflag 64".

JIM SHERMAN

HARDWICK, MA: PHILIP thank you for your check to the Postage Fund. We agree that little mention has been made re. the lazaret at Wollstein, Poland.

However, all the old timers at Oflag 64 remember Dr. James Godfrey who helped establish Oflag 64. Perhaps some of our members have something to contribute re. Wollstein.

PHILIP MC INTYRE

LAWTON, OK: MARTIN thank you for the Postage Fund check, and truly Newport was a great event. Now at least we can look forward to three more.

MARTIN E. KEISER

ATLANTIC BEACH, NC: ED thanks for the Postage Fund contribution and glad you could make Mystic Harbor after Newport. We look forward to seeing you in Las Vegas. ED BATTE

GRAND RAPIDS, MI: ED, thank you for the History of the 313 Infantry and the Minister's Wife story. We enjoyed them both. ED A. GRAF

WAKEFIELD, RI: GLORIA and CHRIS, so glad to hear that both of you are recovering nicely now after the two major events which occurred following the Reunion—Gloria's ruptured appendix and Chris' total hip replacement. We hope you continue to make good progress toward a full and quick recovery. Thank you for sending us the poem that Col. Ed Culhane of the RI State Police read at the dinner and his letter to you on Veteran's Day. They are included here for everyone to enjoy. GLORIA and CHRIS HEISLER

SEDONA, AZ: BONNIE thank you for your most informative letter. We appreciate your loss and understand how much you miss Harold. Our love and prayers go out to you. BONNIE CARROLL

SUN CITY WEST, AZ: AL you certainly live a busy life. We do enjoy reading a letter such as yours. We agree that keeping involved in responsible work is important to well-being. AL FRATZKE

NEW HAVEN, KY: ERROL thank you for the P.F. check. We did indeed have a great reunion at Newport, and our membership voted to continue our reunions as long as possible. ERROL P. JOHNSON

NEWPORT NEWS, VA: FRANK many thanks for your very generous P.F. check. Vic Kanners, whom you mentioned in your letter, came to Newport, and your kind remarks re. *THE ITEM* are appreciated. G. FRANK HEIDT

CLEARWATER, FL: GEORGE thank you for your kind words and for sending us a copy of Janet's obituary. Our thoughts are with you and your family. GEORGE ROSENTHAL

ATLANTIC BEACH, NC: ED and ELIZABETH thank you for the P.F. check, and it was so nice to see you at the reunion. It is always too short a time to sit and recall other times. ED and ELIZABETH BATTE

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT!!!!

At our business meeting in Newport, arrangements were made and announced for the continuation of *THE OFLAG ITEM* and the coordination of letters and Postage Fund contributions. However, since that meeting, we regret to inform the membership that due to unforeseen circumstances which have occurred since that meeting, we no longer have

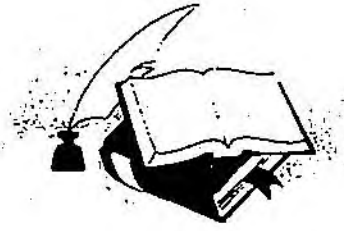
the arrangements for editing, printing and mailing as planned. In addition, Herb Garris is in a situation since October where he absolutely cannot continue as coordinator. Efforts have been made to remedy our problem. John Slack has agreed to print and mail *THE ITEM*, if a new editor and team can be found.

THE ITEM WILL CEASE WITH THIS ISSUE!

The bottom line is that we do not have a replacement for Herb and the Guest Editors! Without their replacement, the publication of *THE ITEM* will cease with this issue! No one wants this to happen, for *THE ITEM* is our lifeline. It has held us together for over fifty years and it is unlikely we could continue to function without it.

There is no question that among our membership there are many who could fill Herb's position without pausing to think about it. The problem is we are in a situation where we cannot openly discuss our needs and vote on it. We must depend on volunteers to call us and say, "I'll do it!"

Herb is available by telephone to discuss the responsibilities, the hows and wherefores with you, both now and later as you carry on this function. Time is extremely important, so don't delay—call today! DON and LUCY LUSSENDEN



BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS

The following list shows books which are still in our inventory and need to be sold as we draw down that important area of *THE ITEM* and its effort to make available and often reprint some of them for your interest and pleasure.

<i>The Water's Story</i>	50 cys	\$19.50
<i>My Tour of Russia</i>	44 cys	\$ 5.00
<i>The Men of Oflag 64</i>	40 cys	\$20.00
<i>The Oflag 64 Member-ship Directory</i>	50 cys	\$ 3.00

To order these books, mail your check to:

Carl Christensen
9 Pine Ridge Drive
Whispering Pines, NC 28327
ATTN: Oflag 64 Postage Fund

<i>In the Presence of Mine Enemies</i>	25 cys	\$10.00
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To order this book, mail your check to:

Mrs. Rose Daniel
5100 Sharon Road, Apt. 603
Charlotte, NC 28210-4720



PINEHURST, NC: RESIGNATION.

This is an announcement of the request for relief as the Secretary/Editor of *THE POST OF FLAG 64 ITEM*, and in the interest of a smooth and efficient transition as possible, it is planned upon the final completion of the December issue of *THE ITEM*. This has been coordinated with our Guest Editors, who will have completed their tour since our Reunion in Newport. At such a time the production and mailing out and final payment of all bills due can be made with an immediate transfer of the Postage Fund accounts.

It is hoped that our search for a new Secretary/Editor will be thorough and to the mutual satisfaction of all parties. It is unfortunate that the timing is such that we could not have handled this at the Newport business meeting.

