

Artist's drawing of Oflag 64 without barbed wire, towers and guards.
drawn by Jim Bickers

POST OFLAG 64 ITEM

FALL 2004

PITTSBURGH, PA 2004

Jerry Alexis has all the details worked out and is in his starting blocks and ready to go.

There are registration forms and a program in this Item. Fill in all the blanks and get ready to go.

**NOW IS THE TIME!!
FILL IN ALL THE BLANKS
AND GET READY TO GO!!!**

FT LAUDERDALE, FL 2005

Irv Solotoff and Rosa Lee are still busy making arrangements for 2005 in Ft Lauderdale.

News will be passed along as it becomes available.

Irv can be contacted at:

Irv Solotoff
13355 SW 9th Court #213
Pembroke Pines, FL 33027
Pho: 954/435-7600

Rosa can be contacted at:

Rosa Lee
3117 N Indian River Drive
at. Lucie Village
Ft Pierce, FL 34946
Email: RoyTree50@aol.com

PUBLICATIONS

POSTAGE FUND DONORS (2004)

The Waters Story \$19.50
 My Tour of Russia \$ 5.00
 The Men of Oflag 64 \$ 20.00
 The Oflag 64 Directory \$ 3.00
 Oflag 64 Audio Tape \$ 5.00
 Original Roster-Oflag 64 \$10.00
 Tribute to TF Baum \$15.00
 Hammelburg Roster \$ 7.50
 Make check out to Oflag 64 PF and
 mail to the Editor.

In the Presence of Mine Enemies \$10.00
 Make check payable to and send to:
 Mrs. Rose Daniels
 5100 Sharon Road. Apt 603
 Charlotte. NC 28210-4720

Vic Kanners Diary---FREE
 Contact- Dave Kanners
 1141 Pine Ridge Court
 Rochester, MN 48306

Americans Behind the Barbed Wire-By Frank Diggs
 New Price....\$22.00 (includes shipping)
 Contact: Vandemere Press
 P.O. Box 5243
 Clearwater, FL 22205

Press Releases -----\$10.95
 Ted Roggen
 101 Westcott
 Houston, TX 77007

Bob Christensen(via Herb Garris)
 Ron Green
 Di Francesco Family
 Jerry Alexis
 Robert Galloway
 Ormond Roberts
 Bob O'Neill
 Herm Littman(Cash)
 Ed Rooney
 John Albree
 Alan Dunbar
 Rose Daniel
 Herb Garris
 Carrol Higginbotham
 Bret Job (Frank Diggs Books)
 Bret Job (RAID Books)
 Jack Monaghan
 Pat Waters
 Bob Cheatham
 George Myron
 Bob O'Neill
 Charles Wilkinson
 Robert Moorehead
 Phillip McIntire

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

We lost our good friend Irv Yarock
 RIP Good Friend

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

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

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

2004 Reunion Chairman- Jerry Alexis
 1021 Highland Ave
 Beaver Falls, PA 15010
 Pho: 724/891-2338



2004 Oflag 64 Reunion Pittsburgh PA
29 September - 3 October
Holiday Inn Greentree

WELCOME

to Pittsburg and western Pennsylvania, America's first gateway to the West - the focus of the French and Indian War - the launching point of the Lewis and Clark expedition - the pioneer producer of iron, steel, coal, glass, petroleum, aluminum, and nuclear power - center of education, medical and pure research, and the arts - the arsenal of democracy and supplier of military manpower throughout our nation's history - and some of the most friendly people in the world!

Schedule

Wed., 29 Sept. - 1:00 P.M. Registration, Hospitality Room open

Thurs., 30 Sept. - 9:00 A.M. Registration, Hospitality Room open

6:15 P.M. Depart for Canterbury Dinner Theater

Seating 6:30/ Buffet Dinner 7:00/ Show 8:00

A RIDICULOUSLY CONCISE HISTORY OF PITTSBURGH

by steel citizens

This fast-paced, laugh-a-second show will take you on a wildride through the 'dahn tahn' of the present-day 'Burgh andperhaps even into the future. Events, sports, and politics areall on the agenda of this original show. (Optional - \$49 pp; maybe cancelled if minimum number is not met.)

