

"AMERICANS IN ENEMY HANDS"

The POW Experience in Germany and Poland

A journal written by Warren Jones from 9/3/07 to 9/14/07

Monday, September 3, 2007

Though I had planned a full eight hours of sleep the night before departure, true to form and as usual, I got "distracted" with squeezing too many activities into too little time, and ended up with only four hours thereof before the wake-up alarm rang. The shuttle van arrived at 4:40 a.m. at my house to whisk me away to LAX. Check-in for my flight was relatively easy and at 7 a.m. the plane took off for the nonstop flight to Newark, New Jersey airport.

Five hours later I arrived on time at Newark for a four-hour layover before catching our connecting flight overnight to Frankfurt, Germany. It had been arranged that our tour group of 17 would all meet at Newark Airport and fly on the same flight overseas. I've always been comfortable with and partial to retired "seniors," and as I soon found out, the majority of the contingent that were present now were in their 80s and were ex-POWs or spouses thereof, it was fun getting acquainted with them and to briefly get engaged in conversation with them before loading on the plane. Two of the guys were in the same officers' camp as dad was and I showed them Dad's book and the TRACES book chapter devoted to Dad. None of them knew Dad, but they recognized some of the photos from the books."

The 6.5-hour flight to Frankfurt arrived at 9:15 a.m. Frankfurt time. We were greeted by our German escort/guide Andreas Iwanicki, a 46-year-old man fluent in 4 languages, who has been a tour guide to Americans in Europe for 25years. Our group of 17 were picked up by a huge, comfortable motor coach designed for approximately 50 passengers, so it turned out to be pretty comfy for seating. Hartmut, another German man, was our driver.

Our first stop that morning was in the town of Oberursel where we were met by a local historian, Manfred Kobb, who stayed with us as we visited the area of Dulag Luft, the prison camp that was the greatest interrogation camp in all of Europe, mainly used as a gathering/interrogation area for airmen POWs before being sent away and reassigned to other camps after processing. The local historian spoke to us in English (with some assistance from our tour guide) and gave us some insight into the history of the camp that used to stand there.

Upon returning to the bus, we learned that Oscar Richard from our group, after being shot down, had been processed and interrogated here for seven days by the Germans and basically got no usable information from him, little more than name, rank and serial number, as he'd been trained to do if ever captured. This was the beginning of what would ultimately become one of many stories the veterans would share with us.

We were bussed over to another area of Oberursel for "authentic" German lunch at a "Brahaus" restaurant topped off with beer made on-site. I chose the "Grandpa" "entree," as it was called, supposedly a smaller portion, but still WAY MORE than I "should have" eaten. The warm, red cabbage combined with vinegar and sugar had good and different flare to it and the roast pork with boiled gold potatoes were very tasty.

The local historian, "Manfred," was dropped off at his car and we headed on to our hotel destination in the city of Aschaffenburg, a beautifully charming city nestled alongside the "Main" (pronounced MINE) River, arriving around 4 p.m. The main focal point of the town (pop. 70,000) as we crossed over the bridge was a towering four-turret Renaissance era "castle" which I later learned was named Schloss Johannisburg, built in 1605-1614, which now is an art museum.

Our hotel, Hotel Wilder Mann, across the road from the river, was over 400 years old and thankfully has been nicely updated to 21st Century standards. We were quickly checked in and I went out "touring" on my own with video and digital cameras, first walking back to the castle that overlooks the river. It's now been turned into city administrative offices and a museum is what I was told. I huffed and puffed my way up the steps to the castle and captured beautiful vistas on the video cam, then proceeded to walk through an area of "downtown," trying my best to be a good video monitor/narrator, while at times between "takes" I later found I'd not "properly" put the camera in "stand-by" mode and ended up filming lots of sidewalk as I trudged along to the next worthy "film site." A few times there ended up being several minutes worth of sidewalk/street pavement I was unknowingly continuing to "film." Hmmmm now, how interesting is THAT? NOT VERY! (As the old song from The Wizard of Oz goes: "If I only had a brain," well, that suits ME just fine!)

The sidewalks and gathering areas of the streets are laid in fan-shaped patterns with small brick ends, resulting in an eye-pleasing and very smooth surface. I liked them a lot.

The architecture of the buildings was so different from American style, as most roofs are "gabled" and covered with red clay tiles, a very easy-on-the-eyes result, as were most houses and buildings we saw in Germany. And the window boxes of cascading red, pink and coral ivy geraniums filled to overflow capacity were, in a word, simply "stunningg." Every European country I've visited does such an excellent job of displaying flowers from window boxes, unlike most cities in America. The hanging baskets are a starburst of color as they overflow the container from all directions. Again, stunning!

Dinner that night was at the hotel at 6 p.m. buffet style in a private room and the meal was excellent and a dessert of fluffy, chocolate tiramisu, complete with lady fingers and dusted with cocoa powder. Would LOVE to have that recipe! I crashed in the hotel room by 8 in an attempt to readjust my body clock to "local time."

Wednesday, September 5th, 2007

Breakfast was buffet style at the hotel, lots of selection, so I was a happy camper. We were back on the bus by 8:30 and five minutes later we were given the choice by our German guide, Andreas, to stop and quickly take a five-minute walking tour through a farmers market in a huge plaza in front of the castle. Oh, do they now how to grow beautiful flowers, fruits and vegetables! I talked into the video cam that I wish Eloise was here to enjoy this with me.

Thereafter we toured through many towns on Route 26 for 90 minutes until we came to a town at the junction of the Main and Tauber rivers (can't remember the town's name). Along the way I listened to our guide narrate about German history and the tyrannical dictator Hitler who master-planned his rise to "leader" while he brainwashed his subjects with hogwash. Our guide is very interesting and has an answer for anything and everything we ask him. Along the way the scenery was spectacular as we drove alongside tall, thick forests of trees and picture postcard views of Nature at its finest, rolling hills, rich soil growing many crops and beautiful red-roofed

Bavarian-style homes and buildings. Old style church steeples were everywhere. I was in utter awe and happy as a lark with what I was seeing.

The main outline for Day 3 was "Today we travel from Aschaffenburg for the start of a very special commemoration as we join with local German reservists, historians and others and retrace the route taken by "Task Force Baum" (named for its commander Major Abe Baum) in the legendary Hammelburg Raid to liberate the POWs held in OFLAG XIII-B. The raid, ordered by General George Patton, because of fears that the POWs (including his son-in-law) would be murdered by the retreating German Army) was conducted by elements of the 4th Armored Division's 37th Tank Battalion and 10th Armored Infantry. We will travel the route of advance to the retreat of Task Force Baum as they attempted to return to American lines. Unfortunately they were surrounded by overwhelming German forces near Reussenberg with most of the force being captured, including the commander.")

