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San Francisco, CA 94132

12 August 1992

Dear Bob:

Received a card that accepted "Schokken to Wugarten" for publication in EX-POW Bulletin. As I told Herb, I hope they don't chop it, but since they handled "Hostages at Luckenwalde" so well I think I should put my fears to bed.

I am enclosing two sample maps for decision of you and Herb. I managed time to copy out of the London Times Atlas the operations map spread of two pages, for the Russian winter offensive. A nice map with arrows going every which way through western Poland. My wife called my attention to the book, a Christmas present from a daughter. Good stuff.

The questions is suitability for Herb's "Grand Tour" and which one? One is a straight copy. The other is a 75% reduction of a 142% blow up of straight copy. While you two are deciding, I will continue a search for coverage beyond Warsaw to Odessa. Possibly the Rand McNally is the best scale for that, but I am looking for coverage of railroads, not just roads.

I'm looking forward to meeting you and Herb at Colorado Springs. A mile high should put a proper touch on the reunion, even if the flight surgeons say lay off the booze and all the good things for the first two days. That leaves us a sayonara cup and I hate sake. We'll find a way.

Sincerely yours,

  
Clarence R. Meltesen  
Lt Col USA Ret

## FROM SCHOKKEN TO WUGARTEN

Clarence R Meltesen, Lt Col USA Ret

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In January 1945 the Soviet Armed Forces initiated their winter offensive by crossing the Vistula River above Warsaw and racing for the Oder River to seize early crossing sites. The German Forces regrouped on the flanks of the penetration. The story of Wugarten is the story of American prisoners of war caught in the cauldron of events as the Germans counterattacked south from Stargard and as Zhukov's armies broadened their front on the Oder River while holding their ground against flank attacks.

A cadre of ground forces officers from Oflag 64, Schubin, Poland were sent to Oflag 64Z, Schokken, Poland in November 1944 to operate a small, mixed nationality camp. Colonel Hurley Fuller was the Senior American Officer (SAO) with staff including Lt Colonel Doyle Yardley, 1st Lt Craig Campbell and others with a small detachment of enlisted men.

Operate is a fiction in terms of a German POW camp. Within the terms of the 1929 Geneva Conventions, the SAO dealt with the German Commandant and staff as to treatment. Food, clothing, shelter, discipline under the German code, relations with the Protecting Power (Switzerland) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) were daily considerations. All such relationships were established and maintained in the context of the political situation in Germany. Of greatest concern was the relationship of the Wehrmacht to the National Socialist government and from June 1944 the ascending power of the Gestapo and the SS units in military matters.

Oflag 64Z was evacuated at the same time as Oflag 64 by forced march evading the reconnaissance screens of the Soviet Forces. Events and circumstances shaped the daily history of such marches. The men of Oflag 64Z marched from Schokken to Wugarten and were then liberated by the Soviet Forces. Their story concludes in Odessa where they were repatriated dockside to members of the US Military Mission to Moscow.

The following route of march of march was prepared from diary notes of Robert Levin. The Polish place names are based upon comparison of a current Hallwag road map of Poland and the 1944 AMS 1:100 000 Map Sheets for Schneidemuhl and Woldenberg.

21 January 1945, Sunday. Left Oflag 64Z, Schokken (Skoki) at 0430 hours. To Buschdorf (Budzieszewko), 8 kilometers.

22 January. Noon meal at Rogasch (Rogozno). Marched 18 kilometers to a Hitler Jugend Camp.

23 January. To Milkawo (Miłkovo), billeted in a barn.

24 January. Marched 14 kilometers, billeted in a warm theater. (possibly Rosko)

25 January. Marched 30 kilometers to Wielen and Filchene (Schloss Filehne). Slept in a cold barn.

26 January. Marched 14 kilometers to Sefchow (Zelichowska) and Selchow (Kuznica).

27 January. Marched 20 kilometers via Wiesental (Przesieki) and Hochzeit (Str Osteczno) to Wolgast.

28 January 1945, Sunday. Marched 19 kilometers via Woldenberg (Dobiegniew) and Brandsheide ~~Wreszin~~ to Wugarten (Ogardy). Total march, 122 kilometers, eight days.

29 January. German commandant left at 0630 hours. Russian forces arrived at about 1030 hours.

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..... 5 March 1945. Moved by truck from Wugarten to Wrzeszin (Wrzeszcyna).

..... 6 March. Left Wrezeszin by rail at 1230 hours in boxcars.

..... 9 March. Passed through Warsaw.

..... 15 March. A ten day ride to Odessa, Ukraine.

..... 25 March. Left schoolhouse in Odessa and boarded HMT Circassia.



Thursday 13th Jan.

Dear Bob:

While it took a long time to unravel the locations of the few small villages that we spoke of, here they are. Polish, first, then German.

