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## World War II Prisoners of War In Georgia: Camp Gordon's POW Camp

### Introduction

"Grateful for it for the rest of my life," smilingly said Radbert Kohlhaas, a former prisoner of war (POW) at Camp Gordon in an interview in April 1989. How could one be grateful for being captured and brought as a POW to the United States? Like POWs in the recent Persian Gulf War and in any war, diverse issues and arguments arise over this consequence of war. However, distinct from the Persian Gulf War, in World War II this calamity of war came close to home as Axis prisoners were sent to POW camps in the United States, including one at Camp Gordon, now the United States Army Signal Center and Fort Gordon. Memories of one former POW give us an idea as to life as a POW in Georgia and those of Americans who worked with the prisoners.

### The Geneva Convention

Like today, during World War II the Geneva Convention governed the treatment of prisoners of war. The Geneva Convention of 1929, in particular the Geneva Prisoner of War Convention, provided the operational guidelines or "international agreements on the laws of war." The Geneva Red Cross Convention of 1929 governed the status of sick and wounded prisoners. Ninety-seven articles comprised the 1929 covenant. Based upon those articles, the War Department's two fundamental principles mandated that prisoners were to be treated as honorable soldiers, objects of neither derision nor abuse, and that the decent treatment of Axis prisoners would help ensure the same treatment for American prisoners of war.<sup>1</sup>

### America's World War II Prisoner of War Policy

America's World War II prisoner of war (PW) policy evolved tortuously as government agencies struggled to determine spheres of responsibility. According to the adopted plan, an interdepartmental board comprised of the Departments of State, War, Navy, and Justice made policy decisions. Actions then flowed downward from the War Department to the newly resurrected Office of Provost Marshal General under Major General Allen W. Gullion and finally to the U. S. Army, the actual manager of the prison camps. An Internees Section established in 1942 within the State Department's Special War Problems Division was concerned specifically with enemy prisoners of war and civilian internees in the United States and their American counterparts in enemy and enemy-controlled areas. The Internees Section was in close contact with the various U. S. government offices involved, with the Swiss Legation, appointed to represent the German prisoners; with the American and International Red Cross, and with the War Prisoners Aid of the International Y.M.C.A.

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<sup>1</sup>Martha H. Byrd, "Captured By The Americans," American History Illustrated, 11 (February 1977), p. 28-27; LTC George G. Lewis and Captain John Mewha, History Of Prisoner Of War Utilization By The United States Army, 1776-1945, Department of the Army Pamphlet No. 20-213, (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, June 1955), pp. 75-76; John Mason Brown, "German Prisoners Of War In The United States," American Journal of International Law, 39 (April 1945), pp. 198-200; and Arthur M. Kruse, "Custody of Prisoners of War in the United States," The Military Engineer, 38 (February 1946), p. 70.

In early 1942 the War Department **ordered** the transfer of all prisoners of war, save those captured by the U. S. Navy "at some distance," to confinement within the United States. The policy was intended to relieve overseas forces from the difficulty of caring for prisoners. The commanding generals of the United States Army's nine service commands were placed in control of the establishment and operation of prisoner of war (PW) camps. By 31 December 1942 some 1,881 prisoners of war were interned in the United States.<sup>2</sup> The situation, however, was changing fast.

At the beginning of the North Africa campaign, the United States and Britain reached an agreement whereby the United States would accept all prisoners taken in Northwest Africa. In April 1943 there were reportedly less than 5,000 prisoners of war in the United States, fewer than the expected influx. By May 1943 the figure had risen to more than 240,000 German and Italian prisoners. The agreement with the British, the victory in North Africa, and the invasion of Normandy thirteen months later inflated the number of prisoners of war creating unparalleled problems.

In answer to the escalating number of prisoners arriving in the United States, the Provost Marshal General presented a plan to the Joint Chiefs of Staff providing for the placement of the first 50,000 prisoners in existing facilities, such as old Civilian Conservation Corps camps. Due to security measures, camps initially were located in rural, sparsely populated and isolated areas. Camps were not to be located in blackout areas some 170 miles inland from either coast or along a specified 150 mile zone of the Canadian and Mexican borders. Camps also could not be located near industries vital to the war effort. Adhering to these conditions, mandated the location of two-thirds of the camps in the south and southwest under the Fourth, Seventh, and Eighth Service Commands.

Later as the manpower shortage became more acute and security concerns diminished, more camps were located in the north and or near less isolated areas. The War Department determined to use existing military installations having some extra space to house additional prisoners. This temporary housing could be transformed later into permanent camps. Among these camps, some intended originally for the internment of civilian aliens, were Camp Forrest, Tennessee; Camp Clark, Missouri; Fort Bliss and Fort Sam Houston, Texas; Fort Bragg, North Carolina; Fort Devens, Massachusetts; Fort Meade, Maryland; Camp McCoy, Wisconsin; Camp Shelby, Mississippi; Fort Sill, Oklahoma; and Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia.<sup>3</sup> Prisoner capacity ranged at these particular camps from 140 to 3,000.

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<sup>2</sup>Lewis and Mewha, History Of Prisoner Of War Utilization By The United States Army, pp. 75-76, 83; John Mason Brown, "German Prisoners Of War In The United States," pp. 199-213; Graham A. Stuart, "Special War Problems Division," in Department of State Bulletin, Vol. XI, # 264 (July 1944), pp. 63-74; Byrd, "Captured By The Americans," p. 27; and Judy Ledford Wyatt, "United States Policy Toward German Prisoners Of War And Its Application In South Carolina," MA Thesis (University of South Carolina, 1985), pp. 14-16. For America's policy concerning the Japanese, see Lewis and Mewha, History Of Prisoner Of War Utilization By The United States Army, pp. 248-261.

<sup>3</sup>Arnold Krammer, "German Prisoners of War in the United States," Military Affairs, 40 (1976), pp. 68-69; Kruse, "Custody of Prisoners of War in the United States," pp. 70-74; Byrd, "Captured By The Americans," p. 28; Wyatt, "United States Policy Toward German Prisoners Of War And Its Application In South Carolina," pp. 21-24; Lewis and Mewha, History Of Prisoner Of War Utilization By The United States Army, pp. 83-85; Mason, "German Prisoners Of War In The United States," pp. 205-206; Arnold Krammer, Nazi Prisoners of War In America, (New York, New York: Stein & Day, 1979), p. 27. In World War I, Fort Oglethorpe along with Fort McPherson were designated as war prison barracks. See Wyatt, p. 7.



