

AMERICAN PRISONERS OF WAR IN GERMANY
Prepared by MILITARY INTELLIGENCE SERVICE, WAR DEPARTMENT 15 July 1944

STALAG 2B

STRENGTH: 4,807 enlisted men, all Ground Force.

LOCATION: Pinpoint: 53°41' N latitude, 16°58'30" E longitude. Camp is situated one and a half miles west of Hammerstein on the east side of a highway leading to that city.

DESCRIPTION: Camp sprawls over 25 acres, divided into 4 compounds and separated by barbed wire fences. Americans occupy 5 one-story stone buildings. Three-tier bunks are too numerous for barracks' cubic space and quarters are overcrowded. POWs sleep on tables, chairs, or on the floor, while awaiting shipment to work detachments. Within enclosure are canteen, small playing field, workshops, rooms for religious services and recreation, dispensary, showers and delouser. Entire camp is surrounded by 2 barbed wire fences. Base camp houses 1,000 Americans, consisting of permanent camp staff, non-recognized NCOs, medics and physically unfit. The remaining 3,800 are on 141 work detachments; some as far 350 kilometers from base camp.

TREATMENT: Treatment varies, depending on the work detachment, but is generally bad. This is the worst American P/W camp in Germany. Eight Americans have been shot and killed while on work parties.

FOOD: Major portion of POWs' food comes from weekly Red Cross parcels. German ration is insufficient, consisting of hot water for breakfast; water soup with 7 small boiled potatoes per man for dinner, and 3 slices of heavy black bread and a slice of sausage for supper. Food on work parties is usually better than in the base camp.

CLOTHING: Usually no clothing is issued by Germans. The only source of supply is the Red Cross. Each P/W has been supplied with an American uniform and pair of leather shoes. At one work detachment American clothing was taken from POWs and Germans issued one uniform and one pair of wooden shoes per man.

HEALTH: Two American doctors are assisted by American orderlies in caring for the sick and invalid. Medical supplies are urgently needed. Hospital facilities are inadequate. Treatment of teeth is good but material is lacking. Men on work groups frequently go to nearest city for medical treatment by civilian doctors. Health is generally good.

RELIGION: There is no American chaplain but a U.S. enlisted man is recognized by the Americans and Germans as "acting chaplain."

PERSONNEL

American Senior Officer:	Capt. Wilbur McKee, MC
Man of Confidence:	Pvt. Harry Galler
Interpreter:	Pvt. Gunner Drangsholt.
German Commandant:	Oberstleutnant von Bernuth.

MAIL: Average transit time for all letters both to and from camp is 3 to 4 months. Receipt and transit times are erratic. Next-of-kin and tobacco parcels arrive in 3 to 4 months. They are frequently pilfered.

RECREATION: Outdoor activities include football, baseball, softball, and basketball. Equipment was received from YMCA. POWs also attend religious services and orchestra and camp shows. Classes were recently started in a variety of subjects but German discourage this because they desire to keep Stalag 2B strictly a work camp. POWs have a library of 1,000 books. They have received phonographs and records from the YMCA.

WORK: All privates must work. NCOs may volunteer. The majority of the POWs are employed on large farms in Pomerania where the main crop is potatoes.

PAY: Working POWs receive 70 pfennigs a day in lagergeld. Non-working POWs receive no pay.

AMERICAN PRISONERS OF WAR IN GERMANY
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LOCATION: The camp was situated 1 ½ miles west of Hammerstein, (53°41'N - 16°58'30"W.) west Prussia, on the east side of a highway leading to that city.

STRENGTH: In Aug. 1943 the stalag was reported as newly opened to privates of the U.S. ground forces with a strength of 451. The Hammerstein installation acted as a headquarters for work detachments in the region and seldom housed more than 1/5 of the PW credited to it. Thus at the end of May 1944, although the strength was listed as 4807, only 1000 of these were in the enclosure. At its peak in Jan. 1945, the camp strength was put at 7200 Americans, with some 5315 of these out on 9 major kommando companies which in turn were subdivided as follows.

