

POST OFLAG 64 ITEM

SUMMER 2000

LAUGHLIN, NV 2000

The Reunion dates are set. Rooms will be reserved for Sun, Mon, Tues, nites on the group rate. If you desire to arrive early or leave late you must contact the hotel directly @ 800-243-6846. Remember-Sept 1 is the cut-off date for the group rate. Also you must make your choice of filet mignon or chicken for the banquet (put it on registration form).

Robert Galloway is still working on his Hammelburg/Schubin Documentary and it looks like he will launch it at the reunion. Pat Waters and Robert will be there. So come and talk to them about their trip. It should be an interesting conversation.

SPOKANE, WA 2001

Herm is working on arrangements for the 2001 reunion in Spokane. He has contacted hotels, but has made no definite commitment yet. He will keep us

posted from time to time.

COLUMBUS, GA 2002

No word yet on arrangements for 20002

PUBLICATIONS

POSTAGE FUND DONORS

Spring 2000 to Winter 2000 issue

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Editor-Bob Thompson
 7448 E 68th Place
 Tulsa, Ok 74133
 Pho: 918/250-0897

Treasurer-Joe Seringer
 1930 Edwards
 Wooster, OH 44091
 Pho: 330/345-5878

Contributing Editor-Bill Warthen
 P.O. Box L
 Vidalia, GA 30474
 Pho: 912/537-4430

Guest Editor- Irving Yarock
 51 Barclay St.
 Worcester, MA 01604
 Pho: 508/754-8586

Guest Editor-Pat (Di Francesco) Bender
 7039 McCallum St
 Philadelphia, PA 19191
 Pho: 215/242-5504

Mailing List- Carl Christensen
 9 Pine Ridge
 Whispering Pines, NC 28327
 Pho: 910/949-3311

2000 Reunion Chairman- Duanne Kennedy
 12073 Pebble Beach Dr
 Sun City, AZ 85351
 Pho: 602-977-0966

At 11.9.44, I arrived as the pre-command with the train at Dollgow, and reported to the major's office, where a Hauptfeldwebel was already leading the newcomers to the barracks of their Companies. I received a beautiful private-quarter at the Family Wegener at Dallgow. I already received a message that I was going home for 2 weeks, like all others of our Division who came back from the front in Normandy. I was the only Officer left from our II. Battalion 982, together with a few men.

When I came back from my nice holiday, I lived in the Wegener Quarter. They were very kind to me. Mr. Wegener was a county constable of the village and sometimes he went hunting. From time to time they invited me for dinner when he caught a rabbit or a duck.

Our new Battalion commander Hauptmann Schneider and his Adjutant Lt. Peters were very busy with the set up. Several Officers of our Battalion were new and unknown for me. Every day more newcomers came; many in Grey/Green Marine uniforms, or in Blue/Grey Luftwaffen uniforms. Most of them have had only a short and insufficient training.

That's why the Companies were mostly outside in the field and at the training range, to teach the men how to be an Infantryman. I was always on the move with the a bicycle, had to visit shooting-ranges at the training field and had to make installments. These were coordinated at the Battalion and passed on as orders to the Companies. I was always on the move with my bicycle to check the area for our planned training. On a beautiful sunny day I saw a daylight attack of 1000 enemy bombers at the nearby "Siemens-city" at Berlin. Soon the sky got dark of thick black smoke; the sun couldn't be seen anymore.

At the end of this training there was a fire-training of all the heavy Infantry weapons. Mortars and Infantry guns at the firing range. — It was very impressive to see how tremendous such a concentrated use of the guns must be to an attacking enemy. During the fighting in the Eifel we always used it like this and the enemy had many losses because of it. In the last weekend there was a 24-hour-Regiments-training, that reached to the Wannsee (Wann Lake.) I received a horse and was always in the fields—it was pretty interesting to train to work together in such a big mass.

The training of the troops couldn't take long anymore; the moment that we were going upfront was coming closer. The troops consisted of about 300/o skilled Infantrymen and the rest were former Marine, or Luftwaffen members. Officers and non-Coms were mostly from the Infantry and you could recognize their experience from their medals.

On October 30, the Battalion gets on the train and in the dark we leave the railroad station Dallgow. We drive from Magdeburg and Paderborn in a western direction. At Cologne-Mublheim there is an air-raid-warning, the train stops between the houses, no one is allowed to get out of the train. It was a strange feeling when the Flak started to shoot and some bombs fell in the distance. In the early morning the train stops before it enters the Duren-railroad-station. From time to time heavy enemy artillery is firing at the railroad tracks. Every few minutes an enemy "greeting" comes rushing in, but it doesn't do much damage.

It takes about an hour before we finally get to Vettweiss. There our train is unloaded under the protection of light-flak. Shortly thereafter enemy planes appear and they insecure the whole area. Our companies were marching in a long stretched column in the direction of Nideggen, while we were using every covering that we found. In the distance we could hear the rumbling of the front very clear. After marching for a while we recognize the explosion of every single grenade. No one knew what was going to come the next days, and the men were in a very depressed and quiet mood. Once in a while we met civilians with all their belongings, some with horse-drawn carts, hand-cars, and even with perambulators or bags and backpacks for the most important things only. Their faces express what they may be already had to live through when they were leaving their home and belongings.

The "front-thunder" is coming closer, we hear the bursting menace of the exploding grenades. — Our tension is growing as the front comes closer. I'm marching with our Commander Hauptmann Schneider at the lead of our Battalion. At the crossroads at Bruce I stop a truck to ask for the road to Harscheidt. When the truck drives on, I see what is loaded. The legs and boots of about 20 dead soldiers can be seen under the canvas.— Some Officers-boots among them also—A shiver, which made (me) think about the reality. After we walked the road uphill, we finally reached the hill 366 at the woodline of Harscheidt. The lead of the column waited for the rest of the men... Rest!

The impacts of the enemy artillery were very close already; they were coming from the direction of Bergstein, where the truck also comes from. Hauptmann Schneider orders me to the Regimental command post, which must be on the edge of the village of Stemmed at the road to Heimbach. I must return with further orders and a runner. It became dark already. We barely have reached the first houses of the village and are standing between some horse-carts, when the first shells are coming in and explode very close. We easily can hear the fighting in that area

The next days there is a hard and tangled fight for Vossenach. The Americans are pushing through the Kail-Valley to Kommerscheid and Schmidt. [Map A] First we didn't know what was going on. Quickly we jump into the ditch for cover. There is a lot of confusion on the street, horses rear, we hear screams of men that were hit. Before we can think about what to do, the next rounds are falling already into the moving column. I decide to go around the village on the left side through the fields, which isn't difficult because of the clear moonlight. Soon we reach the hunting lodge, while Schmidt is still under artillery fire. We quickly go back to where we came from with the orders for the release, while the shells are coming in only a few hundred yards away at the village of Schmidt. Our Battalion is to move through Schmidt and into the defenses around Rollesbroich. I talk with the Commander and suggest that only the vehicles and carts should go through Schmidt because of the artillery that was coming in on the village. The men shouldn't go through Schmidt. We start marching in a long stretched column and go around the village. After crossing two valleys we safely reach the road at Gerstenhof. We rest for a short while and march along in the direction of Strauch.

At the woodline on the right side we were to meet some runners at a pillbox, who would lead us to their line of defense, but we can't find these men. Finally our Hauptmann orders us into a firebreak to the right and we keep walking downhill. I got a bad feeling about this.—Something stinks. That's why I suggested to walk back to the main road. If we would have followed the firebreak, we would have walked right into Simonskall.

The next day the Americans started their attack from the Kail-Valley to Kommerscheid and Schmidt. In the meantime our vehicles had crossed the village of Schmidt. They had some wounded. The pillbox 139/40; [Map B] which was located a few hundred meters inside the forest, was our Battalion command post and the other half of it was a first-aid post. We were glad that we finally found it.

