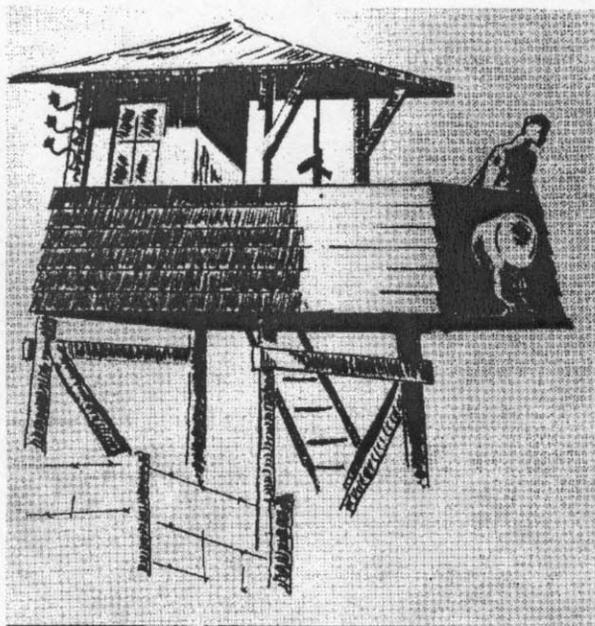


THE
HISTORICAL COLLECTION
of the
STALAG LUFT III
FORMER PRISONERS OF WAR

Air Force Academy Library
Colorado



ABOUT THE COLLECTION

The Air Force Academy Library in Colorado Springs, Colorado holds an interesting and historically significant collection of documents, photographs, diaries and memoirs. This collection tells the story of the Allied airmen who, having been shot down in combat over Europe in World War II, were prisoners of war in Stalag Luft III, the German camp located in Silesia (now Poland). This was the camp that became famous for its escape activity including the so-called "Great Escape."

This collection, assembled through the efforts of the Stalag Luft III Former POW Association, has become the centerpiece of the Special Collections Branch of the Academy Library. It includes hundreds of photographs, many taken in the camp during the war by clandestine cameras in the possession of the POWs. There are official photographs taken by the Germans and acquired after the war. Among the many research documents are the memoirs of Colonel Friedrich-Wilhelm Von Lindeiner and Major Gustav Simoleit, both of whom served as commandants of this notorious camp. Also available is the oral history of Herman Glemnitz, a senior German non-commissioned officer in charge of preventing escapes. There also is the account of the adventures of General Arthur Vanaman and Colonel Delmar Spivey. These officers, near the end of the war, were taken to Berlin on Himler's orders. They were briefed by the German High Command and then sent into Switzerland armed with peace proposals to be delivered to the British and American governments.

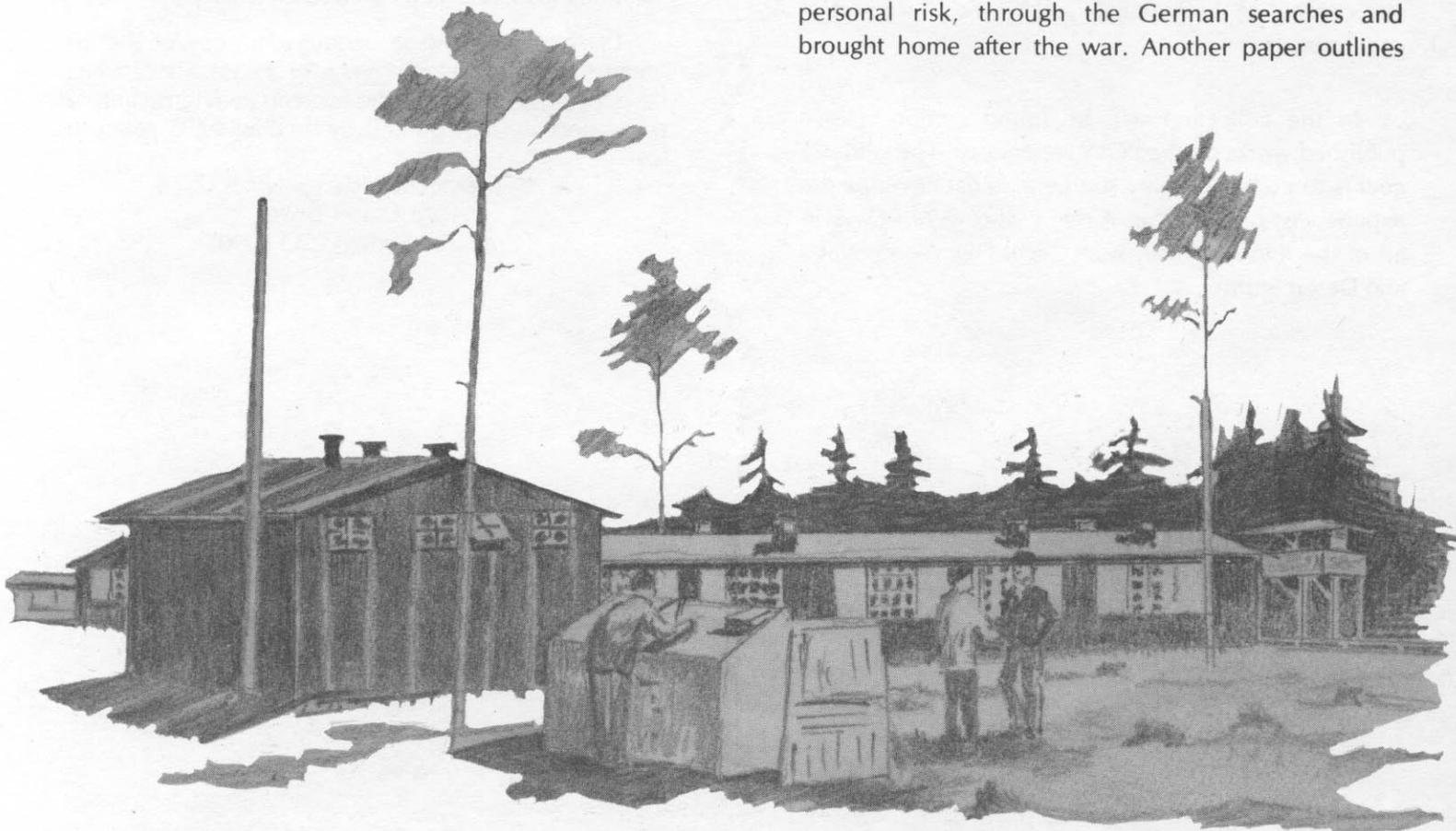
Another highlight of this remarkable collection is the assembled work of Henry Soderberg, the Swedish volunteer with the International Y.M.C.A. He spent much of the war servicing the Allied camps in Eastern Europe and kept copious diaries, photographs and official reports of his life in wartime Germany. Soderberg's remarkable freedom of movement within