Fri., 1 Oct. - 9:00 A.M. - Breakfast buffet, business meeting

1:00 - 5:00 P.M. - City tour of some of Pittsburgh's most fascinating sites, including the Heinz History Center, Soldiers and Sailors Museum, and the Nationality Classrooms at the University of Pittsburgh. (Both included in registration fee.)

Evening - on your own.

Sat., 2 Oct. -

8:30 A.M. - 4:00 P.M. - American Heroes/Laurel Highlands tour. A visit to the site of the 9/11 Flight 93 temporary memorial and Flight 93 Memorial Chapel. You may want to leave a memento (flower, flag, e.g.) at the memorial. Tour members receive a commemorative pin at the site and a donation is made to the Flight 93 Memorial Fund. Smorgasbord luncheon at the Oakhurst Tea Room. A visit to the Quecreek Mine Rescue Site with narration by the owners of the farm. All this in the setting of the beautiful fall foliage of the Laurel Highlands. (Optional - \$60 pp.; may be cancelled if minimum number is not met.)

5:30 - 9:30 P.M. - Gateway Clipper Dinner Cruise on Pittsburgh's three rivers - Monongahela, Allegheny, and Ohio. included in registration fee.

Sun., 3 Oct. - 9:00 A.M. Breakfast and memorial service. Included in registration fee.

Hotel Reservations

You must make your own reservations at the Holiday Inn Greentree. Be sure to mention they are for the Oflag 64 reunion. Also be prepared to give the airline, flight number, date, and arrival time if you need the free airport shuttle. The Inn's address is 401 Holiday Drive, Pittsburgh PA 15220. The reservation phone number is 412-922-8100. Press option 2. If you indicate you are traveling by car, directions will be mailed to you.

Important - Reservations must be received by 8 September! The rates per person for room, tax, and baggage handling are as follows:

Three nights - Single, \$279; Double, \$169; Triple, \$129; Quad, \$99.

Four nights - Single, \$349; Double, \$209; Triple, \$149; Quad, \$119.

Further information needed?

Contact your reunion host, Jerry Alexis, 719 4th Street, Beaver Falls PA 15010-3001; telephone 724-891-2338; e-mail ejalexis@juno.com.

MAIL CALL

Herb Garris, Pinehurst, NC as usual writes a fine and informative letter. Herb gave a graduation speech at the Special Forces Camp at Ft. Bragg The program for this occasion is on another page In this issue of the Item. He received a copy of Clarence Meltesen's latest issue of the Roads to Liberation Oflag 64 and expressed his appreciation and admiration for Clarence's work on this book. He has written a letter to Gottfried Dietz extending him an invitation to attend the reunion at Pittsburgh this fall. Gottfried has indicated in a previous letter that he intended to attend. He also sent along a change of address for Ed Batte, who has moved to a retirement home.

Herb also mentioned that a roster of all the men and where they were captured might be interesting to our men. We have been working on just that for better than a year and have it ready to bring to the reunion in Pitt. Herb also made a trip to the Normandy Beaches on June 1-12 and will bring some photos to the reunion in PA..

Phillip MCintyre, Hardwick MA sends in a donation to the postage fund and asked that his name be removed from the mailing list.. We thank him for the donation and have removed his name as requested.

Robert Moorehead, Wallingford, PA requests some of our printed material and also donates some money to the postage fund. He also states that he will probably attend the reunion at Pittsburgh. We will be looking for Robert and thank you for the donation to the PF.

Ed Beattie has moved a asks that each of you notice his new mailing address. It is: Penick Village, #4A, PO Box 2001, Southern Pines, NC 28388...Pho No: 672-0269

Charles Wilkinsom, Model CO writes that he is still in the cattle business, but is slowly getting out of it. He says that. *Life is good here, plenty of rain and cattle prices are high.!!* He sends in a donation to the Postage Fund and we thank him for it.

George Myron, Little Egg Harbor, NJ sends in a check for a book he picked up in MNPLS. Thanks, George. George also says he will be in Pittsburgh this fall.