A Feldweibel of the unit we that we were to release called my name.—In September we put up an Alarm-Company together in Venlo in Holland. This was just a small experience but it helped to make me familiar with the new circumstances.

The burning logs in the small stove gave a comfortable heat. — Our predecessors informed us about our new tasks. They showed us on the maps where the several companies were, the heavy weapons, and the communications. Communications were partly with wire that was dug in and partly with wire that was lying on the open ground. The other half of the double pillbox was used as a first-aid post.—Inside was the assistant-doctor Dr. Egel. It was still night when our Companies were brought into their new defenses. The old troops were released and they were all gone when daylight came. Our communications-unit was not far away from us at pillbox 142. It was a coming and going at our command post. The telephone kept ringing and the runners were coming in from all directions while others were going again.

At daybreak we could see the steeple of the Lammersdorf-church.—The Americans had an observer positioned there, and every important movement in our woodline resulted in a few incoming rounds. Today is the 2nd of November.— The weather is wet and foggy - Temperature around zero—Outside it's pretty miserable. Part of the 983 Inf. Regt. on our right side is involved in a heavy fight to defend the Forestry Raffelsbrand with the pillboxes 372, 372a, 362, 363 and 22. We can easily hear the fighting in that area. The next days there is a hard and tangled fight for Vossenach. The Americans are pushing through the Kail-Valley to Kommerscheid and Schmidt. First we don't know what was going on.

On the morning of the 2nd of November we send 4 runners with bicycles by way of Schmidt to our Supply Unit at Heimbach to lead the carts with supplies and provision to our new defensive positions. We wait in vain till the next morning for the return of our runners and our supplies. During the next day we are informed by the unit on our left side that the Americans have taken Schmidt and about the hard fighting behind our back. The supplies still don't come in the second night. After a few days we are officially informed by the Regiment about what happened behind our back at Kommerscheid and Schmidt. They found the bicycles of our runners east of Gerstenhof but the men couldn't be found. When I look back, I must say that it was unjustifiable of the Regiment not to inform us about the happenings at Kommerscheid and Schmidt. We should have protected the backside of the road to Gerstenhof at once. If the Americans were a bit faster, they could have pushed through the front till Simmerath without meeting any resistance!!

The Kail-Valley south of Raffelsbrand is under heavy mortar fire day after day. The unit on our right side tells us there have been tremendous losses. In the meantime our Companies become familiar with the half-finished defense positions. Our heavy Infantry weapons, mortars, Infantry guns as well as our artillery have ranged in their guns on certain areas. When an enemy attack takes place, our Battalion gives message to the fire command and a little later our shells are on their way to the Americans. We don't have much rest in the night either. Engineers are working at the defenses. Barbed wire and mines are to be brought at night. A whole Battalion of Russian volunteers is digging trenches every night. During daylight, the Americans at Lammersdorf church-steeple can see every little move that we make.

Our area looks as follows: 5 Co at the road Schmidt-Simmerath, west edge of Rollesbroich 6 and 7 Co

southern height of the Kall-Valley dam (Kali-Talsperre, Map A) till the road Whs. Kallbrück. The 8 Co with heavy machine guns and mortars, west of the Tiefen-Creek.

Our working on our defenses was quickly recognized by the enemy. Their nightly artillery fire on our lines is getting stronger and stronger. One day the Russians mulinied and didn't go out front to dig trenches, because of the high losses of dead and wounded. These dead are buried in a small cemetery at the woodline south of the road Schmidt-Strauch.

Within a few days the enemy attacks at the east bank of the Kall-Valley Dam. North of Rollesbroich and at the dam itself the Americans succeed to take the east bank of the Kall-Valley Dam. At late afternoon the enemy forces are pushed back again by our counterattack. We don't have too many losses. The Americans probably didn't expect a counterattack and they fled back.

The next day our Battalion Commander Hauptmann Schneider and myself visited the defenses of the 8 Co at the Tiefen-Creek-Valley, pillbox 510, our frontline at Rollesbroich, and the retaken east bank of the Kall-Valley-Dam. Everywhere we found a lot of equipment that the Americans left: waterproof sleeping bags, little tents, cans with rations, little cookers, coffee, tea, and cigarettes. They were probably digging in and preparing for the night when our counterattack took place. Our own losses in the first 2 weeks were about 15%—mostly by artillery fire. Our first-aid post in the pillbox beside us was a great help during these days. From here the wounded were to be transported by first-aid trucks by way of Schmidt and Heimbach to the first-aid center at Mariawald.

On the 15th of November our Battalion is shifted to the right. The 7 Co stays in our old defenses at the east bank of the Kall-Valley dam in the area of the dam itself. The 5 Co at Whs. Kallbrück (the Pub), pillbox 111, 112, 113, and 115. The 6 Co—pillbox P2, 22, IG 3, 372, and 372a. From this area there is no connection to another unit till the clearing of the pillbox 372 at the end of January 1945.

The unit of the 89 ID that was to be released, have had a tremendous fight in this area since the 2nd of November, and was seriously weakened by their heavy losses. We were just getting used to our new defenses when the enemy attacked on 16 Nov. the pillbox ill could hold it for a short period. Oberleutnant von Ruden, who also cleared the enemy at the Kall-Valley dam area, was very fast on the spot and he could retake the pillbox 111 without too many losses on the counterattack. Only a few Americans could escape:—The rest were taken prisoner. Although we had some snipers in the area, imprudent Americans kept crossing the firebreak in front of pillbox 22 day after day. They probably were released every few days and no one told the newcomers about it. At the firebreak happens always the same because of imprudence.—During clear nights, Hauptmann Schneider and myself often checked the defenses from pillbox 124, via 111 to 372a. This wasn't possible during daytime because of enemy observation. The pillboxes were connected with trenches—In front of the trenches there were mines and barbed wire. Between all this lay the rest of the completely destroyed fir tree forest. Inside of the pillboxes the men could rest after their duty in the trenches outside, but most of all they were saved from the continued incoming shells. It really wouldn't be easy for an attacking force! Our heavy Infantry guns, mortars and artillery had zeroed in very well at the area directly in front of our defenses. Most of the pillboxes were connected by telephone, which wires were buried deeply in the ground. Wires in the open field were only laid for short lengths between the concrete wire-connecting-pits behind our front. Besides that, we had several field-radios with the forward observers.

In the next days the Americans start several attacks at the pillboxes p 2, 22, and 1G3. Most of these attacks already ended in front of the barbed wire because of the losses in the mine-field and the defense of our soldiers in co-operation with our heavy weapons.

The supply of the 5th and 6th Company is giving us tremendous problems. The horse-drawn carts with supplies are coming from Heimbach by way of Schmidt till the pillbox 124 alongside the road to Kallbrück. From here we must carry all the supplies by hand to the frontlines. like rations, ammunition, barbed wire and mines. Straight through the destroyed beech-forest it goes 75 meters downhill, cross the Kall-River and from there it goes 180 meters steep uphill, fully exposed to the enemy incoming artillery. All our wounded were to be carried the same way back to pillbox 124.—Even the dead were transported this way. This goes on until we receive 2 sledges because of the heavy snowfall, which makes especially the transport of the wounded a lot easier.

The Americans keep increasing their firing with their heavy mortars along the whole front. Day and night they fire along the front and insecure the whole area. We have a lot of losses because of this. Lt. Baader, Oberlt. Feuerherd, Lt. Ziervogel and later on some of which names I can't remember were all killed by this mortar fire.

We discover pretty early that there is no unit on our right side! The Americans are at Simonskall. An American recon-troop hits our sentry east of pillbox P3.—After that we place a MG-post at the end of the Tiefencreek-valley [Map B, Tiefenbach]/ Kall-valley, which I visited pretty often. Enemy recon-troops always retreated to Simonskall when we fired at them. It wasn't a very encouraging feeling to have an open flank and a half-open backside during the heavy defensive fight for Raffelsbrand, but finally we become used to it. We were told that we had positioned several heavy MG (MG 42) in the pillboxes 58 and 59 south of Simonskall which would hold down the Americans at the Kall-valley. We only could hope that our belief in this would be a help to us,—as well as the

Americans were nūstrusting the rocky inhospitable wooded area. After several weeks we get used to this "unreal" defensive position and can handle most of the difficulties.

