

PFANNENSTIEL, P.O.W.

AS PRESENTED TO THE HISTORY

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*Miss Jol
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MY GRANDFATHER, EDMUND PFANNENSTIEL, JOINED THE NATIONAL GUARD IN 1938, IN SALINA, KANSAS. HE MARRIED LORETTA KUHN ON JANUARY 8, 1940. THEY BOTH WORKED AT THE LAMER HOTEL TO SUPPORT THEMSELVES. IN DECEMBER OF 1940, WHEN THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT MOBILIZED THE NATIONAL GUARD, PVT. PFANNENSTIEL WAS SENT TO CAMP ROBINSON, IN LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS. GRANDMA EVENTUALLY MOVED TO LITTLE ROCK, WHERE SHE AND GRANDPA HAD AN APARTMENT. THEY STAYED IN LITTLE ROCK UNTIL DECEMBER OF 1941.

AFTER THE JAPANESE BOMBED PEARL HARBOR ON DECEMBER 7, 1941, EDDY WAS MOVED TO FORT ORD, CALIFORNIA. GRANDMA JOINED HIM IN CALIFORNIA SIX MONTHS LATER WITH THEIR NEW BABY, PATRICIA ANN, MY MOTHER. MRS. PFANNENSTIEL TRAVELED BY TRAIN AND ON ONE STOP, LEFT BABY PATRICIA WITH A SOLDIER SO SHE COULD GET OFF TO BUY MILK. SHE WAS NOT ALLOWED BACK ON UNTIL THE HELPFUL G.I. CAME OUT TO VOUCH FOR HER.

THEY WERE THEN MOVED TO SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA, WHERE THEY REMAINED FOR 11 MONTHS. THE LIVING QUARTERS WERE SO SMALL, THE BABY CRIB WAS THE BOTTOM DRAWER OF THE CLOTHES CHEST. FROM SANTA BARBARA, EDDY WAS SENT TO LA MASA, FOR ABOUT SIX MONTHS. FROM THERE, HE WAS SHIPPED TO CAMP HOUSEY, TEXAS. GRANDMA JOINED HIM IN TEXAS AFTER WAITING A TIME IN CALIFORNIA

IN THEIR SEARCH FOR AN APARTMENT IN GAINESVILLE, GRANDPA REMEMBERS CARRYING THE BABY WITH GRANDMA UNTIL 2:30 A.M. ON THE DAY OF THEIR ARRIVAL BECAUSE EVERY LANDLORD REFUSED TO RENT TO COUPLES WITH CHILDREN. FINALLY A WOMEN LET THEM HAVE A ROOM FOR TWO NIGHTS IN AN APARTMENT RENTED TO A TRAVELING SALESMAN UNTIL HE RETURNED. THEY MOVED TO A MOTEL UNTIL HOUSING BECAME AVAILABLE. DURING ALL THIS TIME IN TEXAS, GRANDPA COULD ONLY VISIT BRIEFLY EACH EVENING, AND

HAD TO CATCH THE LAST BUS BACK TO CAMP AROUND MIDNIGHT. ON WASHING DAYS, THE NEW LANDLADY WATCHED BABY PATRICIA AS GRANDMA JOINED OTHER MILITARY WIVES ON THE WAGON TO LAUNDRY FACILITIES.

IN THE LATE PART OF 1943, EDDY WAS SENT TO NEW JERSEY FOR ASSIGNMENT OVERSEAS, ENDING THE FEW HECTIC YEARS THE YOUNG FAMILY HAD TOGETHER. THE WAR AT THAT POINT AFFECTED MANY IN EDDY'S FAMILY BEYOND HIS WIFE AND CHILD. HIS PARENTS, MR. AND MRS. MIKE PFANNENSTIEL, SAW EIGHT OF THEIR NINE SONS GO INTO THE ARMED FORCES, THEIR ELDEST BEING TOO OLD FOR THE DRAFT. AT THE SAME TIME, THEIR OLDEST DAUGHTER'S HUSBAND WAS IN THE EUROPEAN WAR ZONE. PATRICIA'S AUNT ALSO FOLLOWED HER HUSBAND FROM POST TO POST.

