

AMERICAN PRISONERS OF WAR IN GERMANY

Prepared by MILITARY INTELLIGENCE SERVICE, WAR DEPARTMENT 15 July 1944

OFLAG 64

STRENGTH 477 officers, 52 E.M., all Ground Force.

LOCATION Pin-point: 53°00'30" North latitude, 17°44'30" East longitude.

Camp is situated 2 miles Northwest of the railroad station in Altburgund (new German name for old Polish town of Schubin) on a cobblestone road.

DESCRIPTION

Camp area, 300 X 200 yards, is surrounded by 2 barbed wire fences. It contains large, three-story, stone building formerly a Polish college and 3 brick and concrete barracks. Within enclosure are theater, sports field, chapel, infirmary, canteen, huts for classes and several unused barracks fenced off by barbed wire.

TREATMENT Correct

FOOD

Ps/W subsist only because of weekly receipt of Red Cross food parcel by each. German ration is insufficient in quality and quantity to maintain life in a person normally active. (Authority: U.S.A. Quartermaster dietitian.)

CLOTHING

German issue no clothing. Sole supply is from the Red Cross. Because of shortages and transportation difficulties Ps/W suffered last winter in region's severe cold. Supply has since improved.

HEALTH

Adequate medical care is provided by the 8 American medical officers and 1 dentist, though material is needed for permanent fillings. Bathing and washing facilities are satisfactory. Health is generally good, due largely to American Senior Officer's insistence on sports programs designed to maintain physical fitness "so that when we're released we can fight Japan." Twenty patients are in the camp's 30-bed hospital, most of them suffering stomach ulcers probably induced by the heavy German bread that forms a large part of the German ration.

RELIGION

Interdenominational as well as Roman Catholic services are conducted. There is no German interference.

PERSONNEL

American Senior Officer:	Colonel Thomas D. Drake.
Executive Officer:	Lt. Col. John K. Waters.
Adjutant:	Major Merle A. Meacham.
Dentist:	Captain Paul G. Jacobs.
Interpreter:	Lt. Edgar P. Moschel.
German Commandant:	Oberstlt. Le Viseur.

MAIL

Officer Ps/W are permitted to write the standard 3 letters, 4 postcards per month and E.M. 2 letters, 4 postcards. There is no limit on the number they may receive. Transit time for all letters, including airmail, from the U.S. is erratic, varying between 30 and 90 days. Airmail from camp takes 6 weeks, surface mail 9 weeks. Next-of-kin and tobacco parcels are 2 to 3 months in transit. Occasionally they are pilfered.

RECREATION

Athletics include baseball, basketball, football, softball, volleyball, ice skating, table tennis, ice hockey, occasional parole walks. Equipment has been sent by Y.M.C.A. Studies in a variety of classical and technical subjects are conducted by competent P/W instructors. Hobbies include painting, embroidering, woodcarving, gardening. Public address system enables Ps/W to stage shows and hear German music and news. Occasional movies art exhibits, glee club, choir, minstrels, a phonograph and a few records offer additional diversion. Camp library has 1,600 books and Ps/W publish a newspaper.

WORK Officers do not work. E.M. are orderlies.

PAY

Officers are paid on a sliding scale according to rank, with lieutenants receiving 60 marks a month. From this 22 marks are deducted for food and 10 for orderly service. What remains is of small value because canteen has virtually nothing for sale but weak beer.

AMERICAN PRISONERS OF WAR IN GERMANY

Prepared by MILITARY INTELLIGENCE SERVICE, WAR DEPARTMENT 1 November 1945

OFLAG 64

(Ground Force Officers)

LOCATION

Oflag 64 was situated in Poland, 2½ miles northwest of the railroad station in Altburgund (new German name for the old Polish town of Schubin, 53°01'N - 17°44'E.). The grounds were formerly those of a Polish college.

On 21 Jan. 1945, 1,471 Ground force officers & enlisted men left Schubin just ahead of the advancing Russian Army to travel a total of 345 miles, arriving at Oflag 13B, Hammelburg on 9 March 1945.

STRENGTH

Oflag 64 was opened on 6 June 1943 with just a handful of ground force officers. In Oct. of that year, the Red Cross reported 224 American officers and 21 enlisted men there. Almost all of these men had been captured in North Africa and had been held in other camps prior to the opening of Oflag 64. By July 1944, the population had increased to 620 officers and 57 enlisted men. At the time of the evacuation from Poland on 21 Jan. 1945, the camp strength was 1,557.