But comes the order that our Battalion is to be released on 14.12.44. But on 13.12.44, the enemy attacks suddenly our positions with strong forces. Between pill box P2 and 22 they break through, and this breakthrough is increasing in a dangerous way. It takes till late afternoon before we can restore the front-line again. There were great losses on both sides but the frontline is in our hands again. At the same time the enemy attacked also on our left side.--Simmerath, Rollesbroich, and Kesternich were lost.

Early on the 15th of December our Battalion is released and rally around noon at Gerstenhof. During the last few weeks our Companies had a lot of losses because of the heavy fighting. Their strengths are about 40 to 50 %. From here we are marching in the direction of Ruhrberg. [Map C]—Our Battalion is supposed to attack Monschau tomorrow. Our Battalion rallies in front of Ruhrberg in the valley of the Weidencreek-mill. In the meantime we received a new order from the regiment. From here we must prepare for an attack on Kesternich. We can hear how a lot of artillery is coming in on Kesternich. Another unit started the attack in late afternoon.—Around midnight we had retaken the town. We were to release the attacking unit at Kesternich in the night. I still have a very vivid memory about a thing that happened at the Weidencreek-mill. The miller and his wife got two big sugar-cakes out of their house to divide among our soldiers. We're walking through the Weidencreek-mill valley until we reach the woodline and we can see the burning village of Kesternich. The enemy artillery is covering the area.—A few times the impacts are pretty close.

At five o'clock in the morning, when we are walking over the open fields to the burning village of Kesternich, our Ardennes-Offensive starts with a tremendous artillery fire on our left side. The 5th Company is pushing up on the left side of the street, the 7th company on the right side; release of the attacking forces at the western edge of Kesternich. The Battalion command post is positioned at the east-entrance of the village in the cellar of a house. We don't have much confidence in the wooden ceiling of this cellar. During the heavy artillery fire that is coming in continuous in the next few days, the chalk keeps falling from the ceiling. The unit we are to release brought in loads of prisoners, and they tell us to search through the houses again. They use the 6th Company for this task—The company that had suffered the most. At this occurrence about 300 Americans, including a Regt. Staff with radio-station were brought in as prisoners. The release is just finished when the enemy attacks in the early daylight with strong forces on both sides of the road. In the afternoon the enemy has pushed us back more than halfway through the village after a hard fight. Here we finally can prevent a further attack with the help of a few assault guns.

I went with 6 men into position at the cemetery. The Americans were going around the cemetery and finally they managed to cut off our way back. When it got dark we went into a cellar of a house that was standing separately. After spending a long time in the snow, we were glad we could warm up a little. Under the cover of darkness we walked in a large circle back and managed to reach our frontline. During the next few days there were house to house fightings, artillery attacks, our own forces were gathering to restore the connections to other units and on some spots we reposition the frontlines in the direction of the enemy. On the 18th of December our own artillery fires about 50 guns into the enemy-held part of Kesternich. Our Battalion attacks with the support of some assault guns. The Americans retreat pretty fast but at the end of the village we hit strong enemy counterattack, which is pushing us back. In the evening we are being pushed back to our own line of departure. In the following days there is, beside heavy artillery fire and the mutual destroying of 1 or 2 tanks, hardly any change in the frontlines.

In the night of the 22nd of December we are released:—March to Einruhr, via Herhahn to Etterscheidt for rest. One 23 December we receive replacements. These are mostly older, badly trained soldiers from additional services behind the front. After the heavy losses at Kesternich are Companies reinforced again to about 50% strength. On the 24th of December, Christmas-eve, we are marching back to take over our old frontlines in the Kall-valley at Raffelsbrand. It was a pretty special moment to spend Christmas eve with our decorated Christmas-tree, back again inside the old command post, pillbox 125. The release went without any problem.

Until the 10th of January it is unreal quiet at our sector.—Only now and then the Americans fire into our positions. You can almost believe that the war is ended. The Ardennes-Offensive has insecured the enemy which gives us a bit of relief. In the clear Silvester-night I walked with Hanptmann Schneider and 2 runners to the several defensive positions in front of the pillboxes 111 to 372. We wished all the men a Happy New Year and everyone received a small present:—Cigarettes, Chocolate or Alcohol. This night there was hardly any firing:—The look of the snow-covered forested landscape could almost make you dream. It takes till early morning before we are back at our command post pillbox 125, by way of the fire break at Pillbox P3. This quietness takes a bit too long and we start worrying about it.

We can see that the enemy is organizing large scale firing-exercises behind his front at Roetgen. Every day we can see an increasing number of vehicles that are taking the road from Lammersdorf to Genneter. There are hundreds of them. Our own artillery fire doesn't trouble the enemy that much. During those quiet days we prepared our defenses some more,—We checked a second defense-line on the right side of the Kall-River at the Buhlert and

with the support of an Engineer and an Alarm Company we started to work. Besides that we were making a plan how to get the 2 foremost Companies at Ochsenkopf (Oxhead) over the Kall-River in case of a flood, caused by a possible blowing of the Kall-Valley-dam. Engineers stretch a cable from Pillbox 122 to pillbox 121 and we place 2 rubber boats on this spot. The snow stays till the end of January.

On January 10th it happens: The enemy attacks at the whole sector of our 5th and 6th Company, but the attack can be stopped in the minefields after the concentrated fire of all our weapons. After about an hour the enemy concentrates the attack on pillbox 22. Our men keep on fighting inside this pillbox for half an hour. Till the very last moment we have the men inside this pillbox on the phone:—Suddenly a crack in the line and it's all over. From here, the enemy is moving to pillbox 1G3 and starts pressing on it from all sides. In about an hour this pillbox has the same fate as pillbox 22. The enemy has stopped his unsuccessful attack under heavy losses around noon at the sector of the 5th Company. During the night our Reserve Company is coming in, which will try to retake the old positions in an early daylight in an attack from Pillbox P2 and 119. Two times were these attacks repelled under severe losses for our troops. In the meantime they push in another Reserve unit who attacks a third time:—This time without the support of heavy weapons:—As it was meant as an unexpected-attack—it was a costly failure as well. The next day the Americans attack again and manage to take pillbox P2 pretty fast—The pillboxes 372 and 372a keep on fighting. On the 12th of January another Battalion comes in.—about 100 men, their winter clothing is not sufficient enough. We placed our Battalion command post inside pillbox 119 where I stay with our Commander. At 9 AM our heavy weapons start firing.—After a successful beginning our attack breaks down in the heavy enemy fire—In some places the enemy is pushing us back to our line of departure. We have severe losses—Our men are lying in the snow in the open. Without foxholes in which to hide, they are exposed to the strong enemy mortar fire. Our losses are tremendous. After a short while our command pillbox 119 has changed into a first aid post. Severely wounded are carried inside—the wailing and groaning—medics are trying to dress the wounds. Severely wounded soldiers are dying,—they are carried outside—new ones are coming in. At noon there about 15 dead piled up at the hollow road in front of the entrance. Our wounded are trying to help each other while they are going downhill into the Kall-Valley. It takes late afternoon before the severely wounded can be transported down into the valley. The badly mauled and beaten rest of the men are staying in their defensive positions. I stay with a few men inside pillbox 119 until the morning. The work on our defensive positions went on night after night. Engineers are bringing up barbed wire and mines. All this is to be carried uphill by hand.