FIVE DAYS AFTER D-DAY, EDDY LANDED ON OMAHA BEACH, WHERE HE WAS ASSIGNED TO THE 140TH INFANTRY. ON DECEMBER 16, 1944, DURING THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE IN BELGIUM, THE ORDER CAME TO MOVE OUT. EDDY WAS IN THE LAST GROUP TO MOVE OUT OF THE TOWN. UNFORTUNATELY, THE GERMANS ARRIVED THERE BEFORE THEY HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO GET OUT. THEY WERE TAKING SHELTER IN THE UPPER FLOOR OF A HOUSE WHEN CAPTURED BY THE S.S. AND SENT TO A PRISON CAMP IN BAD ORB, GERMANY. CHRISTMAS WAS SPENT IN A BOXCAR ENROUTE.

ON JANUARY 15, 1945, GRANDMA, WHO HAD MOVED BACK TO HAYS WHEN GRANDPA WAS SHIPPED OVERSEAS, WAS JUST ARRIVING HOME AFTER HAVING BEEN SHOPPING. SHE WAS BRINGING TWO ICE CREAM CONES FOR HER NEPHEWS, WHEN SHE SAW A NOTE INFORMING HER THERE WAS A TELEGRAM DELIVERED FOR HER. GRANDMA'S NEXT

DOOR NEIGHBOR HAD RECEIVED THE TELEGRAM FOR HER, FOR SHE DIDN'T WANT IT LEFT WITH TWO SMALL CHILDREN. WHEN GRANDMA'S NEIGHBOR SAW THAT SHE WAS HOME, SHE BROUGHT THE TELEGRAM OVER TO HER. THE TELEGRAM STATED THAT HER HUSBAND HAD BEEN LISTED AS MISSING IN ACTION.

FROM THIS POINT ON, EVERY KNOCK AT THE DOOR, EVERY CAR THAT PULLED UP MADE GRANDMA JUMP, FOR SHE WAS SURE THAT IT WAS INFORMATION ABOUT HER HUSBAND, GOOD OR BAD. IT WASN'T UNTIL APRIL THAT SHE HEARD ANY MORE. THE NEIGHBOR LADIES CAME RUNNING OVER TO INFORM HER THAT SHE HAD A TELEGRAM. DUE TO HIGH WINDS THAT DAY, THE MESSAGE THAT INFORMED HER OF THE TELEGRAM HAD BLOWN OFF OF THE DOOR AND LANDED IN THE BACKYARD. BECAUSE SHE WAS TOO NERVOUS TO DRIVE, GRANDMA HAD A FRIEND DRIVE HER TO PICK UP THE TELEGRAM BECAUSE SHE DIDN'T KNOW WHETHER IT WAS GOING TO STATE THAT EDDY WAS DEAD OR MISSING IN ACTION. AGAIN, IT STATED THAT HE WAS MISSING IN ACTION, EVEN THOUGH HE WAS IN A PRISON CAMP THIS WHOLE TIME. THE GERMANS FAILED TO INFORM THE ALLIES OF THE PRISONERS BEING HELD IN THEIR CAMPS.

THE CONDITIONS EARLY ON IN PRISON CAMPS WERE VERY BAD. LITTLE FOOD AND POOR CONDITIONS PREVAILED. A MESSAGE FROM EDDY FINALLY REACHED LORETTA THAT HE WAS IN GERMANY AND "GETTING ALONG FINE." KNOWING OF HIS WHEREABOUTS, GRANDMA TRIED GETTING A CARE PACKAGE DELIVERED TO HIM. INCLUDED AMONG THE CANDY BARS AND CANNED FOOD WAS A WEDDING BAND. THE PACKAGE, FLATTENED BY THE THOUSANDS OF MILES TRAVELED, FINALLY REACHED EDDY, TWO YEARS AFTER THE WAR ENDED, AT HIS HOME IN HAYS.

