

TUNNEL-TOOLS
MIS-X PARCELS

United States SECRET
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EX Report No. 560
Date 5 Mar 45

SECRET
By Auth. A. C. S., G-2
Date 26 Mar 45
Initials JEG

WAR DEPARTMENT
War Department General Staff G-2
Military Intelligence Service
Washington

Prepared by
CPM BRANCH

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By CORY, William R., 1st Lt., O-1010499, 805th Tank Dest. Bn.
(Name, rank, ASN, arm of service, squadron, group, or unit)
From Oflag 64, Poland SILVER
Camp and/or country

Missing in action 17 Feb 45
Date of capture 17 Feb 45
Reported P/W 14 Apr 45
Escaped 21 Jan 45
Rejoined Allied forces 21 Feb 45
At Poltava, USSR
Previous interrogation Lt. Col. Wilmeth,
Military Mission, Poltava UKRAINE
Arrived in USA 28 Feb 45, Miami, Fla.
Home address 4710 College Ave., College Pk, Md.
Age 25
Length of service 4 yrs., 9 mos.

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EX-Report No. 560

Prepared by IIS-X Section, CPM Branch

Escape from OFLAG 64 ..

1ST LT. WILLIAM R. CORY

805th Tank Destroyer Bn.

Captured While Trying to Slip Through Enemy Net

Lt. CORY was executive officer of Company "A" of the 805th Tank Destroyer Bn. His company was mauled by the Germans in AFRICA and soon had but one half-track and one self-propelled .75 and approximately 50 men left. Prior to his capture on 17 February 1943, at FAID PASS, subject and the 50 men joined the 6th Armored Infantry to fight a rear guard action. When the fight became hopeless, subject attempted to evacuate the 50 men by having them spread out in a long column of twos to make for the mountains to the north. The morning of 17 February 1943, subject was picked up by a German recon patrol of five men, taken to their CP and interrogated as to who he was. Here Lt. CORY met Lt. COLLEY (subject of IX-Report No. 536), and later in the day both Americans were transported by truck about two miles to a crossroad close to the original gun positions of the Americans, where there were approximately 2,000 American officers and enlisted men, all of the outfit of Col. DRAKE (subject of R-Report No. 32), the 1st Armored Regiment.

Sent to Oflag 64

From this point they were all marched to SIDI BOU ZID, a distance of about 13 to 25 kilometers, and spent the night in a field. The next morning some rode and others walked to the next stopping place, some 20 kilometers away, and then continued marching until they reached SFAX and were put in a compound surrounded by barbed wire. From here the Ps/W were moved by truck to Sousse and spent the night in a French garrison. When they arrived in TUNIS the next day, subject was thoroughly interrogated. The following day the Ps/W were marched to the TUNIS AIRFIELD, where they boarded JU-52s and were flown to NAPLES. From NAPLES they were transported in trucks to CAPUA for a 10-day stay, then moved by boxcars to Stalag 7A, MOOSBURG, GERMANY, arriving about 6 or 7 March 1943. After a week in 7A, subject was sent to Oflag 9A/2 at ROTENBURG, spent roughly three months there and then moved about 4 June 1943 to Oflag 64.

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Hides in Tunnel to Avoid Evacuation

Lt. CORY and about 60 other Ps/W at Oflla 64 started in April 1944, to dig a tunnel, but all work ceased in September, at which time the tunnel was approximately 160 feet long, because the camp leaders were of the view that escape was not advisable at the time. On 19 or 20 January 1945, the German commandant advised the Ps/W that the camp would be evacuated. Immediately, Lt. MURPHY, who was in charge of the tunnel, picked subject and two other officers who had been in on the tunnel project from the beginning, and went to see Col. ALGER, the S-2 officer, and proposed to him a plan whereby the four officers would seal themselves in the tunnel with sufficient food and water supplies for two weeks instead of moving out when the camp was evacuated.

Their proposal was approved by Col. ALGER and about 0500 hours on 21 January 1945, the four officers went into the tunnel and stayed there for about 20 hours, until Col. DRURY, who had been left behind with the hospital group, came down and brought them out of the tunnel, telling them that all German guards had left. He advised them he was taking a chance in letting them out as some of the German personnel of the camp might come back or German troops might enter the area, but that they were free to leave at any time they desired. He then quartered the four Americans in the main camp building which was not being used. They immediately cut a hole in the fence on the far side of the building for a quick exit from the camp in the event the Germans returned.