Company Lauenberg	- 65 kommandos - 1700 men
Company Stolp	- 40 kommandos - 750 men
Company Runmlersberg	- 28 kommandos - 550 men
Company Koslin	- 25 kommandos - 450 men
Company Falkenberg	- 15 kommandos - 315 men
Company Jastrow	- 25 kommandos - 450 men
Company Dt. Krone	- 20 kommandos - 550 men
Company Schlochau	- 12 kommandos - 200 men
Company New Stettin	- 15 kommandos - 350 men

DESCRIPTION: The camp sprawled over 25 acres surrounded by the usual two barbed-wire fences. Additional barbed wire fences formed compounds and sub-compounds. Ten thousand Russians lived in the East Compound, while the other nationalities - 16,000 French, 1600 Serbs, 900 Belgians - and the Americans were segregated by Nationalities in the North Compound. Within the American enclosure were the playing field, workshops, dispensary, showers & delouser. At times more than 600 men were quartered in each of the 3 single-story barracks 15 yards wide and 60 yards long, made available to the Americans. Although this resulted in extremely crowded conditions, it contrasted well with the Russian barracks which held as many as 1000 PW apiece. Barracks were divided in two by a center washroom which has 20 taps. Water fit for drinking was available at all hours except during POWs last 2 months when it was turned off for part of the day. Bunks were the regulation PW triple-decker types with excelsior mattresses and one German blanket (plus 2 from the Red Cross) for each. In the front and rear of each barracks was a urinal to be used only at night. Three stoves furnished what heat there was for the front half of each barrack, and 2 for the rear half. The fuel ration was always insufficient, and in Dec. 1944 was cut to its all-time low of 12 kilos of coal per stove per day. On warm days, the Germans withheld part of the fuel ration.

U.S. PERSONNEL: Pvt. Harry Galler was Man of Confidence from Aug. 1943 until July 1944, when the Germans refused to negotiate with him because they had discovered he was Jewish. Pvt. Galler attributes the German discovery to the activities of a purportedly British PW who called himself Pvt. Leonard B. Cornwall but confided that his real name was Leonard B. England. This man was actively anti-Semitic possessed a list of American PW who were Jews, spoke fluent German and seemed on friendly terms with the German staff. He was suspected by some PW of being a German stool pigeon planted in camp to create dissension.

With the resignation of Pvt. Galler, M/Sgt. John M. McMahan became MOC - a position he held until his escape from a marching column on 13 April 1945. Other members of the permanent camp staff were:

Adjutant	M/Sgt. Robert Ehalt	
Red Cross Representative:	Pfc. Gunnar Drangsholt	
Mail NCO:	S/Sgt. Edward Volberding	
Personal Parcel Distributor:	S/Sgt. Stephen Novak	
Recreational Supplies:	Pvt. Henry Wintjen	
Educational Department:	Sgt. John Dixon and Sgt. Estburn Maynor	
Protestant Chaplain:	Cpl. Alfred C Carroll and Pvt. Bruce Meads	
Catholic Representative:	Pvt. Thomas McGovern	
Medical Officers:	Cpt. Willbur McKee	Capt. Henry Wynsen
	Capt. John Moorman	Capt. Louis Salerno
	Dr. Buls (Belgian)	

A Security Committee also existed.

MOC of the 9 major kommando companies were:

Lauenberg:	Cpl. John Kuntz	Stolph:	S/Sgt. Jacob G. Schnick
Rummelsberg:	Pfc. Paul Sapsara	Kosling:	Sgt. Warren Mason
Falkenberg:	Cpl. Kenneth Castor	Dt. Krone:	1 st Sgt. Leonard Fleharty
Jastrow:	Pvt. Frank DeLuca	Schlochau:	Pvt. Arnold Trautman
New Stettin:	Pvt. Milton Bartelt		

GERMAN PERSONNEL: Although the German commandant seemed correct in his attitude toward American PW, it is unlikely that the extreme severity of some of his underlings could have existed without his knowledge and consent.

Oberstleutnant Von Bernuth:	Commandant
Oberst Von Keppler:	Commandant
Oberstleutnant Segars:	Executive Officer
Hauptmann Springer:	Kommando Officer
Hauptmann Giesel:	Security Officer
Hauptmann Wagner:	Medical Officer
Unteroffizier Krause:	Chief Censor
Feldwebel Kohler:	Lager NCO
Unteroffizier Wendorf:	Kommando NCO

Of the Germans listed, only the medical officer was liked by PW. The censor was disliked to an extreme, and PW hated Springer, Wendorf and Kohler, all 3 of whom were described as Nazi fanatics who enjoyed wreaking hardships on Americans. Springer is held to be responsible for the killing of men on kommandos.

