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VOL. XXXXIII

POST OFLAG 64 ITEM

MARCH 1997

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## OFLAG 64 REUNION Newport, RI, Sept. 2-5, 1997

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Our reunion will take place in the Viking Hotel, a National Historic Landmark located in the very heart of Newport. We will meet on Tuesday, September 2nd, until noon on Friday, September 5th. Since this may be the last reunion of Oflag 64, we must make every effort to have our 1997 Oflag 64 Reunion be the best yet.

Rooms at our historic Viking Hotel will be only \$89.00 single or double occupancy. Registration for the reunion will be the same as last year - \$110.00 per person. Registration forms for the reunion and the hotel will be mailed out soon. However, if you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact Chris or Gloria Heisler, 222 Prospect Road, Wakefield, RI 02879-7060 (Tel. 401-783-5597).

This year's reunion will include our usual banquet, brunch and memorial service, and a real outdoor New England clambake complete with lobster (or steak, if you prefer). A trip to Fall River to tour the Battleship Massachusetts, the destroyer Joseph P. Kennedy, the submarine Loinfish and the only two PT boats on display in the world also is being planned.

Your registration fee will include a narrated scenic tour of Newport's historical buildings and restored homes,

the rugged beauty of ten-mile Ocean Drive, a tour of the Breakers (Vanderbilt's mansion), as well as a narrated cruise on the Viking Queen through Newport Harbor and sparkling Narragansett Bay. Why not make Newport the centerpiece of a late summer vacation? Come early or stay after the reunion and enjoy this historic and beautiful region.

Newport is a colonial town with numerous museums that reveal and review American history. The original houses from before Washington's time are

restored. The oldest Jewish Synagogue is still serving the community. The Newport mansions built by the early American tycoons, including Vanderbilt and the Astors, are among its most famous tourist attractions. It was known as America's first vacationland for the "rich and famous" of early America.

Boats and tall ships grace its harbor. Newport's Naval Base played a major role in WWII and the Naval War College is the Navy's leading educational enterprise.

Shopping in Newport's waterfront specialty shops is an experience in upscale shopping.

For those who are driving:-- Providence, Boston and Cape Cod are about an hour's drive and the historical Plimoth Plantation, where our first settlers landed on Plymouth Rock, is nearby. For those coming from the south and west, Mystic Seaport in Connecticut is a good place to spend a day.

#### About Our Hotel

The Viking Hotel is a National Historic Landmark located in the very heart of Newport. It was built by one hundred of Newport's wealthiest citizens in 1920 to accommodate their overflow guests who came to visit in the mansions which contained lavish entertainment rooms, but few bedrooms. It is located at the end of Bellevue Avenue and Ocean Drive, where most of these palatial mansions (referred to as "summer cottages" by their residents) are located. Its guest rooms are decorated in Queen Anne and Chippendale styles in keeping with historical tradition. Yet it still has all of the modern amenities with convenient meeting rooms and banquet facilities. The service and personal attention to its guests have made it famous.

You can look forward with renewed anticipation to meeting with comrades and friends--old and new. There also will be plenty of time to spend in the comfortable hospitality room with coffee and assorted beverages to help keep the conversation flowing.

For 50 years our reunions have kept us in touch with old friends, revived old memories, and retold our World War II experiences. But now we are the survivors of wartime and "father time," and this may be our last chance to share experiences as a group and confirm or recall old memories. So, mark your calendar, September 2 to September 5. Your wartime and POW buddies want to see you again!

**CHRIS AND GLORIA HEISLER**

**WEST DES MOINES, IA: HUB** thank you for the holiday greetings. It bears restating what a fine reunion you and your staff put together for our enjoyment. We were especially impressed by the demonstration of the communications system that the Iowa State Administration and Iowa National Guard have developed.  
**VERRIS "HUB" HUBBELL**

**GRAND JUNCTION, CO: TOM and SUE** thank you for your contribution to the Postage Fund and your nice letter. By this time you have become aware of the appreciation of our membership for the fine job of editorship you two did in 1996.  
**TOM AND SUE LAWSON**

**VALLINGBY, SWEDEN: HENRY** thank you for your recent letters. We must say again how pleased we were to have you take part in our reunion in Des Moines and

especially of your gift of the recordings to the Camp Dodge Museum.  
**HENRY SÖDERBERG**

**VIDALIA, GA:** BILL thanks so much for the copy of the video interview of Bill Korber done in Atlanta at the 1995 Reunion. It was very well done. Members wishing a copy of the video can obtain one by writing to Ms. Amanda Rhodes and including a check for \$10.00. Her address is Andersonville National Historical Site, Box 800, Andersonville, GA 31711.  
**BILL WARTHEN**

**CHEYENNE, WY:** EVELYN we have reviewed the video tape of Bill at the Atlanta Reunion which Bill Warthen sent to us. It is simply great and we have recommended it to others elsewhere in this issue of the *ITEM*.  
**EVELYN KORBER**

**WYOMISSING, PA:** JOHN we are happy with the progress you have made since we saw you in Des Moines. Keep up the great improvement in your health and we will see you in Newport.  
**JOHN SLACK**

**MT. PLEASANT, PA:** LEONARD thank you so much for the P.F. contribution. We hope on our next trip to visit relatives in Hershey and Hummelstown we can stop by in Westmoreland County to say hello.  
**LEONARD FELDMAN**

**LAWTON, OK:** MARTIN thank you for the news filled letter and the check for the P.F. Keep sending data from the local paper and your kind comments.  
**MARTIN KEISER**

**FORT LAUDERDALE, FL:** RALPH thanks again for your generous check for the Postage Fund. We know you enjoy the Florida sun while most of our members fight the winter's blasts. Our best to you and your family and memory of your recent loss.  
**RALPH TEDESCHI**

**GRAND RAPIDS, MI:** MARGARET and ED we are glad you got the *ITEMS* you requested and found them pleasing. You will also enjoy Clarence Meltesen's new book *Men of Oflag 64* that will be available in the near future. John Sword was plentiful with the praise with you and others who made his visit to our reunion so worthwhile and enjoyable. We look forward to seeing you in Newport.  
**MARGARET AND ED GRAF**

**LONDON, ENGLAND:** KEN thank you for your recent letter regarding your reunion with fellow POWs. We are happy that you received and enjoyed the November issue of the *Oflag 64 ITEM*. Your story of Prisoner 12299 is repeated in this issue of the *ITEM*.  
**KEN FINLAYSON**

**MODEL, CO:** CHARLIE thank you for your check to the P.F. We regret that you feel you cannot join us in September in Newport, for we are certain you could contribute to our discussions for our future. Come along with your all-terrain vehicle and give us a demonstration.  
**CHARLES M. WILKINSON**

**ENTERPRISE, AL:** CLAYTON thank you so much for the lovely Christmas card posted from Florida, which arrived here with our slight snow flurry.  
**CLAYTON G. METCALF**

**BALTIMORE, MD:** GOTTFRIED thank you for your generous contribution to the Postage Fund. Your sabbatical in Europe must have been emotional and nostalgic after having been in the U.S. for fifty years. We will be interested in sharing some of your trip's highlights when we can get together. GOTTFRIED DIETZE

**OAKLAND, CA:** JIM and JEFF we are terribly sorry to hear that you may not be able to attend the Newport Reunion. We truly hope that you can find a way to join us and continue your tradition of support. JIM AND JEFF SHERMAN

**MEMPHIS, TN:** BOB many thanks for your recovering our Oflag 64 materials left at the University Park Holiday Inn, Des Moines, IA, and for forwarding them to N.C. Our best to Miss Carolyn. BOB BONOMI

**WENDELL, NC:** ARCHIE thank you for your remarks about the copy of the *ITEM* you received. For our readers, Archie was taken prisoner while serving with the 30th Infantry Division and became a guest of Stalag IIIA at Luckenwalde. ARCHIE BIGGS

**MINNEAPOLIS, MN:** BRET, thank you for the Newport article. Our best to you, your wife and father. BRET JOB

**BANGOR, ME:** DOT the membership grieves with you on the loss of Milt, your beloved husband and our cheerful fellow Kriegie. Milt died Friday, January 24, and was buried in Bangor on Tuesday, February 4th. We will miss his fine

presence and support. His obituary is included in this issue.

**DOT JELLISON**

**ROCKVILLE, MD:** SAM thank you so much for the check to the Postage Fund. For our members, Sam served with the 9th Infantry Division and was captured in Normandy. In civilian life he served four terms as County Attorney, then practiced law in Paducah, KY and has now retired to Rockville, MD. SAM CARLICK

**COLUMBUS, IN:** ROGER, many thanks for the generous check for the Postage Fund. We enjoyed having you with us at Des Moines and are looking forward to seeing you in Newport in September. ROGER EULER

**KERRVILLE, TX:** NINA and BOB you have our empathy in your decision to bring the association of STALAG LUFT III to a close in 1997. It is a very difficult decision to make, but when faced with the "burn out" of the board and no volunteers coming forward to take over, there remain no alternatives. You two and your staff have served your members commendably these many years and the time has arrived. Your suggestion that members may want to stay together on a sectional or smaller group basis is likely workable, and that may be a way for Oflag 64 when the time arrives and for the same reasons. NINA AND BOB WEINBERG

**HOUSTON, TX:** TED thanks for your change of address. We are looking forward to seeing you in Newport next September. TED ROGGEN

**MT. PLEASANT, SC:** PAT, thank you very much for the copy of *The Armor* recently, which was well written and will bring back many memories to those who were in on "the raid" and had attempted to escape from Hammelburg. It is printed in this issue of the *ITEM*. PAT WATERS

**KITTY HAWK, NC:** KERN many of us did not know that you missed out on the opportunity of living at Oflag 64 in Szubin. When we see you in Newport, we will fill you in! For our members, Kern joined our ranks from the 106th Infantry Division via the Battle of the Bulge and thence to Hammelburg. KERN PITTS

**ST. PETERSBURG, FL:** RUSS the "Reflections of Things Past and Future" and the article printed in the Gulfport Gabber is included in this issue of the *ITEM*. Keep up the great service you provide to your community.  
RUSS FORD

**ALEXANDRIA, VA:** NAT thank you so much for the kind word re. the *ITEM*, which Tom and Sue do appreciate. Concerning some ideas for the future configuration of the Oflag 64 organization, we will try to find a way to find something that will be satisfactory to our members.  
NAT HOSKOT

**DENVER, CO:** JACK thank you for remembering us over the holidays. We look back at the Des Moines reunion with you and your daughter Julie with great fondness. Hoping to see you in Newport in September. JACK RATHBONE

**SAN RAFAEL, CA:** BELL and MATT thank you for your holiday greeting. Yes, we will need to keep money flowing into the Postage Fund as we are still planning more issues. Your neighbor, Jim Sherman, called to say that he attended a dinner the other evening and the guest speaker was George Juskalian from Centerville, VA.  
BELL AND MATT SMITH

**BETHESDA, MD:** MARY and VINCE it was so good hearing from you recently. We hope you will be strong enough to join us in Newport. Perhaps daughter Rosa could escort you, as she did in Atlanta.  
MARY and VINCE DI FRANCESCO

**FT. PIERCE, FL:** ROSA thank you so much for your generous gift to the Postage Fund and your kind and welcome remarks re. the *ITEM*. Your dedication to teaching the disadvantaged is exemplary. We hope we can see you in Newport, RI in September.  
ROSA LEE nee DI FRANCESCO

**SAN FRANCISCO, CA:** CLARENCE it was so good hearing from you. We wish you the best in getting the *Men of Oflag 64* rolling and out to the readers soon. It was good to learn that the Rangers and Stalag XVII have placed memorials at Andersonville. This could be considered by our Oflag 64 membership.  
CLARENCE MELTESEN

**HERSHEY, PA:** DICK thank you for sharing the revealing and most interesting article of research on "The Origin of the 21 Gun Salute." We are reprinting it in this edition of the Oflag 64 *ITEM*.  
DICK WINTERS

**ALEXANDRIA, VA: BOB** glad to learn your interest and nice words about the *ITEM*. We spoke to Net Hoskot shortly after your call, and his message was essentially the same as yours on the *ITEM*, but an idea which held that may lead to saving the Oflag 64 group. Hope to see you in Newport. **BOB REPPA**