DESCRIPTION

The camp was composed of a main stone building and 6 barracks. Only 3 of these barracks were used until the last few months of the occupation. The buildings were 120' long & 40' wide. They were subdivided into cubicles 7' X 10' which quartered an average of 8 officers. The PW slept in double-tiered wooden bunks equipped with straw mattresses, a pillow, 1 sheet and a pillow case. The Germans supplied 2 thin blankets which were totally inadequate for the climate. A large sports ground was available within the compound. The latrines were situated in separate buildings adjoining the barracks, but were of the pit-type at first. Later, latrines equipped with cesspools and pumps were installed, but were insufficient in number.

U.S. PERSONNEL

Col. Thomas N. Drake was the SAO from its opening on 6 June 1943 until his repatriation on 27 July 1944. Col. George V. Millett succeeded Col. Drake and was SAO until the arrival of Col. Paul R. Goode on 16 Oct. 1944. From that time until the liberation, the camp administration was organized as follows:

Senior American Officer:..Col. Raul R. Goode	Executive Officer:.....Col. G.V. Millett
Ass't Executive Officer:..Maj. K. Hanson	Adjutant:.....Maj. Merle A. Meacham
Welfare Officer:.....Lt.Col. J.K. Waters	Sr. Medical Officer:..Capt. F.M. Burgeson

There was also a highly organized Security Committee.

GERMAN PERSONNEL

The German personnel consisted of approximately 100 men from the 813th Infantry (Grenadier) Regiment, and 4 administrative officers. The administration was organized in the following manner:

Camp Commander:Oberst Schneider	Second in Command:..Oberstleutnant Leuda
Security Officer:.....Hauptman G. Zimmerman	Chief Physician:.....Dr. Pongratz
Welfare Officer:.....Sonderfuhrer W. Theissen	

According to Col. Drake, the relations between the PW and the Germans were quite impersonal. Hauptman Zimmerman was particularly disliked for his frequent pettiness. He was a Nazi party-member of good standing and often appeared to be able to reverse decisions of Oberst Schneider.

TREATMENT

The treatment at Oflag 64 was considered better than that of other American PW camps containing ground force personnel. As the camp strength increased, the buildings naturally became more crowded, and comforts experienced in early 1944 disappeared with the shortages of fuel and food all over Germany. According to repatriates who arrived in Jan. 1945, the Germans displayed a definite tendency to provoke incidents in the camp. It appeared that the Germans desired to have as many PW as possible under sentence. As an example, in the summer of 1944 4 officers were being marched under guard to the hospital at Gneisen for treatment and were ordered not to use the sidewalk but to walk in the streets of the town. They felt this was humiliating treatment and in violation of the Geneva Convention. They brought this point up to the guards and after some discussion were permitted to use the sidewalks. However, this incident was reported and the 4 were brought up for trial on the charge of "Obstructing the Functions of the German Reich". The trial was held in Oct. 1944 and the men were acquitted of the charge. However, in Dec. 1944, the 4 were informed that they would be retried on charges growing out of the incident. The retrial was held on 25 Jan. 1945, and all 4 officers received the death sentence. They were liberated before the sentence could be carried out.

A similar instance of this tendency to perpetrate incidents occurred on 22 Sept. 1944 when Lt. James R. Schmitz, the Ass't Adjutant, was in the camp office alone and was approached by 2 unteroffiziers about to post anti-escape posters. Because Lt. Schmitz considered the posters insulting to American officers in that they accused our government "of resorting to gangster warfare up to and within the frontier of the Fatherland" he requested them to wait until he could contact the SAO. Unable to do so, he brought back to the office Lt. Col. Schaefer who discussed the posters with the Germans. As they were leaving Lt. Schmitz stood in the doorway in token protest. When one unteroffizier approached and touched Lt. Schmitz, he immediately got out of the way. Nevertheless, Lt. Schmitz was accused of blocking the doorway and Lt. Col. Schaefer was accused of interfering with the functions of the German Reich. They were both tried on 28 Dec. 1944 and sentenced to death, but were liberated before the sentence could be carried out.