Bob O'Neill, Prescott, AZ, writes that he will be in Pittsburgh and also sends in a donation to the potage fund. Bob's checks always end up in a straw basket and I try to send them on to Joe Serringer before dry rot sets in. Your check is now on it's way to Joe. Thanks for the donation and we will be looking for you in Pittsburgh.

Alan Dunbar, Las Vegas NV...Alan writes that he and Lilo are doing fine but will be unable to come to Pittsburgh this fall. He says ,maybe, they can make it to Florida next year. Alan is an accredited Service Officer for the VA and would like all former POWs, that are interested, to apply for the 100% compensation that the VA is offering. If anybody would like to apply for the compensation you can write Alan at : 4675 Green Canyon Dr, Las Vegas, NV 89103-4386 and he can tell you what to do about applying.

Jonel Hill, Pasadena, CA writes about going to a High School in MNPLS while at the reunion in 2003

On entering the room ,the kids were loud and rather disorderly, but they paid attention,

except one who fell asleep. I was surprised at their attentiveness which took a couple of minutes to get.

I 'm sure that this year the drug problem would make it much harder to pique their interest as an ancient one of 65 years ago. Can't make it to Pittsburgh.. Going back to Hurtgen instead.

I was one of two speakers that went to talk at South High School. Mine was a sophomore Social Studies Class.

I started by pointing out that when I was a HS in 1940-41 as a sophomore it was unclear who would win WWII.

Then I told them about the battle of Hurtgen Forest in fall of 1944, the 30,000 casualties, the almost total lack of news coverage it was given and today is almost unknown.

I described the fighting, casualties in my company F of the 26th Infantry of the 1st Division and how companies E & F were wiped out and a few of us captured.

Then I described the life as a POW in Stalag 12A in Limburg, Germany, and Oflag 64 in Poland. Being recaptured by the Soviets and held under guard by them until repatriated through Odessa on the Black Sea.

There were many questions, intensity of listening, some stayed after the bell to talk and ask questions. They were interested as were other HS classes I have talked to.

REGISTRATION FORM



2004 Oflag 64 Reunion
Pittsburgh PA
29 September - 2 October
Holiday Day Inn Greentree

Name as you want it on name tag

Spouse or other attending

Other attending

Other attending

Your address

Telephone

e-mail

Your unit

Place and date of capture

Point of liberation (circle) - Oflag 64, en route, Luckenwald, Hammelburg,
Nurnburg, Moosburg, Odessa, Other _____

+++++

Registration fee - \$125 per person; number _____ \$ _____

Canterbury Dinner Theater - \$49 pp; number _____ \$ _____

American Heroes Tour - \$60 pp; number _____ \$ _____

Total \$ _____

Make check payable to Rev. Edward J. Alexis and mail to 719 4th St.,
Beaver Falls PA 15010-3001 no later than 8 Sept.

**Reminder - you must make your own hotel reservations, also due by 8
September. See reunion information sheet.**

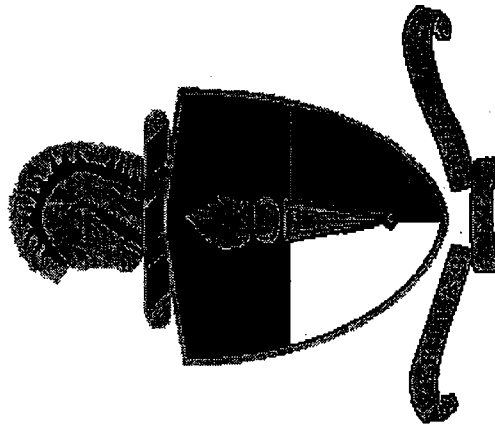
COLONEL JAMES (NICK) ROWE
FEBRUARY 8, 1938 - APRIL 21, 1989

Colonel James (Nick) Rowe was first and foremost a Special Forces Officer. He was a West Point graduate. He was a former POW, having suffered for five years at the hands of the North Vietnamese captors before escaping and making his way back to U.S. Forces on his own. He was a teacher in that he founded and taught the U.S. Army Special Forces Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape (SERE) Program which trains military of all branches how to survive if they are separated from their forces, how to evade the enemy and make their way back to friendly forces, how to resist the enemy if captured, and how to plan an escape. COL Rowe was a devout Christian and was a real live hero of our times who became a living legend in the Special Forces community until his untimely assassination by guerilla insurgents in the Philippines.