Slow, Fitful Travel

Subject stayed in the camp for about five days; and during this period various officers who had escaped from the marching column of Ps/W drifted back to the camp and from them subject heard of the group of Ps/W who were at WEGHEIM. Russian tank columns had been passing the camp during the five days and finally a Russian officer stopped who could speak English and he proceeded to act as liaison officer between the Americans and the Russian forces. He arranged for the evacuation of the personnel of the camp at the end of the five-day period and about 140 were evacuated in ten (x6s (Russian ammunition trucks returning from the front). They were taken through HOHENZALZA, where they spent the night, spent the second night at KUTNO and the third at REBERTO, opposite VARSAN. (In addition to the group of 140 American Ps/W, many French refugees and escaped British Ps/W had made their way to Oflla 64 and they were also evacuated by the Russians.)

At REBERTO the Americans were put in a Polish military college where they

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spent five days. This was a collecting point for refugees and ex-Pa/W - Russian refugees, French, Sorbs, Yugoslavs - who came in and went out. It was very dirty, plumbing facilities were nil, and one outside latrine served about 1,000 people. At the end of five days, Lt. MURPHY, Lt. GAICH and subject suggested to Col. DRURY that they try to contact an airfield in the vicinity and be flown either to MOSCOW or to a central point where they could get word to a military mission and arrange for transportation as Col. DRURY was getting no cooperation from the Russians. He had given many telegrams to Russian officials for transmittal to MOSCOW, but did not know whether they had gone through.

Col. DRURY approved their request and asked the Russian liaison officer to issue them a pass to see the commandant of WARSAW. The commandant of WARSAW told them he could not provide transportation to any airfields but would send them to see the commandant of PRAGA who would supply some means of travel. At about this time the Russians in WARSAW and vicinity stopped issuing passes to the Americans. The commandant of PRAGA said they would have to go to LUBLIN and suggested they go to a control point on the main highway and there ask the MP on duty to stop a truck for them. They got a truck for LUBLIN and when they stopped at a refueling point about halfway to that city, a Polish officer told them there was an American airbase at LUCK and that they were heading in its general direction.

No Luck

Upon arriving in LUBLIN, they reported to the Russian commandant that they wanted to go to LUCK, and he stated he could provide no transportation, that they would have to go to the highway and stop a truck. The next day they hailed a truck and went to CHELEN. They spent the night in the home of a civilian in CHELEN, but when they left the civilian's home to go to HUBIESZOW in his truck, it broke down in a small village, and the following day they walked about 15 kilometers to HUBIESZOW. They then contacted the Russian commandant for transportation, and he put them in a Polish Cavalry College in the town where they stayed for two nights and one day. The school was controlled by the Russians but operated by the Poles. In the motor pool there were many 6x6s and 4x4 trucks, but the Russians stated they could not make available any transportation and the Poles finally told them they could not move anything without the approval of the Russians.

The third day the Americans were supplied with a horse and wagon to take them to the next village, and, accompanied by a Polish officer and another officer dressed in a Polish uniform, but who, they were told, was a Russian secret policeman, they proceeded as far as the border of the BUG RIVER, were stopped, put in a truck and taken to another small village. They were then

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put up for the night and were informed they would leave at 0300 by train for LNOV. They asked why they could not go to LUCK and the Russians stated there was no reason except that they were going to LNOV. (Subject is of the opinion the secret policeman had contacted his headquarters, probably LNOV, and received instructions they were to go to LNOV.) It proved to be a truck, not a train, which brought the Americans to LNOV at about 1200 or 1300 hours, and they immediately went to the office of the Russian commandant and waited two or three hours to see him.

A Six-Hour Interrogation

Finally three Russian enlisted men came in, apparently from the secret police, and took them into another office and questioned them. Lt. GEIGH could speak a little of the Slavic language and did the interpreting for the next six hours and fifteen minutes. They were questioned about everything from the date of birth, schooling, what and where they studied, how much they learned, where they lived and numerous other personal questions. When they were asked questions pertaining to the military, the Americans rebelled and refused to answer. Questions asked were what military schools they had attended, where they received their commissions, etc. The Russians tried in many ways to get this information, but finally at about 2115 hours they gave up and told the Americans they would be given a good bed, a bath and plenty to eat.