We regret to advise you, therefore, that with this issue, publication of *THE ITEM* has come to an end after more than 50 years. This is the final issue! Joe Seringer will continue to maintain the postage fund account to assist the Reunion Hosts by providing funding for the bulk mail-outs of their material announcing the dates and information concerning the reunions. Should we no longer continue to meet at annual reunions, any money remaining in the account will be donated to a worthy charity, carefully using your own recommendation as to which specific charity and the complete address and title of it which will be presented to the treasurer in writing for an amicable and equitable distribution throughout. Checks for the postage fund should continue to be mailed to Joe Seringer to maintain the fund for the purpose of reunion mail-outs and in the event someone volunteers to take over the role

of editor and continue publishing *THE ITEM*. Joe's winter address is:

Joe Seringer
1500 Overseas Highway
Casa Cayo #504
Marathon, Florida 03305
Phone: (305) 743-6740

Book orders will continue to be accepted and should be sent to Carl Christensen, who will handle the sales of books presently in stock. Please see the paragraph concerning books elsewhere in this issue.

Any letters received after January 1, 1998, will be returned to the sender. If anyone would like to take over the role of editor and continue publication, please call Herb Garris (910) 295-6290, who will arrange to forward the material which has been collected to date.

It is with great sorrow that we make this announcement. Unfortunately, time and events make it impossible for us to continue in this role. **HERB GARRIS
LUCY and DON LUSSENDEN**

PINEHURST, NC: AN APPRECIATION.

We are all accustomed to a military procedure in our experiences with the changes of command.

It would be only proper to show my deep appreciation to the following for their sense of duty, dedication, purpose and a spirit of cooperation unparalleled in the past five years. It is to **THE ITEM STAFF.**

- a. Pat and Bob Shenkle, our original Guest Editors.
- b. Sue and Tom Lawson, the next ones.
- c. Lucy and Don Lussenden, the incumbents.

Their good taste, elegance in writing skills and imagination ranging from cut-and-paste to complex computer programming of the final drafts were exceptional.

- d. Barbara and Carl Christensen, with their computer expertise who have printed on discs the ever changing mailing rosters for each issue, which was demonstrated in the splendid Membership Directory. Also, they have attached the mailing address and return address labels for the mail out.
- e. John Slack, who has handled the production effort. It has included acquisition of the bulkmail permit, reproduction by photo copy of *THE ITEM*, stuffing them into the prepared envelopes, and taking them to the local post office in zip code order for dispatch.
- f. Bob Levin, who has been the treasurer. But, he also has been invaluable in many matters with solid and productive ideas for a more efficient overall operation. More especially in his recommendations made four years ago on the solution to a near fiscal disaster we faced with the Postage Fund.
- g. Finally, a note to three new volunteers who surfaced with tremendous talent to fulfill the vacant roles as Guest Editors, if a Lead Editor could be found—Bret Job, Irving Yarock and Pat Bender.

All three were present in Newport, and those who attended certainly met and became impressed with these fine folks. Since these volunteers were not able to take full command as the Lead Editor, I ask their patience during the ensuing transition, for there will surely become a new opportunity at that time.

My sincere personal thanks to the membership at large for the generous and noble response to a very serious fiscal crisis we faced two years ago with our Postage Fund depletion. The response was admirable. The fine support from the membership was so rewarding.

My past five years working as your spokesman and leader have provided me an insight into a fine group that I will always cherish and with it has brought a lot of satisfaction and happiness. The overall task could only be done with such a fine group. A salute to you and my deep personal thanks.

With my best wishes, and always feel free to write to me now and then.

Respectfully submitted,

HERB GARRIS

A FAREWELL NOTE: To the entire membership, a thank you for your many newsy letters and articles which were germane, and for the many donations to the Postage Fund, which is today a sizable and viable account. Best wishes.
HERB GARRIS



CEREBRAL PALSY CENTER FOR THE BAY AREA
4500 LINCOLN AVENUE • OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA 94602 • (510) 531-3323

Help Ourselves? We Can Do It!

Dear Friend of the Cerebral Palsy Center:

What do I want people to know about people with developmental disabilities? Like everyone else, we want to better ourselves through our own efforts. We want the same things in life you want.

I am 50, live in Oakland with my Dad, Jim, and brother, Ron. Without much family, my friends at the Center are very important to me. I've been coming here for 31 years, along with my friends — Alford, Cynthia, Yvonne, Jan and Michael. All of us were classmates at Whitton School before coming here to the Center. We work together in the Work Activity Program, or workshop.

Without the Center, we would not have a place to go everyday. We need to keep the workshop going because we don't want to just stay home. Too boring! The workshop teaches me new skills, and I get paid for it. I save for Camp Costanoan each year, and I pay for most of it myself!



I think the Cerebral Palsy Center is a good cause. For almost 60 years, it's been supporting the success and quality of life of people with developmental disabilities like me and my friends. The Center promotes practical skills, independence and self-esteem.

Our services include:

- training in self-care and advocacy
- prevocational, vocational and academic skills
- a work-activity center where our consumers earn wages
- computer-aided education and assistive devices
- augmentative communication and speech therapy
- integration into the community
- guidance and counseling for consumers and their families

Please consider contributing. Your gift to the Center is an investment that pays dividends in the lives of those it serves. It is the commitment to give — not the amount — that's important.

Remember: Our door is always open to interested citizens to volunteer their time, talent and treasure. And if you're in the neighborhood, come see what we're about! Return the enclosed ticket stubs today, and you could win \$1,000 to be awarded at our upcoming fundraiser — Monte Carlo Night in the Roaring Twenties on October 18. (Call the Center for details.) Thank you very much.

Jeffrey Bair Sherman

Jeff Sherman
Cerebral Palsy Center Consumer

P.S. Enter today. You need not be present to win!

Cerebral Palsy Center for the Bay Area, Inc.

Accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities

4500 LINCOLN AVENUE • OAKLAND, CA 94602 • (510) 531-3323 • (510) 531-2990

VOLUNTEER PROFILE

Jim Sherman's A Hero

An unsung hero works in our midst. We know him as a kind friend and the husband of his beloved wife, Betty, who died in



1992, the father of CP Center consumer Jeff Sherman and a 40-year volunteer, but Jim Sherman is more than that.

Sherman, 74, was a POW in

World War II, captured at 21 by Rommel in late 1942 in North Africa and shipped by boxcar to a camp in Germany where he endured for over two years. Suffering untold privations and losing 50 pounds, he was forced to march 538 miles in subzero cold from Poland to Munich.