**LOVELAND, CO: JEAN**, thank you for your recent call in regard to Bob's platoon out of Hammelburg. We are sorry that the data concerning the platoon was not readily available, but if it does surface we will include in the *ITEM*.  
**JEAN CHRISTENSEN**

**OCEAN SHORES, WA: JOANNE** your card just arrived with the sad news of the death of Hugh. We do hope that you will forward to our editor a copy of Hugh's obituary that we might share it with our members. **JOANNE HARRIES**

**HOUSTON, TX: TED** many thanks for your exceptional effort to trace the whereabouts of C. BROWN.  
**TED ROGGEN**

**WHISPERING PINES, NC: CARL** we want the membership to know what a great job you have done with the book sales. We believe we have 15 copies of General Waters' story left and they will be available in Newport along with other stories re. Oflag 64. **CARL CHRISTENSEN**

**MINNEAPOLIS, MN: FREIDA** we are so sorry to learn of Edward's passing. The sad news came to our attention in the February 1997 issue of the *American Ex-POW Bulletin* and is here reprinted:

*Edward L. Sager, 82, of South Minneapolis, MN, passed away Sept. 8, 1996. He was a veteran of World War II, in Company E, 168 Infantry, 34th Division. He was held prisoner of war in Stalags VII-A, IX-A and Oflag 64. He was also a veteran of the Korean War. He had volunteered over 10,000 hours at the VA hospital. He was a life member of AXPOW, the Minneapolis-St. Paul Chapter. He is survived by his wife, Freida, two daughters, ten grandchildren and twelve great grandchildren.*

**UPPER ARLINGTON, OH: HERB** found a notice of the passing of J. TUCK BROWN in the January-February issue of the U.S.M.A. Assembly. Tuck died in September at his home with his family. His obituary, when received, will be in the next issue of the *ITEM*. **HERB GARRIS**

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**FOR YOUR INFORMATION AND USE:** Postage Fund checks should be sent to one of the Secretary-Treasurers and letters with news or general information to the Secretary-Treasurer or the Guest Editors. Please make checks payable to Oflag 64 Item.


## OBITUARY

### MILTON S. JELLISON



**MILTON S. JELLISON**

**BANGOR** — Milton S. Jellison, 79, of Bangor, died Jan. 24, 1997, at a local health-care center.

 He was born in Bangor, March 21, 1917, the son of Earle M. and Ida (Bragg) Jellison. He graduated from Bangor High School in 1934 and the University of Maine, Class of 1939. He completed civilian pilot training in 1940 and advanced pilot training in 1941. Milton served with the First Division during World War II and was awarded the Silver Star for action in the North African Campaign. During military action at Kasserine Pass, North Africa, he was captured by the German Army. He was moved to several P.O.W. camps and survived the march from Oflag 64 in Schubin, Poland, during January and February of 1945. He retired from the Army Reserves (Military Government and Civil Affairs) with the rank of major. Milton joined the Eastern Trust and Banking Co. in 1940, retiring as vice president and trust officer of Northeast Bank. He was a member and former treasurer of the First Baptist Church of Bangor. During his lifetime, he was an active member of several

civic organizations, including the City Club of Bangor, treasurer of the Bangor Art Society and the Junior Chamber of Commerce. He was president of the Penobscot County Association for the Blind, state treasurer for the National Council on Crime and Delinquency, president of the Little City PTA, member of the board of trustees of the Good Samaritan Home and president of Corporate Fiduciaries Association of Maine. He also served as board member of the Abnaki Council Girl Scouts and Girl Scouts of the Pine Tree State, scout master for the Boy Scouts and treasurer of the Bangor High School Reunion Class of 1934. In recent years, he greatly enjoyed reading, woodworking, art, mining for minerals, history and genealogy. Surviving are his wife of 50 years, Dorothy P. Jellison of Bangor; a son and daughter-in-law, Brian M. and Rosalind (Cough) Jellison of Augusta; a daughter and son-in-law, Linda and Joseph Barry of South Windsor, Conn.; two grandsons, Michael and Mark Barry; and a granddaughter, Meghan Jellison. He was predeceased by a brother, Gerald E. Jellison. Friends may call 4-7 p.m. Monday at Brookings-Smith, 133 Center St., Bangor. Funeral services will be held 2 p.m. Tuesday at the First Baptist Church, Bangor, with the Rev. Frank Girdwood, pastor, officiating. Interment will be in Maine Veterans Memorial Cemetery, Augusta. Gifts in his memory may be sent to the Memorial Fund of the First Baptist Church, 56 Center St., Bangor 04401; or to the Milton S. Jellison Memorial Cancer Fund, Eastern Maine Charities, care of EMAC, P.O. Box 404, Bangor 04402-0404.

# U-Boat History Related

## HITLER'S U-BOAT WAR: THE HUNTERS 1939-1942

By Clay Blair  
Random House, 1996, \$40.

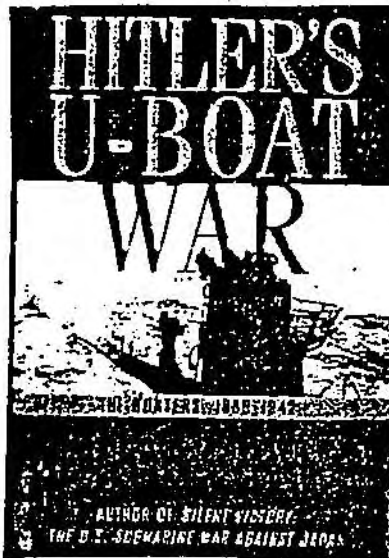
BY HERBERT L. GARRIS

This book enjoys a distinct advantage in that the author served in the U.S. Submarine Service and is eminently qualified in presenting such a professional and interesting story. It is not an easy one to read with so many complex naval and engineering terms relatively common to submarine personnel. Yet it is a treasure for the enormous details it displays of the vital role of the daring U-boat forces during the three years mentioned in the title.

The foreword is a compilation of the author's nine years of profound research and writing some 40 years after his own part in mooring the U.S.S. Guardfish into port at New London, Conn., for "mothball storage." The book has some excellent aids to assist the reader such as clear appropriate maps of the international areas under study, fine photos of the German and Allied leaders and commanders of dominant subs and events.

A short history of the primitive German Submarine Force in World War I is shown and that leads into the formative years of 1935-1939 which shows how rapidly, and nearly uninhibited, the German authorities defied the Versailles Treaty and pursued an effective arms build up with heavy emphasis on the development of a substantial new and awesome seapower using the best in applied sciences and engineering.

Their leadership was under the aegis of Admirals Raeder and Donitz. A comment is worthy of the rapid progress of the Germans and then the entry of the Canadians and the Americans. It shows in detail the convoy management and the respective losses by Axis and Allied as well as successes. Near the end of the book are several appendices to provide a clear and easily understood set of charts of the entire submarine development, its progress and problems, shipping tonnages of the various convoys, patrol routes and solid conclusion of the mighty effectiveness of the U-boat campaigns. The author's skilled crafting of the mass of facts and figures provide an easily avail-



Some salient and critical observations now follow. It certainly meets the very high standards of military history reporting of the specific national governments, and their leaders in a war of unparalleled proportions. It carefully centers on the new state of the art in the designs of naval vessels, weapons and strategies with their short falls and successes.

Within the high levels of the Nazi regime there were frequent examples of disagreement between the senior field commanders and Hitler on many matters. In the areas of force deployment of the submarines and appropriate strategies it seemed ever present with contention and contest. It resulted frequent incorrect assignments, over extended supply lines, civilian worker strikes in the shipyards. Even further along faulty torpedoes and related firing pistol production led appalling results and a loss of morale to say the least. Hitler's ill-conceived Non Aggression Pact with the Soviet, which was promptly violated and led to his invasion of 1941 and will never be fully understood. It led to eventual disaster, a vast waste and inevitable defeat. It was felt mainly by Donitz with the diversion of a great portion of his submarine fleet from its primary mission.

A point is made about the complexity of Donitz's command and control of the U-boat Fleet over vast distances. In many cases security meant radio silence. Much high level discussion took place between the American and British on many subjects during the period. The most repeated area, was why the Americans could not come into

having to bear the brunt almost single-handedly, after the loss of France, and with constant air raids and ship losses it is no wonder. One area of deeper to the American public was the lack of awareness and slow initial action in the anti-submarine war fields, especially when the "Hunter Forces" began patrolling and sinking along the Atlantic from New York south through the Outer Banks of North Carolina.

The role of the German U-boat commanders (at ages between 24 and 31 years) and their daring exploits of their crafts are widely and vividly covered, especially the winners of the coveted Iron Cross and the national attention given by the national military and civilian leaders, with the media fanfare for morale and propaganda purposes.

The harsh life of the crews is one of indescribable agony while in the Northern Atlantic waters on patrol coverage from Newfoundland eastward across Greenland, Iceland and on to Murmansk. The severe weather became often unbearable for duty on the bridge, so severe and cruel they had to secure the crew with lines for their safety. In addition to the high vulnerability to direct and secondary, the danger was increased by the many depth charges planted as soon as the U-boats were discovered in an area. In addition to damage to the craft, its interior equipment and the crews were thrown into a state of com-

plete disorder, barely able to survive, much less to continue with a degree of effectiveness on the assigned mission.

In sum, there is a if one real and well deserved accolade to the author. It is the fine tribute and recognition he gave as a form of appreciation to these crews and their commanders, who under the most considerations did a respectable and commendable job.

It is truly a masterpiece and a great credit to the author for providing the readers with such an intriguing, valuable and commendable narrative of submarine warfare in World War II.

THE PILOT-Southern Pines, North Carolina

Thursday, December 26, 1996



# Daring Adventures In The Air

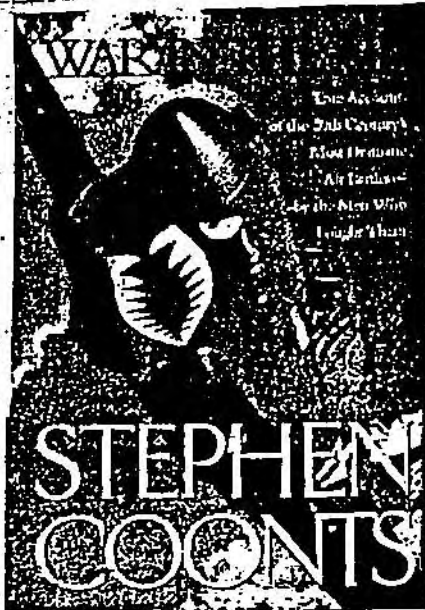
**WAR IN THE AIR:  
TRUE ACCOUNTS OF THE  
20TH CENTURY'S MOST  
DRAMATIC AIR BATTLES  
BY THE MEN WHO  
FOUGHT THEM**  
By Stephen Coonts  
Pocket Books, 1996, \$24.

BY HERBERT L. GARRIS

As the title implies, this is a unique and rare collection of stories related by 26 pilots who flew in battle over the enemy lines across this century.

It is a profound examination with great detail on what it takes to perform with such bravery and skill. It appears an easy question to ask but very difficult to truly define. The success one possesses ties to his ability to fly into an almost "no win" situation, fire his weapons with a great deal of accuracy and to fly home safely. Many qualities seem to make up this flyer which appear to bear and hinge mainly on courage and determination. The advances and progress in aviation over the past eight decades are unbelievable and today require skills and ability to coordinate well while flying at speeds which exceed the speed of sound. It is an area of rare survival and one vividly described by the pilots and their crews as they crossed Europe and Asia in combat flights with some high attrition losses to the men and their planes.

The readers are in store for some reading of some of the finest in these brave and daring adventures. It has a normal and orderly chronological sequence as it takes us from the primitive planes of World War I and includes the forays of Eddie Rickenbacker with 26 German kills to his credit, on to German pilots and their exploits. The coverage of the Battle of Britain and the role of the Spitfire, the backbone of that heroic struggle and of two pilots who claimed nearly 30 planes each.



The venue then switches to a German Luftwaffe flier who stands even today as the most renowned and respected ace—Adolf Gallard with 103 to his credit in some six years of air combat. His luck ran out near the end after suffering being shot down twice in one day. What reckless abandon he flew with!