To house additional prisoners of war the Provost Marshal General advocated an extensive construction program. According to one source, as of 15 September 1942, nine permanent internment camps were completed, another nine were under construction, six more were authorized, and another ten were designated as temporary camps. The government utilized prisoner of war labor as much as possible to construct new camps and in the adaptive use of existing facilities. The number of prisoners peaked in May 1945 when some 425,871, housed in approximately 490 base and branch camps in the continental United States and Hawaii, were interred in the United States. Before the war ended, every state save, Nevada, Montana, North Dakota, and Vermont, had prisoner of war camps.<sup>4</sup>

### Prisoner of War Camp Specifications

Following the Geneva Convention, these camps were built according to American military camp standards. The typical new prisoner of war camp could accommodate between 2,000 and 4,000 prisoners. The large base camp was divided into one or more compounds separated by a fence. Four companies of prisoners or some 1,000 men were housed in each compound. Standard facilities consisted of five barracks, a latrine with showers and laundry tubs, and an administration building for each company. Additionally, each compound had a recreation building, an infirmary, a workshop, a canteen, and an administration building. The camp itself had a chapel, a station hospital, and a large outdoor recreation area.<sup>5</sup> If a station hospital was not available, the prisoners utilized designated wards in the post hospital.

As events unfolded, housing needs outgrew these large base camps. The answer was smaller branch camps accommodating from 250 to 750 prisoners located in close proximity to farms, factories, and other areas where prisoners were used as needed in the work force. The branch camps utilized sundry types of housing including, for example, tents, auditoriums, mobile units, fairgrounds, armories, schools, and sometimes privately owned facilities. As of 15 February 1945 there reportedly were 130 base camps and 295 base camps for German prisoners in the continental United States. A number of others were housed in hospitals and in penal institutions.

As of 1 August 1943 there were three base and branch camps in Georgia as compared to none in South Carolina. By 1 June 1944 that number in Georgia had increased to 14. As of April 1944, 5 small camps with some 250 prisoners each were located in South Carolina and placed under the supervision of larger facilities in other states.<sup>6</sup> The Camp Gordon base camp, for instance,

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<sup>4</sup>Lewis and Mewha, History Of Prisoner Of War Utilization By The United States Army, pp. 83-84, 91, 112; Mason, "German Prisoners Of War In The United States," p. 205-207; Arnold Krammer, Nazi POWs In America, p. 27; Byrd, "Captured By The Americans," p. 26; and Wyatt, "United States Policy Toward German Prisoners Of War And Its Application In South Carolina," pp. 7, 21-22, 31-32.

<sup>5</sup>Mason, "German Prisoners Of War In The United States," pp. 206-207. There are discrepancies in the sources concerning the standard layout of the camps. See also Kruse, "Custody of Prisoners of War in the United States," pp. 70-74; Krammer, "German Prisoners of War in the United States," pp. 68-69; Krammer, Nazi POWs In America, pp. 26-28, 30; Byrd, "Captured By The Americans," p. 28; and Wyatt, "United States Policy Toward German Prisoners Of War And Its Application In South Carolina," p. 23.

<sup>6</sup>Lewis and Mewha, History Of Prisoner Of War Utilization, pp. 84-85, 111, 112; Krammer, Nazi POWs In America, p. 27; Wyatt, "United States Policy Toward German Prisoners Of War And Its Application In South Carolina," pp. 21-24; and John Hammond Moore, "Nazi Troopers In South Carolina," South Carolina Historical Magazine, 80 (October 1980), pp. 306, 308.

administered or sent details to several side camps, including Aiken and Fort Jackson, South Carolina; Waynesboro, and Reidsville, Georgia; Wilmington, North Carolina; and Dade City, Florida.<sup>7</sup> By the middle of 1945, the number of prisoners in South Carolina had risen to approximately 8,000 located in 20 camps spread across 17 of South Carolina's counties under the direction of Fort Jackson, by then a base camp.<sup>8</sup>

### Overseas Processing of Prisoners of War

As officials in the United States scurried in readiness to meet the demands of the prisoner of war influx, their American counterparts in North Africa were confronted with the immediate problems associated with thousands of German prisoners in a combat zone. Responding, U. S. Army officials established reception and processing stations, eventually growing to small town proportions. After being captured and searched, prisoners were transported from the front lines to these centers. Indeed, it seems that "Axis captives drove themselves to ... prison camps during the Allied onslaught ... [in Tunisia]. Evidently," wrote one reporter, "the master race prefers allied captivity to Axis freedom."<sup>9</sup>

Once at the processing centers, prisoners underwent a "labyrinthine registration procedure," including completion of a form similar to the U. S. Army's Basic Personnel Record, a medical examination, fingerprinting, photographing, and an interrogation. Army officials sent copies of the registration forms complete with a personal and medical history, serial number, list of personal belongings, and details of capture, to the International Red Cross and the Swiss Legation who could then contact the prisoners' families. Needless to say the registration process did not always go smoothly, especially when the area surrounding the processing centers was under attack. Problems encountered, such as the lack of interpreters, the failure to assign serial numbers, and the sometimes poor attitude of the American guards, were not unique to the overseas centers but rather were transported along with the prisoners to camps in the United States. One glaring difficulty was the frequent inability to separate Nazis from non-Nazis. The most staunchly Nazis, if known, were directed once constructed to Camp Alva, Oklahoma. This particular concern would later plague Camp Gordon and its Aiken branch camp.

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<sup>7</sup>Inspection Reports, Camp Gordon, GA., 25 May 1944, Prisoner of War Division (POW), Provost Marshal General Office (PMGO), Record Group (RG) 389, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA); Inspection Reports, Reidsville, GA., 28 December 1944, POW Division, PMGO, RG 389, NARA; Inspection Reports, Camp Gordon, GA., Waynesboro, GA., and Reidsville, GA., 31 December 1944, POW Division, PMGO, RG 389, NARA. In July 1944 the Commanding Officer of the Camp Gordon prisoner of war facility was notified that the branch camps at Aiken and Charleston, South Carolina and the Wilmington, North Carolina camp were being transferred to other base camps. LTC R. Hipeuser, Assistant Adjutant General, to Commanding Officer, Prisoner of War Camp, Camp Gordon, subject: Prisoner of War Branch Camps, 22 July 1944, Construction Correspondence, Camp Gordon, GA., Provost Marshal General Office, Record Group, 389, National Archives and Records Administration. Hereafter, POW will be used to abbreviate Prisoner of War, PMGO will be the abbreviation for Provost Marshal General Office, RG for Record Group, and NARA for the National Archives and Records Administration.

<sup>8</sup>Moore, "Nazi Troopers In South Carolina," pp. 306, 308.

<sup>9</sup>Lewis and Mewha, History Of Prisoner Of War Utilization, pp. 90-91; Krammer, Nazi POWs In America, pp. 2-17; and "Prisoners Prefer Prison," Camp Gordon Cadence, 28 May 1943, p. 7, United States Army Signal Center and Fort Gordon (USASC&FG) Newspapers, Public Affairs Office, USASC&FG Archives.