"I've had 50 years to ponder it," Sherman said, "and it made me a better person. I found I could take care of myself and others. Though there were times when I didn't

think I could, I found I could do it."

That courage and strength endured. He retired as Lieutenant Colonel Sherman in 1953 from the Army Reserve. Truth is, he'd wanted to be a history teacher, growing up in Colorado and Sacramento. Instead, he married Betty, had Jeff and second son, Ron, and took another job. His career also included 22 years with Time DC Freight Lines, from which he retired in 1986.

Betty Sherman organized Aquarius Auxiliary with Kay Prosser and Virginia Kirkpatrick, her good friends. "I worked the gate at Carrousel Capers for years," he said. Today he manages the Center's vending machine take each month and is the board liaison with the Work Activity Program.

"Betty was a wonderful, compassionate woman, and we had a good life together," he said. "I don't think there's a soul on earth

who didn't like her. Our boys were a joy to us."

"Jeff is a nice guy and a good mixer. He's regimented - likes schedules like his dad," Jim said. "Jeff works and earns money for himself, working in the WAP. He pays himself for the summer camp he attends in Cupertino," Jim said. "We've always insisted on that level of self-sufficiency."

"The Center helps Jeff, and gives me some respite. My hope is that Jeff will continue to improve and lead a productive life in a sheltered place where he can mix, not in a barracks or rest home. He likes the Center and has friends here."

The Center has changed for the better, and the people who run it are great," he said. "It takes a person strong in heart and mind; a heart for the people and a brain to run it-to seek out anything that would benefit the Center," he said.

"Jeff, Ron, the Center and its people mean a lot to me," he said. "It's all heart. That's the main reason I spend a lot of time up here. It makes me feel like a better person for being here," he said. ■

Ceremony promotes son, honors father

by Ron McLendon II
Pentagram staff writer

On the surface the ceremony was similar to those that are common in today's Army.

The setting was familiar — a small, beige-colored office filled with a few friends and family to watch a simple promotion. Maj. Charles Graul, a speech writer in the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel at the Pentagon, was being promoted to lieutenant colonel.

This ceremony, however, was different — special.

Graul had invited his 79-year-old father, Donald, along with Lt. Gen. F. E. Vollrath, deputy chief of staff for personnel, to pin on his rank insignia. Since the elder Graul also served as an Army officer, he was invited to wear his uniform.

The twist in this promotion ceremony came when the elder Graul received from Vollrath, much to his surprise, the Prisoner of War Medal and Bronze Star Medal for his service in combat more than 50 years ago during World War II. Graul served with the 507th Parachute Infantry Regiment in Europe.

"It was very emotional," said the younger Graul. "Everyone was moved by the ceremony." he said he had wanted to do something like this for his father for the past 10 years. He added that it was a bit difficult to gather all the necessary documents without his father's knowledge but he managed to do it two months before his own promotion.



(Photo by Ron McLendon II)

Lt. Col. Charles Graul and his father retired Maj. Donald Graul stand together in uniform June 27 at the Pentagon. The elder Graul was awarded the Bronze Star Medal and his son was promoted to lieutenant colonel.

"I just wanted to pass on some belated recognition to my father," Graul said proudly.

For the elder Graul, discussing the war was rather difficult. It is something he does not want to think about, and it hurts to remember, he said, fighting back tears. The memories of what he endured and saw still cut deep, even after more than five decades.

It started for him when he enlisted in the Army in October 1941, he said. After basic training at Camp Wolters,

Texas, he was off to airborne school at Fort Benning, Ga., then officer-candidate school.

The 24-year-old, brand-new second lieutenant shipped off to Normandy, France, in early 1944 for the D-Day invasion.

While flying over enemy lines at a low altitude at the start of the Normandy Invasion the aircraft carrying him and 20 other soldiers came under small-arms fire. I

we exit the aircraft," Graul said. "The 21st paratrooper was still in the air when the aircraft took fatal ground fire and exploded," he said staring straight ahead.

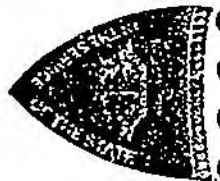
Once on the ground, Graul said, he met up with an officer and his crew from the 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment. Their plane had crashed a short distance from where Graul and his men landed, Graul said. All together, the group numbered about 18, he added.

Shortly after the hook-up, Graul said, he sent about a quarter of the men out as lookouts. A few hours later, one of the men got word back that a platoon-sized German force was on their way.

"I told the officer from the 505th that I would stay, and that he should move out with all but two men, who would stay with me as a rear guard," Graul said. After the soldiers left Graul and the other two men encountered some machine-gun and light mortar fire from the Germans. "One of the machine-gun sweeps took flesh and most of the upper arm off one of the men that was with me," Graul continued.

He then instructed the injured soldier to catch up with the rest of the soldiers who had just left. The remaining man and Graul went back down the hill until they were against a mud wall, he said.

German troops surrounded Graul and the other soldier. "They pointed



Rhode Island State Police

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT



Colonel Edmund S. Culhane, Jr.
Superintendent

November 10, 1997

Mr. Christoff Heister
22 Prospect Street
Wakefield, Rhode Island 02879

Dear Mr. Heister:

On the eve of Veteran's Day it seems fitting that I, as a citizen enjoying the freedoms and opportunity that this great country affords, take a few moments to acknowledge and be thankful for your sacrifice.

I believe it is not a coincidence of calendar but rather God's Divine Providence that Veteran's Day and Thanksgiving Day occurs in the same month and only a few weeks apart.


The celebration of Thanksgiving is perhaps one of the oldest of our nation's holidays. It is a time when we recognize and are thankful for the beauty and bounty of our land. However, as we bow our heads before our Thanksgiving feasts, we must also remember those who answered the call to duty to ensure that the American way of life, its freedoms, its opportunity, and its constitution would be preserved so that we could continue to celebrate our Thanksgiving holiday.

I truly believe that these holidays are inextricably intertwined—without one we would not have the other.