Many historians generally agree that a turning point in the Allies' favor took place with events of 1942. One which began in April of that year was the unheard of near miraculous raid of General Doolittle from a carrier into the heart of Japan with 16 B-25's. It was to have launched at 400 miles out and was detected by a Japanese picket boat and instead it went 800 miles out. That made safe landings a real problem at the end. Next in line were some of the fliers with the Navy and Marines in the same theater and to culminate the real turning point at Guadalcanal and Midway Island.

A fascinating sector of the book

then turns to the fighters of a new group of much more effective and better performing P-51's and the P-47's. It meant much more security on the long bomber runs into the heart of the German cities and one story of a raid from Tunis north across the Alps to Germany. With the enemy there are two fascinating stories of two of the German aces: Erich Hoffmann and Hans Rudel. On the Far East front the Zero pilot's story is compelling with some edges on the American fighter planes but not as capable in other ways.

We have seen and read much about the Enola Gay and its historic flight from the Tinians with the bomb load which ultimately led to the Japanese surrender, it is included. Finally the book closes with the death defying flights during the Vietnam days and one raid to flush the MiGs over Hanoi with some real success.

My congratulations to the author for such a fine presentation, so well articulated, of the varied pilots and their stories told not in a boastful way at all, but more a humble approach with a job to do and its fine execution and in making them respected heroes today. A must to be read by fighter and bomber pilots, but to military readers like those of you and with an aviation interest. Nice work!

THE PILOT

Southern Pines, N. C.

Nov. 25, 1996

### Origins of the 21-Gun Salute

The 21-gun salute honoring the President of the United States, like many American military traditions, appears to be another custom inherited from Great Britain. In early times, it was customary for a ship entering a friendly port to discharge its broadsides to demonstrate that they were then unloaded, and it became a British practice to fire a seven gun salute. The forts ashore would fire three shots for each shot fired afloat. The three guns fired on shore to one gun fired on ship had a practical explanation. In earlier days, gunpowder was made of sodium nitrate and was easier to keep on shore than at sea. When gunpowder was improved by the use of potassium nitrate, the sea salute was made equal to the shore salute. The use of the numbers "seven" and "three" in early gun salutes probably was connected to the mystical or religious significance surrounding these numbers in many cultures.

Gun salutes continue to be fired in odd numbers, of course, and this is likely because of ancient superstitions that uneven numbers are lucky. As early as 1685, the firing of an even number of guns in salute was taken as indicating that a ship's captain, master, or master gunner had died on a voyage. Indeed, the firing of an even number of salute guns at the coronation of George VI in 1937 was regarded by at least one observer as an "ominous" portent. Incidentally, the normal interval of five seconds in the firing of gun salutes likely is in order for the salute to have full auditory effect, and also to give the salute a more solemn character.

The United States presidential salute has not always been 21 guns. In 1812 and 1821 it was the same as the number of states, i.e. 18 and 24, respectively, which was also our international salute. After 1841 the President received a salute of 21 guns and the Vice President 17; currently the Vice President receives a salute of 19 guns.

There has evolved over the last 175 years or so a prescribed number of guns, set forth in various Army regulations, to be fired for various dignitaries in accordance with the perceived importance of their positions. On 18 August 1875, the United States and Great Britain announced an agreement to return salutes "gun for gun," with the 21-gun salute as the highest national honor.

Today, a 21-gun salute on arrival and departure, with 4 ruffles and flourishes, is rendered to the President of the United States, to an ex-president, and to a President elect. The national anthem or "Hail to the Chief", as appropriate, is played for the President, and the national anthem for the others. A 21-gun salute on arrival and departure with 4 ruffles and flourishes also is rendered to the sovereign or chief of state of a foreign country, or a member of a reigning royal family. In these ceremonies, the national anthem of his or her country also is played.

Incidentally, U.S. Naval Regulations require that a 21-gun salute be fired at noon on Presidents Day, Independence Day, and Memorial Day.

Reference Section, History and Museums Division, February 1996

[USMC Home Page](#)

Comments: Send e-mail to the [USMC Webmasters](#)

### Ex-POW No. 12299 Story

By Ken Finlayson

When I was detailed to go to Oflag 64, I was very unhappy about it, as I was being separated from my buddy of the last 3 years. He also felt the same, as we shared everything. I didn't smoke, so he was better off and we used some cigarettes to barter with. After a few weeks in "64", I went to see the commandant and said I had a cousin in 8B Lansdorf and asked if he could arrange for my cigarette ration to be sent back to 8B. To my surprise, he said he would do so and, true to his word, he did. My buddy received them every month, which he confirmed on my return. Soon afterwards I was sent to a stone quarry in Posen where my other 14 days' sentence in the bunker caught up with me. These were the longest days of my captivity, as I was the only one in.

1461st Gabber  
Thursday  
December 12, 1996

- 11 -

# GULFPORT GABBER

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1419 49th Street South

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*Serving Gulfport and surrounding communities every Thursday for twenty-eight years.*

## Merchant Association Brings in the Season



Russell Ford directs carolers assembled on Casino steps Saturday evening as part of the Gulfport Merchants Association's holiday celebration.



## And That's The Week That Was

by Alex Jalbert

It was a dark and stormy night. Suddenly, a song rang out.

Santa's traditional seat was nowhere near, and the keyboard player thought better of exposing the instrument to the elements, but the a cappella choir turned out, well tuned and in fine voice as the local merchants association celebrated the season Saturday night outside the Casino.

Heavy rain and high winds had dominated the day, but by 7:30 p.m. all that was left was a brisk breeze and slick sheen to lend a sparkle to the festivities. Even the Boca Ciega Yacht Club's 11th annual Christmas Boat Parade, almost a washout, came through in the end, spreading more Yuletide glitter upon the shimmering waters.



Santa and friends, Saturday night, outside the Casino.

With Santa waiting in the wings (behind the Casino), Russell Ford, director of the Family Chorus, lead almost two dozen singers through the traditional holiday musical fare. By the time he read "The Night Before Christmas" a crowd had gathered to add their applause to the general good cheer of the activities.

This was the second event staged by the newly-formed Gulfport Beach Merchants Association, which is dedicated to promoting the interests of the waterfront district. An earlier kite festival, held in the area between the city pier and Casino during the early November weekend of the 21st Annual Antique Car Show, also was hampered by rough weather. Because the group still is in the process of becoming incorporated, the city council worked with them, extending liability coverage for the fencing, power supplies and other amenities needed to hold the old-fashioned tree lighting ceremony and caroling.

Framed by that particular mix of festively festooned palms and pine which defines the Christmas season in Florida, the almost-inundated event came off in high holiday style, ending with Santa - ringing a brass bell and carrying a box of candy canes - arriving on cue, much to the apparent delight of the many youngsters and adults on hand.

Meanwhile, inside the Casino, red roses and miniature tree centerpieces set the tone of the evening as City Manager Bob Lee and other officials gathered with fellow workers for the annual municipal employee dinner. It was an occasion of mutual appreciation and camaraderie in the almost-filled hall.

With a floating parade of brightly decorated boats passing to the south, carolers on the north steps and appreciative passers-by joining in as Santa Claus settled in on a slightly wet park bench on the walkway, it was, on the waterfront, more than beginning to look a lot like Christmas, everywhere you'd go.

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## **REFLECTIONS ON THINGS PAST AND FUTURE II**

by Russell H. Ford

SEPTEMBER 1996

*"Life to be worth living, has to be creative."\**

He walked along the shore one day and sat watching the waves wash up onto the sand. He read through the article from 1949. His thoughts flowed from then to the present.

What have the last 47 years brought? Since those POW days 50 years ago? Our country has fought or participated in fighting "conflicts" in Korea, Vietnam, Haiti, Iraq, Panama, Yugoslavia and helped in others around the world. The U.S. was and remains the policeman to the world.

The Iron Curtain has been lifted. The Berlin Wall is down; Germany has once again become a power in Europe, and Japan looms as a financial threat to their conqueror, the U.S. forces in Asia.

Hundreds of thousand of U.S. soldiers have died to further make the world, over and over — safe for democracy. Russian communism has failed and is now split into many states geographically and politically. Stalin and Lenin lie in the ashes of failure and disgrace. What now exists as world powers China, Japan and Germany — China under communist government with all its ills still grows in population which could envelop the world. Germany and Japan, the defeated war mongers now lead the economy of the world. Helped by the U.S. at one point the joke, which is on us, became the basis of a plot of a film made in England "A Tight Little Island" — which deals on the premise that a small deprived nation decides to go to war against the U.S. so that it can be defeated and then be the donee of the U.S. largesse and rehabilitation of its economy.

The Republican party today uses Abraham Lincoln as a front to gain support from this past glorious president. Lincoln who freed the slaves. Did he really or did that freedom lead to an underlying racism that threatens our very existence.

What would he think about a Newt Gingrich, leader of the House of Representatives and author of the master plan to gain control of the country? In spite of the valiant efforts of Afro-Americans like Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Afro-Americans used as cannon fodder in the Vietnam 'non-war'.

We have made much progress in some areas of our system but we are shamed by the several revolts in Watts, Chicago in 1962 and now look at the results of poverty and ignorance which in our great and wealthy nation has the slums of NYC, Detroit, Washington D.C. and other large cities of our nation. Disgrace in the eyes of the world. Fostering an era of fear and misunderstanding. Bringing down the poor of the Afro-American, Spanish, Mexican, minorities on their way to becoming the majorities.

We must wake up and educate our entire nation to the realization that only by understanding and love for one another will we continue to grow as leaders of the world, a world that is watching and trying to understand the harvest of democracy in action.

With John F. Kennedy was born the movement of The Arts Council in the U.S. which grew out of the knowledge that life to be worthwhile must be creative, out of creativity comes the qualities of gentleness at understanding of our fellow man.

While we as a nation grow deeper in debt, our political leaders grant themselves raises far greater than is called for by their services. And we the people award our political candidates millions of dollars each to fight for their election and then after they are elected and served their term they are supplied with lifetime pensions, many who receive millions.

\*Quote from Herb Garris, Spring 1996 OFLAG Item.

Balance the budget? Do they really care? Yes we've made major steps to help our students black, white or pink. More U.S. students graduate from college underwritten by our government each year than probably in all the world.

Hopefully as life goes on we'll make use of that education to help eliminate the dangerous spectres of racism, which is born in ignorance.

In spite of our leaders attempts to dispel ignorance, we are still faced with hate groups across our nation. The bombing of The World Trade Center, Oklahoma Federal, Flight 800, terrorism which endangers us all and leaves our children with futures fraught with greater problems than we ever thought possible.

While we are still here lets try and change that heritage and leave a better world for our children and grandchildren.

The waves move higher on the shore. Thoughts turn to two important areas in our lives.

1. Education. First and foremost the only hope for a future that can be free of prejudice and ignorance, only by being aware of the dangers that are bred by ignorance, will we be able to eliminate the racial bias and prejudice that still exists here in the U.S.

2. As a society we must cling to the values of the past, not just remembering the finer gentler behavior we were taught. Say thank you! Please! You're welcome! And not just say it, but live it. Your example will show the rest of the world a kinder and gentler life.

*To my family, children, grandchildren Iden, Leslie, Lisa, Lynne, Gavin,  
Natalie, Jasmin, Seth, Alexandra and my ex-wife Dr. Laura Ford*

*I leave this quote ...*

"Life goes on day by day. What will last? Only love is permanent, cannot be torn down, cannot be forgotten. Love is the glue of generations. The cement of civilization, the span between life and death. Love must be the salvation of nations, the only cornerstone on which the future can endure. Keep that in your hearts, for love alone, will outlast any enemy or war upon which we will build our lives through our children and their future children will build their life. Love is what god is, and in the end it's all we have."