HIS BOYHOOD KNOWLEDGE OF THE GERMAN LANGUAGE EASED THE PROBLEM OF COMMUNICATING WITH CAMP GUARDS. HE WAS SELECTED BY THE THREE THOUSAND YANKS AS "CHIEF MAN OF CONFIDENCE" WHICH MEANT HE WAS THE ^{SP Liaison} LAISON WITH PRISON AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES. HE CARRIED THE WHITE FLAG LEADING TWO GERMAN OFFICERS TO THE LIBERATING AMERICAN FORCES.

THE CAMP HOLDING GRANDPA WAS LIBERATED ON APRIL 16, 1945. THE RECORDS OF ALL THE PRISONERS HELD IN THAT CAMP WERE TAKEN BACK TO THE PENTAGON WHERE THEY WERE STILL LISTED AS MISSING-IN ACTION EVEN THOUGH THEY HAD BEEN OUT FOR A COUPLE OF WEEKS. EDDY WAS FLOWN TO WASHINGTON WITH THE LIST OF P.O.W.S , WHILE THE OTHERS RETURNED BY BOAT.

GRANDPA, WHO CARRIED HIS BABY'S PICTURE WITH HIM THROUGH THE WAR AND IN PRISON CAMP, WAS BY THEN SUCH A STRANGER TO HIS DAUGHTER THAT SHE WOULD CRY WHENEVER SHE WAS LEFT ALONE IN THE ROOM WITH HER. SOON THEREAFTER, MANY HAPPY SMILES APPEARED IN PICTURES AND THE BABY PICTURE NOW RESIDES IN MOM'S BANK SAFE BOX.

GRANDPA WAS IN ATTENDANCE ^{at} AT THE GROUNDBREAKING OF APRIL 11, 1988 AND WILL BE AT THE DEDICATION ON MEMORIAL DAY 1988 FOR A WAR MEMORIAL ON THE ELLIS COUNTY COURTHOUSE GROUNDS. HE WORKED IN FUNDRAISING AND IS PROUD OF THIS MONUMENT DEDICATED TO THOSE WHO MADE THE SUPREME SACRIFICE OF THEIR LIVES FOR OUR COUNTRY

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"STALAG 9B"
(Ground Forces Privates
Captured in the Bulge)

Archive

Location Stalag 9B was situated in the outskirts of Bad Orb (50 degrees 14" N. - 9 degrees 22" E.) in the Hessen-Nassau region of Prussia, 51 kilometers northwest of Frankfurt-on-Main.

Strength On 17 December 1944, 985 PW captured during the first two days of the German counter-offensive, were marched for four days from Belgium into Germany. During this march, they received food and water only once. The walking wounded received no attention except such first aid as American medical personnel in the column could give them. They reached Gerolstein and were packed into boxcars, 60 men to the car. The cars were so small that the men could not lie down. PW entered the cars on 21 December and did not get out until 26 December. En route, they were fed only once. Eight men seeking to escape jumped into a field and were killed by exploding land mines. The German sergeant in charge, enraged that anyone had attempted escape, began shooting wildly. Although he knew that every car was densely packed with PW, he fired a round through the door of a car, killing an American soldier. The day after Christmas, the men arrived at Bad Orb.

On 25 January the camp reached its peak with 4070 American enlisted men. The following day 1275 NCO's were transferred to Stalag 9A Ziegenhain. On 28 February 1000 privates left Stalag 12A Limburg, for Bad Orb. They marched in a column which averaged 25 miles a day. On leaving they were given one-half a loaf of bread and a small cheese for the five-day march. No medical supplies were available; men who collapsed were left behind under guard. PW had no blankets and some had only a shirt and a pair of trousers for clothing. Their arrival, plus that of other PW, brought the camp strength to 3333 on April 1 1945.