## The Trip to the United States

Once aboard the transport ships, American military police guarded the prisoners and kept order along with the help of German officers and noncommissioned officers. The transports and the accommodations ran the gamut from cargo to passenger ships. During the typical six week long voyage from Africa or the two week journey from Europe, the prisoners, like American soldiers, coped with cramped facilities and other adverse conditions. They landed at either Camp Shanks, New York or Norfolk, Virginia.<sup>10</sup>

Radbert Kohlhaas, one of Camp Gordon's prisoners of war and a member of the German Signal Corps who at one time served in the Intelligence Division of Rommel's successor, Von Arnheim, described his capture.<sup>11</sup>

*Whenever the British caught one of our men (sometimes we had to work behind enemy lines spotting transmitters, a way of electronic rays by means of radio waves) ... they passed the intelligence on one of their networks because they knew we were listening ... so we could always notify the relatives that so and so was caught by the British and is alright. Even when we were captured ... one of our wireless operators was just transmitting a list of the survivors to General Kesselring ... [A]t that moment a British soldier stepped into the truck where the operator was ... and he finished that list the same day ...*

Although the families were told one thing, the German news service told the people that "Tunis was now a Stalingrad. Every house is a fortress. We are fighting to the last man."<sup>12</sup>

Continuing the story of his capture and voyage to the United States, Kohlhaas wrote:

*I was captured after the German surrender on Cape Bon in Tunisia on May 11, 1943. Our captors, the British 18th Infantry, from India, treated us honorably and manly and would even share their own provisions with their prisoners. We were shipped by rail from Tunis to Constantine, Algeria, and finally turned over to the First Army at Algiers, where we embarked on the USS "Samuel Griffith," a liberty ship, on Sep. 25. We sailed in a convoy of about 100 units. It took us three weeks to cross the Atlantic. The sea was calm, so we could stay on deck from sunrise to sunset every day. There were 400 of us in the main hold of the boat. Those three weeks in the sunshine may have saved my life, because*

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<sup>10</sup>Lewis and Mewha, *History Of Prisoner Of War Utilization*, pp. 90-91; Krammer, *Nazi POWs In America*, pp. 2-17; Moore, "Nazi Troopers In South Carolina," pp. 306, 308-309; Byrd, "Captured By The Americans," pp. 27; and Wyatt, "United States Policy Toward German Prisoners Of War And Its Application In South Carolina," pp. 24-28.

<sup>11</sup>On a trip to the United States in April 1989, Father Radbert Kohlhaas visited Fort Gordon and the former prison of war camp site. He consented to an interview with the Command Historian Office and with the Public Affairs Office. Prior to his visit, the Command Historian Office corresponded with Father Kohlhaas several times.

<sup>12</sup>Interview, Father Radbert Kohlhaas with Dr. Kathy Roe Coker, USASC&FG Command Historian Office, 25 April 1989, Father Radbert Kohlhaas Papers, USASC&FG Archives.



I was utterly exhausted at the time.<sup>13</sup>

### Arrival in the United States

The day after the ship arrived on 15 October at Staten Island, Kohlhaas and his fellow prisoners disembarked but not before being searched.

We were searched getting off the boat in groups of ten ... [T]here was one National Guardsman who did the searching with his sub-machine gun at the ready and there was a huge trash can that was for the things they would take away from us. I was the third one from the end. I didn't have much, just a few hankies and a little underwear, but some books too. Among the books were a dictionary, a Greek edition of Sophocles, and [a commentary] on Sophocles' tragedies. The first thing the man grabbed from my few belongings was that book. He opened it. "Wow, what's that, [the guard asked]?" I told him, that is Greek. "Don't you pull my leg. That's Greek to me," he said. It is Greek. [Kohlhaas chuckled in an interview.] "How come you speak Greek [asked the guard]?" We learned that at school [replied Kohlhaas]. "Let us check him out in speaking English, How come you speak English [questioned the guard]?" You asked me, didn't you [Kohlhaas remarked]?

He didn't know what to do at that point. That was the end of the search, Kohlhaas later mused in an interview.<sup>14</sup>

After disembarking, prisoners of war encountered another maze of processing involving a number of government agencies. For instance, the Quartermaster's Office collected, stored, and returned the prisoners' personal belongings and disinfected their clothing. The Port of Embarkation's commanding officer determined how the ships of prisoners were to be unloaded. The Military Police interpreted orders and guarded the prisoners enroute to the camps. The Chief of Transportation and railroad representatives coordinated arrivals, departures, and destinations. The Port of Embarkation's Intelligence Division conducted interrogations as needed. Then they were put on trains for the journey to the prison camps. Before the war ended, over 425,000 prisoners went through this same process.<sup>15</sup>

### The Train Trip to Camp Gordon

Remembering his experiences after the disembarkation and his twenty-four hour long train trip to Camp Gordon, Kohlhaas wrote:

We ... were by the Staten Island Ferry taken to lower Manhattan

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<sup>13</sup>Letter, Father Radbert Kohlhaas to Dr. Kathy Roe Coker, 17 November 1989, Father Radbert Kohlhaas Papers, USASC&FG Archives.

<sup>14</sup>Letter, Father Radbert Kohlhaas to Dr. Kathy Roe Coker, 17 November 1989, and Interview, Father Kohlhaas with Dr. Coker, USASC&FG Command Historian Office, 25 April 1989, Father Radbert Kohlhaas Papers, USASC&FG Archives.

<sup>15</sup>Krammer, Nazi POWs In America, pp. 17-18 and Lewis and Mewha, Prisoner of War Utilization by the United States Army, pp. 90, 91.

for processing, and later to Jersey City Penn Station. We were marched to our train by National Guard's men, one to each group of ten prisoners, and got onto the platform during the early evening rush-hour. As we were still wearing the rags of our Africa Corps khakis, the rush-hour crowd mistook us for US soldiers returning from the European theater of war and gave us a hearty welcome. [The guards told them not to answer the crowd.] The train, consisting of coaches, left at 5 P.M. We were seated in groups of three to each four seat bay, with one guard at both ends of the aisle. The day-time trip through Virginia and the Carolinas seemed endless to me. We finally arrived at the Camp Gordon rail terminal in the late afternoon of Sunday, Oct 17, 1943. After the long trip from northern Africa it did feel like Sunday to me.