The United States Army Special Forces School at Fort Bragg, North Carolina recognized the need for creating the SERE Program. When they started to look for an Officer to design the course and implement it into operation, COL Nick Rowe was everyone's first choice. COL Rowe was recalled to active duty in 1981 and given the mission to develop and run such a program. His efforts resulted in a program that would leave behind a tremendous legacy at Fort Bragg; a course based on his prisoner-of-war experience. SERE - Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape - is taught at the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School. SERE trains soldiers to avoid capture, but if caught, to survive and RETURN HOME WITH HONOR.

Company A, 1st Battalion, 1st SWIG(A)

MAJ Patterson, Company Commander
1SG Clark, First Sergeant
MSG Welton, NCOIC, Field Training
Detachment
MSG Velasquez, NCOIC, Resistance Training
Detachment
SFC Santiago, Company Operations Sergeant



**SURVIVAL, EVASION, RESISTANCE & ESCAPE (SERE):
Training Soldiers to Survive**

SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

One goal, one mission: Teach soldiers how to survive if they become separated from their unit; to evade a hostile force and make their way back to friendly forces; and to avoid capture. In the event that soldiers are captured, SERE training will have prepared them to resist the enemy's attempts at exploitation, to escape from captivity and to return home with honor.

Level C SERE training is conducted by the JFK Special Warfare Center and School's Company A, 1st Battalion, 1st Special Warfare Training Group. Company A is the only unit in the Army that is authorized by regulation to conduct High Risk Level-C SERE training.

The Army's SERE Course traces its roots to the Vietnam conflict. On October 29, 1963, Captain Rocky Versace, First Lieutenant Nick Rowe, and Master Sergeant Daniel Pitzer were captured in South Vietnam after an intense fire fight. All three endured hardships as captives of the Viet Cong. Versace was eventually executed for his staunch resistance to communist indoctrination. Pitzer was freed after four years. Rowe remained a prisoner for more than five years.

In late December 1968, the Viet Cong, frustrated by Rowe's refusal to accept communist ideology and weary of his continued attempts to escape, scheduled his execution. As Rowe was being transferred for execution, he took advantage of a sudden overflight of U.S. helicopters and struck down his guard. Still keen to his surroundings despite 62 months of captivity, Rowe ran into a clearing, where he was spotted by the helicopters. He was rescued and quickly repatriated.

Guided by his own POW experiences, Rowe developed the SERE Course in the early 1980's. Since its first iteration in 1986, the course's basic intent has remained unchanged. Additionally, in 1998 the Commanding General of the Army Special Operations Command directed that each graduate of the Special Forces Qualification Course complete Level-C SERE training and basic language training prior to being assigned to a Special Forces group.

Opening Remarks MAJ Patterson

**Introduction of Distinguished
Guests and Visitors** MAJ Patterson

Introduction of Guest Speaker MAJ Patterson

Guest Speaker LTC(R) Garris

Presentation of Certificates
LTC(R) Garris
MAJ Patterson
ISG Clark

Closing Remarks MAJ Patterson

**GUEST SPEAKER
LTC(R) HERB GARRIS**

LTC(R) Herb Garris (Ph.D) retired from the United States Army in 1967 with over 20 years of distinguished service. LTC(R) Garris jumped into Normandy, France during the D-Day Invasion of World War II and was subsequently captured by the Germans a few days later. He was held for seven months at various Camps in France, Germany, and Poland. LTC(R) Garris remained in the service after the war, received a Regular Army Commission, and went on to command a battalion in Korea. He served as a General Officer's Aide twice and held the positions of Group XO and G3 of the VIIth Army, and taught on the faculty of the Army Artillery School at Fort Sill. His final active duty assignment was in the Pentagon. Following his retirement from the Army, LTC(R) Garris received his Doctorate in Dec 1973 from the University of Maryland and became a Professor at Central Michigan University. LTC(R) Garris currently resides in Pinchurst, NC.