Description From 290 to 500 PW were jammed into barracks of the usual one-story wood and tarpaper types, divided into two sections with the washroom in the middle. Washroom facilities consisted of one cold water tap and one latrine hole emptying into an adjacent cesspool which had to be shoveled out every few days. Each half of the barracks contained a stove. Throughout the winter the fuel ration was two arm loads of wood per stove per day, providing heat for only one hour a day. Bunks, when there was bunks, were triple-deckers arranged in groups of four. Three barracks were completely bare of bunks and two others had only half the number needed with the result that 1500 men were sleeping on the floors. PW who were fortunate received one blanket each, yet as the camp's liberation some 30 PW still lacked any covering whatsoever. To keep warm, men huddled together in groups of three and four. All barracks were in a state of disrepair; roofs leaked; windows were broken; lighting was either unsatisfactory or lacking completely. Very few barracks had tables and chairs. Some bunks had mattresses and some barrack floors were covered with straw, which PW used in lieu of toilet paper. The outdoor latrines had some forty seats - a number totally insufficient for the needs of 4,000 men. Every building was infested with bedbugs, fleas, lice and other vermin.

U.S. Personnel Pfc. J.C.F. Kaston was Man of Confidence, assisted by Pvt. Edmund Pfannenstiel who spoke German fluently. When Pfc. Kaston was sent out on a kommando working party, the barracks leaders suggested that Pvt. Pfannenstiel succeed him. Pvt. Pfannenstiel refused the post, however, until the barracks leaders had consulted PW in their charge and gained their approval. Subsequently, he was an extremely able MOC. His assistant was Pfc. Ben F. Dodge. Other important members of the staff were:

Captain O.C. Buxton	Medical Corps
1st Lt. J.P. Sutherland	Medical Corps
Captain M.A. Eder	Dental Corps
1st Lt. S.R. Neel	Chaplain
1st Lt. E.J. Hurley	Chaplain

Consistent to the Book

German Personnel Noteworthy members of the German complement are listed below:

Oberst Sieber	Commandant
Oberstleutnant Wodarg	Deputy Commandant
Hauptmann Horn	Camp Officer
Hauptmann Kuhle	Lager Officer
Sonderfuhrer Bonnkirch	Welfare Officer
Gefreiter Weiss	Interpreter
Pvt. Wolfgang Daths	Mess Guard

It was Hauptmann Kuhle who permitted American pw to replace Russians in the camp kitchen and Pvt. Daths who enabled them illegally to appropriate extra rations. Gefreiter Weiss, at great personal risk, informed the MOC as to the progress of the war and daily located the position of advancing American troops on maps which he smuggled in to the American PW.

After a 23 March 1945 visit the Swiss Delegate reported, "In spite of the fact that it is difficult to obtain any kind of material to improve conditions, it is most strongly felt that the camp commander with his staff have no interest whatsoever in the welfare of the prisoners of war. This is clearly shown by the fact that although he made many promises on our last visit, he has not even tried to ameliorate condition and is apt to blame the Allies for ~~their~~ these conditions due to their constant bombing

Treatment In a report describing Stalags 9A, 9C and 9B, which he visited 13 March 1945, the Representative of the International Red Cross stated, "The situation may be considered very serious. The personal impression which one gets from an inspection tour of these camps cannot be described. One discovers distress and famine in their most terrible forms. Most of the prisoners who have come here from the territories of the East, and those who still continue to come, are nothing but skin and bones, Very many of them are suffering from acute diarrhea with bloody phlegm due to their complete exhaustion. Pneumonia, dorsal and bronchial cases are very common.

The prisoners who have been in camp for a long time are often also so thin that those whom one had known previously can hardly be recognized.

These prisoners, in rags, covered with filth and infested with vermin, live crowded together in barracks, when they do not lie under tents, squeezed together on the ground on a thin pallet of dirty straw or two or three per cot, or on benches and tables. Some of them are scarcely able to get up, or else they fall in a swoon as they did when they tried to get up when the Representative was passing through. They do not move, even at meal time, when they are presented with their inadequate German rations (for example 9B has been completely without salt for weeks).