#### **Arrival at Camp Gordon's POW Facility/First Impressions**

A few soldiers in dress uniform met Kohlhaas and his fellow prisoners, marching them to the compound not located far from the depot. Father Gerald P. O'Hara, then the bishop of Savannah-Atlanta, was expecting them. He was searching for priests to establish a German chaplaincy. "There was," recalled Kohlhaas, "a priest, indeed, Msgr. Joseph Manefeld of Mainz, W. Germany, who was appointed to the Catholic community on the spot." Kohlhaas became his assistant.<sup>16</sup>

"We were introduced," continued Kohlhaas, "to a life that was incomparably better than we had known as German soldiers." There they found housing similar to that for American soldiers on the post. On the bed they found personal items, such as new underwear and soap. "[W]hatever you had been longing for weeks and months was there." The men then were marched to dinner at the mess hall. Smiling, vividly recalling, almost reliving the event, Kohlhaas sprightly said:

*We couldn't believe it. That was at a level which we had't known for years in Germany. Not only in the Army, I mean in general. There were things on the table which you know from your cookbook, but not from experience. Many of the prisoners thought, 'Well, they are trying to catch us somehow and let's take some of the food along for tomorrow, perhaps, for even next week.'*

The mess sergeant told them not to remove any of the food. "The next morning at breakfast," Kohlhaas continued, "it was like Christmas again!"<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Letter, Father Radbert Kohlhaas to Dr. Coker, 17 November 1989; Letter, Father Radbert Kohlhaas to Mr. and Mrs., Page, 22 June 1981 and Interview, Father Kohlhaas with Dr. Coker, USASC&FG Command Historian Office, 25 April 1989, Father Radbert Kohlhaas Papers, USASC&FG Archives.

<sup>17</sup>Todd Conger, "Freedom behind barbed wire, Former German POW recalls old memories," *The Signal*, 3 May 1989, p. 11, USASC&FG Newspapers, Public Affairs Office, USASC&FG Archives; Letter, Father Radbert Kohlhaas to Dr. Coker, 17 November 1989; and Interview, Father Kohlhaas with Dr. Coker, USASC&FG Command Historian Office, 25 April 1989, Father Radbert Kohlhaas Papers, USASC&FG Archives.



## The POW Camp

It was far from Christmas! More than a year before Kohlhaas' arrival, on 4 October 1942 the War Department had instructed the U. S. Army Chief of Engineers to provide POW housing and facilities at Camp Gordon. A month later the Corps of Engineers authorized \$50,000 to initiate the project with a scheduled construction for beneficial occupancy date of 15 December 1942. The Camp Gordon Internment Camp was activated on 8 January 1943. A month later on 27 February 1943 the Camp Gordon facility's Commanding Officer, Colonel Walter Anderson, notified the Fourth Service Command of deficiencies and proposed changes in the internment camp's construction. Two months later an officer with the Aliens Division, Provost Marshal General Office recommended the abandonment of the camp due to, among other reasons, structural defects. The recommendations went unheeded. On 14 July 1943 the internment facility was redesignated the Camp Gordon Prisoner of War Camp.<sup>18</sup>

The Fourth Service Command's POW facility at Camp Gordon, formerly used by American troops, was converted to a POW camp by adding barbed wire fences and conformed to the standard plan for POW camps. Six twelve foot guard towers surrounded the stockade with another four smaller towers strategically placed around the recreation area. "An excellent line of fire [was] available to the guards in the towers," found one camp inspector. But, the camp commander was "afraid" to use the machine guns in the towers because the American barracks were within forty feet of the fence line and the main road was within a few feet of the camp's eastern boundaries.<sup>19</sup>

The camp's capacity was 3,000 prisoners with 31 officers and 445 enlisted men in the garrison echelon. From the available records, the average population at the base camp was over 2,000. When Kohlhaas arrived in October 1943 there were "about 1200 prisoners, 4 companies of about 100 each to each of the 3 compounds."<sup>20</sup> As Kohlhaas recalled, the camp was located,

*near the freight-yard ... The PW-Camp site seems to have been the site of the present post stockade, consisting of three interconnecting rectangular compounds opening with their shorter sides towards a connecting road parallel to the main fence running along a large field we could use for soccer games once in a while.*

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<sup>18</sup>Memorandum For the Chief of Engineers from Headquarters, Services of Supply, War Department, 4 October 1942; Major E. Seelans, Corps of Engineers, South Atlantic Division Engineer, 11 November 1942; Colonel Walter L. Anderson, Commanding Officer, Camp Gordon Internment Camp, to Commanding General, Fourth Service Command, 27 February 1943; and Captain Harold W. Smith, Aliens Division, PMGO, to Major Earl Edwards, PMGO, 12 April 1943, Construction Correspondence, Camp Gordon, GA., PMGO, RG 389, NARA and Camp Gordon Historical Data Reference Card, Military Reservations, no date, Military History Institute.

<sup>19</sup>Inspection Reports, Camp Gordon, GA., 31 December 1943-2 January 1944, POW Division, PMGO, RG 389, NARA. The location of the guard towers was one of the construction deficiencies Colonel Anderson described in his report of 27 February 1943 to the Commanding General, Fourth Service Command and the subject of construction correspondence as late as February 1944. Colonel Walter L. Anderson, Commanding Officer, Camp Gordon Internment Camp, to Commanding General, Fourth Service Command, subject: Deficiencies and Proposed Changes in Camp Gordon Internment Camp, 27 February 1943 and LTC Earl Edwards, POW Division, PMGO, to Chief of Engineers, subject: Guard Towers, 18 February 1944, Construction Correspondence, Camp Gordon, GA., PMGO, RG 389, NARA.

<sup>20</sup>Memorandum For the Chief of Engineers from Headquarters, Services of Supply, War Department, 4 October 1942, POW Division, PMGO, RG 389, NARA; Inspection Reports, Camp Gordon, GA., 28 November 1943, 31 December 1943-2 January 1944, 25 May 1944, 21 July 1944, and 7 March 1945, POW Division, PMGO, RG 389, NARA; and Letter, Father Kohlhaas to Dr. Coker, 19 July 1988, Father Radbert Kohlhaas Papers, USASC&FG Archives.

Outside this fence, there was a PW-Camp HQ, a chapel, and a **movie** theater.

The chapel, used on "feast-days" was part of the headquarters area. On other days, the prisoners utilized as their chapel the POW library, located on the second floor of the "first barracks as you entered the compounds." There were also recreational areas. "According to the Geneva Convention, our camp was a regular U. S. Army Camp with all facilities including PX.," added Kohlhaas. "To us," he reminisced, "it was like heaven after living in hell."<sup>21</sup>

#### **Treatment of POWs/POW Camp Inspections**

As the Geneva Convention stipulated, the treatment of prisoners of war, such as housing, clothing, and food, for the most part was comparable to that received by American soldiers. To enforce these standards, representatives of the United States government, the Swiss Legation, along with members of the International Red Cross and the International YMCA visited the camps and filed reports of their findings to the Office of the Provost Marshal General.<sup>22</sup> These reports offer eyewitness accounts, some eloquently written, of life at the POW camps.