They were then taken to a hotel in LNOV. There the "good bed" proved to be a couch in the hotel manager's office and "plenty to eat" became a piece of bread given them in the hotel kitchen. They ate it with a can of corned beef they had been carrying. The next morning they were given a hot bath - three men to one tub and moved into another room which was quite comfortable for a five-day wait. During this time they could not see the commandant and twice the secret police came to their room to see "how they were getting along." The Americans were permitted to leave the hotel and often went out to buy various items in the town. A Polish Jewess, who lived in the hotel as the mistress of the manager, acted as their interpreter and treated them very well. She bought them cigarettes for which they signed chits and also purchased food for them from the black market.

American Airmen come to Hotel

About the third day of their stay in LNOV they met a Russian newspaper correspondent, who had been at MURMANSK for a long time, by the name of Vladimir BLYAEV. He knew many American merchant marine and Navy personnel and showed them a number of articles he had written about Americans for the Moscow News, which was printed in English. He apparently was a party man with

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much influence because he immediately saw to it that the Americans received better service and food than that given to the hotel clientele. He treated the Americans very well and subject remarked he was the first Russian they had met who did not seem to expect to get military information from them for his kind treatment. He knew they had come from Oflag 64 but was only interested in getting them food and plenty to drink. He arranged parties for them and the last two of the five days were very pleasant.

The manager of the hotel had been to MOSCOW and he returned on the fifth day. He was reputedly a man of influence, who had been a general in the army before SOLEMSKI but apparently had retired at an age of 62 years; he spoke seven languages, had been to the U.S. about ten times, and had lived in ENGLAND a number of years. Upon his return apparently someone told him how the Americans had been treated, for he immediately invited them to his suite of rooms to attend a party. About half an hour later the manager was called downstairs and the Americans learned about 25 other Americans had come to the hotel and they immediately went to see who they were. These Americans were a contact crew from the air force stationed at POLTAVA and they had come to pick up a downed B-17 crew which had made its way into POLAND.

Argument Ends Favorably

The American airmen then told the Russians they would fly the three American officers to their base and the Russians stated they would not release them. An argument ensued between the contact crew and the Russians and it was resumed intermittently for the next day and a half. The Russians did not want to let the Americans go until they received word from MOSCOW, but the airmen finally convinced the Russians they meant business. Before leaving the hotel, the Americans were treated very well and were given two banquets. The contact crew then flew the three Americans to POLTAVA from the airfield at Lwow. From then on, subject stated, he had no further difficulties insofar as travel was concerned, being constantly in American hands, and he returned to the States via TEHRAN, CAIRO, CASABLANCA and the AZORES, arriving in MIAMI, FLORIDA, on 28 February 1945.

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APPENDIX "D"

EX-Report No. 560 (POLAND)

Prepared by MIS-X Section, CPM Branch

Interrogation and Training

Interrogation

Lt. CORY was very briefly interrogated after capture by a young German officer who spoke perfect English with an Oxford accent. He appeared very well educated, very friendly, gave no indication of being a Nazi and did not threaten subject in any manner. He wanted to find out what papers Lt. CORY had in his possession and subject showed him his AGO card. He stated that he had been fighting for three years in LIBIA, was tired of it and wanted to know why the U.S. had not won the war by this time in view of its mass production rate.

Subject was thoroughly interrogated by an English-speaking I.O. in TUNIS, and here his interrogator tried to find out his unit, where he had been, how many armored units were in a particular sector, how many infantry units, when he had come to the front, when he left the States, if he had been to ENGLAND, if he had flown the ATLANTIC or crossed it by boat, when he was commissioned and how long he had been in the army. When subject gave no information except name, rank and serial number, the interrogator became angry. Subject is of the opinion that he was undoubtedly a Nazi. He was very emotional and excitable. He stood up and pounded on his desk and said it would do subject no good to hold back information, and, when Lt. CORY still refused to reply to his questions, he stated that since subject refused to give any information he would furnish all the answers and proceeded to pull out a micrographed copy with the entire set-up of the 2nd Corps. This astounded Lt. CORY. The German then described Lt. CORY's movements, saying that he left the U.S. on 5 October, went to SCOTLAND, was in ENGLAND and SCOTLAND for about three months and finally came to AFRICA (leaving out the fact that he spent eight days at GIBRALTAR), that he landed in ALGIERS, was bombed, the date he moved to the front and the position his unit had occupied. Subject still said nothing and gave the I.O. no inkling whether his information was right or wrong and stated he would like to help him but could give only name, rank and serial number.