TREATMENT: Treatment was worse at Stalag 2B than at any other camp in Germany established for American PW before the Battle of the Bulge. Harshness at the base stalag degenerated into brutality and outright murder on some of the kommandos. Beatings of Americans on kommandos by their German overseers were too numerous to list, but records that 10 Americans in work detachments were shot to death by their captors.

In the fall of 1943, when Hauptmann Springer was seeking men for work details, American NCOs and medical corpsmen stated that according to the Geneva Convention they did not have to work unless they volunteered to do so, and they chose not to volunteer. At this, the German stated that he did not care about the terms of the Geneva Convention and that he would change the rules to suit himself. Thereupon, he demanded that the PW in question fall into line and give their names and numbers for kommando duty. When the Americans insisted on refusing, Hauptmann Springer ordered a bayonet charge against them. At the German guards' obvious disinclination to carry out the command, Hauptmann Springer pushed one of the guards toward an American, with the result that soon all PW were forced to line up as ordered.

Typical of the circumstances surrounding the shootings are the events connected with the deaths of Pfc. Dean Halbert and Pvt. Franklin Reed. On 28 Aug. 1943, these 2 soldiers had been assigned to a kommando at Gambin, in the district of Stolp. While working in the fields, they asked permission to leave their posts for the purpose of relieving themselves. They remained away from their work until the work detachment guard became suspicious and went looking for them. Some time later he returned them to the place where they had been working and reported the incident to his superior. Both of the kommando guards were then instructed to escort the Americans to the kommando barracks. Shortly after they had departed, several shots were heard by the rest of the Americans on the work detachment. Presently the two guards returned and reported that both Pfc. Halbert and Pvt. Reed had been shot to death for attempting escape. The guards then ordered other American PW to carry the bodies to the barracks.

On another kommando, the Germans shot and killed 2 Americans, stripped them and placed the bodies in the latrine, where they lay for 2 days serving as a warning to other PW.

Eight of the killings took place in the latter months of 1943, one in May 1944 and one in Dec. 1944. In almost every case the reason given by the Germans for the shootings was "attempted escape." Witnesses, however, contradict the German reports and state that the shootings were not duty but clear cases of murder.

FOOD: From the Germans, PW received daily 300 grams of coarse bread and 500 grams of potatoes; twice weekly they received 300 grams of meat and 20 grams of margarine; once a week they drew 50 grams of cheese; marmalade was issued sporadically. All these rations were found in the mid-day meal, which was always in the form of soup. The breakfast ration consisted solely of ersatz coffee. There was no supper.

To supplement the meager German diet, PW relied on Red Cross food. From 19 Sept. 1943 until 1 Nov. 1944, one parcel per man was issued each week. From 1 Nov. until 1 Jan. 1945, the parcel distribution was cut to ~ parcel per man per week because of an insufficient stock. During Dec. 1944 and Jan. 1945, however, carloads of parcels, Christmas

parcels included, totaling 101,000 were received. In late Jan. 5 carloads were received from Stalag Luft 4 where the Germans said there was no room for them. Later the MOC of Stalag Luft 4 stated that he had never approved the shipment.

Parcels were stored in the lager reserve in Harhammerstein and in the headquarters of the various kommando companies. In the stalag proper, they were kept within the "Green Post" compound, between the North & east camps. Many of the parcels arriving at the railroad station were broken open. Whether this damage was due to rough handling in transit or to German pilfering could not be determined. On 19 Jan. 1945, 46,000 parcels were on hand. One month later there were none. The German complement had confiscated 6000, the Wehrmacht 2000, civilians stole 400 and the rest were given to evacuating Americans and other fleeing nationalities passing through the area. During this period 5 carloads (13,500 parcels) destined either for Stalag 2B or 2D were never received. Their disappearance may be attributed either to German looting or Allied air attacks on trains.