Please don't think me weird, I am one of millions who are grateful for the courage you showed when duty called. I, too, served, but fortunately not in combat. Your sacrifice was much greater for you knew you were going in harm's way when you answered the call.

As I sit down to our Thanksgiving dinner this year, I will be thankful not only for our freedoms and the bounty of the earth, but also for you and all of our veterans who placed our nation and its way of life before personal interests.

Thank you and Happy Veteran's Day.

Sincerely,

Edmund S. Culhane, Jr.
Colonel
Superintendent

ESC/KLS

I raised my hand and swore my oath,
To lay down life or limb or both.
In defense of my America, dear
To fight with all in me, despite my fear.

Into the teeth of war I went headlong,
My buddies and I, Americans strong.
Our goal to protect our beloved land,
From the Fascist's ever crushing hand.

And so we went following orders,
Over, through and under their borders,
Americans true one and all.
Some would make it, some would fall.

And some by a twist of freakish fate,
Would end up locked behind the enemy's gate.
Roughed up, hungry, weapons gone,
Name, rank, serial number said on and on.

We fall out often, our heads to count,
To ensure no escape, we did mount.
Our days are ordered like a clock
Our comforts few, and any a shock.

Though my body you may hold,
My spirit is always free.
For I am an American fighting man,
And liberty's in me.

One day soon these walls will fall,
And come crumbling to the ground.
And in place of the tyranny that bound me up,
freedom will abound.

Do not revel in my capture,
Or celebrate your win,
List the din of planes on high,
Your end will now begin.

So mark these words and mark them well,
Our victory's close at hand.
And soon I will be free at last,
And back in Yankee land.

For God is good,
and God is just.
And soon home I'll be
Where in Him we trust.

GOD BLESS AMERICA AND ALL WHO DEFEND HER

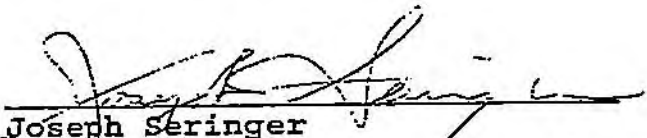
ESC 8/97

OFLAG 64 SECRETARY'S FUND

STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS
June 5, 1996 thru August 12, 1997

Balance in Fund at Date of Prior Examination, June 4, 1996		\$ 8,022.83
Receipts for the period:		
Proceeds from the Des Moines meeting	\$ 3,367.05	
Contributions to Fund	4,244.59	
Sale of Books	<u>174.00</u>	<u>7,785.64</u>
Total		15,808.47
Disbursements from the period:		
Newsletter cost	\$ 2,390.18	
Postage	603.43	
Copy work for Newsletter	422.08	
Supplies	409.55	
Telephone	<u>264.61</u>	<u>4,089.85</u>
Fund Balance at End of period August 12, 1997		\$11,718.62
		=====
Balance per bank July 20, 1997		\$12,206.44
Receipts (included above) thru August 12, 1997		<u>135.00</u>
		12,341.44
Less disbursement included in above statement August 12, 1997		<u>622.82</u>
Fund Balance August 12, 1997		\$11,718.62
		=====

I have compiled the receipts and disbursements of the OFLAG 64 Secretary's Fund as recorded. My examination did not include an audit or review of the records, and, accordingly I do not express an opinion or any other assurance on them.


Joseph Sringer

MEMORIES OF MY EXIT FROM HAMMELBURG

By Walter Chris Heisler

After reading the accounts of the evacuation of Hammelburg, I would like to add one more note to what happened, especially with regard to the last group to leave Hammelburg.

I know that my memory at this time is very sketchy about everything that happened. I am sure that my recollection of that period may differ somewhat from others who may have better documented accounts, but these are my recollections of what I personally experienced at that time.

During the time the Baum Task Force was attacking the camp, we were told to stay in our barracks, but we were soon told to go to the area where the task force was located.

On the way from the camp to the location of the task force, I recall seeing an American GI lying dead near a large disabled tank, and I was surprised that no one had yet taken him to a proper place so that he could be identified and properly buried.

I recall much confusion. We were told that there were many more POW officers in camp than expected. However, volunteers could stay who would replace casualties that had occurred on the way in.

Hugh V. Schoeneman, with whom I had "buddied" on the march from OFLAG 64 to Hammelburg, and I decided to join the group. We were given rifles and ammunition, and we found space on one of the large tanks.

Most of the officers went back to camp; others decided to strike out on their own.

It seemed like an eternity before the task force took off just before dark. At last we were on our way, but we soon came to a halt because we had come under fire. We then took off in a new direction. But it was not long before we came under fire from what I thought was an SP gun. We were told to fire our guns blindly in the dark in the direction of the hedge where the enemy fire came from. Hugo and I got off several rounds from our position. Our tank did not fire but was maneuvering along with other tanks and half-tracks to get away. As I recall, one tank was disabled and in the confusion, one of the men was crushed under a moving tank.

After this action, we moved again for only a short distance. We were told that we were going to take a defensive position on what seemed to be a small hill with a vacant building.

Hugh and I talked it over and decided that the situation was hopeless, and we would rather go it on our own to escape recapture. We gave our rifles to two men who did not have weapons and took off. We had no compass, maps or food but hoped we were going in the direction of the American line or perhaps would be able to join the advancing American forces.

That night we traveled mostly through wooded country, but at daybreak we came upon pastured fields and small farm buildings and houses. We cautiously avoided all contact with people and animals, but after a couple of close calls, we found a good place to hide in a small woodlot. One of us would try to sleep while the other watched.

When night came, we used the moon to give us some sense of direction since we could not see the north star.

We continued to avoid all human contact until late in the night we came upon a well traveled highway. While waiting in the ditch to be sure we would cross it safely, a very large contingent of German troops came marching by while singing their marching songs.

I cannot explain the mixed emotions at that time. There was fear of being seen by our enemies while at the same time we enjoyed their beautiful marching songs as they went marching off. We crossed the road and traveled along our uncertain route to what we hoped was freedom.