One of the most expressive writers was Edouard J. Patte of the International YMCA. In his December 1944 report of a visit to Camp Gordon, Patte wrote:

*The buildings of Camp Gordon are simply stately. Not every camp can claim twenty-two dormitories, all with two floors, showers, toilet, hot water and forced heating, ten mess halls, some of them artistically decorated, three recreation centers, one school building, with bookbinding shop and an exquisite library, one theatre and one church just outside the wires, but so placed that they are available for the POWs. The beautifully clear skies of this region of Georgia add to the camp a certain softness that one does not find further south or north.*<sup>23</sup>

Patte found the "little [side] camp" at Waynesboro, Georgia, "situated very close to a small cotton, tobacco, and pecan town, so close even that it seems to be a part of the township ... You will find there, amidst pines and oaks, twenty-four tents, and one little barrack for the German doctor attached to the camp, all the buildings are undecorated and of a very rugged appearance."<sup>24</sup>

Of his visit also in December 1944 to the side camp at Reidsville, Georgia, Patte wrote: "On this December day, the sun was shining brightly, and the temperature was so warm that I thought we were in May. On the sand,

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<sup>21</sup>Letter, Father Radbert Kohlhaas to Mr. and Mrs. Page, 30 September 1986; Letter, Father Kohlhaas to Dr. Coker, 19 July 1988, Papers of Father Radbert Kohlhaas, USASC&FG Archives; and Todd Conger, "Freedom behind barbed wire, Former German POW recalls old memories," The Signal, 3 May 1989, p. 11, USASC&FG Newspapers, Public Affairs Office, USASC&FG Archives.

<sup>22</sup>Mason, "German Prisoners Of War In The United States," pp. 199-202; Krammer, Nazi POWs In America, p. 38; and Moore, Nazi Troopers in South Carolina, pp. 311-312.

<sup>23</sup>Inspection Reports, Camp Gordon, GA., December 1944, PMGO, POW Division, RG 389, NARA.

<sup>24</sup>Inspection Reports, Camp Waynesboro, GA., December 1944, PMGO, POW Division, RG 389, NARA.



[forty-five] tents have been planted, of the usual type, brown, tan, dark olive." The executive officer introduced him to "a lanky, bony, red-haired spokesman and interpreter." After spending a few minutes "watching a football game played by teams of young men clad in gym shorts, body all bronzed and suntanned" he toured the camp as the prisoners were abuzz to learn the identity of "the civilian in tweeds who had left a red Hudson coupe at the compound's gate."<sup>25</sup>

According to one of the earliest and less poignantly written reports of an International Red Cross Committee visit to Camp Gordon on 28 November 1943, the three recently constructed two story high, steam heated, "very clean" barracks were equipped with indoor showers, basins, and toilets. "The food is excellent and sufficient," commented one inspector, and they "have all the clothing they need." Another inspector found the cost per meal per prisoner per day "reach[ed] the rather high figure of \$0.65[,] certainly indicat[ing] that they are being well and generously fed." Clothing ranged from the blue denim work clothes to their German uniforms.<sup>26</sup>

After working until four or five o'clock, the men had dinner and then were free until around ten o'clock. "That," said Kohlhaas, "is when we went to the PX, had a beer, some ice cream or whatever else." Kohlhaas spent much of his spare time reading. Commenting on the library, the inspector in November 1943 found "[t]here [was] one library for the whole camp ... an advantage over the other camps where there usually is one library per sector." Books came from, among other sources, the Red Cross, donations, and those prisoners bought in the camp exchange. The library at the base camp grew to at least over 4,000 volumes. Prisoners also subscribed to newspapers and magazines. The prisoners had their own weekly (later monthly) bulletin.<sup>27</sup>

Prisoners received modern medical treatment from American and German doctors in two wings of the military camp's hospital. Illnesses ranged from pneumonia to malaria, and typhoid fever. Prisoners requiring prolonged treatment were referred to Oliver General Hospital or Forrest Hill Hospital in Augusta. Those with the most serious cases (e.g., shrapnel wounds, mental problems) were scheduled for repatriation. A number of deaths did occur from natural causes (e.g., cancer, heat stroke, tuberculosis), accidents (e.g. gunshot wound, drowning, and accidents related to wood cutting, stacking lumber, pulpwood detail), suicide, and murder.<sup>28</sup>

In the way of education, English courses already were underway at Camp

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<sup>25</sup>Inspection Reports, Camp Riedsville, GA., 28 December 1944, PMGO, POW Divisions, RG 389, NARA.

<sup>26</sup>Inspection Reports, Camp Gordon, GA., 28 November 1943, 21 July 1944, and 7 March 1945, POW Division, PMGO, RG 389, NARA.

<sup>27</sup>Interview, Father Kohlhaas with Dr. Coker, USASC&FG Command Historian Office, 25 April 1989, Father Radbert Kohlhaas Papers, USASC&FG Archives; Inspection Reports, Camp Gordon, GA., 31 December 1943-2 January 1944 and 7 March 1945, POW Division, PMGO, RG 389, NARA; and Other Inspection Reports, Camp Gordon, GA., 10 May 1944, POW Division, PMGO, RG 389, NARA. The Library of Congress retains many of the POW newspapers on microfilm. The fifteen-reel series is titled "German Prisoner of War Camp Newspapers, 1943-1946." Unfortunately, Camp Gordon's is missing. Also see, James E. Fickle and Donald W. Ellis, "POWs in the Piney Woods: German Prisoners of War in the Southern Lumber Industry, 1942-1945," *The Journal of Southern History* 56 (November 1990), p.723.

<sup>28</sup>Inspection Reports, Camp Gordon, GA., 23 November 1943 and 7 March 1945, POW Division, PMGO, RG 386, NARA and Letter with copies of Basic Personnel Records and Death Certificates, Prisoners of War, Camp Gordon, GA., from German Federal Archives, to Command Historian Office, USASC&FG, 22 December 1986.