A few days later the enemy unexpectedly starts his attack on pillbox 115. They succeed to blow the pillbox with a special charge, but they don't destroy it completely. A Reserve force is sent up front to retake the pillbox, which is now manned by the Americans. The attack is a failure despite the support of our heavy weapons—We lost a lot of men. We receive an order from our Regiment at noon:—The pillbox 115 is to be attacked again tomorrow and to be retaken.

Our Hauptmann Schneider tells the Commander of the Regiment Kdr. Rosener that another attack on pillbox 115 wouldn't make any sense and is unjustifiable. Our men are lying in their foxholes in the snow between the pillboxes 119 and 372 at the Ochsenkopf (Oxhead.) Our last men are lost at pillbox 115. The rising open ground wouldn't give a chance to be successful in another attack. Hauptmann Schneider asks the Regt. Com. to come over to have a look for himself in the area. Finally the Divisional Commander, Gen. König came on the line and he told that it was an order from the Führer-Headquarters to retake pillbox 115 and this order must be obeyed, even if it seems impossible. Hauptmann Schneider says that he can't take the responsibility to waste his men for a useless attack, because we are already too weak for the defense. It was suggested not to start the attack—They could tell the Führer-Headquarters that the new attack had failed. Our Regt. Commander said that he would come upfront to see that the attack would start as ordered. And that's how it went—He could watch how not a single one of the 10 men came back and how they all got killed. This gave a big impact to Hauptmann Schneider!

The enemy had tried to take the pillbox 510 in front of Rollesbroich for several days. These attacks could be repulsed with great losses to the enemy. Once the Americans asked for a cease-fire to get their wounded out and that's indeed what took place. Finally the Americans fired several days with a big gun directly at the pillbox 510. The men inside had some wounded because of pieces of concrete that were falling off. Another infantry attack could be repelled again.

Since the 10th of January we had only very little sleep: There is always something going on. We only slept in turns—mostly I could sleep between 6 and 9 AM. The enemy observation planes could make out very easily the paths that we made in the snow between the pillboxes and the defensive positions. The result was the enemy mortars were firing at the entrances of the pillboxes continuously. Since January the Americans were also shooting with White Phosphorus, but these had not a great effect because of the snow. Enemy artillery is increasing from day to day along the whole front. On February 2nd we received orders to clear several of our defensive positions in the morning of February 3rd. Our Engineers are to blow or to mine the pillboxes. We get out without any problem or difficulty.—The new sector goes from the road Schmidt/Strauch - pillbox 190, along the line of pillboxes to pillbox

128/129, and from there on the right bank of the Tiefencreek to the Kall-Valley. [Map D] The men are digging in as good as possible—Some rest of the snow is lying around. The fighting at Raffelsbrand has weakened the Companies severely the last few weeks.—After heavy losses the strength of our Battalion is about 20 to 25%. The enemy artillery keeps firing day and night along the whole front and this firing is only increasing. Our new Battalion command post is now inside pillbox 136.

In the night of February 5th at 3 o'clock we receive orders to increase the Battalion sector for another 800 meters to the left. This order is widening the lines even more and our front gets severely weakened. Some company runners are called immediately—A written order must be made for every Company. The consequences are that we have not even enough men in our sector to man all the pillboxes. We reposition our Battalion command post in the early morning to the pillbox 220/21. south of the road from Schmidt to Strauch. The first-aid post will stay inside pillbox 139/40 and in the main line of defense.

We have hardly arrived at our new pillbox when we receive the first shocking message. The first message is made by telephone and comes from the RAD-lager (the barracks) where our mortars and infantry-guns are positioned. The enemy appeared there suddenly by the hundreds from the direction of Simonskall. There is some short fighting--It doesn't take long—No more messages from the RAD-lager (the barracks.) A bit later a message from our first-aid post tells us that the Americans have broken through the defense almost without any sound—We must give up'

Now the enemy comes from the RAD-lager and attacks along the road to Strauch, - without much resistance. Finally our communication pillbox 71 7a near the road is involved in the fight. It won't take long until the Americans have taken this pillbox —We can talk to them on the telephone! The enemy has taken the pillboxes along, and north of the road to Zauchen at noon.



At the afternoon, the enemy is pressing against the pillbox that is armed with a 75mm PAZ (anti-tank gun) to the north of us. The enemy is pushing through the forest to the south until he can open fire on the backside of the pillbox. This pillbox is manned only by an Officer and 3 men—They order me with 3 men to go and reinforce that pillbox. The firing compartment is pointing in the direction of the dragons-teeth and Steckenborn. With a binocular we can see that a fight is going on in the village, but we can't discern friend or foe. The dragons-teeth to the road at Zauchen is still free of enemy. The enemy fires at the backside of the pillbox from a distance of about 120 meters in the forest. From a foxhole at the emergency exit the defenders fire back into the forest. Finally the gunner is killed by a shot in the head. In the meantime they are firing also at the big steel door on the backside. Our way back over the open fields to our command post is cut off—We're trapped. We destroy the breech of the gun - we can't blow the gun because we don't have any explosives. The hammering of the bullets on the steel back-door becomes unbearable. We're crawling out of the firing compartment into the open and become a prisoner. Two of the men were wounded by a shot in the arm when this occurred.

The rest of our Battalion Staff gave up their pillboxes at dawn and gathered with the rest in front of Gerstenhof. The enemy attacked the next morning with tanks and Infantry alongside the road. After a short fight these rest surrendered to the enemy. So the next day in a cellar of a house in Roetgen, I met our Commander Hazuptmann Schneider, Adjutant Lt. Peters, as well as Lt. Mobus and Lt. Matzkewitz from pillbox P3 again. Our losses in the last few day were so tremendous, that our Battalion in fact doesn't exist anymore. After this, the Regiment gathered all men that were left in small group. The last remnants of this group were destroyed later in the area around Leipzig. That's how the costly fighting of our Battalion has found a tragic end.

Hameln, February 2nd, 1996
/s/ Guhther Schmidt

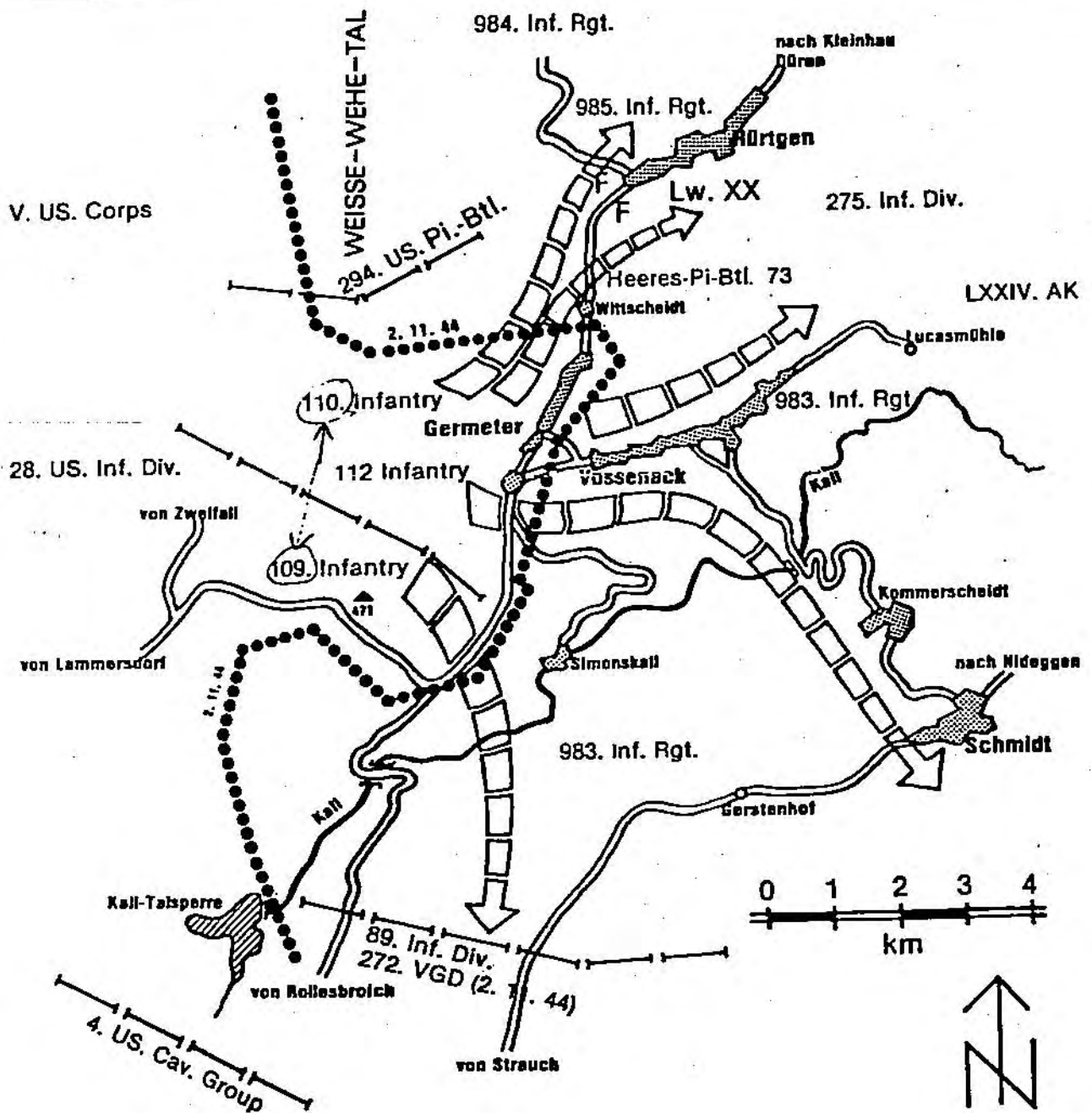
Ausgangslage und amerikanisches Angriffsziel am 2. Nov. 1944