When daybreak came, we carefully traveled and rested until night came again when we were able to make better time.

It was probably some time after 2:00 AM when we came to a small vineyard overlooking a town with a church and a tavern situated by a wide river. Here, again, we listened for over an hour to the harmony of drinking songs drifting up to the vineyard from what we assumed were German soldiers drinking in the tavern. We then decided to find our way down the steep hillside to the river below and to try to find a rowboat so we would row across the river. We assumed (probably mistaken) that it was the Rhine River, and that we only had to get across to be once more in American territory. I know now that it could not have been the Rhine.

However, while exploring along the river, it began to get daylight. There was no place to hide so we continued our walk along the river hoping we would not be identified as POWs. Then from the road above which followed the river, we were spotted by three German soldiers who yelled down to us to "kommen sie hier." Since Hugo spoke good German, he replied that we were going to work (The German word for work I believe is "arbeit"). When they shouted once more, "kommen sie hier", Hugo replied, "Du kommen sie hier" and we continued walking but to no avail. They caught up with us and at gun point led us back to the village where there was a large building which made a well-guarded prison compound. It contained some American GIs and many Russian soldiers who had been liberated three or four days earlier by the Baum Task Force.

The Russians had apparently "liberated" a candy factory after they were captured. When they were searched, their pockets were filled with hard candy. It made a three foot high pile of candy in the corner of a room. Hugo and I tried every way we could to get some of that candy. While Hugo engaged the soldier guarding the candy in conversation, I tried to kick some pieces out of the door. I only managed to get one piece of candy out of the door before the German guard got wise and made me give it back. We were ushered back into the holding room. The sight of that candy after I had gone two days without food will haunt me until I die.

The following day we were taken back to what I believe was the deserted Hammelburg camp and held along with perhaps fifty other assorted POWs that I believe included some men from the Baum Task Force who had been captured in what I think was a gymnasium. We were not given any food but were given a blanket to sleep on.

The next day, or perhaps two days later, we were told that we were going to march out to places unknown.

As it turned out, I was the only officer, or at least the highest ranking officer (1st Lieutenant), and was the person chosen by the German guard to help get the troops ready to move out.

At that point, I realized that most of the men and I were too weak and tired to go any further without food. Therefore, I insisted that the German guard take me to the German officer in charge, or I would not follow his instructions.

When I entered the room where the German officer in charge was, I saluted briskly and told him that forcing a march without food did not comply with Red Cross regulations, and that he would bear the responsibility for his maltreatment of POWs. He told me that he had no food available.

After this very brief encounter, I went back to Hugo to organize a very unorganized sit down strike. I refused to listen or to cooperate with the German guard. To my surprise, about two hours later the Germans came in with a dried vegetable soup. As the officer in charge, I felt that I should not eat until all of the men were fed. We had to eat from dirty soup bowls left over from the last soup that had been served to the previous troops who had marched out perhaps a day or two before. I tried to wipe my bowl clean with a dirty blanket. Therefore, I believe I contracted the diarrhea that distressed me to the end of my POW experience and longer.

Following the soup, Hugo and I and several other POWs were marched to a box car. As I recall, there was perhaps twenty-five or so POWs in the group with two guards. I cannot remember anything about that trip except that we ended our train ride the next day in Moosburg. It was a real relief to be back in the security of an organized prison camp and to be eventually reunited with some OFLAG 64 Kriegies.

After carefully reviewing the accounts in Meltesen's book, I believe that we were probably the last group of POWs to leave Hammelburg.



Editor's Note: If any of you OFLAG 64 Kriegies have recollections such as those above which have been shared with us by Chris Heisler, send them to Clarence Meltesen, who is working on the next edition of his book and would be happy to hear from you. Clarence's address is:
810 Gonzalez Dr., 4D, San Francisco, CA 94132-2221

1998 OFLAG 64 REUNION

LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

RIO HOTEL AND CASINO

TENTATIVE AGENDA

Monday - September 14	Arrivals
Tuesday - September 15	Arrivals Continue
	After lunch, busses will take us to Red Rock National Park - a spectacular site
Wednesday - September 16	Executive Buffet Lunch
	Busses will take us to the Stratosphere Tower - tallest tower in the United States
Thursday - September 17	Banquet - Dancing and Door Prizes
Friday - September 18	Memorial Brunch
	Departures

* * *

Alan and Lilo Dunbar are hard at work on next year's reunion and have prepared the above tentative agenda for the 1998 Reunion in Las Vegas. All of the events listed above will be included in the registration fee, which at this time is expected to be \$95 per person. The Hospitality Room will be open each day for your convenience. More information will be mailed to you in the spring of 1998, as the schedule is firmed up. Mark the dates on your calendar and plan to be there!

OUR DEEPEST SYMPATHY goes out to JOHN SLACK, whose dear wife of 56 years, MARY, died on Wednesday, November 19, 1997, after a long illness. Our thoughts and prayers are with John and his family during this difficult and sad time. Mary is survived also by her devoted daughters, Linda C. Slack and Marjorie E. Slack, and by a grandson, James O. Mohamdein, and a son-in-law, Mohamed K. Mohamdein. Relatives and friends gathered at her funeral on Monday, November 24, in the Chapel of the Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church. Interment was at West Laurel Hill Cemetery. In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made in her name to The Salvation Army, 701 N. Broad St., Philadelphia, PA 19123.

Toland Observes History Firsthand

CAPTURED BY HISTORY: ONE MAN'S VISION OF OUR TUMULTUOUS CENTURY

by John Toland

St. Martin's Press, 1997,
\$24.95.

BY HERBERT L. GARRIS

Having been an ardent reader of Toland, it was my pleasure to receive "Captured By History" as a gift on Father's Day. It gave this reviewer a tremendous insight of this author and his endless talent and success. It covers the four decades since his first successful book "Ships in the Sky" was published.