Gordon in November 1943. Later school programs at the base camp and the branch camps offered courses not only in English but also in Spanish, biology, economics, accounting, history, mathematics, geography, physics, chemistry, electricity, architecture, drawing, and other subjects, even leading to bachelor degrees. One inspector considered Camp Gordon to have "one of the most ambitious educational programs along modern lines, both in lower and higher grades" that he had seen in any camp he had visited. Courses offered at the base camp and branch camps differed as did the entertainment, sports, and other activities depending upon the education, talent, interests, and needs of the prisoners of war themselves.<sup>29</sup>

Weekly movies, prisoner-built stages for theatrical performances, large orchestra and smaller orchestras, a church choir, and a string quartet were some forms of entertainment found at the camps. The prisoners played football on the large athletic field outside the base camp. Among the other sports were soccer, handball, tennis, and boxing. German speaking chaplains or German chaplains themselves provided Catholic and protestant services at the base and branch camps.<sup>30</sup>

With the ever increasing manpower shortage and subsiding fears of prisoner of war uprisings, the U. S. Army and civilian personnel began to utilize the POW labor pool. The Geneva Convention specified the conditions under which prisoners could work. The directive, included in "The War Department Policy with Respect to Labor of Prisoners of War" issued on 10 January 1943, put the matter in "a nutshell:

*... any work outside the combat zones not having a direct relation with war operations and not involving the manufacture or transportation of arms or munitions, and not unhealthful, dangerous, degrading, or beyond the particular prisoner's physical capacity, is allowable and desirable.*<sup>31</sup>

#### **POW Labor Regulations**

Prisoners usually worked on military installations in mess halls, laundries, motor pools, and in various capacities for private contractors. To avoid competition with American free labor, private contractors first had to determine that no local labor was available to perform the desired work. Prisoners volunteering for work received eighty cents a day in canteen chits or coupons to buy personal items or to be held in reserve. Private contractors paid the federal government to use the prisoners who received the same eighty cents a day in credit. The War Department determined this rate in 1942 based on the twenty-one dollars a month paid the American private in 1941. Additionally each prisoner received ten cents a day in canteen chits

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<sup>29</sup>Inspection Reports, Camp Gordon, GA., 28 November 1943, 25 May 1944, and 7 March 1945, POW Division, PMGO, RG 389, NARA.

Not all courses were offered at all camps nor is the list in the text list all inclusive. For example, in December 1944 the school program at the Waynesboro, Georgia branch camp included algebra, English, German, geometry, drawing, and French and German literature. Inspection Reports, Camp Waynesboro, GA, December 1944, POW Division, PMGO, RG 389, NARA.

<sup>30</sup>Inspection Reports, Camp Gordon, GA., 31 December 1943-2 January 1944, 10 May 1944, December 1944, and 7 March 1945, POW Division, PMGO, RG 389, NARA.

<sup>31</sup>Krammer, Nazi POWs In America, pp. 79-82.

allowing him to buy necessities. Although officers were not required to work, they did receive salaries ranging from \$20 to \$40 a month.<sup>32</sup>

As Kohlhaas recalled, "Daily life at the camp was comparable to regular Army life [starting] with roll call ... Then we would go out to work [until four or five o'clock] and for me, that meant going to the gate and reporting to Chaplain [Captain Alden C.] Baughman's office." In addition to serving as Monseigneur Manefeld's assistant, from November 1943 to February 1944 Kohlhaas worked as Chaplain Baughman's secretary. Chaplain Baughman supervised both the German POW Catholic chaplain and the Protestant chaplain.

#### **Nazi POWs**

In time, Kohlhaas was "forced by the Nazi NCOs in control of the compound to give up ... [the] job that would remove ... [him] from their watching eyes and ears." Knowing Kohlhaas wanted to become a Benedictine monk, he was "a suspect and a potential traitor in their minds." At one point, the Nazi's tried to court-martial Kohlhaas. The visiting International Red Cross team wanted Kohlhaas, exhausted from working on the Catholic Christmas program, to report to the hospital for repatriation. Kohlhaas, who wanted to continue work on the Christmas program, asked that he be allowed to stay. "Some of our Gestapo friends [in the] compound overheard ... [him] so, they drew up a document that [he] had refused to be repatriated ... [O]ne of them stopped [him] on the road, [and warned], 'Well, don't forget you are a German soldier.'" Kohlhaas replied, "I think that is over." "Oh, boy!" he exclaimed.

*It took about a week and then they set up a real court-martial in our Catholic Chaplain's office. One afternoon, they were all there, six or seven of them. They closed the door from the inside and then they started threatening me with taking steps against my family in Germany. They would ... find means ... to do it by way of some soldier who was going to be repatriated. They would give him the documents necessary for the police to interfere in Germany. That is the way they would do it.*

Once free, Kohlhaas informed Chaplain Baughman of the incident, who instructed him to keep a low profile for a week or two "and then to forget about it."

Coerced to do other jobs, Kohlhaas worked as a janitor at the installation's motor pool, in warehousing, on a night shift at the post laundry, at the "Post Engineers' flying saw-mill," and in peanut farming. Speaking of the motor pool, Kohlhaas remarked: "It took about two weeks for all the trucks [to be] manned by German drivers. They [the Americans] were afraid of us in the beginning. The Prussians, dangerous men," he laughed.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., pp. 83-90; Lewis and Mewha, History of Prisoner of War Utilization by the United States Army, pp. 77-79, 86-90, 102-113; and Moore, "Nazi Troopers In South Carolina," pp. 306-307.

<sup>33</sup>Letter, Father Kohlhaas to Dr. Coker, 19 July 1988 and Interview, Father Kohlhaas with Dr. Coker, 25 April 1989, Father Radbert Kohlhaas Papers, USASC&FG Archives.



## POW Labor

As for the other prisoners, the inspection teams found them working in sundry capacities both within their camp and the American military camp, including for example, in the officer's kitchen and mess hall, in the bakery, in the laundry, as cooks and orderlies in the hospital, in the motor vehicle shop and motor pool, with the camp quartermaster, in agricultural labor, in peanut harvesting, in forestry and logging, in dismantling farmer's houses, and at the base camp's farm.<sup>34</sup>

As Kohlhaas recalled, "in the beginning, we would work on the base only, but later on, we would go out with one...escort per detail, to work for civilian contractors." Staff Sergeant Percy Tatter with the 4th Infantry (Ivy) Division before it left Camp Gordon for overseas, for example, accompanied a detail to Wadley, Georgia to collect peanuts.<sup>35</sup>

One would be civilian contractor was Castelberry Food Company of Augusta. The company requested the War Manpower Commission to certify the use of forty prisoners to work in its food processing plant. When the commission insisted that the prisoners be paid not less than forty cents an hour, the company withdrew its request, fearing a strike from the two hundred American civilian workers who were paid thirty-five cents an hour.<sup>36</sup> Details were also sent from the base camp to the Augusta Arsenal and Oliver General Hospital. The base camp sent 278 prisoners in April 1944 to Wilmington, Georgia to work in dairying and in a fertilizer plant. Another 246 were sent to the Aiken branch camp to work in the pulp-wood industry. Dade City, Florida received 250 prisoners to be used in the lumber mills and in packing fruit. In June 1944 the Waynesboro, Georgia detachment used its 249 German prisoners to cut trees, to load grain cars, to clear pastures and prepare cotton. The Charleston, South Carolina branch camp, located in a suburb, in July 1944 employed its 500 prisoners in such jobs as mosquito abatement, woodcutting, and in sawmills. Also in July the Wilmington, North Carolina labor detachment utilized its 270 German prisoners in cutting down trees, gathering vegetables, and in taking care of livestock.<sup>37</sup>