The famed Task Force Baum started its secret mission to go 30 miles behind enemy lines to try to liberate a POW camp at Hammelburg, and over a 30-mile course to Hammelburg some 400 soldiers and 55 vehicles were utilized to try to liberate the camp, which was rumored to have General Patton's son-in-law as a captive at the time.

We were met at the outskirts of the town of Hammelburg by another local German historian, who was 14 at the time of Task Force Baum and had personally witnessed a lot of what went on during the raid. His enthusiasm to share his story was endearing and impressive as this 77-year-old man eagerly shared his story of eyewitness to what he saw and experienced firsthand as a boy living in Hammelburg. Unfortunately both my cameras' rechargeable batteries failed on me when we met up with the old guy, so the day's filming came to an end.

After our meeting with him on the outskirts of Hammelburg, we followed him up further to an area above the city where the POW camp Stalag XIII-C was located. We were allowed onto the campgrounds and were met up ultimately by a young German master sergeant who gave us a very good history of the camp and the Task Force Baum battle.

A lot of the original buildings at the camp are still standing and have been converted to present-day German Army training for active duty soldiers. We heard artillery fire and big bombs going off at times while there for two to three hours. We had lunch in the canteen/snack bar building along with soldiers.

From there we bussed over to an area on the campgrounds dubbed "The International Cemetery" where the remains of many countries' fighting men are buried with headstones printed in the language of the country they hailed from. The purpose of our stopping here was to have a special commemoration and to leave a floral bouquet in honor of the many thousands who died at this camp. Our American tour guide said a few words in memory of the fallen soldiers and asked if anyone else wanted to say a few words. There were two people on our tour who escaped this camp in 1945 and one of them, Martin Jones, from Lawrence, Kansas, who I'd become fond of (as well as all of the participants of the tour) came forward and gave a talk on what this experience meant to him and how his best friend was shot and killed right next to him and he still misses and remembers him. It was pretty sobering and there were lots of misty eyes on a lot of us. I went over to Martin a few moments later and patted him on the back and told him I was glad he could be here with us and that his presence made the trip that much more meaningful to us all, having been in the original play-out as it happened in realtime. Martin thanked me and told me he wish my dad could be here, too, and how honored he was to have

me care enough to want to come and experience this, too. That's all it took for me, as I just couldn't hold it in any longer, and I choked up and tried to keep from breaking into sobs. I was on the verge of complete breakdown coming back to the bus. Another old soldier, Oscar Richard, came over and said he wish Dad was here with me, too, and said "God bless you." I returned the same words to him and thanked him. It was very difficult and I didn't think I'd get this "touched" emotionally so early on Day 3 of 12. I can only imagine what it will be like on Day 8 when we're at OFLAG 64, Dad's camp. I'm tearing up pretty much already, just writing this.

I sat alone in the back of the bus trying to regain my composure, but the enormity of being a small part of this experience, not even beginning to comprehend how horrendous those days were, and here I was many years later in peacetime, being educated and humbled by meeting men who "were there" and lived, ate, breathed it and survived it to come here to tell their tale, write their memoirs and come back here probably one last time to relive, in a better world now, what back then had to seem like The End to them.

I've gotten very attached to these guys and it's just such an honor and a privilege to be in their presence and to get to know them.

They all have to be at least 80-plus and I've heard a few are 85 and 88 some of them walk just as nimble as if they were 15! We are amazed at some of these guys. An 85-year-old widow of an ex-POW of OFLAG 64, Marcia Kanners, is on our tour, coming from Michigan, and she has gone to many OFLAG 64 reunions, even after losing her husband 10 years ago. She uses a cane at times, but she knows her history and is sharp as a tack and is planning to travel alone to New Zealand and Australia next January. Some people never slow down!

The 30-minute ride back to our next hotel in Schweinfurt was so beautiful. We are 1400 feet above sea level and the partly cloudy skies were probably the prettiest I've ever seen. The clouds seemed to be so low and ominous-looking, it was just another beautiful paint stroke from the hand of God. It truly was.

Tonight we had a bit of "dress-up" dinner in the Hotel Mercure again along the Main River. We toasted the old soldiers, their wives who have loved them, and their fellow buddies who can't be here either by way of ill health or having passed on.

I've made it a point to sit with a new party every meal so far to try to get to know them better and engage them in conversation.

It's been a joyous trip and I can heartily say I'm glad I'm along for the ride.

Thursday, September 6th, 2007

We had a very wide assortment of breakfast buffet items to choose from this morning between 7 to 8 a.m., so multiple trips "back" to the food area were made by me. I really liked the yogurt that looked like gray oatmeal, but it had granola, walnuts and apple in it. Yum!

Our bus driver (Hartmut's), wife, Heidi, replaced him this morning as a one-day substitute driver this morning. She drove us to nearby Nuremberg where we went into the courtyard of Nuremberg Castle, established in 1050, that overlooks the city. Today the video cam was in better shape than yesterday and I recorded conversations and recollections of Martin Jones and

Jimmy Kanaya, who shared memories of their 1940s experience in this city and the war in general. I took lots of footage of that and of the city skyline vista below us.

Then we drove down into the city and had lunch of Nuremberg-style bratwurst and sauerkraut -- delicious!

I finally got a chance to get a cash advance at a Citibank outlet adjacent to the restaurant. The past three days I had no pressing need to have the local currency, "Euros," as each day so far our meals were included as part of the tour. I offered to help Van Maywood on our tour to also obtain Euros at the ATM after lunch. That is when I discovered that I hadn't remembered to take my card from the machine an hour earlier. I'm used to hearing beeping signals from LA ATMs when the ATM was returning your card at the end of a transaction so your attention is drawn to it to retrieve your card. I don't know if this machine beeped at me or I was distracted or my hearing is worse than I realize, but there was nothing I could do about it as the teller stations were closed for lunch and we were due back at the bus in five minutes. I alerted our German guide of this situation, and between him and our bus driver, they were able to make arrangements to contact the bank branch and ask them how we could retrieve it and seemingly, with little trouble, they learned we could return later at 4 and they would have the card ready for my pickup. So later the bus driver drove the tour guide and me backtracking where we'd been at and in 40 minutes roundtrip we were back to pick up the rest of the tour group.