My highest accolade goes to this wandering young man who in the early days of the Depression rode the rails and hitchhiked all across America. He developed a keen sense of observation and this, coupled with being a good listener, made his portrayal of people and events all the more readable and appreciated. His interest (and the only mediocre acceptance of his plays and novels) finally moved to another venue--history. It was done with a smooth and effective transition and a remarkable turn in his fortune resulted.

Another skill in which he was adept shows in his methods of interviews with an ability to handle the great and near great. They included disgraced Japanese and German military and civilian leaders and Americans as well. They simply opened up to him with seeming ease and only slight reluctance for hard questions he gave them. He was well trusted and nicely rewarded with much delicate and hard to get information about some astonishing war stories rarely reported.

Toland's real breakthrough came in a willingness to travel anywhere to gain a fair and equitable or balanced view of some touchy and delicate subjects.

It is noteworthy at age 59 he became a Pulitzer Prize winner in non-fiction in 1971 with "The

Rising Sun." He certainly was not without a talented and competent chief assistant and interpreter. It was his wife Toshiko's diligence and inherent skills in close support of his works.

At about the halfway point came a story revealing some of the actions in the final days of a fierce strike called the Battle of the Bulge, with Hitler's dying hope to reach Antwerp and split the massive Allied drive toward the Rhineland. Baron von Manteuffel, with his aura of Prussian arrogance, revealed gladly the many secrets of that master plan of General Depp Sietrich of the 5th Panzer Army and General Ernst Brandenberger of the 7th Army, and the endorsement of Hitler personally. The several Allied generals with hor-



John Toland

rendous losses initially, including the barbaric Malmedy massacre, held fast and the Germans were forced to withdraw. Their stories gave a balance to an interesting chapter to this reader.

Going to the Far East, Toland gave a detailed and harsh report of the Bataan Death march and it follows with his personal visits and witness to Corregidor, Pearl Harbor and Hong Kong, with priceless interviews among these people just a short time after V-J Day and their surrender.

Another facet which struck close to the reviewer is the one entitled "The Last One Hundred Days," with a specific story in which some individuals participated who had been in the same camp with me in Oflag 64 in Poland. It is a wider version of an event which took place in the spring of 1945 with a poorly devised plan, designed by Gen. Patton to penetrate some 60 miles behind the enemy lines from near Frankfurt to Hammelburg to enter a camp and rescue some 900 American POWs. Within that compound resided the son-in-law of Gen. Patton, LTC John Waters, taken in early 1943 in North Africa. It was a total failure and while it created pandemonium among the German military and civilian populations, it was literally devastating for the small task force with the

mission. One of his key sources was Gen. Creighton Abrams, who had to, against his will and with limited resources available, organize the Baum Task Force. Having served later with Gen. Patton's son and with an acquaintance of Waters, the story seems to be told (to me) with great clarity and fairness.

Another poignant area of the work covers the closing day of the surrenders of Japan and Germany. Toland's tact and tenacity of seeking out very cleverly these desperate leaders and their subordinates were exceptional. A touching description. All showing a sense of hopelessness, despondency and depression of themselves and the people at large with such indescribable losses and devastation.

Toland lives today with his wife and enjoys a seemingly abundance of peace of mind as shows all through "Captured History" so full of his views in reporting national and international conflicts.

It is a great and invaluable contribution to current literature and is highly recommended to students of military history and international diplomacy and is done with the most self-effacing grace possible by the author. A job well done!

POW Stories From Both Sides

WE WERE EACH OTHER'S
PRISONERS: AN ORAL
HISTORY OF
WORLD WAR II
AMERICAN AND GERMAN
PRISONERS OF WAR
By Lewis H. Carlson
Basic Books, 1997, \$25.

BY HERBERT L. GARRIS

This new work is surely a high compliment to the author and a pleasure for the readers. The principal difference in this and most all stories of this genre lies in the title itself. It, to my knowledge,

is the only book which deals with the Americans held by the Germans as POW's and the Germans held in American custody.

A point made early in the work is that right after the end of World War II here in America, the media, the public and the government, in part, gave an appearance of neglect for those returning from POW experiences.

To this reader and many others, it was a chapter that was put aside and nearly forgotten. That isn't the case with the many returning Germans, who were not sent directly home at all, but in some cases served and were required to do labor for up to three years in Britain, France or other countries before release.

In that period, both here and there, they were compelled to attend and learn many fine, valuable lessons on democracy. (Especially those in America who came in much closer contact with outsiders than in Germany.) This transition was not welcomed and some cases accepted by many of the diehard and deeply entrenched Nazi radicals such as the SS leaders. They presented a serious problem to the American camp commanders who exercised great skill in managing this particular group.

The interviews of about 150 prisoners were thinned to the 34 stories shown in this volume. Most are very interesting and poignant. It reveals the considerable physical and mental stress needed to

witnessed and survived.

Yet a burning dichotomy exists with this reader and many others over the total differences in treatment after the capture of Germans and the Americans. The rapid dispatch to European ports was well organized and timely where ships returning home gave them passage and complete meals. Upon arrival in America they were taken by trains to the many newly designated camps across the land and there were placed in comfortable barracks with neat and adequate facilities for the duration. Even those on work parties never experienced what the Americans faced in war-torn Germany with a transportation system in disrepair and an angry populace in hunger.

The book opens with a glossary of German words one learned well in dealing with guards. While a short summary, it includes the principal words needed. Then a map which shows in each case the place names and numerical identity of all POW camps in America and Germany and Middle Europe. Then follows the fine photo work of 16 pages of internees, their camp activities and one of the disgrace by the German SS in the Malmédy Massacre during the Battle of the Bulge.

It then proceeds into a group of individual experiences as noted by six survivors and their trauma and embarrassment at being caught.

Yet, a most consoling facet is that they were spared from death.

The subject of escape and evasion, always a duty and a dominant one for anyone taken into custody, for any viable opportunity was described. The success stories were scarce until the Russians advanced into the German Heartland in January 1945. Then the mass movement of nearly all the eastern camps was undertaken, providing many openings.

