

# War Cover with a Story

by Amon Carter, Jr.

My favorite cover could tell a long story. In 1945, I was serving with the First Armored Division in Tunisia, and on February 14, 1943, I was taken prisoner by General Rommel's forces. Finally, after four months in three different POW camps in Italy, Austria, and Germany, our group of about fifty American ground force officers was sent to open a new camp in Szubin, Poland, which is in the Province of Bydgoszcz. Air Force officers were kept in separate camps.

The nineteen months in Poland are another story, but I did have a job at the Szubin railroad station, and was able to meet many wonderful Polish people, and have been back to Poland three times since the war. Also, Feltwibel Schopert, one of my German guards, was very nice to me, and he was a stamp collector.

Our mail from home was very irregular because of bombings and the Germans just not delivering it. The illustrated cover is one that was mailed to me from Fort Worth on June 1, 1943. I asked Feltwibel Schopert if he would put a German stamp on the cover and have it postmarked for me. He wasn't exactly happy about doing it because it was against all regulations, but being a stamp collector, he understood why I wanted it. He finally delivered the cover to me with the

cancellation of Altburgund, Wartheland, which was the German name for the town of Szubin. He also told me to hide the cover because of the many Gestapo searches. If it were found, he would be in trouble and be sent to the Russian front, which no German soldier liked to think of.

I kept the cover well-hidden for the next fifteen months, and then in January 1945 the Russians broke through the German lines in Warsaw. Instead of the original thirty officers, we now had more than twelve hundred in camp, and we knew something had to happen because we were only eighty miles from Warsaw and about two hundred miles from Berlin. In about a week, we were all assembled and told

we had three hours to get ready to march to Berlin.

We could carry what we wanted to, but most of the surplus was discarded the first few miles of the march. The weather was terrible, below zero and lots of snow. I ended up with just a cardboard box: In it were my cover, some cigarettes, and a little food.

After about a week of marching west, some of us with frostbitten feet were put on a flatcar with German wounded, and the train headed for Berlin. During the week of marching, we had heard Russian machine-gun fire and actually saw a few Russian planes, so we were glad to get on the train. Every morning, the wounded

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The American Philatelist

November 1977/895

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Germans who had frozen to death overnight were just tossed off the train. On February 5, 1945, our group of about fifty finally arrived in Templehof railroad yards and was immediately greeted by more than one thousand American B-17s bombing Berlin. The raid lasted more than an hour but, luckily, the yards were not the main target that day.

We were then put in another camp with more than fifteen thousand Poles, Russians, Norwegians, Yugoslavians, French, and other Americans. Here is where another German stamp collector helped me save my cover. As we were deloused and thoroughly searched, a German soldier found my cover. I told him I was a stamp collector, and he said he was also a stamp collector. He let me keep it.

In April, the Russians took Berlin and, after ten days with the Russians, I finally made it to France, where I had a French liberation stamp canceled by an APO, and then back to Fort Worth where I had the Win the War stamp canceled on May 21, 1945. After twenty-three months, this cover had finally come back to where it had begun. Every time I look at it, it brings

back many memories, and none of this would have been possible if it had not been for two German soldiers who were stamp collectors.