Roads to Liberation from Oflag 64, Clarence Meltesen, Oflag 64 Press, 810 Gonzalez Dr., 4-D,
San Francisco, CA, 941 32-2221, 3 Edition, 2004, 382 pps. \$25.00.

This book is a high tribute to all of us who were captured, confined, were poorly fed and endured many forced marches in the harsh winter of 1944-45.

It describes two totally dissimilar paths from the departure from the camp at Szubin, Poland on 21 January 1945. The main body composed of nearly 1300, began an exhausting and torturous march on foot north toward the Baltic Sea across North Germany to Parchim, and by train to Hammelburg, where Abe Baum led an unsuccessful raid to free the camp, and then by foot and train south to Moosburg and Stalag VIIA for repatriation on 29 April 1945. This route encompassed about 500 miles with severe losses. Then home.

The second path was the enormous escape elements that broke away from the above column on 22 January from Wegheim, and which led to the east through Warsaw, Kiev and to Odessa on the Black Sea by 7 March for its repatriation. The next day we sailed to Istanbul, to Port Said, to Naples. Your reviewer asked permission to return to his unit instead of going home where he remained near Berchtesgalden in the Army of Occupation.

The story is complete with a short summary of the routes from the battle areas like: North Africa, Sicily, Anzio, Salerno, Normandy, and Southern France and the Bulge that led them to Oflag 64. Some escapes were tried and worked, others failed.

Survival is the name of the game and he portrays many fine examples in the places mentioned above in which surveillance, evasion, resistance, and escape were aptly applied and with some real success. We had no such formal training in that area but today the Army with its Special Forces School has adopted and teaches these same skills here at Fort Bragg.

Another area that the author touches upon is the references to The Geneva Convention of Rules relating to prisoners of war. There is evidence that the SS and Gestapo did in fact abuse the enlisted men who were forced into hard labor camps.

Oflag 64 is well described in its physical arrangements and the organization within it. We had two senior American officers during the period: Col. Thomas Drake taken in North Africa and Col. Pop Goode, in Normandy. Both were exemplary leaders with strong discipline and leadership.

Consequently, morale was high with a good understanding between the leaders and the prison population. Out deep appreciation goes out the Mr. Henry Soderberg, now deceased, who was a senior representative of the International YMCA. He, in his position, brought to the camp many library books, dramatic and art materials, musical instruments and scores, and athletic equipment for our avocation. The tremendous work of the chaplains assigned to us was invaluable to provide: weekly services, proper funerals, and always someone to hear our problems. Another group that had a great effect on the

camp life and search for a cure to the boredom were the well educated list of linguists on our rolls, so well trained and able to teach, translate and interpret, who organized a group of language classes. We attended regularly and while we never became very fluent, it was a step ahead and one that paid off the reviewer immensely during my final tour of duty in Germany in the early sixties that made that tour very pleasant. They assisted in daily translations of The Volkischer Beobachter into English for our bulletin board. In addition, we decided we wanted a newsletter and created one with German civilian assistance and called it The Oflaci 64 Item, which is still in existence since 1943 and is now a quarterly. Of the five editors there are two still living, one of which is the reviewer. A great part in the prisoner of wars existence was the Red Cross Parcel. Initially they came with some regularity about once a week, but as the war became more intense it began to dwindle down to very few at all. They were essential and a most welcome gift to us. Mail had the same problems with slow delivery and often it was found unopened and unread. Earlier a message of our status did reach our parents, but it too soon diminished later on.

Thank you, Clarence, for this masterful presentation. It is a splendid story of so many recognizable memories and told in such a scholarly style. All POW's will enjoy it and it is worth reading even with some emotional feedback, now and then.

It is highly recommended to College ROTC libraries and military libraries. Our deep appreciation for a job well done!

Respectfully submitted

Herb Garris, 295-6290

ORDER FORM FOR ROADS BOOKS

Roads to Liberation from Oflag 64-3rd Edition

Enclosed is my check for \$..... forcopies of

ROADS TO LIBERATION FROM OFLAG 64-- 3RD EDITION
AT \$ 25.00 PER COPY.