In the meantime, between approximately 1 to 3:30 we were visiting the grounds of the remains of the Nuremberg Nazi Party Rally Grounds in which Hitler was recorded on infamous film footage giving his raging broadcasted speeches to loyal thousands in the Rally Grounds area. We were met by a young German political scientist who gave us a tour of the grounds and a verbal history that led to the building of it, and also photos and drawings of the area over the years. The area in the end of the stadium where Hitler stood now is fallen into decay and is used by skateboarders at play. I took lots of video of his talking to us at two different sites.

Then we were given an hour to go into a portion of the still-standing building that's been preserved and restored into a museum, archiving the history of the Nazi movement in film and photo up to and after the Nuremberg War Crimes Trial. The museum was hauntingly silent, as the only way you could really appreciate what was displayed was if you rented an English language headset that narrated what you saw from room to room. I would have liked more time to do just that, but because of my folly at the ATM earlier, I had to quickly walk through and just view what was displayed without the headset. There was no talking by anyone there that I saw. Very sobering. The rest of those with us could rent the audio headset but I had to cut it short to go back to the bank to retrieve my ATM card.

That deed was accomplished relatively easily with a showing of my passport and a written signature. How embarrassing.

Now we're on our way to Munich two hours away from Nuremberg and have come into some rain on the outskirts of Munich, and we'll be in our hotel shortly and have another group dinner at the hotel and early to bed for a change. Last night I was up past midnight writing the journal, but now I'm done at 6 p.m. today -- yea!

Friday, September 7th, 2007

As usual, this morning's breakfast presented a huge and varied array of selections, the same as every of the other three mornings we've woke up to in hotels. Needless for me to describe it all, and suffice it to say I have pushed myself away from the table after, shall we say, "multiple" trips to the "food court."

We left by bus shortly after 8 this morning for Moosburg, approximately 30 miles from our Munich hotel. Moosburg was where Dad stayed and was "processed in" as an official POW in March of 1943. He was there for only a week before being transferred up to OFLAG 64 in Poland where he remained for another 22 months until January 21, 1945 when the Germans forced the soldiers to March for 20 days in winter's cold to try to evade the advancing allied Russian troops who would surely overpower the diminished-in-strength German soldiers of OFLAG 64 and thus liberate the allied POWs.

That said, the history and Dad's interplay, we visited a museum that's part of an annex of an 800 year-old church. Before entering the museum there were two of our tour group who were veterans of this camp and they were interviewed by a local newspaper columnist before we entered the museum as well. I also was asked to be included in a group picture taken with these two men, representing Dad's having passed through Moosburg as well, and in addition an 85-year-old widow of a POW, Marcia Kanners, was included in the photos, and another survivor of OFLAG 64, a Japanese American man, Jimmy Kanaya of the Tacoma, Washington area.

At the museum we were greeted by a local retired businessman, Mr. Kerscher, who warmly welcomed us and gave us his thanks for coming to visit Moosburg, for if there had not been a POW camp established there, Moosburg would have been destroyed by the Allies much the same as Munich was, just 30 miles away. So because of the POW camp's existence from 1939-1945, holding upwards of 100,000 POWs from nations all over the world, making this truly a world war, no harm ever came to Moosburg as far as the effects a world war could have brought otherwise, such as bombs, gunfire and wounded and deaths.

We were talked to by Mr. Kerscher for nearly an hour, through translation from our German guide, Andreas, as he recited the camp history and the role it played. The museum contained a mock-up re-creation of the Moosburg camp which occupied most of one room, in addition to many tools and artifacts and creations of the POWs. It's hard to imagine the immensity of the camp that ultimately held 100,000 men, this in a town of 10,000.

Mr. Kerscher also presented an emblem stick-pin to any of us who had a personal connection with Moosburg, as well as a huge Moosburg POW memorial ceramic beer stein/mug.

He also accompanied us in our bus to a neighborhood of Moosburg where we picked up another local man in his 80s, who happened to be an acquaintance of Don Davis, one of our POWs from Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and he then got on board and directed us to a memorial garden and sculpture on the former grounds of the POW barracks, which have now been torn down and redeveloped into single-family homes. We all got out and toured the garden, took pictures and watched Don and the two local German men shake hands and pose for more pictures.

All of us then rode to the outskirts of Moosburg to a former international cemetery where we were told many POWs were buried, mainly Russians, as they were treated less kindly by the Germans, since Russia was not a member of the Geneva Convention, so they got less desirable food and no mail or Red Cross parcels.

We heard a story then by Mr. Kerscher as he told us of how, as a teenager, he remembers every day horse-drawn carriages carrying caskets from the camp to the cemetery, and that many years ago all the POW remains were exhumed and sent back to their country of origin.

At 11:30 we stopped at a popular local brat house and had more brats and sauerkraut and a beer, then both of the local Germans bid goodbye at 1:15 and we drove thereafter to Dachau concentration camp 30 minutes away.

Dachau was the first concentration camp in Germany and was opened up under the guise of "reeducating" the Jews to become better public citizens, when in fact of course we know the weak did not survive as they were beaten, tortured, starved and worked to death. At Dachau we were met by a young Jewish man, Avi, from Israel who has lived in Germany for five and a half years. He and Andreas shared speaking duties over the next couple hours as they recited facts and statistics about the camp and walked us through a museum housed in the former administration building that served as a processing center for new arrivals who had made it through the guards' initial selective process of separating the weak from the strong. The weak were not processed but instead brought to a room where they removed all clothes and glasses and led into a large room, being told they were going to have water from above fall on them and shower them clean, only to end up being gassed to death instead.

Avi and Andreas gave us lots of information between 2:30 and 3:30. Then we watched newsreel in silence as a 20-minute movie played in a large theater-layout room, showing actual photos and live footage of this camp in the WW-II era.

From there we walked through a reconstructed barracks where the victims/prisoners stayed. Army-like strict bedding rules were enforced, such as tucked corners on the beds, pillows with lined stripes had to be matched up perfectly with the lines on the sheet and blanket. Any infraction could lead to 25 lashes with a bull whip, and the victim had to shout out and count in order each lash, and if they mixed it up, the counting started over once again at "1." Alternatively the guards would tie your wrists together from behind and then hang the person on a peg by the wrist in the air for an hour until they either died or were weakened sufficiently enough that they never came back from the permanent injuries they'd received.

The barracks were divided into two main opposite wings, each 100 meters long and ten meters wide. Triple bunk beds were stacked end to end in one room, a row of storage cabinets and wicker stools stored the inmates' meager possessions, and one room in each wing for washing up. At one point prison records show upwards of 2,000 people lived in each wing when it became overpopulated.

The initial grounds one walks onto upon entering the entrance to the camp is a wide-open space akin to probably like 500 yards deep by 300 yards wide. The infamous crematorium area was at the far end of the camp which was so far away, we couldn't see it. It was decided we'd spare the old folks the long walk to see that, as we would be seeing similar at a smaller camp in a few days.