Germany enabled him to record a rare picture of the prisoner's life and that of the German people themselves. He visited the Russian prisoners in their camps and recorded their desperate conditions. Soderberg was also an eyewitness to the bombing of Dresden and he served as a volunteer among the ruins helping to save lives.

This collection commenced with a scrapbook compiled by General A. P. Clark after he retired as Superintendent of the Academy in 1974. He was a POW in this camp himself and donated his extensive collection of photographs and important documents to the Library. Gradually the collection grew in size and significance after officials of the Air Force Academy Library graciously agreed to accept custody of the collection.

Many of the rare documents, such as diaries and official reports, were carried out of Germany by former prisoners. On Hitler's direct orders, Stalag Luft III was evacuated on the bitter cold night of 27 January 1945. On very short notice some 11,000 British and American officers were force-marched westward to avoid their liberation by the advancing Russian armies. The fact that any of this historically significant material survived the war is most unusual and reflects a deep sense of history among many of these men. For example, one officer carried on his back several large ledgers filled with the names and brief accounts of how each of the 2000 prisoners was shot down and captured. Another prisoner brought out a file of weekly camp newspapers.

As early as October of 1944, the prisoners of this camp learned of the atrocities occurring in the concentration camps and carefully documented the facts. One of these documents was carried, at great personal risk, through the German searches and brought home after the war. Another paper outlines



the official American escape policy of one of the camps. Of great importance are the end-of-war reports written by the respective camp Senior American Officers, as well as reports of incidents and shootings that occurred in the camps as reported to the Protecting Power. A number of individual scrapbooks and works of art done by prisoners also survived the war and are included in the collection.

The Air Force Academy Library values this collection highly. It constitutes a rich source of unique original historical documents and is widely studied by the Academy's cadets who thus learn the importance of using primary source materials for their research papers. A growing number of scholars use the collection. In 1984, it was heavily utilized by Life/Time Books in the production of their illustrated **Prisoners of World War II**. The collection has also been the subject of a documentary video tape which depicts the scope and content of the materials and its use in support of cadet studies.

In the collection will be found comprehensive published works on the POW experience. The Library's goal is to collect primary source material covering the experiences of American Airmen who were POWs in all of the five American wars, including World War I and Desert Storm.



HOW TO HELP

Over the years, the existence of this collection has become more widely known and offers of relevant historical material continue to be received. The Friends of The Air Force Academy Library, a non-profit group dedicated to the support of the Academy Library, is pleased to handle these offers. Individuals considering an offer of a gift of materials are invited to write to:

Lt. General A. P. Clark, USAF (Ret)
The Friends of the USAF Academy Library
Post Office Box 188
United States Air Force Academy, CO 80840-0188

Persons interested in acquiring a copy of the 20-minute video cassette, "A Quiet Excellence," which describes in greater detail the contents and significance of this collection, may order it by sending \$9.95 postpaid, to:

Alexander Video Services
1075 Elkton Drive
Colorado Springs, CO 80907