## Views of the Americans in Charge of the POWs

Also recorded in some of the inspection reports were the strength and capability of the American military personnel at the camps, often soldiers "who by lack of qualifications ... [were] not needed elsewhere." In its 28 November 1943 inspection of Camp Gordon, the International Red Cross Committee

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<sup>34</sup>Inspection Reports, Camp Gordon, GA., 28 November 1943 and 31 December 1943-2 January 1944, POW Division, PMGO, RG 389, NARA and Prisoner of War Camp Labor Reports, Camp Gordon, GA., 1944, POW Division, PMGO, RG 389, NARA.

<sup>35</sup>Letter, Father Kohlhaas to Dr. Coker, 19 July 1988, Father Radbert Kohlhaas Papers, USASC&FG Archives and Interview, Mrs. Edna Tatter with Dr. Kathy Roe Coker, 4 November 1988, Oral History Collection, USASC&FG Archives.

<sup>36</sup>Letter, Father Kohlhaas to Dr. Coker, 19 July 1988, Papers of Father Radbert Kohlhaas, USASC&FG Archives and Inspection Reports, Camp Gordon, GA., 31 December 1943-2 January 1944, POW Division, PMGO, RG 389, NARA.

<sup>37</sup>Inspection Reports, Camp Gordon, GA., 21 June 1944, 5-6 July 1944, and 8 July 1944, POW Division, PMGO, RG 389, NARA. For information on the use of German POWs in the southern lumber industry, see Fickle and Ellis, "POWs in the Piney Woods" German Prisoners of War in the Southern Lumber Industry, 1943-1945," pp. 695-724.



considered the camp commander, Colonel Anderson, to be receptive and "very interested in the prisoners" and that "an efficient cooperation ha[d] already been established between the Authorities and the prisoners." In January 1944 inspectors found the twelve officers and seventy enlisted men assigned to the Camp Gordon POW camp to be "satisfactorily instructed" in the Geneva Convention's provisions. Colonel Anderson, did voice his concern over the guards' too affable feelings toward the prisoners, "brought about by the guards working with the prisoners daily and getting to know the prisoners as individuals."<sup>38</sup>

But, just a month later in March 1944 1st Lieutenant John J. Buckley of the Advisory-Liaison Branch, Military Police Division, Fort Custer, Michigan filed a quite different report. Commenting on the camp commander, he reported:

*The Commanding Officer does not appear to be capable of handling the prisoner of war camp. He appeared to me to be indecisive in his decisions, uninformed of the local camp regulations, and apprehensive of what newspaper columnists, especially Walter Mitchell, would say of the manner in which he operated the camp.*

1st Lieutenant Buckley also found the staff wanting, "made up of retread officers who were both unimpressive and unorganized." The enlisted men were not confident of their officers. Morale was "sub-zero." The enlisted men were overworked and unable to guard the number of prisoners detailed to them. When 1st Lieutenant Buckley told the commanding officer this, he said he was aware of the problems but could do nothing to correct them without more men. 1st Lieutenant Buckley reported several incidents, including fraternization between the staff and the prisoners and a prisoner who had escaped when a guard mistook a piece of paper for an official pass. "No discipline exists," he wrote, "among the German POW." Other incidents reported to him had been "hushed up."

One tragic incident 1st Lieutenant Buckley mentioned, occurring during his inspection, was not "hushed up." It was the murder of a German POW at the Aiken side camp. The incident involved the hanging on 6 April 1944 of Horst Gunther. 1st Lieutenant Buckley was critical of Colonel Anderson's eight hour delay in leaving Camp Gordon for Aiken to investigate the matter. Thought at first to be a suicide, an inquest determined that two other prisoners, Erich Gaus and Rudolf Straub, strangled Gunther, then carried his body off, and hanged it from a telephone pole to give the appearance of suicide. According to one report, Gaus and Straub may have thought Gunther had distributed food to them inequitably. Another version reported that other prisoners suspected Gunther of having notified American authorities of a planned work stoppage and "that he liked jazz music."<sup>39</sup>

Were there more serious political factors at play? Kohlhaas believed there were. He reminisced:

*Life at the PW-Camp was well regulated on the surface, but it*

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<sup>38</sup>Krammer, *Nazi POWs in America*, p. 6; Other Inspection Reports, Camp Gordon, GA., 10 May 1944, POW Division, PMGO, RG 389, NARA; and Inspection Reports, Camp Gordon, GA., 31 December 1943-2 January 1944, POW Division, PMGO, RG 389, NARA.

<sup>39</sup>Inspection Reports, Camp Gordon, GA., March 1944, POW Division, PMGO, RG 389, NARA and Krammer, *Nazi POWs in America*, pp. 172-174.

could be dangerous underneath, at least for active church members; there was quite a strong undercurrent of Nazi persecution which led to outright murder in the spring of 1944. A plot aimed at our PW-priest in Cp. Gordon failed, but a prisoner was hanged in one of our branch camps at Aiken, S.C. The killing was investigated by the FBI, the killers were found out and brought to justice after the war. Similar conditions seem to have prevailed in German PW-Camps all over the U.S.<sup>40</sup>

Dr. Edward A. Freer of the Swiss Legation, who visited the base camp a few days after the murder, reported that Colonel Anderson had obtained a confession. Distinct from 1st Lieutenant Buckley, Dr. Freer "had only high praise to offer for the manner in which Colonel Anderson and his assistants were administering the camp." The State Department representative accompanying Dr. Freer, Charles C. Eberhardt, agreed adding, "Colonel Anderson and his assistant deserve all commendation for their administration of this camp, grown so difficult in recent days."<sup>41</sup>

There were other, not as serious, disciplinary problems. Among them were car thefts, stealing laundry items, hiding to avoid transfer to another camp, exceeding the speed limit, escapes, and attempted escapes.<sup>42</sup> Disciplinary measures included court-martials, hard labor, and partial forfeiture of monthly allowances. Some of the problems, notably the escapes and camp administration, were attributed to the negligence of the American guards and questionable abilities of other staff. Mr. Eberhardt observed on a later visit in December 1944:

*It seems obvious that the Camp Commander has been greatly handicapped by detail of too many subordinates lacking qualifications for successfully carrying their share of the burden of administration. Several instances indicating that the hearts of subordinates were not in their work came to the writer's notice.*