And all I leave to you. My love, Dad

## REMEMBERANCES OF OFLAG 64

Frank Maxwell • John Glendenning • Tom Mitchell • Dick Van Sickle • Larry Phelan  
Bob Rankin • Boomer Holder • Sid Thal • Alexander Ross • Lou Otterbein • Sammy Saxton  
Don Waful • Bill Cooper • Wilbur Sharpe • Don May • Bill Cory • Leo Farber • Bill Fabian  
Herman Littman • Jim Bickers • Verris Hubbell • Kermit Hansen • Tom Holt • Seymour Bolton  
Charley Jones • Col. John Waters • Dick Rossbach • Bill Carpenter • Casey Koch • Ken Goddard  
Dr. Lou Salerno • Tony Cipriani • Craig Campbell • John Hannan • Sol Levy • Leo Farber "Queenie"  
Bill Farrell • John Slack • John Shirk • Bill Korber • Len Vaden • "Mouse" Waldman • Bill Hansen  
Lou Gershenow • John Creech • Ed Berlinsky • Willard Duckworth • Jim Alger • Larry Allen • Bob  
Bingham • Amon Carter, Jr. • Col. Thomas Drake • Frank Hancock • Jim MacArevey • John Scully  
John Hannon • Craig Campbell • "Doc" Smith • & Last But Not Least, Herb Garris

*My many thanks for having served with you and having known you. You have made a great difference in my life, for which I am most sincerely grateful.*

Russell H. Ford

# TASK FORCE BAUM and the HAMMELBURG RAID

*Reliving the Incredible Adventure  
of a Young Captain  
Ordered to Rescue  
General Patton's Son-in-Law*

by Richard Whitaker



Major Abraham Baum, at left, in April 1945, shortly after the ill-fated raid on a German prisoner-of-war camp 40 miles behind enemy lines. Above, Baum with the author in October 1995.

Several years ago, I read with great enthusiasm *RAID*, a book by Richard Baron, Abraham Baum, and Richard Goldhurst. It is a true story about a WWII U.S. Army raid 40-plus miles behind German lines, covering the distance from Aschaffenburg to Hammelburg. This raid was conceived and ordered by GEN George S. Patton Jr., then commanding the U.S. 3rd Army.

Although the reason for this raid was concealed from the task force and its commander until H-hour, it was an attempt to liberate some 1,200 U.S. Army POWs, one of whom was LTC John Waters, General Patton's son-in-law.

When the raid failed, speculation about LTC Waters' relationship to the army commander entered into criticisms that the operation was ill-timed, poorly planned, undermanned, and doomed to failure from the beginning.

It was not until the operation by "Task Force Baum" had begun, that CPT Abraham Baum, leading the raid, learned from MAJ Stiller, GEN Patton's aide, that LTC Waters was believed to be in the camp and that he was GEN Patton's son-in-law. At this point, CPT Baum wondered if his mission had any chance of success.

The task force included 300 men and 53 vehicles, including tanks, tank destroyers, and halftracks.

I thought that it would be good to commemorate the 50th anniversary of this famous 4th Armored Division raid,

and proceeded to call the authors and some of the key participants regarding a 50th reunion in Hammelburg, Germany. In a later telephone call, MAJ Abe Baum, the leader of the raid, was delighted to hear that he had not been forgotten and wished he had been notified earlier so he could have planned to attend. There were no funds provided by the military for this purpose.

MAJ Baum sent me a list of 29 officers and men who received the Silver Star for this action, and I would guess that there were five times as many Bronze Stars awarded, in addition to probably 150-200 Purple Hearts to those wounded and killed in action. Baum got three.

Baum also was personally awarded the Distinguished Service Cross by GEN Patton himself. His certification reads: "For the brilliant leadership he displayed while in command of Task Force Baum. The mission of this task force had led them far behind enemy lines with only a small force. The daring of this movement threw the enemy into a panic, believing that all this territory was being overrun by our troops. Communications were disrupted and large enemy forces were needlessly shifted from more important strong-points, facilitating a later drive by another combat command of this division through Hanau and to Hemsfeld."

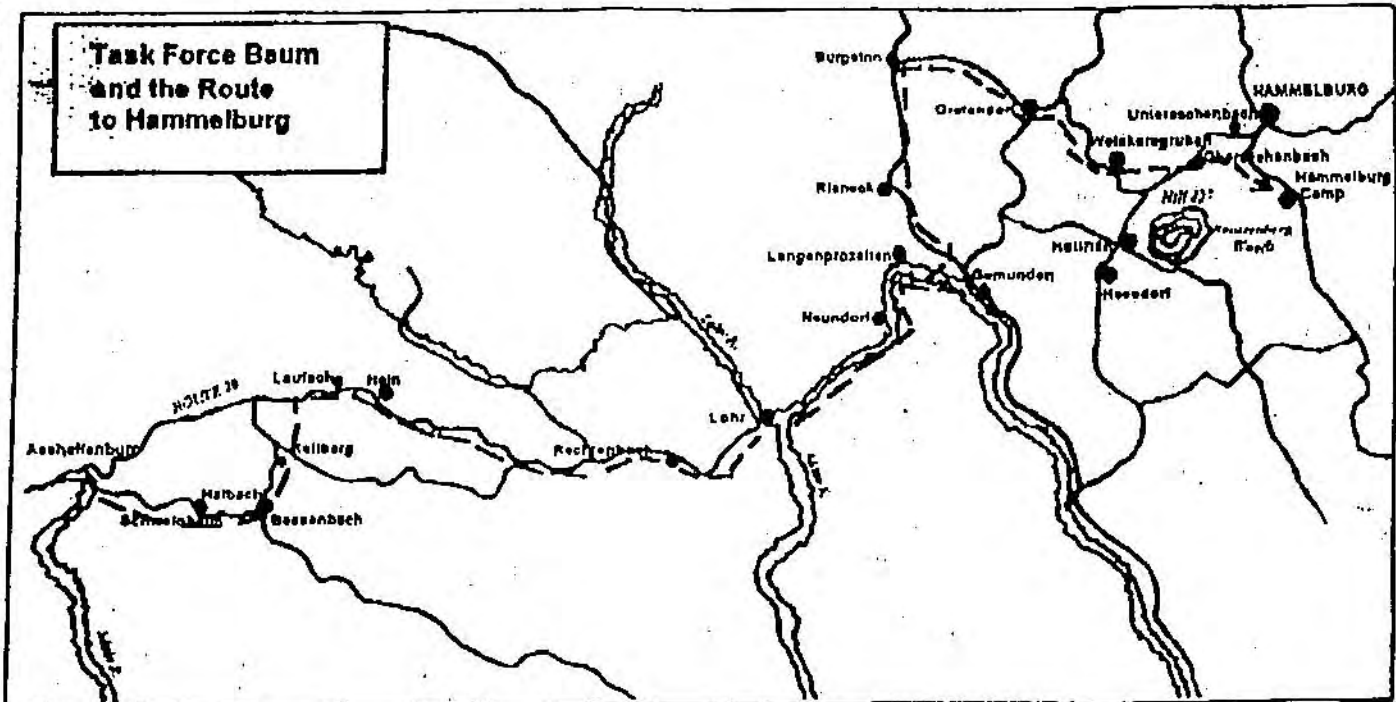
I spoke with the book's co-author, MAJ Richard Baron, via telephone, and he informed me that as far as he knew there would be no reunion, as it

was too late to plan one. It seemed ironic since the original mission was planned in less than 24 hours! Baron was awarded the Bronze Star for his efforts during the escape.

T/SGT Charles O. Graham, who led the antitank platoon, also did not wish to participate, even if there was a reunion. He was awarded five Silver Stars and two Bronze Stars during his Army career. LT Nutto, who commanded a platoon of tanks, also elected not to participate.

By March 26, 1945, units of Patton's 3rd Army, in particular the 4th Armored Division, arrived near Schweinheim after four days of hard fighting inside Nazi Germany. They paused in the hills overlooking the German-held towns of Aschaffenburg and Schweinheim. This was to be the opening scene of Patton's biggest military blunder.

Patton ordered the raid after having been ordered to the north by GEN Omar Bradley. He knew that his son-in-law, LTC John Waters, was being held approximately 70 kilometers to the east, in Oflag XIII B, a prisoner of war camp for officers overlooking the old Frankish town of Hammelburg. LTC Waters had been captured by elements of GEN Erwin Rommel's Afrika Korps during the battle for the Kasserine Pass two years earlier. Military intelligence had been tracking his internment and had informed Patton that he was in the Hammelburg lager, a few miles east of Frankfurt.



This proved to be too tempting for GEN Patton, and he immediately issued verbal orders for the now-infamous raid, despite the fact that he had been ordered to turn 3rd Army north and vacate his former positions to GEN Patch, whose 7th Army was to the south, on Patton's right. GEN Patton claims he received verbal permission from GEN Omar Bradley prior to ordering the mission, but in Bradley's book, *A Soldier's Story*, he does not remember it that way.

The raid took place in spite of immediate protests by two of Patton's subordinates, MG William M. Hoge, commanding 4th Armored Division, and General Manton Eddy, both of whom thought this mission was ill-timed, poorly conceived, and undermanned — ill-timed in that it came following several days of hard fighting by the same group of men who had just been given the orders to liberate the camp. These men had crossed the Rhine River on March 24th, and had just arrived at the Main River on the 26th after continuous fighting and going without sleep for days.

The men selected for the mission were from units of the famed 4th Armored Division, Patton's favorite, one of only two divisions in Europe in WWII to have been awarded a Presidential Unit Citation by President Franklin Roosevelt. The man selected to plan and choose the units sent on the raid was LTC Creighton Abrams, then thirty years old and in command of Combat Command B. LTC Abrams se-

lected his old friend, LTC Harold Cohen, a battle-hardened veteran commanding the 10th Armored Infantry Battalion, to lead the raid, and ordered him to hand-pick his own men. However, Cohen was to be medically excused from the mission.

(Apparently, LTC Cohen had a severe case of hemorrhoids. He was removed from the assignment by GEN Patton himself who, after personally inspecting the inflamed area, remarked, "That is some sorry ass!" )

Cohen then immediately selected his own replacement with Abrams' approval.

He was 24-year-old CPT Abraham "Abe" Baum. At this point, Patton motioned for the young captain to step aside and stated to him, "Listen, Abe, you pull this off and I'll see to it that you get the Congressional Medal of Honor!" CPT Baum was a tough, scrappy, hands-on officer from New York City with questionable qualifications to be heading a raid this far behind enemy lines. For one thing, he was Jewish, and capture mount uncertainty when the letter "H," signifying Hebrew, was discovered on a soldier's dogtags. He had been a patternmaker by trade and, because of this, had been assigned to the Army engineers upon his enlistment. Army enlistment personnel apparently did not know he was a patternmaker of clothing; he was assigned to the engineers because they thought he was a metal patternmaker. This stroke of luck eventually got him

assigned to the Army's Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning, Georgia.

CPT Baum was far from being underqualified, however. At this point in the war, he had been one of the first to arrive at Bastogne. Baum had earned two Bronze and two Silver Stars.

The units assigned to accompany him on the mission were C Company of the 37th Tank Battalion, commanded by 2LT William J. Nutta, consisting of 10 Sherman tanks, and a platoon of five light tanks from D Company, commanded by 2LT William Weaver. There was also a platoon of three self-propelled assault guns, under the command of T/SGT Charles O. Graham. These were Shermans adapted to carry a 105-mm gun that could be used as an antitank weapon or as an artillery piece. The balance of "Task Force Baum, as it later became known, consisted of 27 halftracks carrying Company A of the 10th Armored Infantry, under the command of CPT Robert Lange, together with a recon platoon of nine men and three jeeps, and medical and maintenance personnel with an interpreter, PFC Irving Solotoff. Also assigned to the column was an additional jeep carrying MAJ Alexander Stiller, one of Patton's most trusted aides, who had served with Patton as a tanker in WWI.

Back in the hills overlooking Schweinheim, an artillery barrage ended at 2100 hours, and the platoon selected by Cohen to lead the breakout through the main street of town began moving. Af-

ter proceeding only 200 yards, they came under fire, and a Panzerfaust (bazooka) stopped the lead Sherman in its tracks and blocked the street. CPL Lester Powell drove his jeep forward, entered the burning tank, and drove it out of the way, also rescuing the surviving tankers. During this action, he was hit by enemy fire, and when he awakened in a hospital in England, he was told he had been awarded the Silver Star for his bravery and a Purple Heart for his wounds.

At 2300, the situation grew worse. Another tank was hit and abandoned, causing further delay. At this point MAJ Stiller joined CPT Baum and said, "We're late."

