

NEW MEXICO CHAPTER

Association of
Former
Intelligence
Officers



LTC. CHARLES M. THOMAS (Ret) PRESIDENT
6012 Torreon Drive N.E.
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87109
(505) 821-3314

AFIO NEWSLETTER NOVEMBER 1989

The speaker at the November 28th meeting of the New Mexico Chapter of AFIO was Roland Anderson. Roland was a Technical Sergeant assigned to the Third Division, 15th Infantry, Company A in Italy. He received a Battle Field Commission on June 14, 1944 for taking the Company Commander's place who was killed in action during the break-out at Anzio. Roland was subsequently made CO of the 15th Infantry Battle Patrol Company. He was subsequently captured by the Germans during the Rhineland Campaign and sent to OFLAG 64 in Szhubin, Poland. He told the members a fascinating tale of his escape in January 1945 and his long journey to Odessa, Russia.

The POW Senior Officer directed the POW's to save all the food that they could. He also convinced the Germans to release captured Polish Army overcoats, jackets, and hats, and issue these items of clothing to the POW's. The reason the POW Senior Officer caused this action was that he knew the Russian Forces were rapidly closing on Warsaw and the POW's faced a long, forced march to Berlin.

Eighteen miles was covered the first day of the march with a temperature of -20°F. The march covered 300 miles to Hamilburg in 45 days. 1400 officers departed OFLAG 64 and only 1200 made it to Hamilburg. 200 men died of wounds, escaped or were killed by the SS guards.

Gen. George Patton discovered that his son-in-law, an Infantry Officer, was among those imprisoned at Hamilburg. Gen. Patton sent a 294 man task force to rescue the POW's at Hamilburg which was 50 miles behind the German lines. The task force was stranded at Hamilburg and they too became POW's.

During the first day of the march Roland, a Lt. Wing, and a Polish Army Captain decided to walk away from the march during the hours of darkness, which they did. There was five feet of snow on the ground at that time. These three men walked at night and rested during the daylight hours. They found caches of food on collective farms where food was stored for the winter. Thus they were able to eat and even took cover in the caches. Roland had decided they would head for Odessa, Russia. They made this walk of over 1200 miles without the benefit of a map and depended on Roland's ability of dead reckoning. The three men rode at times on flat cars of Russian trains. They could only ride for

20 or so miles at a time due to the intense cold. They would then jump off the train and start walking again toward Odessa. They finally arrived at Odessa on the Black Sea.

Roland contacted a US General Dean in Odessa. General Dean, in addition to being US Representative for Lend/Lease, was accepting all POW's. The now ex-POW's were "de-fleaed" and given "birthday suit" physicals by Russian female doctors. Roland had fallen from 150 pounds to 110 pounds by the time he reached Odessa.

Roland was truly impressed by the Polish people during his 14 days in Warsaw. The Poles greatly feared the Russians and did everything possible to feed the party of three and share with them the meager food they had. The Polish Captain was invaluable to Roland and Lt. Wing during their escape and long walk due to his ability to speak Russian and German.

Roland, Lt. Wing, and the Polish Captain were given passage on the SS Mariposa to Naples, Italy, along with other ex-POW's. When Gen. Dean found out that General Wing's son was one of the group of three, they were given a large, comfortable stateroom.

The ship docked in Boston seven days later and Roland was sent to a military hospital in Florida. He was subsequently sent to Randolph Field, Texas, placed on sixty days leave and then discharged from active duty.

Our January 1990 Meeting speaker will be Dr. Harry Vanderpool, Chairman of the State of New Mexico Juvenile Parole Board. Dr. Vanderpool's subject will be JUVENILE OFFENDERS IN NEW MEXICO. I have heard this presentation by Dr. Vanderpool and his message is very moving and to some degree even shocking. It is a message that all of us should hear.

Reservations for the January 23rd, 1990, Meeting, 11:30 AM at KAFB West Officer's Club should be made with Milt Thomas at 821-3314 or 6012 Torreon Drive NE, Albuquerque, NM, 87109, no later than 12:00 PM January 22nd, 1990.

MERRY CHRISTMAS

AND

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!!