Zeichenerklärung

 geplante US-Angriffsrichtung
 Frontlinie

F Försterei

▲ Höhe



Subj: Re: Reunion date!
Date: 4/26/00 1:19:40 PM Central Daylight Time
From: Duane2581
To: TH07448

I regret that the time for the reunion is fixed. Since most of our attendees are seniors I would recommend that the purchase Senior Passes. That at least would fix the price and would allow them another round trip at a future time within one year. I will send you some information on a side trip for your next publication. I also need to know what entree everyone wants for the banquet. The choices are: filet mignon or chicken cordon blue.

Duane

**OFLAG 64
REUNION
2000
Ramada Express Casino
Laughlin, Nevada**

October 1, 2000

1200 hrs(12:00noon)	Arrival/ Registration	First Class Passenger Area
1400 hrs(2:00pm)	Hospitality Room opens	????
1800 hrs(6:00pm)	Reception/Social Hour - Hors-d'oeuvres - No Host Bar	Town Square or Band Stand
1900 hrs	Dinner on your own	

October 2, 2000

900 hrs (9:00am)	Buffet Breakfast	
1000hrs(10:00am)	Opening ceremony with Posting of the Colors, Invocation and Welcoming Remarks. Pavilion Area	Business Meeting to follow
1200 hrs(12:00 noon)	Lunch on your own	
1300 hrs(1:00pm)	Activity - to be announced later	
All Day	Hospitality Room will remain open.	

October 3, 2000

Breakfast on your own		
1000hrs(10:00am)	Activity - to be announced later.	
Lunch on your own		
1600 hrs - 1800 hrs	Banquet in Pavilion Area - Filet Mignon or Chicken	
2000 hrs	Show in Pavilion Area (to be announce later)	
All Day	Hospitality Room will remain open.	

October 4, 2000

0900 hrs (9:00 am)	Sit down breakfast (Pavilion Area)	
1000 hrs (10:00am)	Memorial Service followed by the Retirement of the Colors.	

Have a safe trip home. Hope to see you all at our next Reunion.

**REGISTRATION FORM
Oflag 64 Reunion 2000
Ramada Express Casino
Laughlin, Nevada
October 1 - 5, 2000**

Name _____ Lady's Name _____

Guest's Name _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Home Phone _____ Business Phone _____

Smoking _____ Non Smoking _____ King _____ 2 Beds. _____ Handicapped _____

Other _____

Registration and Hotel fee: \$175.00 per person

This includes rooms and meals as indicated on agenda. Gambling and other activities are on your own.

Activity fees for trips etc. will be announced later as availability permits

Cut-off date for registration is September 1, 2000

Mail all registration forms and checks to: Oflag 64 Reunion 2000

Duane S. Kennedy
12073 N. Pebble Beach Ave.
Sun City, AZ 85351-3757
Phone (623) 977-0966
duane2581@aol.com

Shuttle Express to and from Las Vegas and Laughlin

From Las Vegas to Laughlin:
10:30 am 2:00 pm 6:30 pm 10:30 pm

From Laughlin to Las Vegas:
7:00 am 11:00 am 6:30 pm 8:00 pm

Price Round trip is \$59.50

Reservations not necessary-pho no is (800) 801-8687

MAIL CALL

Irv Yarock has read all your mail and says,

Jerry Alexis 129 Point Vue Drive, Pittsburg, PA 15237- was one of our late corners, having been captured in the Battle of Hurtgen Forest. He has a write-up of the battle translated from German along with some maps. If there is space, some of it may be printed in this issue, but if you want the whole picture, contact Alexis directly. Write-up plus maps comes to 12 pages, so a couple bucks ought to cover the cost. His phone number is 412-366-1883 or e-mail ejalexis@juno.com Thanks for the donation to the Postage Fund.

Tom and Sue Lawson, Grand Junction, CO missed our last reunion, but hope to make it to Laughlin. They are highly appreciative of Bob Thompson's work in THE ITEM, which they say gets better each issue, and are looking forward to Bob Galloway's film. Thanks for the Postage Fund donation.

Alex Bloom of Glenmont, NY-joined us at Of lag 64 for two weeks seasoning before joining the Col Goode detachment on our little hike all the way to Moosburg. He sent along a copy of a letter he received which is a real example of mental telepathy. At the very time that he was captured, a letter was mailed to him from his family indicating that they felt he was in danger. He was captured in the Battle of the Bulge.. Alex keeps busy shuttling between his local M.D.'s and the V.A. He sends his best wishes and a donation to the Postage Fund.

Bret Job of Minnetonka, MN-who has been to a few of our reunions with his in-laws sent along donations for the Postage Fund for himself, **Bo Nunnalu** and **Ray Holmquist**. Many thanks.

Ken Hyatt, Shakopee, MN - is another late-corner who reported in at Schubin on New Year's Eve in 1944. He mentions that he was with us through Hammelburg, but I (IY) don't know what happened after that. He spreads kudos on THE ITEM and is awaiting Bob Galloway's production. Thanks for the donation to the Postage Fund..

Ray Klinkenborg, Rock Rapids, IA-just a short note containing kudos to Pat & Martha Waters on the job they did, thanks to **Gladys Thompson** for some photos, and a warning that the Oklahoma Cowboys won't make the final four in basketball if they have to play Iowa State first. Thanks for the donation to the Postage Fund.

Mrs. Eugene Daniel of Charlotte, NC sent along a donation to the P.F.

Bill Warthen, Vidalia GA - is still recruiting. This time he has come up with a bunkmate from OCS who, along with a bunch of UMass graduates ended up in the 6th Armored. Wonder if that was about the time of **Costas Caraganis**, a UMass graduate who was **General Abrams** supply officer during the time of the Baum raid. Costas died recently but he had some interesting comments on the raid. I (IY) am not sure if Abrams was Baum's Battalion CO or the Division CG.

Anthony Cipriani, Wellsburg WV- Tony says he has about 30 group pictures taken at Of lag 64. That may very well be a complete set, so if you're interested in a copy, he's at 103 Tenth Street. Zip code is 26070.