Mail to: Clarence R Meltesen
810 Gonzalez Dr, Apt 4-D
San Francisco, CA 94132

Contact Points: Terry Shima (301-987-6746; ttshima@worldnet.att.net)
Thomas Mukai (703-751-1550; tmukai@scitor.com)

NISEI PROJECT AT NATIONAL WWII MEMORIAL DEDICATION SMASHING SUCCESS

Over three thousand visitors streamed through the Japanese American Veterans Association (JAVA) exhibit at the WW II Memorial Dedication festivities in Washington, D.C. from May 27 to 30, 2004. JAVA, headquartered in Washington, D.C., is a nation-wide organization of Japanese American veterans of all wars.

Students, academicians, military personnel, government workers, tourists and other interested folks viewed the JAVA display that depicted the evacuation and internment, the roles of the Varsity Victory Volunteers of Hawaii, the 100th Battalion and 442nd Regimental Combat Team (RCT), the Military Intelligence Service, Nisei members of the Women's Army Corps (WAC) and the Presidential review of the 100th/442nd troops.

Items for the display were contributed by various Japanese American organizations, including the 442nd Veterans Club, Hawaii, the 100th Infantry Battalion Veterans, Hawaii, the Go For Broke Educational Foundation, and the Japanese American National Museum, Los Angeles.

JAVA's theme for the Memorial Day weekend was Loyalty: Japanese Americans fought the Axis overseas and prejudice at home. JAVA's efforts complemented President George W. Bush's speech in which he specifically referred to Japanese Americans and the heroism of George Sakato, winner of the Medal of Honor. Japanese American veterans were also conspicuously mentioned by Tom Brokaw and Senator Robert Dole in their speeches, too.

WW II veterans and internees were present to describe their experiences.

The Library of Congress Veterans History Project and JAVA jointly arranged a reunion of the veterans of the 100th/442nd and the 1st Battalion, 141st (Alamo) Regiment, 36th (Texas) Division. Three veterans of the 1st Battalion and ten veterans of the 100th/442nd were present. Marty Higgins, Commander of the encircled 1st Battalion, described his unit's seemingly hopeless situation in October 1944 in the Vosges Mountains of France.

Referred to by the press as the "Lost Battalion" because it faced certain annihilation, Higgins recalled his unit's dire situation in being trapped in an iron encirclement by German forces and the failure of two sister battalions to break through to them.

When the 100th/442nd was then committed to battle, Higgins described his unit's elation on being rescued by the Japanese Americans. He expressed his criticism of the Division command for not publicly crediting the 100th/442nd with the rescue at the time and condemned the internment and loss of homes and possessions of the families of the Japanese American troops that had performed so bravely. He told the 100th/442nd veterans "you have spared the US Government the embarrassment of having lost a battalion."

George Sakato, Congressional Medal of Honor awardee, related the fierce fighting over five days in the Vosges and the mounting 100th/442nd casualties that totaled over three times the 211 survivors left in the Battalion when it was saved. Barney Hajiro and Shizuya Hayashi of Hawaii, both Congressional Medal of Honor awardees, also participated in this reunion.

Students and other interested parties seeking material for research projects interviewed the veterans and internees directly. All visitors were provided with literature describing the combat and intelligence contribution of Nisei WW II veterans.

JAVA's 100th/442nd and Military Intelligence Service veterans and internees appeared on the Library of Congress and Smithsonian Institution panels that discussed Japanese American issues such as the Nisei role in fighting the Japanese in the Pacific, experiences as a prisoner of war, internment and enlistment, and dealing with prejudice at home.

At the JAVA Salute to WW II Veterans dinner on May 28th that capped the festivities, JAVA President Bert Mizusawa noted in his opening address that the extraordinary achievements of the veterans and the internees have proved the loyalty of the Japanese Americans. Mizusawa, a native of Honolulu who graduated first in his West Point class of 1979, also mentioned that the extreme sacrifices of the Nisei have been the cornerstone in the earning of the right of Japanese Americans to truly be called Americans.