Food When the Americans arrived the Kitchen was in charge of Russian PW under the lax supervision of German guards. Sanitary conditions in the kitchen were foul and the soup prepared was practically inedible. When the MOC was permitted to substitute American PW for the Russian help, there resulted a considerable improvement in the preparation of the meager prison fare. The eight bushels of potatoes which German Pvt. Daths enabled the Americans to steal was most necessary since the German ration was terribly slight. It consisted of 300 grams of bread, 550 grams of potatoes, 30 grams of horse meat, 1/2 litre of soup made from putrid greens. The greens made the men sick, and the MOC intervened to have the allotment of greens changed to oatmeal. Later, even this small ration was cut so that at the end of their stay PW were receiving only 210 grams of bread and 290 grams of potatoes per day. The MOC was convinced that a larger ration was available and attributes its non-distribution to Oberst Sieber, the commandant. The full ration listed above was the minimum German civilian ration minus fresh vegetables, eggs and whole milk. No German soldier was so ill fed.

A thousand men lacked eating utensels of any kind, either spoons, forks or bowls. They ate out of their helmets or old tin cans or pails, anything on which they could put their hands.

Only one ~~par~~ shipment of Red Cross food reached camp, 2300 parcels on 10 March 1945. Failure ~~to~~ of another shipment to arrive from Geneva was attributed to the chaotic transportation conditions within Germany.

The German rations had a paper value of 1400 calories. Actually, the caloric content was even further lowered by the waste in using products of inferior quality. Since a completely inactive man needs at least 1700 calories to live, it is apparent that PW were slowly starving to death.

Health

In the month between 28 February and 1 April, 32 Americans died of malnutrition and pneumonia. Medical attention was in the care of two American medical officers and 10 American medical orderlies. On 23 March the infirmary held 72 patients, 22 of whom were pneumonia cases. The others suffered from malnutrition and dysentery. Influenza, grippe and bronchitis were common throughout the camp. No medical parcels were received from the Red Cross and the extreme scarcity of medicines furnished by the Germans contributed to deaths of PW who otherwise might have been saved. The MOC considered it fortunate in light of the exposure, starvation and lack of medical facilities, that more PW did not die.

Clothing

Instead of issuing clothing, the German confiscated it from PW. Upon being captured many men were forced to give up everything they were not wearing, such extra items as shoes, overshoes, blankets and gloves. Some had only shirts and trousers, no jackets. Others lacked shoes and bundled their feet in rags. At Liebburg and elsewhere en route from the front, Germans took Americans overcoats with the result that as late as the last week of March one-fifth of the PW had no

No clothing came from the Red Cross because of the transportation breakdown.

Work

On 8 February 350 of the physically fit PW were sent to a work detachment in the Leipzig district. Other men at the camp were forced to carry out the stalag housekeeping chores. Until Pvt. Pfannenstiel became MOC, German guards had marched into the camp and taken the first men in sight for necessary camp details. This resulted in considerable inequity since they not infrequently took the same men time after time. The MOC arranged to take care of all details through men physically fit to work and subsequently furnished a daily work roster to the Germans.

Pay

In December 1944 en route to Bad Orb, PW were lined up at Waxweiler and forced to give up all money in their possession. About \$10,000 was taken from the 985 men by the German Lieutenant in charge and no receipts given.

Since the issue of "lagergeld" had been abolished, no money was paid to officer or NCO's. The amount due them was credited ~~to~~ by the Germans to their accounts every month, to be settled at the wars end. Non-working privates received no pay.

Mail

No incoming mail was received. The issue of letter-forms was irregular and haphazard, but each PW was permitted to mail home a form post card informing NOK of his status.

Morale

Morale fell rapidly under the brutalizing conditions and by March the majority of men were absolutely broken in spirit, crushed and apathetic. The Swiss delegate emphasized the fact that even American and British PW asked for food like beggars.

Welfare

The Protecting Power inspectors visited the camp on 24 January and 23 March 1945, each time reporting the atrocious camp conditions and extracting promises from the commandant.

The International Red Cross representative wrote an extremely strong report decrying camp conditions as he saw them on 10 March 1945. That more Red Cross food and supplies did not reach camp must be attributed to the disruption of German transport.

For similar reasons, the YMCA was never able to visit the camp nor to supply recreational equipment.

Religion

Until 25 January, no room was available for either Catholic or Protestant services, although two chaplains were present in the camp. In February, however, the chaplains held regular services for both denominations and received the cooperation of German camp authorities.