Judith Whorley Winkle 3764 Priest Lake Dr, Nashville TN 37217-in interested in information about "her father's war and POW days" and orderd some of our literature. Sure she would like hear from anyone who knew Bill. Many thanks for the donation to the Postage Fund.

Alan Dunbar, Las Vegas NV- has found that there is a flight out of Phoenix to Bull Head City AZ which is just across the river from Laughlin. If Phoenix is in your itinerary, this might be worth looking into rather than the Las Vegas-Laughlin bus.

Harold Tallman Ponce Inlet, FL- hasn't been to a reunion since '93, but hopes to make a few more in the future. Thanks for the donation to the Postage Fund.

MAIL CALL

James Sherman, Oakland, CA- a man of few words confined to a check for the Postage Fund - Thanks.

Joseph C. Ainsworth, Jackson MS- Joe & Ruth have been to many of our reunions but haven't made their mind up about Laughlin yet. They enjoyed the Mt Pleasant one. Thanks for the donation to the Postage Fund.

Jack Rathbone, Denver CO- sends a little more detail on Hubbell, whose obituary was in the last ITEM. Jack was in the 133rd Infantry in North Ireland and was transferred to Co "I" of the 168th in which Hub was the 1st Sgt. Hub was commissioned in Africa and was in the fiasco that left the 168th on top of a hill at Sidi bu Said, could see themselves being surrounded by tanks, and could not get Division O.K. to pull back until they were completely surrounded. Colonel Drake was the Regimental Commander who I (IY) remembered as a Captain with a big dog at Fort Devens, again as a Pentagon Staff Officer who came down to Camp Blanding with General Marshall and again as Senior American Officer at Of lag 64. The guy who said "you know you can't get captured unless you're close enough to get killed."

Jack Stewart, Lincoln, NE -hasn't been able to make the reunions, but appreciates THE ITEM. His daughter published a book he wrote under a pseudonum, i.e. JUSTIFIABLE PRIDE by Wm D. Stevens, which has sold about 400 copies so far. Thanks for the donation to the Postage Fund.

Mrs. Mary Cupit 49 Golden Pd, Mystic CT 06355-is having trouble convincing people that she has moved. Her most recent address is the one above. Thanks for the donation to the Postage Fund.

Lucy & Don Lussendon, Livonia MI-are looking forward to Laughlin, NV and hope to be able to bring their daughter and granddaughter along. They all enjoyed the last one, and are anxiously awaiting Bob Gallagher's video. Thanks for the Postage Fund donation.

Gaither "Hank" Perry, Novelty, OH-who was in the first batch of 34 officers to report to Of lag 64 (IY- being one of the first, how did he end up in barracks 3A?) "Hank" escaped along with his cubicle mate Jim Bancker during the long march and came out through Odessa. He has also kept contact with Ormond Roberts over the years. Thanks for the donation to the Postage Fund.

Royal Lee, Mankato, MN-he and Harriet spent some time in Florida and came back to hear about the passing of Verris Hubbel and sent along the announcement of the funeral service. Thanks for the Postage Fund donation

Matt Smith, San Rafael, CA- sent along his E-mail address which is Belstar2@aol.com. He and Bel are "hanging in there" and appreciate the work that goes into THE ITEM. Thanks for the Postage Fund donation.

Joe Seringer 1930 Edwards St Wooster, OH 44691-is now at that address permanently (doesn't say whether he'll sneak off to Florida in the winter). Somehow he got a check for the Postage Fund from Martin Keiser. Thanks Marty.

Time caught up with us again, so, I (Bob Thompson) will respond to all the rest of the letters and phone calls.

Ralph Ball, Clearwater FL was visiting his daughter, Maggie Wagner in Tulsa, the last week of April. I called him and then went by Maggie's house and picked him up. I then gave him a guided tour of the world headquarters of the Post Of lag 64 Item followed by lunch. We had a real nice visit. Ralph had only attended the last two reunions and hopefully he will attend the rest.

MAIL CALL

Tony DeSanto, Germany, checked in by e-mail and said he would be back in RI on May 2. He had a nice vacation on the island of Majorca off the east coast of Spain. He is having scheduling difficulties about the reunion in Laughlin but thinks he will make it. Tony is trying to work in a tour of the Black Forest in Germany and a cruise down the River Shannon in Ireland. He said he will probably be able to make the reunion in Laughlin. (We sure hope so). We are looking forward to meeting Renate again!

Walt and Gloria Heisler, Wakefield, RI checked in via e-mail with the good news that they will be in Laughlin this fall. They have some rather grand summer plans. Walt's 507th Parachute Infantry is having their reunion this fall in Fayetteville with the last day to be Oct 1, which is the first day of our reunion. They will leave the 507th reunion and head for Laughlin for our reunion. They are leaving in May for Belgium and France (Normandy) and returning in June to Wakefield. Tony DeSanto and the Heislars are almost next door neighbor in Wakefield, RI.

Herb Garris, Pinehurst, NC has been real busy lately. He attended a POW Recognition Day and the speaker was a MG William Boykin of the Special Forces Group at Ft. Bragg. He later attended a graduation ceremony for the DERE Class 1 and was supposed to be the speaker for the occasion but was bumped by John Hemingway (PAPA's son). John Hemingway was an OSS Operator in Southern France. He parachuted into Southern France ahead of the invasion troops and was badly wounded and captured in the Vosges Mtns. near Remeirmont sometime in Sept. '44. He spent a long time in a German hospital and was then transferred to Hammelburg. He was there during Abe Baum's raid and watched the wipe-out on the side of that hill. Herb, at least, you were bumped by a class act.

Alan Dunbar, Las Vegas, NV – Alan and Lilo have a new computer and are using it for e-mail in addition to other things. The only problem is that Lilo uses it so much that Alan can't get any time in on it. Alan, have you tried getting down on your knees and begging? Thanks for the donation to the Postage Fund. We'll see you in Laughlin!

Carl Christensen, Whispering Pines, NC checks in. Carl has had a lot of tough luck and hasn't been able to get around very well. We all hope that he will be able to make it to Laughlin. Thanks for the donation to the Postage fund.

Analouise (Stacy) Bolton, Washington, DC sends in a change of address. Her new address is:

Mrs Seymour Bolton
3932 Livingston St. NW
Washington, DC 20015-2922
(202) 966-3151
a.bolten@starpower.net

Analouise also sends in a donation to the Postage Fund. Thanks

Bob Cheatham, Ashboro, NC was digging around in some old shoe boxes and found this.

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SECOND REUNION DINNER-DANCE
of
OFLAG "64" KRIEGYS
at the
Beckman Tower Hotel
49th St. and 1st Ave., New York City
Saturday, Sept. 18th, 1948
Dinner at 8:00 \$6.00 per person

NO
165

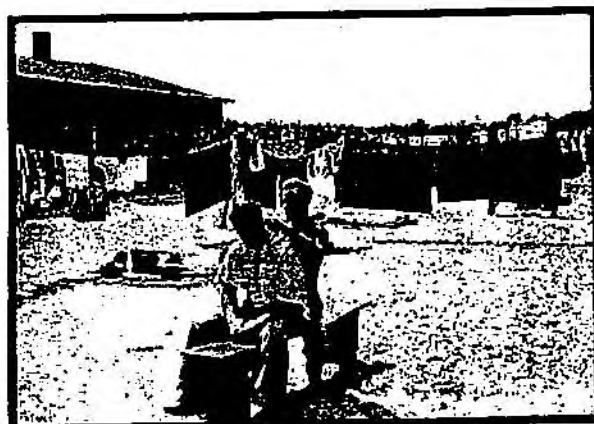


Confusion and uncertainty were rampant among the prisoners at liberation. Trapped behind the lines with fighting all around, they wandered and mingled aimlessly, waiting for the arrival of the American Army.