The treatment grew steadily worse from the Allied invasion until winter. Then as it became obvious to the Germans that defeat was inevitable, many of the guards and camp officials became more lenient, and the treatment improved. There was a noticeable scarcity of true Nazis in the last few days.

FOOD

From the time the camp opened until the evacuation, the German rations were very poor in both quality and quantity. The Red Cross food parcel became the means of subsistence in the camp and the difference between complete misery and tolerable existence. From 10 Oct. to 3 Dec. 1944, no Red Cross parcels were delivered in camp and the men suffered accordingly. During the period from 20 Oct. to 15 Nov. 1944, all men in camp were checked for weight loss, and the average was 9 pounds per man. The German ration during that period was as follows:

Per day each man received:

Meat	...35 7/10 Grams	Margarine.....	21 4/10 Grams
Cooking Oil...	9 7/10 "	Cheese.....	4 1/2 "
Barley.....	25 "	Potatoes.....	353 "
Cabbage.....	200 "	Carrots.....	100 "
Dried Veggies....	6 2/5 "		

ONE ONLY OF THE FOLLOWING:

Turnips.....	400 Grams	Sugar.....	25 Grams
Sauerkraut....	25 "	Tea(ersatz)...	1 "
Jam.....	25 Grams	Bread.....	318 "
Soup Powder....	3 1/2 "	Coffee(ersatz)	2 1/2 "

HEALTH

In spite of many hardship due to insufficient food, impure water supplies, and poor sanitation facilities, the health was surprisingly good. The "revier" itself was old, the floors unpainted, the plumbing a constant source of concern among the doctors. The 30 beds available in the "revier" were usually occupied by men suffering from stomach ailments, colds and other routine complaints. It was not equipped to handle the cases of

those seriously ill or badly wounded. These cases were sent to the hospital at Wollstein.

Fortunately for the early arrivals at Oflag 64, RAF doctors who had formerly inhabited the camp left behind about 25 units of Red Cross medical supplies. These sufficed until more supplies were received from the International Red Cross. However, the flow of supplies was inadequate and undependable. By constant nagging, special drugs and emergency items were obtainable from the Germans in rare cases, but the American doctors preferred to isolate themselves from the German doctor as much as possible.

CLOTHING

Thanks to the Red Cross, clothing was adequate during 1943 and early 1944. However, by Nov. 1944, clothing was so scarce that the Germans demanded that PW turn in all but one uniform. They also demanded field jackets, which were refused. As a result, the guards came through the barracks with fixed bayonets and fired their rifles in the air forcing the men into giving up their jackets. The original excuse for confiscation was that clothing was needed for new PW, but men arrived in Russian, French and British uniforms which were never replaced by American equivalents. Bed clothing was completely inadequate, and many times officers slept 2 to a bunk in order to "pool" their blankets. The Germans at no time provided sufficient clothing.

WORK

The officers at Oflag 64 were not required to do any work except their own fatigue details around camp. These duties were assigned by the SAO's staff. However, 33 of the enlisted men who were sent as orderlies were required to work at a near-by sawmill. Their work was not too hard, and their noon-day rations were slightly better than the camp's.

PAY

In the beginning, officers were paid on a sliding scale according to rank, with lts. receiving 60 marks a month. From this 22 marks were deducted for food and 10 for orderly service. The balance was supposed to be used for purchases from the canteen, but since this offered nothing but weak beer and an occasional razor blade, the money was no asset. At no time was an officer permitted to have in his possession more than 30 marks, and an American finance officer was assigned to keep a duplicate set of records on the financial status of each PW. He made arrangements with the German officials to disburse the amounts owed. After a visit on 23 Oct. 1944, the Red Cross reported that camp money disbursement had stopped entirely and the amounts were credited to a special account of each officer.

MAIL

The officers received 3 letters forms & 4 postcards each month. The enlisted men received 2 letters forms & 3 cards a month. The SAO received 10 letter forms to conduct camp affairs. The Germans checked the number of outgoing letters from each officer a month in the early days. However, it was later noticed that this practice had stopped, and officers were able to borrow mail forms and write as many letters as they wished. There was never any shortage of letter forms and none was ever refused an individual as a punitive measure. The 8 censors were all except one enlisted men and ex-residents of the United States. They performed other duties, and for this reason mail was often unnecessarily delayed, sometimes for 2 weeks. Transit time for letters, including airmail from the U.S.A. to the camp was erratic, varying between 30 & 90 days. Toward the end of the war the mail service grew slower as transportation facilities were harassed by Allied bombers.