We returned home by 5, then had group dinner at the hotel from 6 to 8. It's now 9:35 and I am pooped. One long day, but one definitely to remember!

Saturday, September 8th, 2007

Today we had buffet breakfast again between 6:30 and 8:00 as we have on all days of the tour, and we were on the road again by 8:15. We had been staying the last two nights out by the Munich airport, so this would be our only chance to see Munich itself.

We were met by a young tour guide, Harald, at 9:15 and he stayed with us on the bus till 11:30 as he narrated on the bus microphone what we were seeing as we drove by it.

We made one 30-minute stop at Schloss Nymphenburg (or (Nymphenburg Castle) which was originally built to give thanks to God in 1664 for delivering a male heir to the Bavarian royal family, after 12 years' marriage and no male offspring. The king promised God he would build a palace/castle in thanks if God helped him produce a male heir. Footage of it is in my film. It's now been turned into an art museum. It is a MAMMOTH 3-story structure with four huge side pavilions added later. The tour guide said the grounds in the back courtyard extended 300 meters, longer than three football fields!

Then we resumed touring and drove by the site of the 1972 Olympics and corporate home of BMW as well as nightclub area and ritzy shopping avenue.

Ultimately we parted with the guide at 11:30 and we all walked a few blocks to the Hofbrauhaus, a famous tourist attraction restaurant built in 1896. It offers typical regional German food and liters of beer, dumplings, rolled stuff cabbage leaves, many kinds of sausages, mustards, spaetzel, mashed or boiled potatoes and, of course, sauerkraut. It was so-o-o good!

The ambience of Hofbrauhaus is best captured on video, and also camera, but I'm glad I had the video cam as it picked up the "flavor" and pace/rhythm the place operates by. I walked around the restaurant and videoed as the live polka band decked out in shorts, Alpine hats, and lederhosen, playing famous German songs everyone sang out in chorus to. I'm sure those segments will be fun to review on tape again.

There's so much to see and explore here, I'd definitely like to come back here some day, but not during Oktoberfest beer festival two weeks from now when this city of 1.1 million explodes into 6.1 million people who all just wanna have fun. I don't think I'd do well in all that craziness.

By 1:30 we were greeted by our bus again and resumed our trip north to Chemnitz, Germany for a drive five hours north. We checked into the hotel at 7:15 in Chemnitz (former East Germany) and had group dinner at 7:45. Food was another buffet. "Help yourself!" Oink!

The scenery was beautiful as we drove the last four days. Yesterday we saw our first fields of hops which are vines that grow on 50-foot-high trellises which are ultimately used in making beer. It takes six months to grow and produce. The rural areas prove to be quite heavily agricultural. Many fields of corn and beans, even new winter wheat just starting to poke through the bare ground that will be harvested late October for the livestock. Munich has one of the mildest winter weather you'll probably ever experience from what our guide told us. Imagine planting crops this late in Minnesota/Iowa? Got to hit the hay. It's 9:45 -- pooped!

Sunday, September 9, 2007

Our overnight hotel in Chemnitz, Alte Spinnerei, proved to be comfortable and has an interesting history in that it used to contain a parachute manufacturing company and later an underwear manufacturer, now converted to a comfortable hotel. Breakfast was the usual all-you-can-eat

buffet. On the road by 8:30 to visit nearby Colditz, Germany or "Colditz Castle," which was a POW prison camp for "difficult" POWs who had escaped other camps and been recaptured, also known as Luft Stalag XIV-C. It sits above the small town of Colditz and was originally built in 1054, burned in the 1500s and was rebuilt in 1600 sometime and was occupied by Sweden, Denmark and Germany over the centuries. The hour tour was conducted by a lady in her 40s whose father had been a German POW captured by the Allies for a short time and let loose very shortly thereafter since he was a young man of only 18.

We were told the castle housed British, Polish, French and Australian soldiers and we viewed a typical prisoner cell with metal-frame bed and mattress and original World War II German storage locker with an authentic old Red Cross cardboard parcel care package box. Then we proceeded to other rooms with various photo displays of WW-II POW artifacts.

From there we went to an adjacent outside entrance through the courtyard into the chapel area where we were shown a tunnel that was dug through the floor and down over through the underground of the chapel and hopefully to end through to the other side of the prison compound and to freedom.

We also saw a one-third-size mock-up of a two-man glider plane that had been secretly constructed behind a false wall that, with proper timing and watching of guards' inattention to "guarding," a signal would be given by the prisoner network that it was safe to try the escape. But it never happened, as Americans liberated the camp in April 1945 so it never got a chance to be tested. It was a very interesting couple hours.

Lunch was at a truck stop McDonald's, of all places!

Then we got word from our tour guide he'd like to cancel the side trip to Zagan, the camp which "The Great Escape" movie from the '50s with Steve McQueen was about. We were told there's really nothing left there now anyway to see, so he suggested we take an alternative hour stopover in Dresden, which had been severely bombed at the end of the war, decimating a city of centuries'-old buildings. What we did see was very awesome, however, as we saw museums, opera house and Catholic church that still stands, displaying years of grime (soot build-up) on their exteriors. Our guide escorted us around the exterior of the contiguous buildings and gave us history talks along the way. Awesome Baroque architecture and great photo opportunities!

Left Dresden in an hour and proceeded to the Polish border where we waited 45 minutes to get 19 passports cleared by border guards for passage for a day in Poland. There's a very noticeable difference between Germany and Poland.

The Polish roads are BUMPY AS HELL, a more flat landscape and shoddy-constructed buildings. I'm not impressed, nor was Dad in his book. We will be spending the night in Poznan, Poland (pop. 600,000) tonight, two hours from OFLAG 64. I have to fine-tune my words tonight after dinner for tomorrow's memorial service at the camp. 11 and a half hours from hotel to hotel today, approximately 10 hours driving. Arrived at Poznan and checked into the brand-new posh Andersia Tower Hotel, opened for two weeks, at 10:30 p.m., had good dinner and got to the room at 11:45.

Monday, September 10, 2007

Woke up at 6:30 and made sure both the digital and video camera batteries got fully charged overnight, as I knew I'd probably come close to using all the energy of them both on this OFLAG 64 POW camp tour today. I took one more scan of the hotel room and bathroom with the video cam, as this room was by far the most opulent of all so far on the tour, with flat screen TV built into the wall, beautiful king-size bed with the most comfortable pillows and sheets I ever slept on. The sheets were probably a high threadcount weave that isn't usually in my budget, but I think I may go shopping for sheets when I get home. I hated to even wrinkle them but I did, of course.