HEALTH: Health was surprisingly good. Aside from minor ailments such as diarrhea or grippe, the main illnesses were malaria, from which some 100 men suffered and diphtheria, which struck a maximum of 5 men a month.

Medical supplies in the lazaret were woefully short. PW received no stocks from the Red Cross until June 1944, when they got a few parcels in response to 2 telegrams sent without knowledge of the Germans. Pvt. Drangsholt, the Red Cross representative in camp, had twice been able to wire Switzerland when on business outside the stalag. Within 2 weeks after the first telegram had been sent, medical supplies were flown to camp. Among the most needed drugs were quinine, atabrine and aspirin. Previous to this time, the Germans had refused to pass on the American medical officer's requisitions, saying that he did not need the supplies. For example, when he asked for 1000 Phenobarbital tablets, the Germans would give him 10, saying he now had a supply and would get some more only when his current supply was exhausted. Furthermore, the Germans disliked sending telegrams to the Red Cross in Switzerland for such telegrams gave the impression, they said, that the PW were receiving nothing. Yet, at times the Germans gave only 100 Atabrine tablets to some 90 men shaking from malaria and then claimed that the Americans had no right to protest to Geneva about lack of supplies.

Examination of men chosen for kommandos provided the American medical officer with a great deal of difficulty, for the German idea of a PW's fitness for duty differed substantially from the American. Capt. McKee tried to hide men who were too sick to go out on work detachments and usually put them in the hospital after falsely diagnosing their cases as grippe or dysentery. Some men, always unwilling to work, sought excuses to forestall their being chosen for kommando duty. The medical officer gave these men all the help he could. He did not, however, permit himself to aid malingerers to the point where it would jeopardize those who were actually sick. Ear, eye, nose, throat, mental, venereal and similar serious cases were sent from Stalag 2B to other hospitals. But PW on kommando sometimes suffered from lack of medication and proper treatment.

One 48-hole latrine, with adequate urinal space, served as many as 1800 PW during the daytime. Since they lacked equipment for many months, PW found it difficult to keep the latrine clean. Twice a day a detail washed it down with hot water.

Bathing facilities were satisfactory. A PW could take 3 hot showers a week. The shower building was open 8 hours a day and contained some 80 showerheads. Men were deloused periodically.

CLOTHING: The clothing situation was always a source of contention. The Germans insisted they had the right to keep a man's old clothing when he was re-outfitted with Red Cross supplies. This made it necessary for PW to work in rain and mud in their one and only uniform. Eventually the Protecting Power did see that PW were allowed to keep their old clothes.

As in other camps, the Germans never pretended to supply enough clothes and when they were called upon to furnish garments issued wooden shoes, rag-like socks, undershirts spun from processed wood and old overcoats infested with bugs. The Red Cross provided enough of all items except shoes, overcoats, socks, gloves & blankets. The Germans had enough blankets in camp to issue 2 per PW but instead sent them to Volkssturm troops digging trenches in the vicinity.

In December 1944 the camp received from the Red Cross a shipment of 2380 American uniforms badly needed by 1100 new arrivals. The Germans broke all precedence by demanding that the uniforms be yielded to them and subsequently seized them by force. French PW under German guard loaded trucks which were driven out of camp. Although PE received a receipt for the clothing, they never got a satisfactory explanation. The MOC complained to the commandant 3 times and was told that the confiscation order came from the Red Cross. The Protecting Power denied knowledge of any such order and promised an investigation.

WORK: Except for housekeeping chores benefiting PW, no work was performed in the stalag. All men fit to work were sent out to kommandos where conditions approximated the following:

A group of 29 Americans were taken under guard to a huge farm 6 kilometers from Stolp, where 12 French PW were already working without guards. Americans were billeted in a section of a large brick-floored barn. Adjoining sections were

occupied by pigs, cows & grain. PW slept on double-decker bunks under 2 blankets. The French had a small building of their own. Guards lived in a small room opening onto the Americans' quarters.

Each day the men rose at 0600 and breakfasted on Red Cross food and on potato soup, bread and hot water (for coffee) which they drew from the farm kitchen. At 0630 they washed their spoons and enameled bowls and cleaned their "barracks". They shaved and washed themselves in 3 large wash pans filled from a single spigot which gave only cold water. The outdoor latrine was a 3-seater.