MORALE

The morale of the men, especially after "D-Day", was exceedingly high. This spirit was reflected in the monthly publication known as the Oflag Item, which was issued from Nov. 1943 to Jan. 1945. By making light of the "Kriegie-woes" and reviewing the months' activities in the vein of a collegiate newspaper an easy air of comradeship was developed. The "Little Theater of Schubert College" was a huge success. PW produced a total of eight three-act plays, all of which were former Broadway hits. They also produced 7 one-act plays, 8 musical reviews and 1 original three-act play. In addition to these activities the men took part in many types of sports. A league was formed for baseball and softball enthusiasts as well as basketball players. Thus, men kept their morale high by keeping occupied.

WELFARE

Insomuch as the Germans were concerned, welfare consisted of only the barest necessities. All phases of welfare were handled by the International Red Cross, the Protecting Power and the YMCA. As mentioned before, the Red Cross food parcels and clothing took care of 2 basic requirements of PW. The Protecting Power in its capacity of mediator made 7 visits to the camp. The representatives were punctilious about interviewing the American staff in privacy and made a conscientious effort to improve situations about which complaints were made, even though their representations to the German officials were often ignored after their departure.

The athletic and recreational equipment provided by the YMCA contributed a great deal to the welfare of the men. The library at camp was well stocked with a good variety of literature from text books to murder thrillers.

RELIGION

The religious activities in the camp were very satisfactory. A room was furnished by the Germans and made into an attractive chapel by the men. At one time there were as many as 3 chaplains at the camp, but because they felt they were needed elsewhere, they requested transfers to other camps. Only a Protestant and Catholic Chaplain remained.

RECREATION

In addition to the many activities mentioned in the paragraph on Morale, there was a great deal of interest in art, crafts & education. Of all recreations, reading seemed to take first place. Many officers availed themselves of numerous text books to improve their knowledge on various subjects. The school was well attended and foreign languages appeared to be favorite subjects.

Many men who had dabbled in art as a hobby took advantage of their leisure to improve their style. Cartoonists appeared from every barracks and new hobbies were developed daily. However, the favorite pastime of all was re-reading letters from home and day-dreaming about the end of the war.

EVACUATION

On 21 Jan. 1945, the SAO was informed that the camp was to be evacuated immediately, and that all able-bodied men would fall out to begin the march. The German doctor and the American medical staff hurriedly examined all of the men in the camp, and after a great deal of discussion, agreed to leave behind 86 men under the supervision of Col. Drury. These men were to remain in the hospital until the advancing Russians over-ran the camp. The other 1,471 officers and enlisted men left on foot for the 345 mile trek to Brandenburg.

After the able-bodied men left the camp, the first problem facing the new SAO was to keep the Poles out of the camp because they began a systematic routine of looting. During the first 24 hours several small groups of Germans passed the camp on the same road taken earlier by the column, but they did not enter the camp. Late that evening the Poles reported that Russian tanks had been in the town but had passed on again before they could be informed of the Americans' presence. On the morning of 22 Jan. 1945, both American & Russian flags were raised over the camp and shortly afterward the first Russians appeared on the road. The SAO was told by the tank commanders that they must move on, but that the rear echelon would give PW the best of care. As more and more trucks passed, and no one seemed to have authority to begin the evacuation, the SAO decided to commandeer a truck and driver and return to the Corps headquarters. After sending 6 telegrams from that headquarters and discussing the problem at length with the commanding general, Col. Gen. Blov, Col. Drury made evacuation plans.

On 28 Jan. 1945, the men left Schubin by truck and were taken to Rembertow, arriving 31 Jan. 1945. At Rembertow the Russians had taken over a former Polish military school and turned it into a refugee processing center with approximately 5,000 tired, hungry and frightened people of mixed nationalities. In spite of many promises of assistance, it was not until 22 Feb. 1945 that the group boarded a train for Odessa. Meanwhile, several impatient officers had left the camp and proceeded on their own to reach Moscow where they were given air passage back to the United States. The group reached Odessa on 1 March 1945, and were evacuated to the United States by plane and boat.