The bathroom was separated from the bedroom by a clear glass wall and a glass door that opened in or out. The sink was a big bowl and new-fangled plumbing handle that sprayed a waterfall over the backsplash and mirror the first time I moved the handle. I quickly learned you barely needed to flip the handle to get just the right flow. The shower stall floor was even with the rest of the bathroom floor and had a slightly frosted half-stall glass wall to deflect shower splash into the rest of the room. The showerhead was like a big mushroom head that gently rained multiple rivulets of water on you. I used the hotel's complimentary shower gel in a mini-bottle and I twisted and pried the cap there in the shower for probably five minutes until I discovered the cap just popped/pulled off to open it. It's the "Polish" way of doing things, I guess.

Also the bathroom had a TV speaker in it so you could be in touch with what was playing on the tube in the living area, too. The clear glass panel between the two rooms I had thought initially was very poor design, but elegant, as privacy was no longer a "given" with a clear glass wall. Well, the more I snooped around, I discovered three flat panels of floor-to-ceiling curtains tucked away in the bathroom corner, so privacy was restored after all. I filmed all this on video.

Also had a built-in ironing board in a closet with iron as well. Our guide told us in high season our rooms rented for \$500 a night, but last night it was 300.

Breakfast was the usual multiple choice buffet again. It was funny listening to all the old folks' versions of how their adjustments to their rooms were last night at breakfast. One guy, Van, from Baton Rouge, who somewhat resembles Dad, is so alert and a wise-cracker at age 85, he had us all laughing when he told us about the room he shared with another 88-year-old guy, Oscar, also from Baton Rouge. They had a room similar to mine but had NO PRIVACY CURTAIN in their bathroom. We thought he was mixed up, but our co-tour guide inspected later and confirmed he was right. The grandson of one of our OFLAG 64 vets, Ed Graf, walked head-on into his glass door in his room in the middle of the night as well. It was nice but ALL NEW TECHNOLOGY to us all.

So now we're on the trip to OFLAG 64, a two-hour drive from Poznan, Poland. It's another cold, gray, overcast day with enough drizzle to occasionally run the windshield wipers. A gray day just like this makes everything in the landscape more drab than it stands on its own, so I took no bus video this morning, wanting to preserve as much battery time as I could for the camp.

Around 11:15 we met up with four local historians from the Schubin museum who gave us information on Schubin and its ties to OFLAG 64. The museum had three main rooms of display cases of OFLAG 64 artifacts, books that were written and donated by former OFLAG 64 POWs, and a big wall map that showed adjacent towns that Dad passed through initially on the 20-day March in January-February, 1945. I believe there was a newspaper man there, also, who took many digital photos there and later at the camp. I signed the guest book, making mention that

Dad had been a POW there from June 1943 to January 1945 and thanked them for keeping the OFLAG 64 story alive.

The three museum personnel, the photographer and a farmer historian got on our bus then and we drove probably ten blocks to the camp.

The entrance to the camp fronts right on the main street of Schubin on the south end of town. At the main street entrance to the camp there's a tall maybe 50-foot-high obelisk-type concrete monument with a depiction of prisoners behind bars carved into the stone. The four of us "survivors" (two actual POWs and Marcia and myself) had our pictures taken together in front of it and also along with other POWs from other camps on tour with us.

The White House (German administration and POW camp personnel officed there, including Dad, I believe, as the "camp clerk," if I interpret his writings correctly) was the first building off of main street as you entered the camp. Our local Schubin tour guide gave us a tour of what's left of the grounds behind the White House where the POW barracks once were, three of which have been converted to other uses now, a tool shop being one, apartments in another, and an original red-bricked barracks that's got windows knocked out and high grass and weeds around it. Ed Graf knew there was a tunnel being constructed from one of them and he thought it was this neglected forgotten barracks. Jimmy Kanaya, an 88-year-old POW from this camp, told of how their camp commander made them exercise two times a day and walk the perimeter of the camp to stay fit, but he said he didn't have energy for it as he was always hungry.

Ed thought the mess hall was in the basement of the White House but the farmer historian said, no, that it and the canteen were in an adjacent 4-story building (which is now a detention home for juvenile delinquents). The White House and its 3-4 stories looks abandoned. One latrine building still stands near the run-down barracks building. Hopefully the video and my narrating will depict it more concisely for posterity.

When nearing the end of the tour, it was the "call of nature" that had me nervously wanting to get back to the bus and tend to "business," and I unfortunately omitted and forgot to mention on the video any memorable note of recognition or commemoration of the significance of this day, that being Dad's passing on this date in 1999 and me being here in his honor on that same day. Am disappointed I didn't record something verbally with a little speech of recognition. It was bad timing, poor drizzly weather and a drive to get back to relief and warmth in the bus that's to "blame."

From there, we bussed to the abandoned railway station where Dad probably arrived at, if I remember his transportation mode of original arrival at Schubin. A few of us got out to take photos. The railroad doesn't run through Schubin anymore, so the station there is abandoned as well.

We then dropped off our local historian and guides, but not before some of us made an approximate 50 Euro donation to the museum.

Then we left Schubin around 2 p.m. to go to a nearby town for lunch where our tour guide bought lunch for the 19 of us. We were back on the road to Berlin by 3:30.

There was no good opportune time today to have any of us OFLAG 64 people say any words of remembrance, due to weather, noise from the street at the monument near the entrance, and a

non-desire to have the "talk" on the bus. So it was decided, weather permitting, when we have a wreath-laying at the British Commonwealth POW cemetery two days from now in Berlin, that's when us 64ers will have our "say" as well.

Pretty gray wet day on the road to Berlin. Lots of thick forested areas close on either side of the highway, tall mature red pines, spruce and white birch trees. It's unknown if these are naturally-growing or were specifically planted many years ago. Lots of flat farmland, what looks like beets, withered potato plants, winter wheat and field corn, groves of apple orchards close to harvest time, but have seen no hops vines like we did in Germany.

Ed mentioned he'd not seen one sign for a golf club anywhere here or in Germany. He's right. I haven't, either. Arrived at our Berlin hotel around 10 p.m. and had another buffet dinner waiting for us. To bed at midnight.

Tuesday, September 11th, 2007

No wake-up call this morning for a change. We're at a sister hotel to the one we stayed at in Munich, the "NH Hotel," so no new bells and whistles like we had in Poznan. Had another buffet breakfast and got a city and subway map from the hotel clerk to familiarize myself with where we are in relation to the airport and city center and points of interest. We're a couple blocks from a subway line and an all-day ticket costs around \$10 for unlimited bus/trolley and subway riding. I'm pretty familiar and confident how to get where I want to go on free time by subway now.