Baum replied, "I might not be able to reach Hammelburg before dawn... We need the cover of darkness."

"Is there another way to Hammelburg?" Stiller asked. Baum shook his head no, and stared at the major, still wondering why he was included in the mission.<sup>1</sup> Abrams and Cohen had been told the reason, but they had not passed it on to Baum. Both had thought the mission very risky and foolish.

The assignment of MAJ Stiller had caused CPT Baum to question who was actually in command, and to wonder what the aide to a famous general was doing on a combat mission about to proceed over 40 miles behind enemy lines. The answer to Baum's question caused him to turn cold. "It's important to General Patton," said Stiller, who explained that LTC Waters was in the camp.

"Who's Colonel Waters?" asked Baum.

"He's Patton's son-in-law. Didn't you know that?"

After hearing this, and knowing that 300 men were about to risk their lives for one man, he considered pulling the plug and aborting the mission. However, after collecting himself, Baum hoped that the rest of the men would see it as he did, a job to be done. At this point, he ordered his men to proceed through the town of Schweinheim without pausing. Thus began one of the most daring sagas in U.S. military history.

After clearing the town, the column stretched out over a mile. Baum's next task was to find the main east-west highway, Route 26. After passing through the small villages of Haibach-



LTC John K. Waters, seen at left in 1961 as a LTG, was in the Hammelburg prisoner-of-war camp in March 1945. Captured at Kasserine Pass in North Africa two years earlier, he was the son-in-law of General George S. Patton, Jr., then commanding the U.S. 3rd Army. Patton's troops were approaching within 40 miles of the camp when Patton ordered CPT Abraham Baum to lead a raid on the camp.

Grünmorsbach, they soon passed through Bessenbach, and then Keilberg. After reviewing the order of march as the column passed by, Baum then sped ahead, and after several turns on the narrow, winding road out of Keilberg, came to his first objective, the main road to Hammelburg.

It was now 0230 hours. Now on Route 26, Baum had just accomplished a very difficult leadership test. Leading an armored column in daylight is difficult enough; leading one at night in unfamiliar territory, over a complicated route, is even more challenging. As they proceeded to their next objective, the town of Laufach, Baum ordered the tanks to run over several telephone poles along the highway. He also ordered some lines cut by hand for added protection. Then one of his men noticed that, in several of the towns along the route, white sheets were hanging from the windows as a sign that they had surrendered. At this point, the task force leaders realized that the lines had not been cut soon enough.

As they sped on in the early dawn hours outside of Laufach, the road passed by a military parade ground. A large contingent of German troops were taking morning exercise. After spraying these troops with a hail of machine gun fire, it again became apparent that the mission was no longer a secret and worse yet, their exact position was now known to the enemy survivors. They next came upon a detachment of troops marching along the road who immediately surrendered to the lead tank unit, headed by LT Weaver. They were ordered to throw down their

weapons so that the tanks could drive over them, rendering them useless. This scene was repeated again a short distance further along and the Germans were told to march toward the approaching American Army in the west.

Baum's task force raced through Hain and Rechtenbach, then approached Lohr, the largest town since leaving Schweinheim, and also the mid-way point on the route. Baum decided to move Nuto's Shermans, with their 75mm guns, to the front of the column in case the city had been warned and fortified. This proved a prescient decision. As the column approached the outskirts in the early morning light, they spotted an overturned heavy truck with telephone poles piled around it, blocking the main road ahead. At this roadblock, another Panzerfaust struck the lead tank and disabled it, but the crew escaped and scrambled to the rear. A second Sherman then used its main gun and machine guns against the roadblock, scattering the soldiers manning it. The Shermans proceeded into the roadblock, clearing a path for the task force and scattering the defenders after bulldozing the truck aside. After continuing a short distance and scanning the town with his binoculars, Baum decided to try to bypass the city, thus avoiding further resistance. After doing this, he ran head-on into a truck convoy coming from the opposite direction and hauling 88mm antiaircraft guns. With LT Weaver back on point, he ordered his crew to "let them have it!" As Weaver swept by in his tank, "Conquering Hero," he was shocked to see that the 88s were manned by young



girls. They had been trained for this duty because all the available men were at the various fronts.<sup>1</sup>

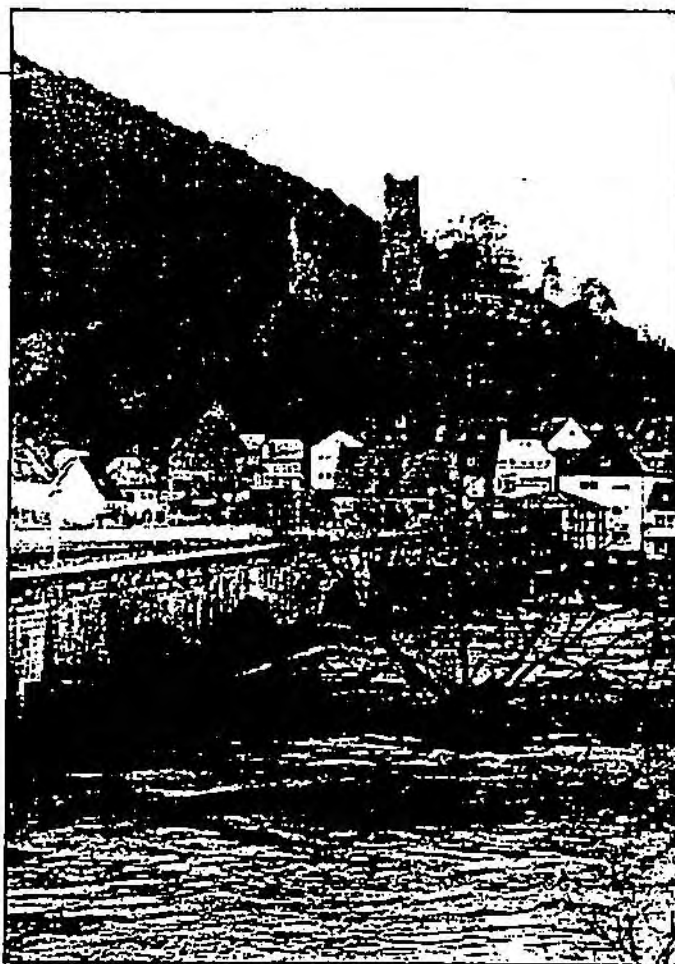
On March 26th, 1995, as I approach the town of Lohr down the scenic road which slopes rather steeply into this "Hansel and Gretel" town, I can envision the roadblock and am surprised to find yet another roadblock of a different sort. It is a full-blown street fair, and it turns out to be a nice treat as the old strasse through the village is filled with the bright colors of spring and the wonderful odor of many locally produced cheeses and smoked meats. It is here that I mail my first postcard to myself. It will bear the postmark of Lohr and a 50th Anniversary date of the day when Task Force Baum was here. The route Baum selected around the town was located just above the town, and was just visible from below. It was in Lohr that General Hans von Obstfelder, responsible for all German ground forces in the southern region, was summoned from his office by an aide who said the Americans were on the upper road. Seeing that they were bypassing Lohr and heading toward Gemünden, he immediately called for reconnaissance planes to follow the column and instructed his troops in Gemünden to prepare to dynamite a bridge to block the route.

As LT Weaver was leaving the Lohr area, he began to overtake a German train on his left. The train consisted of both freight and passenger cars. Some soldiers were waving at him! They stopped waving as the 75mm guns and machine guns of "Conquering Hero" began to point toward them. At this moment, the doors to the boxcars slid back to reveal small anti-aircraft guns aimed at the tanks. Luck again was on the American side as the road dropped suddenly below the railroad bed. The tanks were now able to fire on the train, but the reverse was not possible. The fire from the task force struck a freight car loaded with ammunition, which blew up, and after firing additional rounds into the engine, two engineers jumped out, leaving the damaged train to its own demise.

A short while later, a train approaching from Gemünden appeared to have a chance to cross the tracks in front of the column and block the task force, but another Sherman fired two 75mm rounds into the engine and derailed the train just short of the crossing.

As Weaver and the column neared Gemünden, another juicy target appeared. This time it was a tugboat hauling five barges through the locks on the river Main. After firing high explosive and incendiary rounds into them, the barges exploded. Continuing further, another vital target appeared alongside the road, the huge railroad marshalling yards on the outskirts of Gemünden. Baum ordered all of his tanks to fire on this bonus target. They destroyed two more trains, unknowingly disrupting the unloading of the German 7th Division, who were trying to get to the front. In addition, they destroyed several more locomotives and then followed up by ordering a nearby American spotter plane to call in an air strike on this valuable target.

Approaching Gemünden, Baum again halted to survey the bridge across the river and into town. He sent the recon platoon down the hill to verify that the bridge was intact. As LT Hofner approached the old bridge, he spotted a



pile of dozens of land mines which the Germans had just started to bury in the road. After throwing out smoke grenades, Hofner and his men began tossing the stacked mines off the road and began firing across the bridge into targets in the town. For this effort, Hofner earned a Silver Star.

As soon as the road was cleared, Baum put Nutto's medium tanks in the lead, and they started across with LT Hofner's platoon of infantry. From his turret, Nutto heard the fire from the first Panzerfaust, then another and another. There was also 75mm antitank fire coming from an old castle over the river and above the town. At this point, the lead tank was hit and rolled to a stop just five yards from the bridge, blocking the column. Nutto watched as the stunned platoon leader, LT Raymond Keil, helped his badly burned crew out of the tank. At this point, panic ensued and the lead tank's sergeant broke and ran for the rear, yelling, "I've had it, I've had it!"

At this point, Baum ran up as Nutto heard another "whoomp" from a panzerfaust. Looking up he saw it wobble and strike the asphalt in front of them before exploding and showering



Above right, the Roman bridge at Gemünden, and the castle where the Germans had sited their 75mm antitank guns.

LT Nutto, who commanded Baum's medium tanks.

them with steel fragments and searing phosphorus. He also felt the fragments pierce his body, and then watched as Baum went down. Baum struggled to stand up while bleeding from his right knee and hand. As the two men moved back to receive first-aid, Baum watched as Elmer Sutton, leading the infantry platoon, made it across the bridge with two more men running after him. Suddenly, the Germans blew the bridge and the two men vanished forever.

It is March 26th, 1995. While standing above the roadside overlooking the bridge, which has long since been rebuilt, it is starting to rain and again I am reminded of what must have been going through the minds of the men who watched as their comrades died. The bridge still has the original foundation erected by the Roman army almost 2000 years ago. The bombed-out castle also survived and is still standing in the mist above the city.

The town is strangely quiet, with no one in sight on this lazy Sunday afternoon. Then a policeman drives up to see why we are stopped here. Reality returns, and we press on along Baum's path.

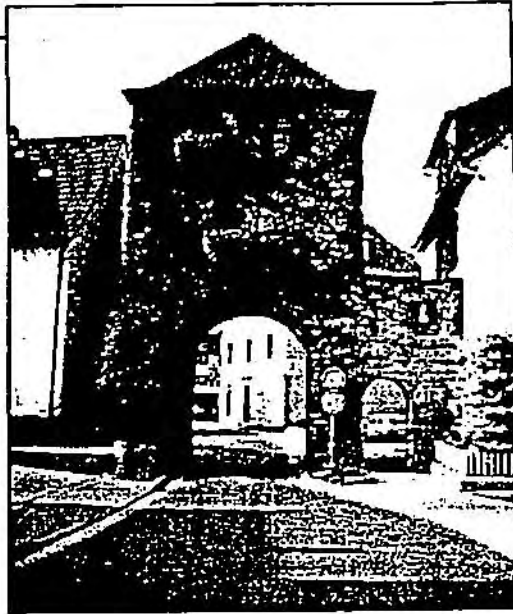
On March 27th, 1945, at 1100 hours, Baum is also backing out of the town. He has sent a recon probe to look for another road out of the village. After Baum consulted his map, Stiller asked him if he wanted to go back.

"We don't quit," Baum said, adding that the enemy had no idea of where his unit was heading.

After turning north on a back road, Baum sent his second message back to 10th Armored: "Two tanks lost, two officers and eighteen men wounded or killed. Proceeding."

A short while later, at a fork in the road, another tank was lost after throwing a track. At this point, the wounded were lifted out of the halftracks and placed on the side of the road, where they would be found and given medical aid. They were in no condition to continue.