The 1,471 officers and enlisted men under the command of Oberst Fritz Schneider marched to Exin, Poland (24 kms.) where they were supposed to entrain for a new camp in Brandenburg. However, upon their arrival it was discovered that no arrangements had been made for the journey and the group continued on foot to an estate just outside of Exin where they were quartered for the night in cow barns. The weather was below freezing and the ground was covered with snow. The day's march had been gruelling and 186 men decided to hide in the hay lofts and make their way back to the Russian lines. All of these were successful in their escape, and were able to reach Rembertow where they joined Col. Drury's group.

During the entire 45 days of the march the quarters were, with few exceptions, hay barns, stables, cow sheds or machine sheds. They were often overcrowded, and many were lofts with only one ladder for entrance and exit, thus presenting a great hazard in case of fire. Despite continued protests on the part of Col. Goode, it was not until 2 Feb. 1945 that the Germans sent a quartering party forward in advance of their arrival. Prior to this time, PW would arrive at their destination at dusk with wet and cold feet and be forced to stand around while hasty arrangements were made for quartering. Frequently fires were not permitted so that shoes & socks could not be dried nor could food be cooked.

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

Medical supplies were not provided at all by the Germans until 17 Feb. 1945. After that date only a very limited amount was given.

There had been continuous trouble in providing transportation for the sick and no effort was made to provide proper places for sick call. The ration provided on the march was inadequate. The German ration officer stated that they were receiving the same ration as the German guard company, but this was not true. The average ration for the day was one bowl of turnip soup, a few potatoes, a cup of ersatz coffee or mint tea, a half a slice of brown bread. The only supplement to this diet was an occasional barter with the farmers along the way who wanted cigarettes, soap, fountain pens, etc., until finally 500 Red Cross parcels were obtained on 17 Feb. 1945. These had to be shared by 1,023 men.

The table below gives the number of kilometers the men marched each day:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Distance</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Distance</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Distance</u>
Jan 21	24	Feb 4	17	Feb 18	8
22	23	5	21	19	10
23	7	6	22	20	20
24	9	7	20	21	0
25	21	8	20	22	16
26	0	9	13	23	19
27	18	10	13	24	23
28	17	11	14	25	21
29	7	12	24	26	0
30	12	13	7	27	16
31	14	14	13	28	11
Feb 1	3	15	0	Mar 1 to 5	0
2	18	16	23	6	9 boarded train arriving
3	0	17	27	at Hammelburg	9 March 1945.

Only 423 officers and 67 enlisted men completed the trek to Oflag 13B, arriving in a state of exhaustion.

LIBERATION

On 27 March 1945, Col. Goode was notified that camp 13B would be evacuated that afternoon at 1600 hours. At 1300, American tanks appeared and after a brief consultation, the Germans agreed to surrender the camp immediately. Three of the staff officers and one German officer were selected to carry the white flag of surrender to the American tank column. As they marched out of the gate, an SS private shot Lt. Col. John K. Waters, seriously wounding him. Immediately the tanks started firing and after a few minutes the camp was in the hands of the Americans. However, the spearhead was not prepared to transport so many officers, and it was impossible to remain there and defend the area. Many

road blocks and mines hampered their progress. The following two days saw nearly all of the men returned to the camp under German guard. Meanwhile the Germans had returned to evacuate the remaining prisoners to southern Germany, and about 500 men were sent to Nurnberg by train. Two days later, the remaining men were marched to Stalag 7A, Moosburg. This trip was approximately 90 miles and it required 15 days to march because of the weakened condition of the men and the constant bombing of the Allied air forces of stallations along the way. Many men escaped during this march during the confusion. Upon their arrival at Stalag 7A, Col. Goode organized the camp of 30,000 PW for their final rescue which occurred 29 April 1945.

"SOURCE MATERIAL FOR THIS REPORT CONSISTED OF INTERROGATIONS OF FORMER PRISONERS OF WAR MADE BY CPM BRANCH, MILITARY INTELLIGENCE SERVICE, AND REPORTS OF THE PROTECTING POWER AND INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS RECEIVED BY THE STATE DEPARTMENT (Special War Problems Division)." Taken from the general introduction of camps.