The next interrogation was at Ofing 94/2 where he was asked name, rank, serial number, unit and home address and subject gave only name, rank and

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serial number.

FUTURE BRIEFING

Messages Impossible to Send

Lt. CORY and his companions tried to call the American Embassy or to send a wire to it from every town at which they stopped, but the Russians said they could not communicate directly with the Embassy and that they would take care of everything. Subject remarked that the Russians will take written messages for transmittal to the Embassy, but he does not know how far they go and is of the belief they are not sent on. He knows that no messages from Americans were ever received at the Embassy. Apparently instead of sending the messages to the Embassy, the Russians sent them to Russian officials in MOSCOW.

American Base at Poltava

Lt. CORY remarked there were Americans permanently stationed at POLTAVA, about 27 officers, four nurses and enlisted men. Originally this station was set up as a shuttle bombing base and later used to pick up American crews shot down in or near POLAND. American planes of the LTC crew in all the time on a regular schedule. Subject was informed this was the only American field in that section of RUSSIA. There is also a Russian base at POLTAVA and if a contact crew goes out to get in touch with a crew that has been shot down, a Russian pilot flies the plane; one reason being the limited American personnel at the field. Once an American reaches POLTAVA he is entirely in American hands. Subject stated that he believed he could have eventually reached POLTAVA by going from control point to control point.

How Best to Travel in Russia

Lt. CORY stated that if he had the same trip from western POLAND to a point held by our troops to make over again, he would select POLTAVA as his destination. He would go only to control points and carry a map or have knowledge of the roads, because all road signs are written in Polish or Russian. He would live with the Poles and avoid the Russians as much as possible, especially the commandants of the towns through which he passed, as they never furnish transportation and may detain one. He would tell the MPs at control points he wanted to go to KIEV or LVOV, not mentioning POLTAVA, which is supposed to be a secret base. When he reached LVOV, which is close to the border, he would contact the Russians, because the Russian

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secret police would, he believed, pick him up in any event and he would insist on being sent to POLTLW.

Security Committee

24. WSI reported that Office SA/L... before he left to go to Office 4, a Security Committee was set up consisting of 12. Col. J... Capt. Louis H. STREIB, Capt. Robert MILLER and subject, to work with the British officers in the camp and function as S-1. When they were moved to Office 50, Col CHASE had already set up his staff and subject was made senior officer for the selected men's detachment which numbered about 125.

Tunnel

There were 50 Pa/V involved in the building of the tunnel at Office 4 and the work was begun with the approval of the Area's Committee. It took 50 men to do the work properly. There were crews of diggers, electricians, mechanical men to work on air pumps, and a dispersal crew to get rid of the dirt which they put up in the ceiling of the building which the tunnel was being dug, using Red Cross boxes for this purpose. There were also a number of sleepers around to check on all German movements in the camp as the workers at the tunnel would get a glimpse of the guard's office to which to move work.

The tunnel was started under one of the large vaults, built in brick above over a fireplace, used by the Pa/V to warm their clothes. The vault was taken out, the floor underneath broken and a false bottom was put in. The tunnel

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INFORMATION FOR MIS-X

Submitted by

1ST. LT. WILLIAM R. CORY
EX- Report Number 560

SUBIN, POLAND

ROTHENBURG AM FURDA, GERMANY

Security Committee

Lt. CORY reported that Oflag 9A/Z, before he left to go to Oflag 64, a Security Committee was set up consisting of LT. Col. J.A.-----, Capt. Donald B. STEWART, Capt. Robert MILLIGAN and subject, to work with the British officers in the camp and function as S-2. When they were moved to Oflag 64, Col DRAKE had already set up his staff and subject was made supply officer for the enlisted men's detachment which numbered about 136.