Marty Higgins, the commander of the trapped Texas battalion, was the keynote speaker. He said: "When I visited the Japanese American National Memorial near the US Capitol Building and faced the wall of over 600 Nisei names chiseled into the granite wall, I had the same chill that ran down my spine on two previous occasions. One, when I visited Punch Bowl a few years ago and the other when I saw the Niseis as they broke through the German lines to save us. 211 survived because of you but I grieve every day for the casualties you took. I felt highly respectful and humbled facing the best fighting force in the United States Army."

END

AN AMERICAN HERO OF THE GREATEST GENERATION

My name is Jay Tucker. My wife, Margo, and I first met Don and Lucy almost 30 years ago. We were a young family moving from Chicago to Detroit with a baby daughter, one on the way, and we knew nary a soul in Detroit. Since everyone here knows Don and Lucy, you've probably already guessed that they took us under their wing and eased the transition into our new life here in Detroit.

When something would break, there was Don at the door with his toolbox. When one baby in diapers became two, there was Lucy at the door helping shepherd Margo and the girls on a shopping excursion. When we were away from our families at Christmas, Don and Lucy shared their home and their family with us; Grandpa John on the violin and Don running to the cellar for another bottle of home made hooch.

We are here today to remember and celebrate the life of a truly extraordinary man. Moreover, extraordinary to each of us in a different way. As a husband, father, grandfather, genealogist, author, photographer, gardener, plumber, and maker of fine wines; to name but only a few. Don had more interests than the Tigers have baseballs.

Don was many things to many people. To me, he was not only a friend, but also a mentor, particularly in my early days at Ford. But most of all, to me, Don was a hero. A bright and shining example of how a man should live his life.

Not long ago, Tom Brokaw wrote a book titled *The Greatest Generation*. A compendium of stories about the men and women who served in World War II.. Stories not just about their war years, but about their lives.

While Don's story was not one of them, it should have been, because Don's life was emblematic of the courage, conviction, character, and humility of all these veterans embodied throughout their lives.

In his book, Tom Brokaw was doing more than just telling us the story of people's lives, he was telling us where to find our heroes, our bright and shining examples of how to live our lives. He was telling us that as a society, our judgment and values are badly misplaced when our heroes are the hitters of 70 homeruns, Oscar wining actors, and billionaire titans of industry. Don Lussenden is my hero, and would have been Tom Brokaw's as well. Can you possibly imagine the courage and conviction it must have taken to survive the Nazi prisoner-of-war camps?

Do you have any idea how much courage and conviction it takes to stand up for an employee, like Don did so many times, and demand justice on their behalf in the face of an angry boss who holds your family's Livelihood in his hands.

Don was not only a man of tremendous courage and conviction, but a man whose heart was taller than his stature. A man of impeccable character, dignity, and grace who asked nothing more from life than to have the opportunity to give more to others than he knew he would ever receive, and that was just fine by Don.

Don's life was never about seeking fame or fortune; Don's life was about doing the right thing. The right thing for his country, the right thing for his family, the right thing for his friends, and the right thing in the eyes of all those whose Lives he touched and he did it well. But Don was wiser than most of us because he knew that the legacy of our Lives is not judged by what we get out of life, but rather by what we put into it.

Don Lussenden, my friend, my mentor an American hero of the greatest generation. So long old soldier, and Godspeed on your new journey.



LUSSENDEN, Donald A., Age 83, June 9, 2004. Beloved husband of Lucy. Loving father of Ken (Connie), Garrett, Debra (Regis) Rusnock and Patricia Smith. Dear brother of Joyce (Jim) Bingman and the late Robert (Sandy). Survived by nine grandchildren and one great-grandson. Decorated Veteran, POW, WWII and wounded in Korea. Recipient of the Bronze Star and Purple Heart. Retired from Ford Motor Company after 40 years. Visitation Thursday 6-8 p.m., and Friday 2-8 p.m. at the Harry J. Will Funeral Home, 37000 Six Mile Road, Livonia. Funeral services Saturday 10 a.m. at the funeral home. Burial at Glen Eden Cemetery in Livonia.

Don enlisted in the Army on December 8, 1941, the day after Pearl Harbor was attacked. After receiving his Commission at Ft. Benning in November 1942, Don was sent to North Africa. He served with Company K, 26th Inf. Regiment, 1st Infantry Division in the Battle of Troina, Sicilian Campaign when he was captured on August 3, 1943. After a short stay in Moosburg 7A and interrogation in Luckenwald, Don was sent to Oflag 64.