The chapter on the unruly behavior of the arrogant and zealous Afrika Korps tells of their undying and relentless devotion to the Nazi principles. The perpetrators were identified and executed of murders of their own countrymen who had not compiled with such a code of conduct. This

then led to the intense and well organized educational program on democracy to men with a strong desire to remain rebellious and ill-behaved lot.

A tragic section deals with a nearly unheard story of American servicemen who were placed into the horrible concentration and labor camps and suffered the same abuse and poor treatment as did the Holocaust internees there. Three cases are covered in some detail of their tragedy.

The bright side soon appeared in or near V-E Day and then two roads to liberation soon became apparent. They were Odessa on the Black Sea in Russia and Moosburg, near Munich in Germany. The delays in Germany were priorities to move thousands of troops and equipment out to fight the Pacific War, and caused considerable unrest among the POWs. They were soon moved to Le Havre and sailed to America. In Russia a relatively well planned system was in force which allowed the railroads to send thousands of POWs from up as far north as Warsaw south through Kiev to Odessa. There the repatriation took place and vessels were in port on the Lend Lease Runs which took many through Istanbul, Port Said to

Naples where ships were placed to finish the homeward trip. (The reviewer opted and took the latter course of action from the march column in later January and avoided the cruel march across northern Germany along the Baltic Sea and south from near Hamburg to Moosburg.)

In summary, my congratulations on such a fine and appropriate piece on military history and some close personal and fine examples of survival.

THE PILOT-Southern Pines, NC
August 25, 1997

Hitler: Behind The Scenes

HITLER AND HIS SECRET PARTNERS: Contributions, Loot and Rewards. 1933-1945

By James Pool
Pocket Books, 1997, \$24.

BY HERBERT L. GARRIS

The most significant impression gained by the reviewer of this new book is the success and progress which was achieved in the short time of 37 years by Hitler. This dates back to his discharge from the Wehrmacht after World War I in 1918 to his death in 1945. Especially when, at 13 years out, in 1933, his first pinnacle was achieved as he was appointed the Chancellor of Germany by then President Hindenburg.

By this time he had assembled quite a respectable retinue of supporters who were loyal and provided large and generous funds to him. They included the leaders of the armed forces, bankers and financiers, and the powerful industrialists who found him young, dynamic and articulate. On the agenda was the doom of the three principal parties by an Enabling Act which literally turned the powers of the Reichstag to his cabinet.

Here the title selected for the book is clearly shown as the diverse support became identified both in Germany and abroad. In a short time Hitler's record of domestic improvement became well known as he initiated devastating depression and high unemployment.

Many projects, such as the planned autobahn across the nation were implemented, but more important was the high priority on modernizing the German Armed Forces. A serious problem he detected was the demonstrated insurgence of the Communist Party with its strikes and unruly conduct. It required total elimination and this was done in short order

This was followed by Hitler's deep hatred and envy of the Germany Jewry which constituted a sizable amount of the national population.

A historical event was agreed upon, designed and orchestrated nation-wide by Hitler, and implemented by Goering, Goebbels and Himmler, in the ruthless heavy hands of the S.S., Gestapo, and S.A. This took place on the Nov. 9, 1938 and bears the name of "Crystal Night." It is today

recalled as the most indescribable portion in all of German history. It meant the loss of property and lives and was done with the harshest and most inhuman desecration. While it shocked the rest of the civilized world, it did not impair the support which Hitler had promoted thus far. He was simply not judged as a menace yet awhile.

Hitler's first goal, as he shows in "Mein Kampf," was an expansion of the narrowed down homeland borders from the Treaty of Versailles. This change was imperative as he sensed the greater need to feed his people and to find many resources across the borders which would assist him in the arms race.

This led to the employment of the most successful military innovation in years of trench warfare and is called the "blitzkrieg." Its dominant forces soon crossed into and "occupied" Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, the Low Countries and the three small Baltic nations. Each of these fell quickly and were soon meticulously drained of their wealth, art treasures and many

other industrial assets, and shipped back to the homeland to the Nazi leaders. Many of the items stolen in the heist were dispatched to Switzerland and other neutral countries for security and recovery later. The industrialists and entrepreneurs with greed seized through a quasi-legal control: the mines, plants, laboratories, transport and farm lands as rewards for their generous gifts so far.

We come now to the strange mind set of Hitler and his deeply ingrained hatred for the Jewish people. He and his cabinet set about to design and exercise the elimination of this vital segment of his total

population. It was fraught with problems for they were hard workers and diligent, some were wealthy and influential and many were in the professional class as lawyers and physicians. Yet they were helpless for the most part as they watched the local police stand by and watch the S.S. and S.A. goons execute their assigned tasks with an unabated fervor.



....continued over

THE PILOT-Southern Pines, NC
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Hitler: Behind The Scenes

Here then is a more complex part of the equation as to what to do with these unfortunate victims. One which led to massive internment and the dreaded concentration camps. However earlier some of the Jewish people were able to buy their way out of Germany to freedom by signing a release of their entire estate holdings. Some were skilled in certain areas and chose to remain a bit longer with state and local government positions. Others with much more professional skills were received and shielded by the industrial giants such as Krupp and I. Farben. They too were in tentative status and often short lived.

Then the most fatal error of judgment that Hitler had, it appears to this reader, was one he lived to regret even after a string of very successful campaigns: his decision to invade the Soviet Union. A fate similar to what Napoleon met: adverse weather, enormous geographic obstacles and an apparently unforeseen logistics nightmare. While it bore some sensible value which required solving he needed: oil, grain, mines with ores and many eas-

ily obtained industrial plants and a respectable railroad network. Soon after his June 1941 invasion he was able to penetrate deeply into the very heart of this new and determined enemy. While never successful in Leningrad or Moscow, his troops were positioned deep into the Caucasus Range and only a few miles from the rich oil fields beyond Stalingrad. There he met the most severe weather, supply lines stretched too far for efficient management and the Luftwaffe grounded, and his subsequent nemesis.