At 0700 they rode out to potato fields in horse-drawn wagons driven by coldly hostile German farmhands who would welcome the opportunity to shoot a "kriege." Under the eyes of a watchful, armed guard they dug potatoes until 11:30, when they rode back to the farm for the noon meal. This consisted of Red Cross food supplemented by German vegetable soup. Boarding the wagons at 1300, PW worked until 1630. The evening meal at 1700 consisted of Red Cross food and the farmers issue of soup, potatoes & gravy. After this meal they could sit outdoors in the fenced-in pen (30' by 8') until 1830. Then the guard locked them in their section for the night.

On Sundays the guard permitted PW to lounge or walk back & forth, in the "yard" all day, but they spent a good deal of their time scrubbing their "barracks" and washing their clothing. Sunday dinner from the farm usually included a meat pudding & cheese.

Once a month each PW received a large Red Cross food box containing 4 regulation Red Cross parcels. These were transmitted to distant kommandos by rail and to nearby units by Wehrmacht trucks. Parcels were stored in the guard's room until issued. The average tour of duty on a farm kommando lasted indefinitely. On other work detachments it lasted until the specific project has been completed.

PAY: The finance officer collected \$17,000 from the Americans in camp. None of this money was returned. PW who did no work received no pay. Working PW received 70 pfennigs a day in lager-geld which was of little value since it could be spent only on knickknacks which were seldom available either in the stalag or kommando headquarters.

MAIL: Each PW was furnished with 2 letterforms and 4 cards per month except for a few months when a shortage, reputedly caused by bombing, cut the issue in half. Medical orderlies received double allotments. Forms were net withheld as punishment. Surface mail to the USA. averaged 3 ½ months in transit; airmail, 6 weeks. Only a spot-check censorship was made by the American staff.

The number of incoming letters was unlimited and PW could retain such mail indefinitely. Surface mail from the USA took 4 months to reach camp; airmail, 5 weeks. All letters were censored at the stalag by Wehrmacht personnel, civilians and SS troops. As a rule, censorship was sloppy. Once a week incoming mail was delivered to kommandos and outgoing mail picked up and brought to the camp for censoring and dispatch. Communication between the men at the stalag and those on kommando was permitted.

Personal parcels generally arrived in good condition about 4 months after being mailed. Some of these parcels, like a few of the letters, were censored in Berlin. Most, however, were censored at Stalag 2B, where an American always witnessed the censoring. German guards on work detachments made a habit of stealing cigarettes from personal parcels, and at the base camp 90,000 Old Gold & Raleigh cigarettes were confiscated because their packages bore the slogan "For victory – buy war bonds."

MORALE: Morale of the Americans as a group was exceptionally high. They were always "cocky." All propaganda efforts by the Germans were ineffective and paradoxically lifted the morale of PW who had schooled themselves to believe the exact opposite of what they recognized as German propaganda. Discipline was good, with only a few PW causing trouble. PW were largely satisfied with their American camp staff which saw that they were regularly fed and adequately clothed. Only during the period of the evacuation march when PW encountered wretched quarters and lack of food did morale dip.

WELFARE: All PW felt extremely grateful to the Red Cross for delivering food, clothing and medical supplies. Had it not been for the Red Cross, states the MOC, many more men would have died.

The Protecting Power representative visited the camp quarterly and investigated all complaints. Although the visits did not accomplish much, it was felt that the representative had the interests of PW at heart and did as much as he could for them. The May 1944 visit differed from the other in that it seemed to accomplish better results. Kommando killings ceased, except for one in Dec. 1944, but whether this was because of the Protecting Power or coincidence is not known.

The YMCA provided PW with sports equipment, books and musical instruments enough to earn the gratitude of the many men who availed themselves of recreational opportunities.

RELIGION: The chaplaincy in Stalag 2B was initiated by Pvt. Bruce Meads who arrived in Aug. 1943. When his health broke down in Feb. 1944, leading to his eventual repatriation, he was succeeded by Cpl. Alfred C. Carroll. At first regularly scheduled chapel services were held in any available barracks space. Later permission was granted worshippers to leave the American compound and use the French chapel. With the consent of the abwehr officer, Pvt. Meads began the practice of visiting one kommando each Sunday. Subsequently his assistants visited as many as 4 kommandos per

Sunday.