The unit had moved ahead only a short distance when a lost American jeep from the 7th Division, carrying a combat propaganda team with a loud-speaker, wandered across Baum's path. The team had seen the smoke from the battle in Gemünden and, upon discov-



The narrow city gate of Burgsinn, the only route through the town, remains much like Baum's task force found it in 1945.

ering the tank tracks leading out of the city, proceeded to catch up with the column, thinking it to be one of their own. They then began broadcasting in German, directing the message into the woods towards some enemy soldiers who had outrun the column from Gemünden. The broadcast message was simple: it would be better to surrender to the 7th U.S. Army than to the Russians, who were coming from the east. About 100 of them walked out of the woods and began laying down their weapons. Then one of Baum's men informed the team that the task force was not part of 7th Army. The propaganda team immediately left to find their own troops.

With Baum leaving in the opposite direction, the abandoned Germans must have thought the American rules for fighting a war a bit odd.

Moving to the north, the column captured a lone paratrooper who was absent without leave from his unit and heading for home. After finding out that he was originally from Hammelburg, Baum and the interpreter, Private Solotoff, convinced him to lead them to a bridge in Burgsinn. The paratrooper proved to be a valuable asset. Several times along the route he convinced other smaller groups of German soldiers to surrender and walk towards the oncoming U.S. Army. The last group to follow his instructions were manning two camouflaged antitank guns. Further along the road to

Burgsinn, the task force chanced upon a staff car containing a high-ranking German general, Ortel Lotz. After forcing him to mount the front of one of the lead tanks to quell possible hostile fire, they proceeded through Reineck and then across the narrow but intact Burgsinn bridge.

The town of Burgsinn is an older walled city and, had they been forewarned of Baum's arrival, they could have easily blocked the main gate into town, forcing another costly delay. Even after passing through the main gate, the streets are so narrow that any stalled vehicle would have created additional problems and further delay. Upon leaving Burgsinn, there is a rather steep incline to negotiate on the road to Gräfendorf. Somewhere in the wooded region between the two villages, another unexpected event occurred. The task force encountered several hundred conscripted Russians who were working on the construction of an autobahn bridge, guarded by a group of German soldiers. Again, the captured paratrooper ordered them to throw down their arms. Upon seeing this, the Russians mobbed Baum's jeep, shouting, "Amerikanski, Amerikanski." The Russians wanted to do something further to help their liberators, and having armed themselves with the German rifles, they wanted to take the town. Baum approved of this, but on one condition — they were to wait until after the task force had passed through. In addition, the Russians wanted the general. Baum again complied.<sup>1</sup>

On March 27th, 1995, driving out of the woods, which were spectacular to see, the road again turns steeply downhill and offers a splendid view of the town of Gräfendorf. As the main street wound through the town, I was amazed to see how narrow the roadway was, and how easily it could have been blocked. About halfway through the village, we spotted a cafe and stopped for coffee and cake. Since the owner of the cafe was in his late fifties, I asked him if he remembered the panzer raid of Task Force Baum. He became excited, and immediately produced his copy of the *RAID*, the book by Baron, Baum, and Goldhurst. He told me that he was a small boy, hiding in the basement below where we were standing, when the American tanks came rumbling through. He watched them from the basement window, and it was a sight he will never forget. Another man

who had been sitting nearby got up to tell me that he had also been a young man in the town of Burgsinn when the column passed by, and he recalled similar memories. After saying good-bye and thanking them for their time, I then asked them if they would send me a postcard from their towns with a short story of what they had seen, and they both have complied. (I sent them each a 4th Armored shoulder patch and a thank you card.)

Outside, as we were getting into our car, the cafe owner pointed to some second floor windows above the shop next door, and explained that his neigh-

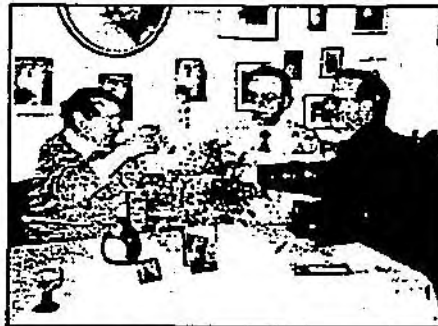


bors had draped a white sheet over the window sill in order to keep the Americans from firing on them. This worked fine until some SS troops came through the village later and, upon seeing the white sheets of surrender, proceeded to shoot the townspeople who had hung them up! This proved to be a very sobering experience, and at this point I wished I had not eaten such a large piece of cake.

After we crossed yet another tiny bridge in the middle of town, the valley narrowed as the road followed the railroad and the river up out of town toward Weickersgrüben. This was the site of another crucial incident for Task Force Baum.

As the task force left Gräfen-dorf, a single-engine German spotter aircraft flew up the valley behind them. After the column had fired several hundred rounds at the aircraft, unsuccessfully, the pilot managed to fly out of range.

tippling his wings in defiance. As it turned out, the small plane had positively identified and counted the remaining vehicles — 13 tanks, three assault guns, and 27 halftracks. Meanwhile and unknown to Baum, General Lotz had gotten free of the Russians and phoned Gräfen-dorf, passing on the information that the Americans had talked about nothing but Hammelburg. Among those forewarned of the column's destination was the camp commandant at Oflag XIIB, General Von Goeckel, and other commanders in the area, including Oberst (Colonel) Cord Van Hoepple, area commander, and General Bernhard Weisenberger at



At left, the bridge at the village of Gräfen-dorf, where SS men shot civilians who displayed white flags. Above, the author with Frau Stürzenberger, widow of Karl, and their son Edgar.

Schweinfurt, positioned just east of Hammelburg.

At 1200 hours on March 27th, the column had just passed through Michelau and then over another small bridge across the Saale River and north of Weickersgrüben, their next destination. At this point, the guide, who was unfamiliar with this region, became useless, and after turning the column up a dead-end road, needed to be replaced. Baum's next move was to send his driver, with Solotoff the translator, back to Weickersgrüben with instructions to find somebody who could get them to Hammelburg. After speeding back into the town, they arrived at an inn.

Solotoff found the owner, Karl Stürzenberger. After telling Solotoff that his wife was due to give birth this very night and he was the only one to help her, he asked to be excused from acting as a guide. This request fell on deaf

ears. The situation was now desperate and the task force was stalled and way behind schedule.

After leading the column back up the correct road to Highway 27, and after arriving at the intersection to Hammelburg, the innkeeper again asked to be excused to return to his wife, and this time he was allowed to go home. After seeing the entire column pass by, he realized the consequences he faced if the SS found out about his involvement with the Americans. So, after returning and aiding in the birth of a new son, he went into the woods, where he remained until the end of the war.

It was raining again as we passed by a covered bus stop in Weickersgrüben, where my friend John Dirks noticed three men standing and smoking, seeking shelter from the rain. We wondered if they knew of the raid and Herr Stürzenberger? The answer was an excited yes! One of the men was among the Russians freed by CPT Baum and his men. He had elected to remain in the area after the war. He said we were only 50 meters from the home of Herr Stürzenberger. A few minutes later, ringing the innkeeper's doorbell, I felt much the same anticipation as Solotoff must have felt. A member of the family answered; not Karl, but his grandson, who invited us in to meet the family — Karl's sons, Herbert and Edgar. After explaining the reason for my previously unannounced visit, (Abe Baum had told me to look up his friend Karl when I passed through), we were immediately escorted into the family room where we were given a glass of local wine and treated like royalty.

It was at this point that we learned of Karl's passing. We were saddened, but also delighted to meet Klara, his widow and the mother of Herbert, Edgar, and Walter, the son who was born on this day 50 years earlier. Karl had died in 1991. The family told me that Walter would be coming later if we wanted to stay and meet him, but our schedule depended on available light for additional photographs, so we thanked them for their hospitality and, after presenting them with 4th Armored patches, moved on towards Hammelburg.

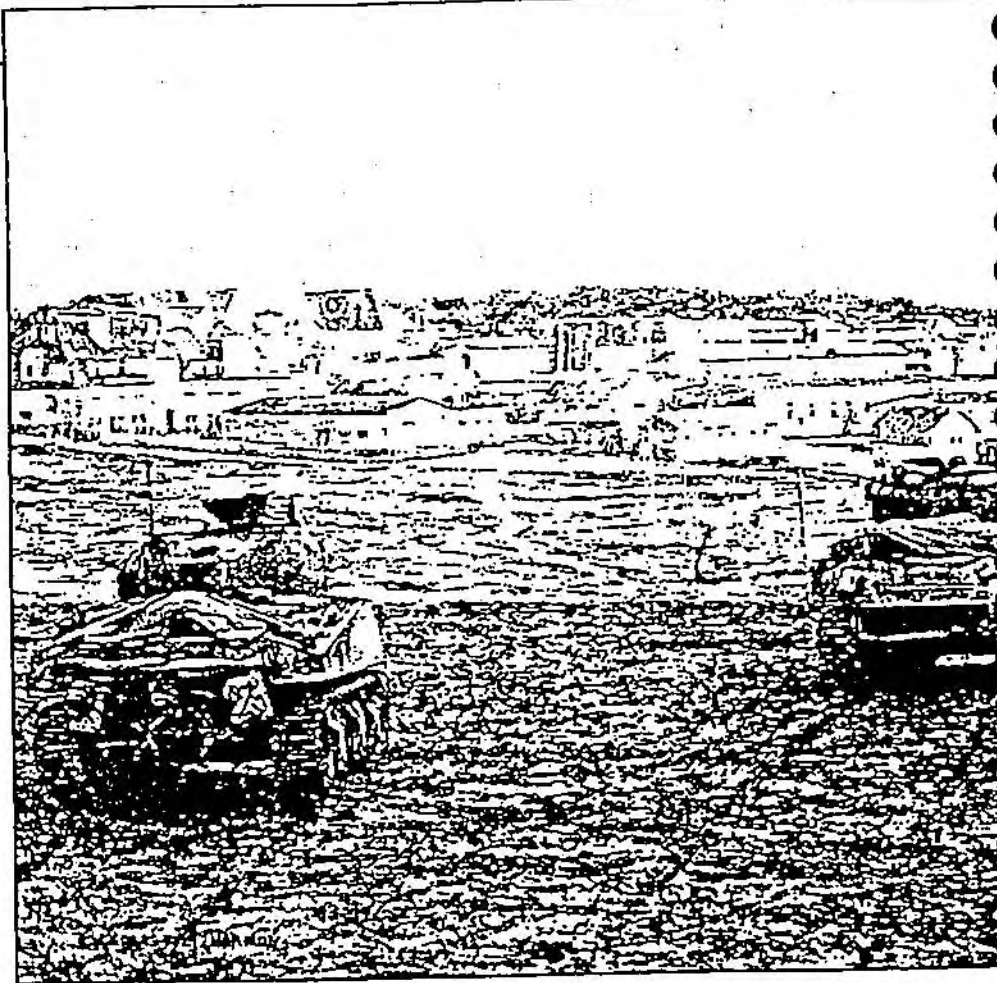
Task Force Baum is now in the hills overlooking Hammelburg and at the intersection of a road that led south over the Reussenberg hills and toward the lager. It was not far from this point that

Hauptmann Richard Kochl, leading a company of eight panzerjaegers (tank hunters), had positioned himself. He had been alerted by one of the phone calls that General Lotz had placed after escaping from the Russians. He set up his guns near the railroad station, about 1,000 yards from the road that CPT Baum would have to pass on his way into the camp. He seemed to be in an ideal location for an ambush, but the task force was traveling at high speed when it reached this point, and all the rounds fired by Kochl's 75mm guns missed their targets.

Baum sent T/SGT Graham's assault guns 500 yards up the hill to fire on Kochl and protect the rear of the column. Unfortunately, this section of the road turned up rather steeply toward a saddle at the top on the ridge, and before all of the column had passed by, they took casualties from Kochl's anti-tank guns. Slowed by the incline, two more tanks were knocked out and the halftrack carrying CPT Lange was hit. He was seriously wounded. Three of his men placed him on another vehicle and headed up over the ridge to safety.