Tunnel

There were 60 Ps/W involved in the building of the tunnel at Oflag 64 and the work was begun with the approval of the Escape Committee. It took 60 men to do the work properly * there were crews of diggers, electricians, mechanical men to work on air pumps, and a dispersal crew to get rid of the dirt which they put up in the ceiling of the building under which the tunnel was being dug, using Red Cross boxes for this purpose. There were also a number of stooges around to check on all German movements in the camp so the workers on the tunnel would get a minimum of two minutes' notice in which to cease work.

The tunnel was started under one of the large vats, built in brick cases over a firebox, used by the Ps/W to wash their clothes. The vat was taken out, the base underneath broken and a false bottom was put in. The tunnel went from there, under the floor, to the end of the building, at which point they had dug a chamber in which they stored their boxes and tools for the job. A 30" shaft went straight down from the chamber for 25 feet. At the bottom of that there was an air pump made out of British biscuit tins from Red Cross parcels and a shaft 20" x 24" supported by bed boards cut to fit ran towards the enclosure fence. About every 50 feet there was a small chamber where a man could sit so he could work the sled which was made out of two runners covered with tin, with a rope on each end. This sled would be used for hauling the dirt. Electric lights were on most of the time from a cord in the washroom down through the laundry vat. Although it was cold, the Ps/W wore no clothes while working, as a further security measure; they feared dirt on their clothes might give away the show.

The tunnel was dug with equipment sent them in parcels by the War Department. Men would dig for four hours and then be relieved. The lower part of the barrack was brick and the upper part wood. Each barrack had a trap door as a means of entrance to the loft above it. The Ps/W made another door alongside the trap door which could only be detected by very close observation and the dirt would be passed through this second door to them in the loft. The boxes of dirt would be stored on the crossbeams and trestles. Other supplies such as bed boards, empty boxes and some tools were also stored there. A crew of eight worked in the loft disposing of the dirt. Usually a crew of eight or ten carried the dirt to the loft and a crew of five worked in the tunnel digging while another man worked the air pump and another stacked boxes and passed them back. They started working on the tunnel in April and stopped in September. The tunnel was 165 feet in length before it was closed down.

As the tunnel neared completion, those on the camp list paired off for the attempt or decided to go it alone, and those men were then briefed by Lt. Col. Alger as to the best routes and matters were so planned that too many would not take the same route; each man was briefed on what to look for while making his way out of the country and Col. Alger passed on to the men all underground information that he had and furnished them with maps and compasses. The Security Committee furnished each man with enough concentrated food (2 small brown loaves for 15 days). All escapers were furnished with wire cutters, pliers, flags and what ever other equipment needed. Each man was required to take with him his AGO card and dogtags, if he had them, and his POW identification so that if picked up he would not be treated as a spy.

When the camp was evacuated, two men stayed behind in the chamber, one worked the air pump and the other was in the tunnel proper. The men had two radios, a crystal set and a battery set, while hiding in the tunnel. They had a u.s. flag and a Russian flag which had been sent in from the states.

PARCELS

Subject remarked that not a single security parcel was detected by the Germans, due, he believed, to good fortune and fine work by Col. Alger. Ninety percent of the time the men received advance notice by letters of the arrival of parcels and what was in them. Some of the parcels came in the clear and they had to take a chance on those. Subject stated he could not figure out whether the Germans were dumb or whether they did not try to catch anything.

Lt. Cory reported that he received a number of parcels sent to him from the War Department. Lt. Col. Alger would tell him he was getting a parcel in the next lot and to look out for it. Subject would then go to the parcel room and ask for his parcel as it would be put on the counter. He would then state that it was not his parcel but for another POW with a similar name. Where upon the parcel would be put underneath the counter. This parcel would then be momentarily forgotten by the Germans who were busy examining the next parcel issued and it would be taken from underneath the counter by a POW to the back of the room of the parcel bldg and there handed out the window to someone else. The Germans kept a very inaccurate account of what came in and many times they did not sign and the Germans counted only receipt and not parcels, never even counting them when they arrived at the camp.