- a. Potonov- Eichfeld 16 mi. South of Wyrzsk.
- b. Wyrzsk- Charlottenburg 27 mi. East of Bydgoszcz.
- c. Wirnitz or Smogulec - Wegheim 27 mi. West of Szubin.
- d. Dobiegniew- Woldenburg 85 mi. West of Szubin.
- e. Szcziniski- Stargard 17 mi. southeast of Stettin.
- f. Szczecin- Stettin 30 mi. South of the Baltic on the Oder River.
- g. Wrzesnia- No Change apparently 50 Mi. South of Szubin.
- h. Skoki- Schocken 50 mi. North East of Poznan.

You will find a copy of Clarence's nice letter and one from the National Archives.

Copies of the respective maps are also enclosed for you.

Best wishes.

*Herb*  
Herb

P.S. A COPY (4 SHEETS) OF  
THE TREK FROM  
SZUBIN TO PARCNIM.

## REMEMBERING A CHRISTMAS

Listening to Christmas carols in the lobby of our Club House triggered a memory of a Christmas spent in a POW camp in Schubin, Poland in 1944.

Major Jack Dobson decided we should have a Christmas dinner by combining our Red Cross Christmas parcels. Present were four officers and three enlisted men. Major Dobson, Lt. Lynn Hunsaker and Lt. Patrick Teel were from the 1st Ranger Battalion and Lt. Stanley Peters from the 36th Division. The enlisted men were Harry Sauter and Harvey Warner from the 1st Ranger, and I was from the 36th.

The meal consisted of fried spam and gravy, mashed potatoes, biscuits, chocolate pudding pie and coffee. We thought it was a great meal. I made a menu for the seven of us so that we could sign each other's. Of course, we all took part in preparing the meal. After the meal we gave thanks that we were able to celebrate this event, while hoping that in the near future we would be able to celebrate Christmas with our own families.

It's hard to believe that this event took place over fifty seven years ago.

Bob Levin

## A LONG JOURNEY HOME

During WWII I was an enlisted man in the 36th Division. On the night of January 21, 1944 our platoon was ordered to lead the crossing of the Rapido River below the Benedictine Abbey on Montecassino, using a pontoon bridge built by our engineers. We were the only company to cross before the bridge was knocked out. We established a bridgehead, but didn't receive any more help and, eventually, were overrun.

The Germans took us to the Abbey where they treated our wounds. We were then moved by truck up into the Po valley and then by boxcars to a transit camp in Germany which housed prisoners from all countries. Later, we moved to a prison camp in Poland.

Early January, 1945 marked what was to be the beginning of my long journey home. I, along with a lieutenant colonel, a chaplain, and another enlisted man were assigned to help establish a new POW camp for American officers in Schokken, Poland. When we arrived we were greeted by three American officers along with about 30 Italians--generals, admirals and their orderlies. In a few days we were joined by 90 American officers captured at the "Battle of the Bulge".

About a week later we could hear the Soviet Army artillery, initiating the Russian winter offensive by crossing the Vistula River and racing toward the Oder to secure crossing sites.



On the 20th of January we were told to get ready to march the next day. We divided our supply of cigarettes, pipe tobacco and our limited supply of Red Cross parcels with the new prisoners. At 4:30 in the morning we were issued a half loaf of bread, hot milk, soup, cheese and butter and began our long march. Only eight kilometers the first day over snow that crunched under our boots; but at night we slept in a warm barn.

Over the next several days we covered from 14 to 30 kilometers each day. Our rations, while not inspiring, were adequate. Accommodations ranged from the inevitable barns to a warm theater, Nazi youth camp, town hall and school. Every effort was made to slow the Germans down. They were, of course, in good shape and had an incentive to move rapidly.

On the 28th of January, artillery fire came from every direction. The American officers asked the German interpreter to convince the chief German guard to leave us so that they might proceed faster. The interpreter was told that we would try to get him into American control if he stayed with us. The next day the German Commandant announced his departure, and provided our commander with a paper for protection against other German troops that might come through the area. In four hours Russian forces arrived.

Now in Ogardy, Poland we stayed there for five weeks. Food requisitioned locally was supplemented by a daily ration of vodka --used to clean our uniforms and fill our

Zippo lighters. Well, yes, I do remember drinking with some Russian sergeants. They filled our glasses and gave toasts to Stalin, Roosevelt, and Churchill. I didn't remember anything until the next day.

With the diminishing sounds of combat, which had moved to the west, our evacuation became possible beginning 5 March. By trucks and rail boxcars, and now skimpy rations, we made our way over the next ten days to Odessa in the Ukraine on the Black Sea. And then by a British ship to Naples where the German interpreter was turned over to the Allied Command.

In a couple of weeks we boarded a ship bound for the United States and landed in Boston the day after President Roosevelt had died. To step ashore was a happy ending to an experience that I wouldn't take a million dollars for or would not do it again for a million dollars.

Bob Levin

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A lovely young thing in Duluth  
is actually long in the tooth.

Yes, if truth be told,

She's really quite old,

Having drunk from the Fountain of Youth.

Harriette Corbin