Bill Warthen sent in an article that appeared in the Atlanta Journal Constitution about a man named Angelo Spenelli. Mr. Spenelli was a photographer that was taken prisoner and was confined in Stalag III-B and Stalag III-A. There are about 1,200 photos and they are on exhibit in the POW Museum at Andersonville. 3 of the photos are included in this issue of the Item.



Sharing resources among POWs was often essential for survival. Here rations are divided and prepared for a meal.



Warm weather brought almost all POW activities outdoors. For payment of a couple of cigarettes, a prisoner could have his hair cut.

CONFIDENTIAL

No. 11619

From the Special War Problems Division
DEPARTMENT OF STATE TO:
War Gen. Bryan
Date: **MAY 19 1945**

Via Airmail Pouch

AMERICAN LEGATION

Bern, April 30, 1945.

Subject: American Interests - Germany
Special report on conditions
of transfer of American officers
from Oflag 64 to Oflag XIII B.

The American Minister at Bern has the honor to enclose, for the Department's information and records, a copy of a special report prepared on April 3, 1945, by Mr. Albert A. Kadler, an inspector of the Swiss Legation in Germany, on the shocking and inhumane conditions prevailing during the transfer of American officers from Oflag 64 - Altburgund to Oflag XIII B - Hammelburg. There is also attached a photostatic copy of the totally inadequate daily food ration provided by the Germans during the march.

The Legation received copies of this report and of the chart under cover of a note dated April 27, 1945, from the Swiss Foreign Office.

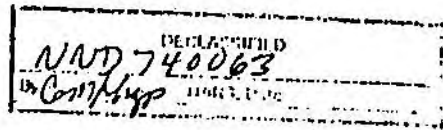
Enclosures:

- No. 1 - copy of special report - with original of despatch only;
- No. 2 - photostatic copy of chart - with original of despatch only.

File No. 711.4
GT/mak
In quintuplicate to Department.

This document contains information affecting the national defense of the United States in the meaning of the Espionage Act, Title 18, Section 793, as amended. Its transmission or revelation of its content to any unauthorized person is prohibited by law.

Enclosure No. 1 to despatch No. 11619
dated April 30, 1945 from the American
Legation, Bern.



CONFIDENTIAL

No. 755

AMERICAN

SPECIAL REPORT ON CONDITIONS OF TRANSFER OF AMERICAN
OFFICERS FROM OFLAG 64 - ALTBURGUND TO OFLAG XIIIIB HAMMELBURG.

On January 21st, 1945, 1471 Officers and Enlisted Men left Oflag 64, Altburgund, Germany, under the Command of Oberst Fritz Schneider to march to Exin where they were to entrain and go to a new camp in the province Brandenburg. In the ensuing 45 days this group marched 553 kms. or 345 miles.

The weather was below freezing the first 10 days and the ground covered with snow so that more than 100 officers suffered from frozen members, frostbite, or chilblains.

The quarters were, with few exceptions, hay barns, stables, cow sheds, or machine shacks. They were often overcrowded, many were lofts with only one ladder for entrance and exit, thus presenting a great hazard in case of fire. Despite continued protests it was not until February 2nd, 1945, that the Germans sent a quartering party forward in advance of their arrival, so that prior to this time they would arrive at their destination as dark was falling, feet wet from tramping through deep snow, and be forced to stand around while hasty arrangements were made for quartering. Frequently fires were not permitted so that shoes and socks could be dried or food cooked.

Camp sites often lacked adequate drinking water. Absolutely no shaving or washing facilities were available. No provisions for baths were made during the entire period.

Until February 17th, 1945, the Germans provided no medical supplies or attention. After that date only a very limited amount was given. There had been continuous trouble in procuring transportation for the sick or for the packs of the walking sick. No effort was generally made to provide proper places for sick call.

The ration provided on the march was inadequate. Hauptmann Doring, the Stabsintendant, made the statement that they were receiving the same ration as the German guard company but this is not true. Attached is a breakdown of the daily ration.

This document contains information concerning the following:
1. The defense of the...
2. The... of the Espio...
3. Its... as amended. Its...
4. The... of its content...
5. The... of an unauthorized person is pro...

Following is an analysis of losses of personnel during the march:

	86	left in hospital at Oflag 64, Alzburgund, Colonel F. W. Drury,
	186	sick or escaped between Alzburgund and Exin,
	171	left at Wegheim, Colonel E. Gans,
	4	left at Netzthal, Major A. Grandall
26th January,	90	by rail from Flatow to Grosbane or Luckenwalde, Lt. Col. Oates,
27th January,	119	by rail from Jastrow, Lt. Col. Jones,
30th January,	68	left at Oflag IID, Westphalenhof, Capt. C. E. Dunn,
30th January,	4	left at Heinrichsdorf,
5th January,	176	by rail from Zeitlitz to Luckenwalde, Lt. Col. Cross,
13th February,	4	left at Swinemunde, Lt. Col. Alger,
14th February,	100	by rail from Stolpe (Usedum) to Luckenwalde, Lt. Col. Van Vliet,
15th February,	18	British to join another column.

1023

Column arrived at Oflag XIII B on March 9, 1945, with 423 Officers, 67 Enlisted Men. The difference of 42 is accounted for by the Officers and men who joined the column en route.

Chart of Ration breakdown and servings attached.

1 encl.

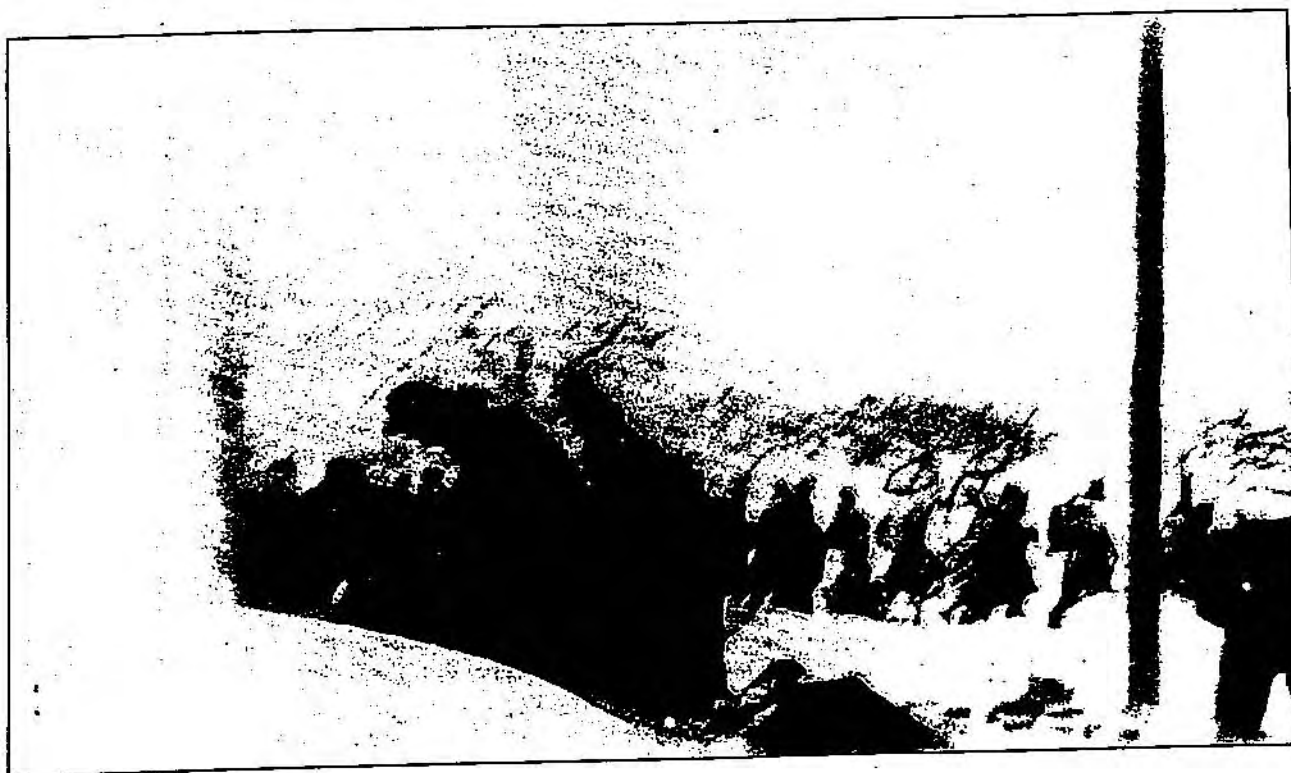
(Sgt.) Albert A. Kadler.