At 10 we bussed down to a major shopping street in the City Center, Kurferstandam, and were set loose on our own between 11 and 1:15. I strolled up and down the street for many blocks and took many video shots and digital cam shots as well. Went inside a bombed church that still has a segment undamaged, so videoed some in there.

At 1:30 we departed the city (pop. 3.4 million) to go to Sachsenhausen concentration camp about 40 miles away. It was one of the earliest camps built by the Nazi regime, started in 1932 for political undesirables, then branched out to homosexuals, gypsies, homeless, Russian POWs, and ultimately Jews. It was supposed to be a "work camp" but in reality it was a death camp.

We were met by a camp guide and he showed us on a projected image on the wall what size the camp originally was, in the middle of the town of Sachsenhausen, and a few years later it was relocated to the outer fringe of the city, then in 1938 it was increased probably four times more.

We saw the assembly area where prisoners were counted multiple times a day. If anyone was missing, the other prisoners would have to stand in formation for eight to ten hours in the cold of winter as punishment for a possible escape. We were told of the electrified 300-volt barbed wire barriers and eight-foot tall cinder-block walls, shown the many guard towers as well.

We saw Barracks 39 and 38 that are the only two still-standing intact barracks as well. We toured one of those living quarters (barracks) for this male-only camp and were told one room was for sleeping, designed originally for 78 men in three-high bunkbeds, and later that number increased to 200-300. The next room was called a day room which was totally open for roaming around after awakening. The next room after that was a sunken multi-stall (but wide-open) area along one wall where you could probably stand and ladle water over yourselves for a semblance

of bathing, and two adjoining round wash stations where the men probably washed their face and shaved. The next room to that, right at the entrance, was the urinal/toilet area, probably 8-10 ceramic sit-down squat areas for "No. 2" and maybe eight urinals mounted on the opposite wall. The barracks all had actually two "wings" of identical layout described above, 78 men on either side (in the beginning.)

We walked along a walkway to another building that has been preserved where people were put in solitary confinement and/or tortured in the most inhumane ways imaginable. There were probably 30 of those rooms there. Then outside of that building there were just the outlines in the ground of room dividers of three identical torture buildings, which have been torn down. There were also three long nails protruding from a cross-beam about ten feet tall. Prisoners were tortured and punished by tying their hands together behind their back and have their wrist bindings be suspended over those nails in a quasi-crucifixion mode for approximately an hour, similar to what we were told earlier this week had been done at Dachau. Surely shoulder dislocations and permanent damage had to result from this torture, if not death.

From there we walked to another area where an angled-down pit was dug in the ground and we were told prisoners were shot dead after being marched there in single file. Also for Russian POWs we were told that they would be brought into a "supposed" doctor's office where a POW was greeted by a man posing as a doctor in a white doctor's uniform, and was quickly ushered behind a screen where they told him to press his head back against a measuring line on a partition, and when the POW did that, he was shot in the head from behind.

There were at least four ovens where bodies were burned around the clock. Prisoners were marched into one room, shot pointblank and the next room over were the crematoriums. At one point gassing was experimented with to exterminate the prisoners. Recent excavations near the crematoriums uncovered mass graves of cremated remains, so larger slabs of stone have been placed there on which many small stones have been placed in memoriam, a Jewish tradition we saw in the movie "Schindler's List" at the end of the movie. The saying goes that by placing a flower or bouquet in remembrance, it quickly withers away and is for gotten and removed, but placing a stone there is more permanent and not so quickly discarded or forgotten.

The crematorium/murder rooms have been preserved as far as wood beam room dividers in the dirt and a protective roof has been erected over it to shield it and preserve it from the elements.

We also saw a very tall approximately one-hundred foot monument erected by the East Germans after the war in memory of the atrocities committed there. It had all the various triangle and Star of David symbols on it that various kinds of prisoners were forced to wear.

We were told there were up to 200 police dogs at the camp at any one time as well.

It was a very sobering and unbelievable experience, seeing the remains of it now 62 years later, walking the grounds in peace, and not even beginning to imagine the inhumanity that was practiced like this was normal everyday life for them.

Utterly unbelievable, but very, very real.

We bussed back to Berlin, a very sober lot. Our German guide pointed out a segment of the former Berlin wall (formerly 150 kilometers long) that still stands as a monument to the Wall built in 1961 and torn down in 1989, formerly dividing West Berlin and East Berlin. This segment of

wall has been permitted to be painted on by world artists in memory of that inhumanity visited once again on the German people. This segment is called the East End Gallery.

Crossing a river bridge, it was pointed out to look over the river at a huge sculpture on the river of two human forms maybe 50 feet tall, facing and touching each other, but it was also pointed out to look at the holes in the forms, which resembled bullet holes. This was to symbolize the number of people found dead in the river from bullets over the years, having tried to escape from the East to the West to freedom.

Berlin and Germany have such a checkered past. I'm glad they admit their wrongdoing and hopefully will learn valuable lessons from it forever.

Wednesday, September 12, 2007

We drove into the city this morning for a rendezvous with a local tour guide, Julia, who rode with us on the bus for several hours as we drove through various areas of interest in both sections of what used to be divided East and West Berlin. Our first stop was Brandenburg Gate and we got a chance to get out and take photos. We also stopped at the war memorial, Neue Wache, which memorializes the dead and wounded and victims of fascism from both world wars. It was a statue sitting alone inside the entrance fashioned after the Pieta by Michelangelo at the Sistine Chapel in Rome of Mary cradling Christ in her lap post-crucifixion. The memorial's statue, "Mother with Dead Son," depicted a bowed, cloak-hooded mother cradling her dead soldier son in her lap. There needs to be no explanation of its symbolism. The sorrow is very meaningfully expressed in the eyes, the features on the faces of sadness and death -- a very moving and emotional memorial.

We also drove by the Holocaust Memorial, where over 2700 slabs of concrete are erected on a square block plaza, and there's an exhibition hall underground thereunder. Some people say the stones depict tombstones, others say they symbolize the barracks of concentration camps. I would suspect the exhibition hall would have been very meaningful in its message.

We also stopped for a minute at the former site of the bunker that Hitler committed suicide in that was pointed out as we looked from the windows of the bus. Also another building where an assassination attempt was made on Hitler. It was said there were around 100 such attempts over his reign of terror.

Many government buildings and foreign nation embassies were pointed out to us as well as beautiful old churches and a restored synagogue.