RADIO'S

There were five radios in camp. One group of Officers took one with them on the march. Those in the Hospital had one and took it to Warsaw. The one subject had he took to Warsaw and turned it over to American Officers there before leaving and the other two radios were left in camp. There was also a camera sent into camp but someone had hidden it so well it could not be found even by the Americans.

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APPENDIX "C"

EX-Report No. 560 (POLAND)

Prepared by MIS-X Section, CPN Branch

Camp Conditions

Conditions at Oflag 64 After Evacuation

Lt. CORY reported that those left in the hospital after the evacuation had plenty of food. The Germans had left some of their own food there and this was also used. The Polish people in the town near the camp brought in fresh milk and butter for the men. They had plenty of blankets, clothes and medical supplies. Three medical officers remained in the camp. Those men who were sick were moved by the Russians in trucks; only two cases could not be moved and they were left in the hospital in the town and were to be later evacuated to a general hospital. One of the two cases was not expected to live, but subject does not know what happened to them after they were put in the hospital in town. There were about 87 in the hospital, plus the four in the tunnel and the total of 140 in the camp was made up by other Americans drifting back to the camp.

SACs at Oflag 64

Col. GOODE, subject stated, is now in GERMANY and was quite sick when he left the camp. He did an excellent job as SAC. When Col. DRAKE was repatriated, Col. MILLETT took over the camp for a few weeks, but subject remarked he was handicapped by the fact that he had not been a prisoner very long or an Army man very long and let the Germans bulldoze him, but Col. GOODE soon took over and things returned to normal. Lt. Col. John K. WATERS, Col. DRAKE's executive officer and Col. GOODE's S-3, did an excellent job and was the most efficient officer in the camp.

Protecting Power

Lt. CORY had no experience whatsoever with the Protecting Power and no contact with them. He stated that according to hearsay information he got in the camp, most Americans were of the opinion the Protecting Power representatives were German sympathizers. Also subject was told by camp leaders that the answers they received to complaints from the Protecting Power showed they sympathized with the Germans. Subject knows of no changes in the camp due to the intervention of the Protecting Power. Lt. CORY states

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that the camp leaders were of the opinion the Protecting Power was not doing the job as well as they should.

Lt. GORY had been a prisoner for two years and stated the Swiss attitude in some instances might have improved due to the change in the trend of war, but that in the relatively recent trials of Col. SCHAEFER and Lt. SCHMIDT it was felt that the Swiss did not give them the assistance necessary for a fair trial and sentence.

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Scott

EDITOR'S NOTES

Handwritten notes:
Johnston/H...
Scott

I found OFLAG 64 to be a fascinating, extremely enlightening, well-written and well-designed manuscript -- one of the very best I have read as both an editor and author. In my opinion, once in book form, it should be made available to the public because it contains very important, little-known information about one of the most important and critical periods in the history of the United States. How different it is to read a book about the War by those who were in it, rather than by a historian, who has simply gathered facts and has never really been directly touched by what he wrote about.

As a child growing up during World War II, all I really knew about the War was what I saw and heard in the newsreels at the neighborhood movie theater. I also knew that I greatly missed chocolate bars and bubble gum, and was never really told much about what the brave and gallant people serving our country overseas were missing. How vividly OFLAG 64 brought that out to me! As a child, I also knew that I was grateful that my father did not have to "go to war" (because he was color-blind), though the men's clothing company he worked for made uniforms for servicemen. I also remember that my mother organized a group of children -- my friends and neighbors -- who knitted afghans which the Red Cross sent to the soldiers overseas. (I know now how badly the men in OFLAG 64 could have used some of those afghans!)

I wish that there could have been a television series based on this wonderful book, OFLAG 64 (a serious series), instead of the ludicrous, insult-to-the-American-people's-intelligence, "Hogan's Heroes."

Of the many things that impressed me in this accounting of what went on at OFLAG 64 is what marvelous ingenuity the men had -- how they made the most of their time, both mentally and physically, not just to survive, but so that when the War finally ended, they would emerge even better men, having used their time to learn, and to help, and even entertain, their "brothers" in captivity.

What a great deal of time, effort, heart and soul went into the compiling of the material and the writing of this very moving book.

Arlene Anderson