Catholics attended regular Masses celebrated by a French priest. He and his assistant, Pvt. Thomas McGovern, visited working parties twice monthly. Aside from the services conducted by these representatives, no organized religious activities for kommandos existed.

RECREATION: In 1943 and the spring of 1944, PW were locked up in their compound and could only walk in a 50 x 50 yards space in the rear of the 3 barracks occupied by Americans. In the summer of 1944, after one year in camp, Americans were given access to a athletic field situated in the center of the camp between barracks #8 and #10. Football, softball, basketball and volleyball could be played on this field simultaneously. Most equipment came from the YMCA and some came from the Germans. The softball field could be used at any time in the evening after 1700 hours; the football field, volley ball & basketball courts were shared with PW of other nationalities.

By Nov. 1944 some 8000 books had been received from the YMCA, Red Cross and European Student Relief Fund. Sgt. Eastburn Maynor was in charge of the library which could be visited any time during the day or evening. A reference library of 2500 books was maintained in addition to the 8000 volumes already mentioned.

A theater built by the French was shared by all. Several original musical comedies were produced by Americans, and since the theater seated only 300 men, 5 separate performances had to be given to assure each PW of an opportunity to attend. At times the band and theater group, under guard, were permitted to give performances for the benefit of work detachments. The band numbered 18 pieces; all instruments were supplied by the UMCA or Special Services, U.S. Army.

Once 3 groups totaling 1500 Americans were escorted to motion pictures in Hammerstein -a privilege accorded PW of other nationalities. The Americans spruced up and wore class "1" uniforms putting German officers and soldiers, who were untidy, to shame. This was resented by German civilians and Americans were not taken again to the movies in Hammerstein.

EVACUATION & LIBERATION: On 28 Jan. 1945, PW received German instructions to be ready to evacuate camp at 0800 the following morning. Upon receipt of these instructions, the MOC set up a plan of organization based on 25-man groups and 200-man companies with NCOs in charge. On the day of evacuation, however, PW were moved out of camp in such a manner that the original plan was a little assistance. German guards ordered PW to fall out of the barracks. When 1200 men had assembled on the road, the remaining 500 were allowed to stay in the barracks. A disorganized column of 1200 marched out into the cold and snow. The guards were considerate, and Red Cross food was available. After the first day, the column was broken down into 3 groups of 400 men each, with NCOs in charge of each group.

For the next 3 months, the column was on the move, marching an average of 22 kilometers a day 6 days a week. German rations were neither regular nor adequate. At almost every stop Sgt. McMahan bartered coffee, cigarettes or chocolate for potatoes which he issued to the men. Bread, the most important item, was not issued regularly. When it was needed most, it was never available. The soup was, as a rule, typical, watery German soup, but several times PW got a good, thick dried-pea soup. Through the activity of some of the key NCOs, Red Cross food was obtained from PW camps passed by the column in the march. Without it, it is doubtful that the majority of men could have finished the march. The ability of the men to steal helped a lot. The weather was atrocious. It always seemed to be either bitter cold or raining or snowing. Quarters were usually unheated barns and stables. Sometimes they slept unsheltered on the ground; and sometimes they were fortunate enough to find a heated barn.

Except for one period when Red Cross food was exhausted and guards became surly, morale of the men remained at a high level. Practically all the men shaved at every opportunity and kept their appearance as neat as possible under the circumstances.

From time to time weak PW would drop out of the column and wait to be picked up by other columns which were on the move. Thus at Dahlen on 6 & 7 March, the column dwindled to some 900 American PW. On 19 March at Tramm, 800 men were sent to work on kommandos, leaving only 133 PW who were joined a week later by the Large kommando company from Lauenberg. On 13 April the column was strafed by 4 Spitfires near Dannenberg. Ten PW were killed. The rest of the column proceeded to Marlag 10C, Westertimke, where they met the men they had left behind at Stalag 2B who had left on 18 Feb., reached Stalag 10B after an easy 3-day trip, and then moved to adjacent Marlag 10C on 16 April. Westertimke was liberated by the British on 28 April 1945.

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