Don kept busy at Oflag 64 during the first six months there by working in the tailor shop. In his book Don says, "In the tailor shop I altered the olive drab enlisted men's dress uniforms to fit the individual officers." When the call went out for a book binder to help restore the camp library books, Don volunteered. He became known as "Der Gnome," and spent most of his time in his little workshop in the attic of the White House repairing and rebinding the books. Part of his responsibility in the camp was to conceal and retrieve contraband for the intelligence officers. This contraband was hidden between the walls of the White House which could only be reached by climbing to the peak of the roof rafters and dropping a line down with a "hook" to retrieve the items requested. All of this by a slight, short fellow who was afraid of heights!

On a bitterly cold January 21, 1945, Don and the other POWs joined the long line of German ethnic civilians in the march toward the west and away from the oncoming Russians from the east. The snow was deep and the roads were frozen. The POWs slept in barns and waited in long lines for their one meal of the day. They marched for more than six weeks until March 9, 1945, when the men arrived at Oflag XIII B in Hammelburg.

It was at Hammelburg that Abe Baum and his column of men, tanks and half-tracks arrived on March 27, 1943, to liberate the American POWs. Gen. Patton had ordered that a task force of 294 men be sent about 60 miles behind enemy lines to Hammelburg to liberate what he thought was a group of about 300 POWs. By the

time Commander Baum arrived at Hammelburg with his Task Force, he had lost a number of men and vehicles. He realized that he did not have the manpower or equipment needed to liberate the hundreds of men who were there. Captain Baum invited as many of the POWs who wanted to join him to jump on the vehicles or otherwise accompany his task force back to American lines. Don jumped on a half-track and held on for dear life as the men began to make their way back through the forest to safety. Unfortunately, a Panzer training school was nearby and, hearing the commotion of vehicles, rushed to Oflag XIII B and surrounded the task force and POWs. After several attempts to escape, several vehicles were blown up and many of Baum's men and the POWs were either killed or wounded. The rest of Baum's men were captured and marched back to camp along with the other POWs. Abe Baum, himself, was wounded and captured. A few days later, on April 4th, the POWs were put on trains to Nurnberg. Three days later they were on the march again, towards Camp VII A at Moosburg, just west of Munich.

On April 29, 1945, the American forces liberated the POWs in VII A. Shortly afterwards, Don and the others were flown to Camp Lucky Strike, fattened up and debriefed, and placed on ships for the ride home.

After returning home from the war, Don took advantage of the G.I. Bill and enrolled in school. He graduated from Wayne State University in Detroit and enrolled in Graduate School at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. During this time he married, returned to work at Ford Motor Company, where he worked for 40 years until retirement, and built a house in Ann Arbor. In 1950, he was recalled to service (pulled right out of Graduate school) and sent to Korea. Don was wounded in October 1951, and later returned home to raise three children.

Don's marriage ended in divorce in 1961, and he was given custody of his children, ages 10, 6, and 4. He met Lucy while they both worked at Ford, and they were married on January 20, 1962. Lucy's daughter, age 6, fit right in with Don's three children. They moved into their present home in Livonia in 1963.

Don suffered from many illnesses. He was diagnosed with sleep apnea and diabetes in about 1980. Gradually the diabetes led to many other medical problems, such as heart disease, neuropathy, circulatory problems and glaucoma. He was hospitalized on May 25th for the removal of an ulcerated, malignant colon polyp. He seemed to be doing very well and was given solid food to eat on May 31st. Unfortunately the next morning the doctors felt that Don was having respiratory problems and intubated him. A combination of being intubated and receiving so many medicines, including morphine, finally led to the failure of Don's kidneys and heart at 5:20 a.m. on June 9th.

Don was a good and kind man who was loved by many. He enjoyed a wonderful life together with Lucy. He and Lucy traveled widely in the United States, Canada, and Europe with their family and friends. A beautiful tribute was given by one of his young friends at Don's funeral. Don will be greatly missed by his loving wife and family, including our Oflag 64 family. His absence will be felt in the hearts of many.