

## 2004 Oflag 64 Reunion Report

by Jerry Alexis

When I attended my first reunion in Louisville, I thought, “Boy, I’d sure like to host a reunion in Pittsburgh.” It wasn’t until the Columbus reunion two years ago that I got up enough nerve to extend the invitation. Am I glad I did!

It was a wonderful experience for me and the comments of those who attended expressed the same sentiment. The majority had either never been to Pittsburgh or had been years ago when it was “the smoky city” and “hell with the lid off.” Many remarked how interesting, beautiful, and friendly the city is. Our hotel also gave us superb service.

About half our group arrived Wednesday and immediately began reminiscing and reading the memorabilia in the hospitality room while imbibing cokes and our local Rolling Rock and Iron City beer (very moderately, I assure you!) The rest came in Thursday. It was gratifying that no one had to cancel because of the hurricanes down south. We had 40 kriegies and over 50 NOKs and widows. That evening, most of them enjoyed the meal and show at the Canterbury Dinner Theater. This consisted of comical skits telling about Pittsburgh’s history and foibles. They also got a lesson in our language, such as *yuns*, *dawntown*, *Stillers*, and *Am City Beer*.

We had our business meeting led by Bob Thompson after our breakfast buffet on Friday morning. Joe Seringer reported that we have about \$12,000 in our treasury and that it costs about \$400 for each issue of the *Post Oflag 64 Item*. Irv Solotoff, the host of next year’s reunion at Fort Lauderdale, told about some of the arrangements. Rosa DiFrancesco Lee, Doc’s daughter, will be co-host. Pat and Martha Waters invited us back to Charleston in 2006. Four first-timers were introduced – Bud Bolling, Bob Moorhead, Harry Thompson, and Dar Walker. Gene “Bwana” Sharick, a retired director of the Baldwin-Wallace College Choir, came to bring us CDs of “IN CAPTIVITY Competition”, subtitled “Select Chamber Music written by Prisoners of War in 1943”. The International YMCA, which sponsored the competition, found the original scores in its archives a few years ago and sent them to the Baldwin-Wallace College librarian YMCA’s short-story competition. The college’s music department then went to work to perform them in the concert on the CD, which also includes an interesting narrative on the compositions. If you want a copy, send \$15 to Gene at 22 Bauman St., Rittman OH 44270-1602.

Thursday afternoon we all went on a tour of Pittsburgh. It included guided ours of the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hall and Museum and the Nationality Classrooms in the Cathedral of Learning at the University of Pittsburgh. Saturday morning about fifty went on the American Heroes/Laurel Highlands tour.

It included visits to the Flight 93 temporary memorial and Flight 93 Memorial Chapel and the Quecreek Mine rescue site. Along the way, the tour guides also spoke on the French and Indian War sites nearby. This is the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of that war, which was largely fought in southwestern Pennsylvania. Saturday night we enjoyed a three-hour dinner cruise on the Gateway Clipper fleet’s *Majestic*. We sailed on our three rivers – the Monongahela (Indian for *high banks falling down*), the Allegheny (*clear waters*), and the Ohio, formed by them.

Our time together concluded Sunday morning with a breakfast buffet and memorial service. I led it and Helen Chappell was our pianist. Those deceased in the past year were Joseph C. Ainsworth, LTC George Britto, James V. Cook, BG George M. Donovan, Frank Diggs, Robert Eckman, MAJ J. R. Green, William Harlow, COL Nathaniel Hoskot, COL Charles Kouns, Paul D. Lampru, Fred Livingston, Donald Lussenden, Jack Rathbone, Victor W. Renz, John P. Sanford, Roy J. Smith, COL Warren Walters, and Irving Yarock. (If you know of any others, please inform Bob Thompson.)