We had about a 30-minute stop at Checkpoint Charlie, the most famous crossing gate between East and West Berlin in the Cold War days. I videoed parts of a block-long wood wall barrier there around a construction site depicting key events in the Wall's history from 1961-1989. There was a big photo of John Kennedy walking with dignitaries and a big crowd during his famous 1963 visit here. Pretty moving and emotional to remember a great president whose life was cut short, who did his best. The world lost a great leader shortly thereafter.

The architecture between East/West Berlin was so different as was evidenced by the bland cold style on the East/Russian-influenced style versus the more creative, modern, pleasant-appearing structures on the West side.

We also stopped for a photo opportunity at the Olympic stadium built by the Nazis for the 1936 Olympics where Jesse Owens, the famous American Olympic black track star, won four Gold Metals, which did not make Hitler happy, since he believed the white Arian to be the supreme race.

From there we went to the British Commonwealth War Cemetery where 3800 soldiers and POWs are buried from World War II. We had stopped earlier at a floral shop to pick up a memorial flower arrangement that had been ordered. We said goodbye to our local guide and proceeded into the cemetery, placed our wreath at the closest tombstones and our American tour director, Gary, made a few opening remarks and then let Ed and Don memorialize their brothers who were shot down during WW-II.

Then it was my turn to speak and say the tribute I had written that was intended to be given at OFLAG 64 two days earlier, but the cold rainy weather and proximity to traffic noise that day just wasn't conducive to a very meaningful time.

What follows is the text of what I said to those gathered with us on the tour that afternoon:

"Earlier this week we were at OFLAG 64, and now also Berlin, and for a lot of us, seeing and experiencing the camp again, and for the very first time, has been a driving force in our lives that brought all of us together here on this tour.

My dad, then 1st Lieutenant Charles Jones, 168th Infantry, 34th Red Bull Division, U.S. Army, of then Audubon, Iowa, was a POW at OFLAG 64 from June 6, 1943 to January 21, 1945 and was captured by the German forces in Tunisia, North Africa, after a three-day stand-off four months earlier on February 17, 1943. He was flown across the Mediterranean Sea to Capua, Italy for three weeks, then on to Moosburg, Germany for one week in March 1943, then on to Rotenberg for two months and finally to OFLAG 64 on June 6, 1943. Nineteen months later, on January 21, 1945, the Germans evacuated the camp and forced the soldiers to march in the cold knee-deep snow. Sixteen days later Dad became too weak to continue and was trucked and taken by train to Lukenwald near Berlin and was liberated by the Russians on April 22nd.

Like you, Dad's experiences there and elsewhere as a POW exposed him to men from all walks of life, each of them coming to the table with a story to tell, a life to share, each of them and you becoming buddies for life, developing unbreakable bonds of brotherly love.

Getting to know a bit from each of you this past week, I've come to hear about and read about your connections to your POW experience. Each one of us here has a story to tell. Some have daring deeds and acts of bravery that could sell big time at the box office if a movie were ever to be made that tried recapturing those real-life real-time experiences on film. I've talked with each of you and read your wartime accounts in an attempt to understand what the life of a soldier was for each of you in our own individual lives.

Getting to meet you, to know you, and learn your stories has given me a greater understanding and appreciation of the roles you played, the sacrifices you and your spouses and families made, and the hardships you could not escape but instead had to do your best to adapt and accept.

My dad wrote a book upon his retirement in 1978 outlining his life from 1913 to 1945, with special emphasis on his experience as a POW, entitled "The Water and the Rock." If he were

with us today (and somehow, in a special way, I feel he really is,) I think he'd like it if I quoted a few of his observations from the book:

"The bonds of attachment between men who shared the totality of battle and the years of prison survival are as the hoops that hold the staves of a barrel in tight containment. They are like the love that grows by going through things together. They are far greater than the strings of ribbons which knits a team or body together in group victory. These are bonds that tied each to the other in mutual survival. No stronger bonds exist."

Each of your lives were greatly interrupted when you were captured, but you all had the same resounding battle cry, and that was to survive, persevere, to know and see your families again and, if possible, to pass on the gift of life to your progeny when your civilian life would one day return after the hellish war was over.

Dad also wrote in his book and said:

"The steady dripping of water will wear away the largest rock. In the journey of life the study dripping of water never ceases. The hard rocks of bad times and depressions and confusions slowly change and wear away. The cliché about "mighty oaks from little acorns grow" could apply to many lives and many things, but it doesn't happen in a day or a month."

Continuing on that theme, over your lifetimes, my friends, you've persevered and overcome your biggest obstacles in the roadway of life. You each have a story to tell of your life's experiences shared with others. Each of us here recognize and salute you for the valor and bravery you displayed in battle and after capture. Under the most dire of circumstances, you lived to tell your story.

My dad had an undying love for his buddies in WW-II and especially OFLAG 64. He always looked forward to the reunions he started attending after his retirement in 1978 and I know he was on a spiritual "high" when he saw his fellow survivor friends once again. I'm sure you know that special feeling I speak of yourself, as you have experienced the same reunions and get-togethers you've had in your lives as well when you see your buddies once again, never forgetting the unbreakable bond.

While at OFLAG 64, Dad worked as camp clerk in the administrative section which, from what I read, was located in the German administration building "White House." I'm sure in OFLAG days that quite possibly he read over at least Jimmy's and Ed's names in his duties dealing with personnel rosters and the like. If he were here with us today, he may not recognize you by face, but he more than likely dealt with personnel matters concerning you.

My dad wrote in his book that while a prisoner of war he often wondered, that if he ever made it out of this alive, what could he do to give back to the world to give back what he had received and to give thanks for getting his life back. One of the things he did for over 20 years was volunteer and man the fund-raising drive for the American Red Cross, as he always felt he owed his life to them for the parcels they got through to him to keep him alive and healthy as possible under the circumstances.

Another major realization as a POW was, at that point, all he had was his life, and he knew he wanted to share and give life to others, so his gift to himself and my mom -- and to give his life

purpose -- was the five children they created when their lives intertwined once again after liberation and marriage three weeks after he returned to Iowa.

I am here today, two days after the eighth anniversary of my father's passing, as my father's representative, and on behalf of my family's and my own personal undying love for my father, to give thanks to you all for having given your best in service to our nation, also to the Red Cross and YMCA who helped you all with care parcels and equipment that allowed you to live to tell your tales and to L-I-V-E LIVE your lives in freedom.

You each made your own personal contribution to freedom in the 2nd greatest war the world has ever known. I salute you for the roles you played, and for those of your buddies you've known or lost or that couldn't be with us here today. You all helped pave the way to a safer world and, from the bottom of my heart, my buddies, my dad and I thank you, one and all. May God bless and keep you as you live out your lives in freedom you fought so hard to restore to the world.