While Kochl was firing on the column, Baum was racing up and down the road in his jeep, trying to get stalled vehicles off the road and trying to restore order. Now Graham's guns were in position on the ridge and started to return fire. Capable of firing 8-10 rounds per minute, Graham's guns scored three knockouts on Kochl's panzerjaegers and also wiped out a fuel and ammunition column of six trucks moving toward Kochl. Unfortunately, Baum's unit had been shot up badly, losing two mediums and one light tank, five halftracks, and two jeeps. Now out of range and over the hill's crest, the task force regrouped at the sight of a large French memorial cross, erected by the French government after WWI to commemorate the French soldiers who had perished in Hammelburg. Baum now had his first view of Oflag XIII-B. It lay on the reverse slope about 1,700 yards away.

As remaining light was growing short, Baum left Graham's assault guns and a rifle platoon behind to protect the rear and to provide covering fire from above and into the German positions outside the camp. He arranged the remaining 11 tanks into a "desert formation" (spread out side by side), with the



infantry following close behind. With the final goal in sight, they headed downhill towards the camp. When they were about 200 yards from the wire fence, the Germans began firing.

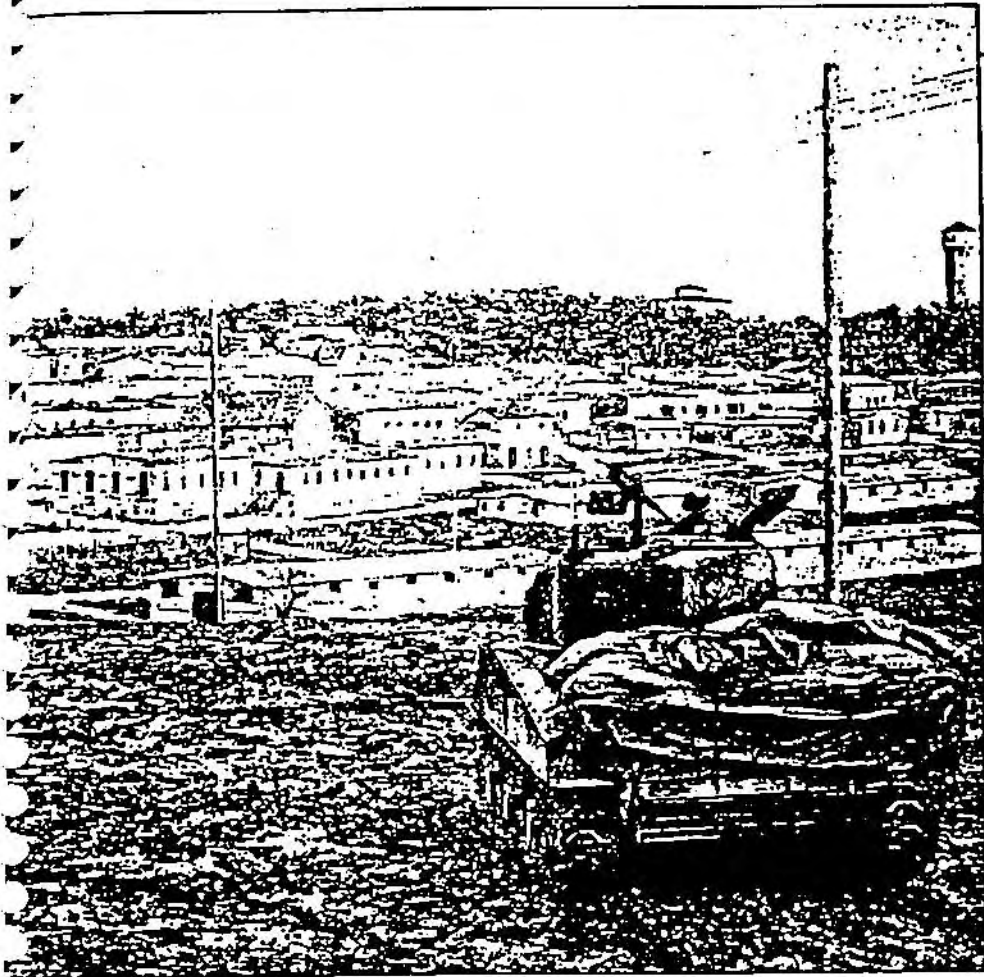
We were met at the Schloss Hotel Saalach by Herr Obersuleutnant (LTC) Taube of the Hammelburg Infantry Training School, and drove to his office. The Infantry Training School was celebrating its 100th year in Hammelburg. In Colonel Taube's office, we had coffee and were introduced to LTC Bradford, the U.S. Army liaison officer assigned to the school; Hans Schnebel, the school's librarian and historian; and Peter Martin, a history instructor, who acted as our translator and guide. A short time later, we found ourselves at the saddle, standing in the road next to the French cross monument where we had our first view into the compound from the point at which CPT Baum and his men first saw it.

Standing at the location of Graham's support position near the cross, we looked back down the panzerstrasse

(tank road) and saw an overview of the steep winding route the task force took coming up from the base of the mountain.

We returned to our van and proceeded to the first camp buildings that Baum's men approached. They are still in use as Infantry School support and supply buildings. During the time of the raid, these buildings were administrative buildings, located just inside the compound fence.

Baum's unit responded to the enemy fire which commenced about 200 yards out from the wire fence. Then the tanks broke through the wire. General Von Goeckel, the officer in charge, surrendered his entire command to a surprised POW, Colonel Paul R. Goode. During the initial melee, LTC Waters, the primary objective of the raid, was severely wounded by a German soldier, carried back into the compound, and hidden by a Serbian medical officer. He later learned that the bullet had missed his lower spine by a fraction of an inch. During all the confusion that



began with the American entrance into the compound, MAJ Stiller had been running from building to building, searching for LTC Waters. When he found him, he was already in the operating room, fighting for his life, and in no shape to travel. After speaking with him, and verifying his condition, he left in search of Baum.

The camp was in pandemonium, with prisoners running around everywhere. They were jumping on all the vehicles and some were kissing Baum's men. Others were asking for cigarettes, still not realizing that they were over 40 miles from the American front lines!

Meanwhile, Baum was making a few discoveries of his own. First, there were far more men here than he had planned on rescuing, and he was now severely short of transport vehicles. Even if his original column had survived the 16 hours of fighting and travel it had taken to get there, they would have still been far short of transportation vehicles. There were more than 1,500 prisoners, and he would

only be able to accommodate and rescue 200 or less. Far worse was the fact that no one seemed to be in charge of this unruly bunch! It was like Times Square on New Year's Eve, Baum recalled later.

LT Richard Baron, one of the prisoners and a co-author of *RAID*, came out of the compound and realized that Baum had only a small task force. Since it was not supported by any additional American forces, they would have to fight their way out and back to the west. Baron had been captured in Alsace-Lorraine while fighting with his machine gun platoon, a part of the 45th Division. While he realized the dilemma the task force faced, he decided that leaving was still a better option than remaining at Hammelburg.

At about that time, Baum and Goode found each other and were discussing whose duty it was to inform the men that only 200 or so would be able to go out with the column. Baum mounted the hood of one of the vehicles and began to shout for quiet. This was as dif-

ficult a task as he had faced up to this point, and it was only with extreme difficulty that he was able to explain to the excited crowd that only a few hundred of them could leave with him. At this point, many of the stunned and confused men stood paralyzed in front of him. Slowly they began to move in two directions, most back into the camp from which they had just come, and several hundred onto the tanks and into the halftracks. Among these was LT Baron, who was one of the men searching for a spot on one of the tanks.

As it was now dark, Baum thought perhaps this would provide cover for his exit from the compound. He sent LT Nutto out with three tanks and three halftracks to probe the roads for an escape route. After Nutto left, Baum reorganized the remaining task force with five light tanks in the front, then five halftracks, and the assault guns with the recon jeep and the remaining halftracks in the rear. This was accomplished just prior to moving to another assembly area to await the results of Nutto's probes.

Upon finishing the latest order of battle and just prior to moving out, disaster struck again. An explosion occurred in the last tank in the column and blew it up. The tank had been struck by a panzerfaust fired by an infiltrating German combat engineer who had gotten close under cover of darkness.

In the time it took for Baum to reach the new assembly area, the Germans were also moving quickly. The officers and senior enlisted men quickly dispatched soldiers and cadets to the various exit roads. They immediately sent men to the south, to the small villages of "Hundsfield" and "Bonmland." These small villages had been appropriated by the German government to be used in house-to-house infantry training. The villages had been vacant of civilians since 1895, but to Nutto they looked just like any other sleeping German village. After passing "Hundsfield," the first small village on his right on the route south, he soon spotted a roadblock of felled trees across the road, difficult to bypass in the darkness. Shortly after Baum arrived to survey the situation, he ordered Nutto back to the intersection in "Hundsfield" and then out toward the



The old cobblestone road that Baum's task force took, looking back toward Hammelburg.

Reussenberg Woods, which were above the small valley they were in.

By now, the Germans were reacting. They had spotted Nutto's change in direction, and a team of combat engineers was sent ahead, to the area known as Hill 340, near the Reussenberg, to intercept them. As soon as these engineers began firing on Nutto's unit, Baum heard them and raced to the trouble spot in his jeep. It was another roadblock with supporting fire coming from the woods above. This forced yet another change in direction for the probe, this time to the west toward the main road at "Hollrich."

This route passed Hill 427 on their right flank and continued about four miles into town. After passing through the town and with the main highway in sight, Nutto radioed Baum with the news. He was elated, replying, "We are moving up... We should be there in twenty minutes."

LT Baron, who was riding on one of the probe tanks, recalls what happened next. With Nutto back in his tank and on the main road just out of town, two panzerfausts lit up the night, revealing German tanks, in addition to infantry!

One of the German rounds slammed into Nutto's tank and knocked him semiconscious. Then the second tank was also hit. After waking up, Nutto found himself on the road and a prisoner of war.

The remaining halftracks and the surviving tanks made their way back toward the task force. This was a serious blow to Baum, as he had just lost the irreplaceable Nutto and two more much-needed tanks.

At 0030 hours, Baum's jeep approached the town, where he ran into

the survivors coming back. He immediately sent two tanks about a mile to probe the next town of "Hessdorf," which was also situated along the main road, Highway 27. At this point, he ordered the remaining former POWs off and told them to wait with the halftracks. In addition, he ordered the main column to continue on the route he had just traveled and to wait for further instructions at a road crossing about midway between him and the latest probe. Some of the POWs had considered returning to the safety of the lager and were discussing this option among themselves.

At 0230 hours, as Baum and the two probe tanks were approaching the town of Hessdorf, he glanced at the odometer in his jeep. It revealed that with all of the diversions, he had already traveled 52 miles since leaving Schweinheim, and had been without sleep for over 100 hours. Then, suddenly, from out of the darkness, a panzerfaust took out another of his tanks. The surviving men scrambled up on the remaining tank and headed for the intersection below the Reussenberg Woods.

After joining up with the main body once more, Baum decided to retire until daylight when they would be able to force their way out across country and around any roadblocks. It would be futile to attempt any more this night; the losses had already been too high. He then ordered his men up to Hill 427 and onto a semi-flat area adjacent to the woods. Using the woods as cover to the rear, he fanned the assault guns and the remaining tanks out toward the valley below and toward the lager. Next, he ordered the men to refuel prior to dawn and prepare to destroy the remaining empty and damaged vehicles.

While his men were following Baum's latest orders, he summoned Moses, Graham, Weaver, and Stiller to a final pre-breakout conference and was informed by Stiller that more of the POWs wanted to return to the lager. About this time, a group gathered around Colonel Goode as he stood on one of the tanks. In short order, he explained that, due to the additional vehicle losses, there were still too many of them and they would be a burden to the remaining task force trying to break out and fight their way back to the U.S. lines. After this sober news, about 70 of them elected to return with Colonel Goode and left at 0500 hours. This left only a dozen of the original POWs, including Richard Baron and a few of the officers of the 45th that Baum then assigned to replace the vacant slots among his own remaining infantry.