The Soviet's launched a massive counter attack across the frozen Volga and forced the complete surrender of General Paulus' 6th German Army of 300,000 men to Marshal Zukhoy. All to the chagrin of Hitler who had ordered a "never surrender" ultimatum to his leaders. This enormous setback opened the way to a massive retreat which ended in Berlin in mid 1945. In tandem with this pull back and the high military costs in men and equipment, the Germans lost control of all the factories and farm lands they had seized from Stalin.

It is a harsh story but very well written by this scholar. It vividly shows the driven leader and the unmerciful treatment he gave to so many victims. It is highly recommended as a story of a nation who lost in its military disaster and coupled the story of the tragic Holocaust which was downplayed with Hitler's initial achievements across the land and his successes in Western Europe.

Reflections Of World War II Offered In Book

THE PACIFIC WAR RE-VISITED
Gunter Bischoff and Robert L. Dupont, Eds.
Louisiana State University Press, 1997, \$25

BY HERBERT L. GARRIS

This is an extraordinary book which is composed of a fine collection of essays showing a wide range of impressions derived from a very select group of scholars.

They were in session in 1991 on the 50th anniversary of Pearl Harbor and were able to study in great detail some of their reflections related to the United States Japanese War in the Pacific.

Here we find the refined product which is simply profound, well written and most interesting. All the essays are of a single author with one exception. They, in all cases, seem to focus on the United States position in a fair and balanced fashion. It readily shows that most historians have found that even though we had not yet declared war with Germany that theater was more generally favored in several ways. Events prevailed that took care of that - one sided procedure.

At least some unfamiliar and scarcely covered topics appear in these works. They include the naval logistics requisites, the submarine campaigns and strangely enough, (one this reviewer has not seen before) racial thinking in the great strategy. Welcome are the stories told of the heroic nurses, Army and Navy, who performed so well and the misery of the POWs in that area.

The one most decisive and singly the most devastating issue was the complex considera-

tions studied and presented in the final strategic bombing of Japan and the ultimate employment of the atomic bombs on Nagasaki and Hiroshima.

Without commenting in detail on all the essays, the one selected as perhaps the best one of all is a ringing profile by Michael Schaller on General MacArthur. It covers his performance from his departure as the Chief of Staff of the United States Army to the beginning of



the Occupation of Japan after the surrender. Never in American history have as many favorable and unfavorable articles been written than about this rare and aloof leader. He was extremely capable and always seeking the limelight in all of his many pursuits. That self-serving streak created for him many enemies at the highest level of government and military leadership.

MacArthur's conduct in Manila just prior to Pearl Harbor was reproachable. His failure to perceive and act wisely and promptly to save the near entire United States Army Air Forces resources in the Pacific generally. His unfulfilled chain of command was never as perfect as he wished with such strong Navy leadership at hand. Worse yet, his aspirations as a registered Republican for a run for president of the United States caused Roosevelt severe discomfort, and appear to be the reason he was kept overseas for such a long period of time.

The MacArthur readers will not be very pleased with the blunt and honest revelations which made him a very tough subordinate to handle and work with. It is truly a fine assessment and easily called the best essay of all.

It is a scholarly work and is highly recommended for readers who have an interest in and enjoy military history. Success is what counts and notwithstanding of the intermingled views of how to win, Japan and Germany were decisively defeated. This fine work provided a fresh insight on many of the small but important facets of the national strategy in time of war.

Monday, November 3, 1997

Monday - October 6, 1997

THE PILOT-Southern Pines, North Carolina

Cover To Cover

In At The Beginning As A SEAL

FIRST SEAL

By Roy Boehm and
Charles W. Sasser

Pocket Books, 1997, \$23.

BY HERBERT L. GARRIS

This is a story which encompasses the service of a sailor in the U.S. Navy and certainly one of the most unusual ones that this reviewer has ever encountered.

It begins with an 18-year-old enlisting in the service in early 1941. His deep interest initially was quite evidently in diving. By the time of Pearl Harbor he was aboard the USS Duncan, a destroyer. He was there and saw first hand the carnage done to seven battleships in port in the early morning raid by the Japanese. He and others were ordered to dive and attempt to recover the many bodies trapped below the Arizona's decks.

At that early age he soon became fully acquainted with war and death. Then his ship was dispatched to assist in the Battle of Guadalcanal, to help secure the vital Henderson Field. His assignment on the destroyer was as a crewman of one of the five-inch naval guns.

Shortly upon arrival the Duncan came into a no-win situation and received as many friendly rounds as

she did from the Japanese fleet. The Duncan was soon capsized and was lost.

With bluntness and a total lack of respect for any naval military or civilian who either crossed him or appeared ineffective, Boehm soon became a man marked a leader, one who performed with the highest standards.



It was clear early that no one blocked his underwater experimental training in research while on the Penguin while in the Key West Squadron with its seventeen subma-

rines stationed in the Caribbean. Its mission was to rescue the crews of stricken submarines. There, near St. Thomas, and during the underwater training he encountered an eight foot black eye shark. He undertook to attack the shark and killed him single-handedly, bringing him to the surface, and tying him to one of the whaleboats alongside.

The arrival in the White House of President Kennedy meant a boon to the Underwater Demolitions Units and the Army's Special Forces. That avid support accounts for his name emblazoned over the entry to the U.S. Army Special Forces at Fort Bragg today. Some fine coordination was shown in the early preparation of the ill-fated Bay of the Pigs operation. It led to Boehm's subsequent assignment as the commander of UDT 21 as its operations officer.

As the title implies, the term which was created in 1961 was called Sea Air and Land. And the "SEAL" was born and its members wear proudly the black berets. Boehm then had reached the rank of Lt. Commander and was assigned as its head.

The section on Vietnam along the Mekong River basin and the Delta was well described and his actions were extraordinary. Some six pages of photos cover the highlights of his career but heavily stresses his role in Vietnam. By then he was destined for a desk assignment as an instructor at the Naval Amphibious School in Coronado, Calif. and where he was awarded the Navy's Commendation for Achievement.

In summary the joint authors, Boehm and Sasser, provide an interesting and valuable book. It will be of especial interest to those readers who have been into scuba diving and some of the exploits in action and training.