When the MOC refused to single out Jews for segregation, a German officer selected those Americans PW who he thought were Jews and put them in a separate barracks. No other discrimination was made against them.

Recreation

From the end of December to the middle of January, PW were allowed to leave the barracks only between 0630 and 1700 hours; the rest of the time they were locked in. Outdoor recreation was non-existent because of PW's weakness. The British lazaret at Bad Soden sent over 32 books, the only volumes obtainable.

Proposed Evacuation

Being informed of the rapid advance of the American forces, Pvt. Pfannenstiel began to prepare a camp organization to meet the contingencies of their arrival. Secretly, with the aid of the barracks leaders, he selected 500 of the most reliable men in the camp and made them military police, whose authority was to begin when the American troops arrived in the vicinity, at which time they were to maintain control and order within the camp. About the third week in March, the district commander ordered that 1500 of the men in Stalag 9B be marched eastward to another camp. When he received this order, subject protested that to march the men in their semi-starved condition was impossible. He realized that the Americans were close and wished to prevent the march by any means possible. The district commander met his protest by reducing the number demanded to 1000. Subject was told to chose the 1000 best fitted for the march. He then went to the German medical officer in charge of the camp and pointed out that there were a number of diphtheria and possibly typhus cases in the camp and that to march them off might spread an epidemic through the area covered by the march. He was successful in convincing the doctor who proceeded to slap a ten-day quarantine on the camp. By this means subject was able to prevent the movement of any of the American PW's until they were rescued by American forces.

Liberation

Subject was attending church services in the camp at 1415 hours on Easter Sunday, 1 April 1945, when he was called out of the church. He suspected at this time that the Americans might be closing in on the camp. Sent by the camp commander to Bad Orb, a hospital town, he was taken to the major in command of the town's hospitals. The major proposed that subject take a white flag and proceed to meet the American troops and guarantee the surrender of the town. This proposal strongly accorded with the wishes of the townspeople. Subject felt that an American soldier wandering around alone behind German lines carrying a white flag might have some trouble so he refused to go unless he was accompanied by two unarmed German officers. The major named two officers and with them subject proceeded toward the edge of town. By this time an American unit, rumored to be one of great size and power, had occupied the hill overlooking the town. As subject's party reached the edge of the town, it was stopped by

the German officer, Major Fulkman, charged with the military defence of the town.

Fulkman denied having made any arrangement with the medical major for its surrendered and refused to permit the party to proceed until he had consulted with the medical major.

At this time the German garrison opened up with small arms fire against the American position on the hill, and the Americans answered with machine guns. Subject's party was caught between the two fires. The German officer with him then walked down the street and told him to follow and keep cool. In the meantime the American firing, which had started high over his head, was getting lower and lower. Without much time to spare, the German officer and he managed to duck into an underground hospital. During the night the medical major and the major in command of the garrison met at the hospital to consult on what to do. In the meantime the Americans began firing artillery shells into the town. They dropped one shell regularly every 15 minutes. The medical major persuaded the garrison major that resistance was hopeless and the latter agreed to withdraw his troops. The withdrawal took place during the night and the next morning Pvt. Pfannenstiel's party again went forward with their white flag to meet the Americans.

They made the contact on the edge of the town with Capt. Langley, commander of an American reconnaissance group of 200 men that had run 60 miles ahead of the main body the American forces, and hours ahead of its own ammunition supply. At the time that the group entered Bad Orb with its tank guns and antitank weapons pointing fiercely in all directions, there was not a single round of artillery ammunition available to be fired from any of the guns. Subject borrowed a car and returned with some of the American soldiers to Stalag 9B. There everything was in order, the German guard unit remained and the camp commander turned over the control of the camp to the Americans. At about noon, American units of the main body began to pass through the town, and when they learned of the pitiful condition of the American PW at Stalag 9B, the units as they passed through, emptied their PX stores and sent them up to the prisoners. After several days, the American personnel at Stalag 9B, were evacuated to Camp Lucky Strike near Le Harve.

These pages were marked secret, but I got them after the restriction was lifted.

Was nice visiting with you Pete,
Keep up the good work.

Dr. P.