Colonel Bradford unlocks the gate at the intersection where Baum lead the task force up the road to Hill 427. The gate is locked because this is a live firing day and an artillery training exercise is scheduled to begin in an hour. I am feeling a bit uneasy now, as I have been in this kind of situation early in my Marine Corps training at Camp Pendleton and have heard of the accidents that can occur due to short or long rounds. It is also raining, and a cold winter wind is blowing up the hillside towards the Reussenberg Woods. We saw the exact spot where the task force was deployed and the approximate position of the panzerjagers waiting hidden about 1,500 yards down the hillside. About 100 yards away, there was a burned-out personnel carrier and additional target vehicles for the artillery training school.

The panorama of the battlefield from the plateau is breathtaking. The scene is also quite sobering, and I feel a sudden sense of awareness toward the men of Task Force Baum.

It is almost as if I have stepped back in time 50 years and the drama is about to reach its final climax.

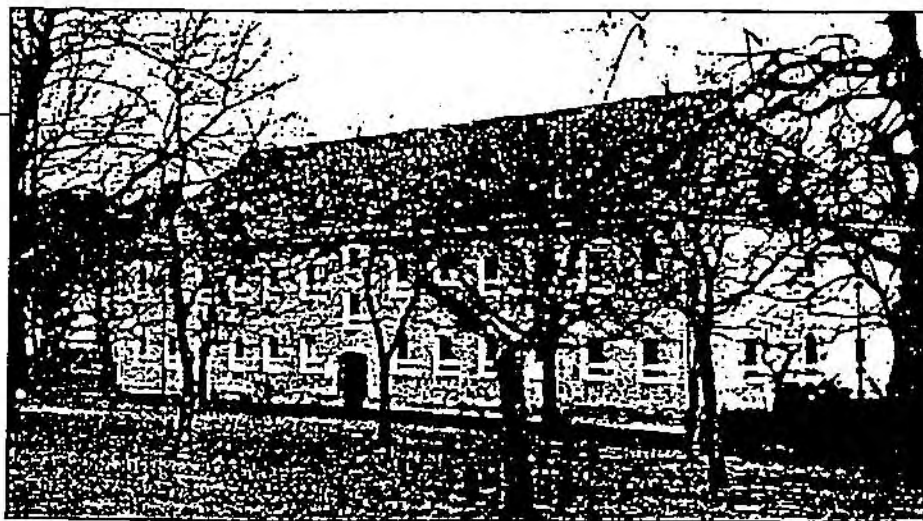
At 0500 hours on March 28th, 1945, the column of men returning to the lager is barely half a mile from the task force when they hear a familiar sound. It is the sound of tanks and men digging in and preparing for battle. Unfortunately, the sounds are not coming from the task force, but from Koehl's panzerjager platoon! After waiting 10

hours for fuel and ammunition, they are now maneuvering into position, waiting for daylight. Ironically, none of Colonel Goode's men returning to the safety of the lager thought to send a runner back to warn CPT Baum of their discovery. Could they have all been so dispirited and exhausted from the last 12 hours of emotional ups and downs that they overlooked this critical point? In the meantime, even more activity was occurring in the German ranks. A team of 20 officers and cadets were quietly positioning themselves in the woods just above the plateau and to the rear of where Baum's men were making final preparations for the breakout. These men had followed the task force during the confusion and were armed with panzerfausts. Just prior to daybreak, they were in the Reussenberg Woods and were wide awake with anticipation of the coming dawn. In the task force, however, some of the men had finally fallen asleep after days of having none. Their sleep would be short-lived.

The seriously wounded men who were still with Baum, and who were in no condition to endure the journey back to the front lines, were taken on stretchers to a nearby barn and made as comfortable as possible with extra blankets. A large cloth red cross was then fashioned on the roof, visible in daylight. Baum gave the order to mount up at about 0800 hours.

In the German headquarters, Oberst Hoeppe's aide awakened him at 0730 hours and told him that the American tanks were visible on the hillside just above Koehl's position and below the Reussenberg Woods. At this point, Hoeppe radioed coordinated instructions to the various units surrounding the task force. No one was to fire until Koehl's antitank guns opened up, and then everyone was to fire at will!

At 0810 hours, CPT Baum was still issuing the final commands to his men before the breakout. His radioman was transmitting a situation report to the American lines and advising them they might require air support later. As the tanks roared to life and began moving towards their preassigned positions, and with many of the men still on foot and hurrying to mount vehicles, it happened! "A sheet of Hell engulfed the clearing... The ground shook with concussion after concussion... Geysers of dirt and steel were thrown up... Trees



The Hammelburg camp's hospital, where Waters, and later Baum, were treated after the failure of the raid and capture of members of Baum's force.

were falling over, and branches were flying through the air and floating to the earth... To Baum it seemed as though a single enemy salvo had utterly destroyed his task force... Tanks were ablaze... Halftracks stopped suddenly... and men were spilled out over the ground. From his jeep and using his field glasses, he saw Koehl's five anti-tank guns moving up the hillside toward him and firing faster than he had ever seen them fire before. They were, he thought, firing like semi-automatic rifles... Scanning across the slope in another direction, he saw five tanks firing their main guns as well as their machine guns. All of the units were supported by infantry, also firing and moving up rapidly. The fire was so intense that Baum never had a chance to deal with the panzerfaust fire coming from his rear. The one bright spot occurred when he saw many of his tankers returning fire... The attack was so overwhelming... and unremitting... and uncommonly accurate.'

Within three minutes of Baum's order to move, "the entire clearing seemed to be one single sheet of flame, every vehicle was hit... It was then he knew he had lost his task force."

Sidles was still on the radio, tapping out the final message from Task Force Baum in Morse code: "Task Force Baum surrounded. Under heavy fire. Request air support." Sadly, several rounds struck the barn sheltering the wounded and the stone walls supporting it collapsed in on the men. It was doubtful that any had survived.

"Every man for himself," Baum shouted as he leapt from his jeep and headed into the woods. He soon found cover with Sidles and Stiller. He

guessed that fewer than a hundred men had made it to the woods. The last order shouted to his men was, "Fan out...make your way west in groups of twos and threes, and go your own way so you won't be visible. Get as much distance between you and them before they get here. Get going!"

With these last hurried orders, Task Force Baum had effectively disintegrated. It was a great effort, and not without many successes. Although the primary mission failed, the havoc created this far behind enemy lines had occupied the Germans for the better part of two days as they ran around in circles trying to figure out what was going on. Meanwhile, the U.S. Army's 3rd and 7th Armies were making rapid progress.

In addition, there were so many acts of bravery and heroism that everyone should have gotten a medal. As it turned out, I am not sure that they did not. I know of at least fifty Silver Stars, one Distinguished Service Cross (Baum's), and more than one hundred Purple Hearts, (Baum got three), as well as Bronze Stars for everyone. (Baum got one also.)

As I walk into the dense woods behind the plateau, I envision the mayhem that had taken place here that fateful morning. Men running in all directions, trying to remain alive and also attempting to escape. T/SGT Graham was one of a few who accomplished this feat. He eventually made it back to the 7th U.S. Army sector after several days of close encounters with the enemy. CPT Baum and LT Baron were not as fortunate, however, and ended up back in the lager, thrown together by fate and still 25 years away from

telling the world in writing of this adventure.

As I take one last look around the floor of the woods for a souvenir of this moment in history, I remember that CPT Baum was still thinking clearly enough at this stage to throw his dog tags into the forest as he ran. He did this because they were imprinted with the letter 'H,' for Hebrew, and he was well aware of the many atrocity stories that had been told about Jews in Nazi captivity. As it turned out later, he was never identified nor discovered by the Germans in the lager as the leader of the mission. It was not conceivable to them that all this havoc had been created by a 24-year-old captain; they had been searching for a much higher-ranking officer. It is unclear what happened to Stiller after his capture and he is not mentioned again in any of the manuscripts at my disposal.

About one hundred yards from the edge of the woods, I began to look in earnest for the dogtags which Abe Baum discarded 50 years ago in hopes of the ultimate treasure find, but it was not to be. As I walked out of the woods, the others were waiting, and a glance at my watch told me that we had only 15 minutes until the live-firing began. Not wishing to relive Baum's encounter to the fullest, I hasten my pace. As we are driving out of the area, we are aware of German soldiers in "camo" cover with radios and, yes, Panzerfausts too! The soldiers are part of the training cadre and are waiting in foxholes for the artillery fire to begin. Again, I am reminded of the task force and how real this 50th Anniversary tour had become.

Shortly after closing and locking the gate behind us, I hear the sounds of the guns firing in the distance, but my mission has been completed.

In trying to establish a complete picture of what happened, the following comments are of note:

Patton died denying publicly any knowledge of his son-in-law being in Hammelburg when he ordered the mission. But on March 23rd, shortly before the raid, Patton had written a letter to his wife Beatrice: "We are headed straight for John's place and may get there before he is moved." Patton stated in his journal, published after his death, "I can say this — that throughout the campaign in Europe, I

know of no error I made except that of failing to send a combat command to Hammelburg." Additionally, in his book, *War As I Knew It*, after realizing that the raid had failed, Patton states, "I made arrangements to reconstitute the two companies of the 4th Armored Division, which we now knew was definitely captured. After forcing a crossing over the Main east of Frankfurt, in which the captain in command was slightly wounded, they continued the attack and reached the outskirts of Hammelburg (interesting that he refers to it as an attack). Here they ran into elements of three German divisions which, as we had hoped, had been drawn by their attack. (At this point, I think the general was "stretching it" somewhat.) While some of the tanks... and armored infantry engaged these divisions, other tanks went to the prison camp, some six miles to the north, and released the prisoners. [Again, Patton does not mention Colonel Waters.] These tanks, accompanied by some 1200 prisoners, rejoined the rest of the force in the vicinity of Hammelburg and started back over the road they had taken. The following report was made by my aide, MAJ Stiller, who was with them but not in command [again no mention of Waters.] He suggested that instead of returning over the road already used, the column strike north. The officer in charge declined that advice and the column stopped to refuel. While engaged in this refueling, they were attacked by three regiments of German infantry from three different directions and scattered. When the confusion had cleared, MAJ Stiller, the captain in command of the force, and five enlisted men continued to fight until they had used up all their ammunition and had their vehicles destroyed, when they surrendered."

This is the only mention of the raid that the general saw fit to include in his only book on the war.

Because the mission was labeled Top Secret (GEN Patton's influence continued until 24 years after his death in 1946), it was 25 years before MAJ Baum and MAJ Baron told their stories in book form.

I am indebted to both of them for their help and information. Without them I could never have made this journey back in time. I also believe that, although many of the men of 4th Armored died and suffered in vain, the

story of the individual heroism and courage of these men remains as one of the great military feats of all time.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>RAID. Baron, Baum, and Goldhurst. N.Y., Putnam and Sons, 1981.

<sup>2</sup>Personal Interview, Richard Baron, 5 Jan 95.

<sup>3</sup>Personal interview, Charles Graham, 7 Jan 95.

<sup>4</sup>Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pa., 1703-S008.

<sup>5</sup>"The Hammelburg Affair." Marin Blumen-son, *Army*, 15 Oct 65.

<sup>6</sup>Personal interview, Abe Baum, February 1995.

<sup>7</sup>*War As I Knew It*, George S. Patton, Jr., Houghton Mifflin, 1947, pp. 280-281.

<sup>8</sup>*Patton's Best*, Frankel and Smith, Hawthorn, 1978, pp. 140-170.

<sup>9</sup>Baum, A.J., "Notes on Task Force Baum," 4th Armored Division report, 10 Apr 45.

<sup>10</sup>*The Mighty Endeavor*, Charles MacDonald, Oxford University Press, 1969, pp. 460-461.

<sup>11</sup>*48 Hours to Hammelburg*, Charles Whiting, Ballantine Books, 1970.

<sup>12</sup>*The Last 100 Days*, John Toland, Random House, 1966.

<sup>13</sup>Telephone interview and materials sent by COL James Leach, DSC, 4th Armored Historian.

<sup>14</sup>Telephone interview and materials sent by SGT Sam Schenker, Secretary, 4th Armored Division Association.

Richard Whitaker, A.A./B.S. University of California at San Jose, is a 55-year-old former U.S. Marine Air Reservist and ardent collector and writer of military history. He has written articles on small and unusual battles for the *Medal Collector*, the journal published by the Orders and Medals Society of America. He lives in Los Gatos with his wife, Christine. He would be happy to hear from any of the other survivors of the raid on Hammelburg.