And now may we bow our heads as I ask our Maker to hear us today as we come together from thousands of miles away to go back in time to be educated and reminded of and to remember what our fighting forces did for the world in the name of freedom, so oppression could be stomped out and order restored from chaos. Let us never forget what we have experienced here in Europe the past nine days and to cherish the time we've spent touring, learning and remembering the past.

We came here, Heavenly Father, to allow these fine soldiers to experience one more "Hurrah!" and a reminder of what they went through in those horrible years of war.

We also came to learn from the past and to never forget and to continue to tell the story, just as we have told your son, Jesus Christ's, story for 2000 years.

Through bad times, hopefully good times will always return, so like the steady dripping of water that smoothes out and polishes the rockiest of crags, these old soldiers with us here today come to us highly polished, they've put in their time, and help us to always remember what they did for us and the world.

Thank you, Lord, for a safe journey as Andreas, Hartmut, Gary and Ellie have helped us all have a great life experience and we ask your blessing for a continued safe journey through our return home, and we pray today, as always, in the name of your son, Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray, saying:

"Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespassed against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory forever. Amen."

I spoke for about ten minutes memorializing Dad and quoting from his book and paying tribute to the six WW-II veterans/ex-POWs and said a prayer at the end, The whole ceremony was videotaped by me and also our tour guide took over filming while I was speaking, and also filmed the inside cover of Dad's book and his inscription to me at the same time, where he wrote:

"To Warren, my son, of whom I am most proud and has been an answer to my purpose, I send my love and hopes for as rich a life as he has brought to me. This story, I hope, will give you more insights into your father. May the Lord bless and guide you always. Dad"

It was pretty emotional for everyone and Ellie came over and hugged me and cried. I got through it okay and was better at "holding up" than I thought I would.

We were invited afterwards by our tour director to tour the cemetery at random. It was the nicest, most colorful and well-tended cemetery I've ever seen. The grass was near golf-green quality, only more soft to the tread and totally weed-free. Many perennial flowering plants were planted in a narrow dirt area in front and sides of the markers. It was so peaceful, yet sad at the same time, when reading the markers so many men at age 20, 21, etc. were buried there -- so many lives lost way too early.

Thereafter we drove back to the shopping street, Kurferstandam, and were set free to shop and have lunch on our own. I elected to take the subway back to the hotel on my own schedule rather than have to meet back at the bus after shopping/lunch. I went into Ka/Wa/De department store with the group. It's Europe's largest department store, even larger than the famed Harrod's of London. I believe its nine to ten stories tall and the entire sixth floor is a food court. It's absolutely amazing to see what they offer for sale ready-made, also multiple deli areas and rumored 600 varieties of cheese are offered for sale. I walked around filming and ultimately was told by a chef: "No filming!" so unfortunately I had to shut things down.

I skipped lunch and had fun riding various subway lines for a few hours, transferring here and there. The subway map was pretty easy to understand so I felt comfortable venturing out on my own and made it home in time for dinner with the group at 7.

Thursday, September 13, 2007

Today I opted to forgo the last day's touring. I just wanted to do my own agenda on our last full day in Berlin. The group was going to drive four hours to the north to the Baltic Sea and visit another POW camp that Oscar had been stationed at in WW-II and also visit another concentration camp. I just wanted to avoid eight hours on the bus, although I heard the report, from the ten of 17 who went, that it was a great day overall and especially for Oscar, as he was well-feted by the locals at the former Stalag Luft POW camp.

Karen from Baton Rouge and I took the subway into town, about an hour ride, and went to a museum on the shopping street called "The Story of Berlin." It has three floors of various rooms categorized by time/era in history from Berlin's beginning in the 1200s till the time after tear-down of the Wall in 1989. We spent close to three hours there. English explanations were printed to the sides of the artwork or photos or displayed items. The museum was very well laid-out and summarized well -- in words, graphics and pictorials -- the long history of Berlin.

The most interesting portion was a written history from 1933-45 and then from the time of the Wall (1961-1989). The earlier era started with the famous book-burning in Nuremberg by Nazis of all famous accepted authors. I remember seeing footage in American TV documentaries of the big fire that was fed by books thrown into it by Nazis. The whole floor in this display was lined with spines of book backs laid into the floor, and books strewn on either side of the walkway. Very effective and drove the point and history home.

The exhibit tracked important days' developments by day and month, reciting more and more restrictions imposed on people's lives by the "government." All along, we heard appropriate sound effects, like the breaking of glass depicting the night of broken glass, "Krystallnacht," in November 1938 when the Nazis went around at night and broke the windows of Jews and Jewish-owned businesses. Then there were the sounds of planes overhead, bombs being dropped and the haunting sounds of European emergency vehicle sirens.

We saw German black-and-white film footage of the aftermath of cleanup after the bombing and war was over. I never knew that the cleaning of debris and streets and plowing and replanting was largely done by women, since there was such a shortage of men after the war. We saw bucket brigades of women handing pails one to another, separating good bricks from bad for later reuse, even a circus elephant being used to push wagonloads of debris.

We next saw the time of the Wall and different culture classes that were created in the division between East and West. East German TV shows were completely drab and so different from West German TV footage.

Then came the time of November 1989 when the Wall came down.

Four actual segments of the wall were saved and placed in the museum complete with artwork by famous artists who painted their work on them.

Went through a gift shop there thereafter.

All in all, it was a very moving and well-done museum. Berlin and Germany has quite an interesting history.

Karen and I parted ways for a few hours and I again rode the rails for three hours and saw various areas of Berlin. Met up with Karen at 5 and we got back to the hotel in time for final dinner with the group. Lots of tributes and fond farewells and speeches were given one last time. I was up till midnight writing final postcards, repacking and making sure I got everything in order.

Friday, September 14th, 2007

Woke up at 3:45 after dreaming I came home to open mail from this trip to find someone had stolen my identity and they'd charged \$1800 in my name. It was enough to keep me awake after that. Breakfast at 5:45 and on the airport bus at 6:15 for our 9:30 departure. A bit of a hassle getting through security as I'd forgotten to stow a bottle of liquor with my checked luggage, but Ellie came to the rescue and loaned me a souvenir bag from Dresden and I was able to recheck the liquor separately with "FRAGILE" stickers adhered to the bag.

This trip was a real winner! I'm definitely glad I came! This was a memorable trip not only to fulfill my dream of seeing and experiencing my dad's camp, but also, in the broader picture, coming to know some veterans who were in the same straits as my dad was, and coming more to appreciate in a greater sense just what the war was all about and how everyone pulled together to make it come off as well as it did, to bring order back to the world.