Berlin, April 3rd, 1945.

A COUPLE OF COLD DAYS IN POLAND IN 1945



These photos showed up at the reunion at Philadelphia about 30 years ago and are reportedly of the march from Orlao 64.





Oklahoma

PRISONER

Published quarterly by the Oklahoma Department of the American Ex-Prisoners of War

Spring, 2000

A Salute to All Veterans

By William A. "Bill" Fisher
(Edmond, Oklahoma)

This was originally published as a letter to the editor in The Daily Oklahoman

Not long ago I attended the funeral of an American hero, my Uncle Harold Fisher of Sand Springs. He was the typical World War II veteran who helped others and gave of himself and his talents, whether teaching music or carving handmade toys for children in his neighborhood.

He was also a bona fide hero, risking his life for others. Driving home from his funeral, I thought of how many of our fellow citizens did their duty for our country and how we often take them for granted. We may give them an occasional nod of thanks if they march in a parade or we may even buy a paper flower on Veterans Day. But in thinking of just what my Uncle Harold did, I don't think that's enough at least not for me.

Harold was an attack bomber pilot in the Pacific theater, flying 126 bombing missions in an A-20 and an A-21. Since he hadn't yet married, he let others who were married take his rotations home in his place. As the operations officer for his bomb group, rather than giving the most dangerous missions to other pilots, he took those missions for himself.

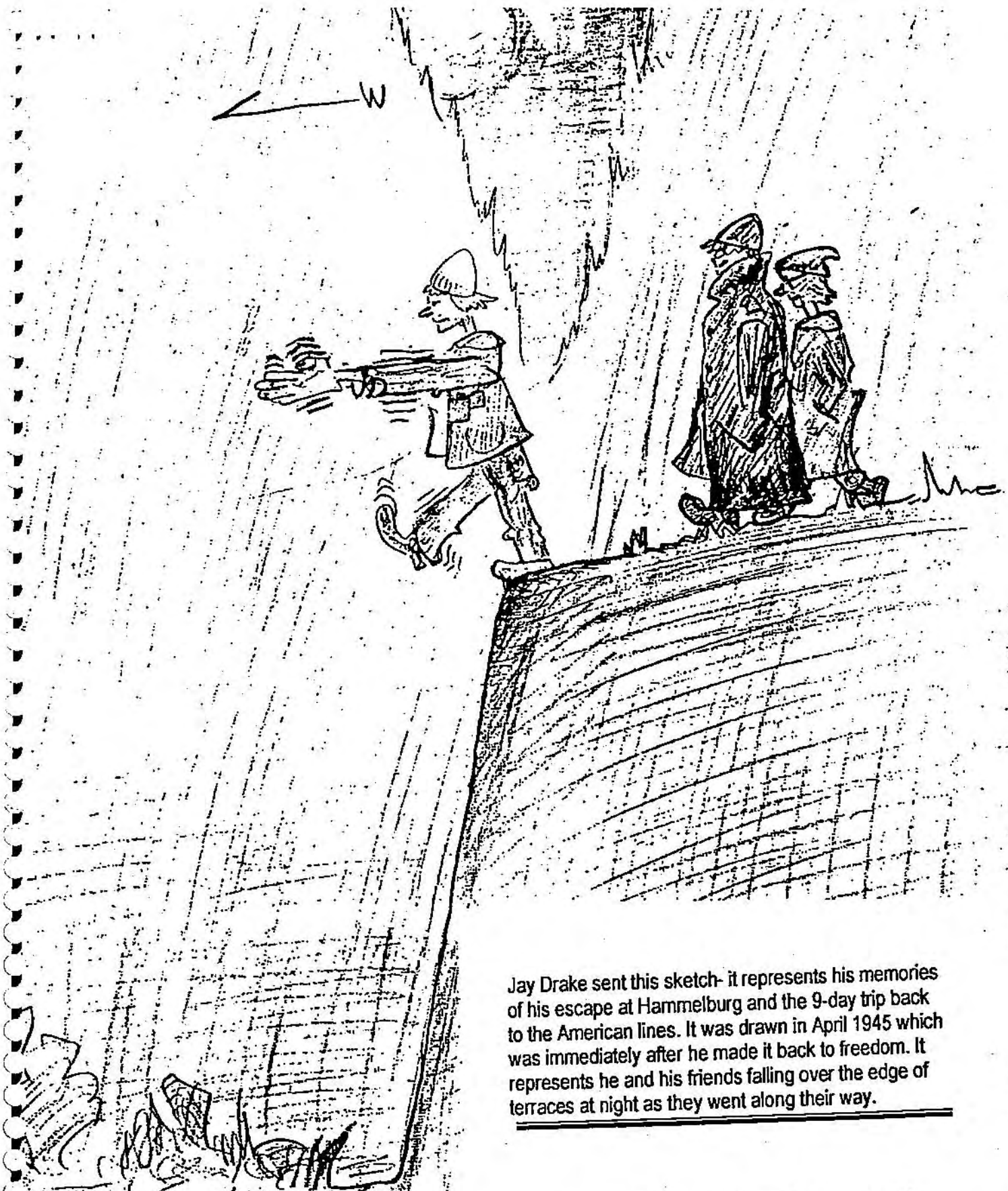
Instead of keeping his distance from new pilots and their "learning curve" mistakes, he took those new pilots and kept them close to himself, teaching them the lessons of war and giving them a fighting chance for survival. When others were surprised at his actions in taking the "Newbies" under his wing and in his taking on the most dangerous missions, he simply said he couldn't ask others to do something he wouldn't do himself.

How many people today are willing to sacrifice themselves that others might live in the freedom guaranteed, not given, by our Constitution? How many today even know what the Constitution actually says? How many truly appreciate the price paid to establish and maintain our freedom over the years?

It may not be much, but I'm going to start saluting our veterans when I see their "DAV" tags or their "Iwo Jima," "POW," "Purple Heart" or "Veteran" tags. I don't care if they are soldiers from World War II, Korea, Vietnam or the Gulf or if they served in peacetime, I'm going to give them the best physical salute I can as I drive by, followed by a wave of greeting.

It may not be much of a gesture to some and it might be misunderstood by others. But coming from this non-veteran, it's sincere and it's from the heart—a heart that is grateful to all our citizen soldiers who have made and continue to make such a difference in our lives and in the lives of others all over the world.

I thank all of you who have served your country and your country's light of freedom. And thank you, Uncle Harold.



Jay Drake sent this sketch- it represents his memories of his escape at Hammelburg and the 9-day trip back to the American lines. It was drawn in April 1945 which was immediately after he made it back to freedom. It represents he and his friends falling over the edge of terraces at night as they went along their way.

"3" SILENT FIGURES IN THE NIGHT.

This appeared in the program at Verris Hubbell's funeral.

*Do not stand at my grave and weep,
I am not there, I do not sleep
I am in a thousand winds that blow,
I am the softly falling snow.
I am the gentle showers of rain
I am the fields of ripening grain.
I am in the morning hush,
I am in the graceful rush
Of birds in circling flight.
I am the star shine of the night.
I am in the flowers that bloom,
I am in a quiet room,
I am the birds that sing,
I am in each lovely thing.
Do not stand at my grave and cry,
I am not there. I did not die.*

--Mary Frye

What a nice way to be remembered!