Another inspector, Major Edward C. Shannahan, was critical of the camp's administration and found the staff's morale to be low. He questioned the camp commander's apparent habit of berating his officers in front of others, including prisoners. The staff, he adjudged, required more instruction in their duties. What did Kohlhaas think? Perhaps somewhat nostalgically, he remarked: "He [Colonel Anderson] was an elderly gentleman, respected by both

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<sup>40</sup>Letter, Father Kohlhaas to Dr. Coker, 19 July 1988, Father Radbert Kohlhaas Papers, USASC&FG Archives. The 17-18 December 1944 inspection team noted that two prisoners found guilty of the murder were confined at Fort Leavenworth. Inspection Reports, Camp Gordon, GA., 7 March 1945, POW Division, PMGO, RG 386, NARA. According to Kramer, the Gunther murder was one of the "seven celebrated Nazi-inspired murders, there were dozens of other such incidents." The two were hanged at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas in 1945. Kramer, *Nazi POWs In America*, p. 173 and Moore, "Nazi Troopers in South Carolina," p. 309. Also see, *United States v. Sergeant Erich Gauss*, 7 September 1944, War Department, Judge Advocate General, NARA.

<sup>41</sup>Inspection Reports, Camp Gordon, GA., 25 May 1944, POW Division, PMGO, RG 389, NARA.

<sup>42</sup>Among the escapes were two made by Gerd Gutzat, one on 24 January 1944 from the Aiken branch camp and another on 17 April 1944 from Camp Gordon. Hermann Mueller and two other prisoners accompanied Gutzat on his second escape. Moore, "Nazi Troops in South Carolina," p. 309 and Donald Law, "Wartime Aiken Roused By German POW Escape; Nazi Hoped To Steal Airplane," *Aiken Standard*, 14 June 1967, p. 10.

the HQ-detachment and the prisoners for his pleasant ways."<sup>43</sup>

Usually each camp appointed a spokesman who conferred with the American POW camp commander. There were various spokesmen over the life of Camp Gordon's POW camp, including one of the first, Stabsfeldwebel Gerhard Knechter. Spokesmen did register complaints, such as, the amount of mail received, personal items confiscated at the port of embarkation and not returned, and pay due them for labor done in North Africa, to which officials apparently tried to respond.<sup>44</sup>

#### **Closing of the POW Camp**

According to one of the inspection reports, the Southeastern Branch of the United States Disciplinary Barracks took over the Camp Gordon POW facilities in December 1944. At that time, the ultimate fate of the POW camp was uncertain. The visiting POW camp inspector recommended that 1000 prisoners remain at the post and reported that the Camp Gordon post commander had ordered a survey determining the cost of building security measures around barracks to house 1000 prisoners in another part of the military camp. The POW camp at Camp Gordon officially closed on 29 January 1945.<sup>45</sup>

#### **Relocation of POWs and POW Labor**

As Kohlhaas recalled when the POW population at Camp Gordon fell in early 1945, the prisoners were relocated to Daniel Field.<sup>46</sup> With the move to Daniel Field, explained Kohlhaas, the German Catholic POW priest was transferred to Camp Blanding, Florida. The Catholic POW community then became a part of the parish of Augusta's St. Mary-on-the-Hill. Daniel Field became a branch of the Camp Wheeler POW camp.

As Kohlhaas reminisced, Augusta Arsenal, the largest employer of prisoners, by then used daily some two hundred to three hundred men. Augusta Arsenal "took on a new life" as it expanded to meet wartime demands. "German prisoners of war were housed there by the hundreds." Men from the local police force, such as Bill Chavous and Rufus Lanier, provided the necessary escorts or guards. One civilian contractor at Augusta Arsenal, Albert J. Cromer, used prisoners in construction projects. "They knew the Geneva Convention," he recalled, "and knew what they could and could not do." Their morale was high, save when rations and privileges were curtailed following the

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<sup>43</sup>Inspection Reports, Camp Gordon, GA., 31 December 1944 and 7 March 1945, POW Division, PMGO, RG 389, NARA and Interview, Father Kohlhaas with Dr. Coker, 25 April 1989, Father Radbert Kohlhaas Papers, USASC&FG Archives.

<sup>44</sup>Inspection Reports, Camp Gordon, GA., 31 December 1943-2 January 1944, POW Division, PMGO, RG 389, NARA and Mason, "German Prisoners Of War In The United States," p. 201.

<sup>45</sup>Inspection Reports, Camp Gordon, GA., 31 December 1944, POW Division, PMGO, RG 389, NARA; Camp Gordon Historical Data Reference Card, Military Reservations, no date, Military History Institute; Colonel Catesby Jones, Director of Security and Intelligence Division, Army Service Forces, Headquarters Fourth Service Command, Atlanta, Georgia to Commanding General, Army Service Forces, Washington, DC, 7 May 1946, Army Service Forces, Fourth Service Command, RG 160, NARA; and Prisoner Of War Camp, By Location and Principal Types of Work As Of 1 June 1945, Army Service Forces, Office of the Commanding General, Military History Institute.

<sup>46</sup>Letter, Father Kohlhaas to Dr. Coker, 19 July 1988, Father Radbert Kohlhaas Papers, USASC&FG Archives.



news of German atrocities at the concentration camps. "The Nazis tried to create trouble and had to be sent back to the compound." But, Cromer added "that was a small percentage."<sup>47</sup>

By August 1945, there were some 298 POWs at Daniel Field used in industry and agriculture. The Daniel Field POW camp also sent details to the local brickyard (Merry Brick). Joe Buck, a civilian painter employed by Post Engineers, utilized about 150 prisoners from Daniel Field for some eighteen months in 1944 and 1945 at Oliver General Hospital. Since he did not speak German, Mr. Buck at first did not want the job. But, an interpreter was provided. They "got along alright." He only had trouble with two of the men. "They were smart people ... All were good workers," Buck commented.<sup>48</sup>

In addition, there were several wood cutting and farming details. POW details also took care of the grounds at the Augusta National golf course. In Kohlhaas' opinion, relations were good between the prisoners and the civilian population.<sup>49</sup> Mr. Cromer and Mr. Buck agreed.

### **Augustans' Reactions to the Presence of POWs**

How did other Augustans react to POWs in their "backyard"? According to local newspaper accounts and official records, county farm officials, in particular J. W. Chambers and Fred Sims, and farmers welcomed the POWs. Lester Moody, Secretary of the Augusta Chamber of Commerce, actively lobbied War Department and Fourth Service Command officials for help. In late August 1943, the "hopes of the farmers [were] buoyed" when learning that POWs "would be in the fields about Richmond county ... " The farmers needed all the help--even that of POWs--they could get to harvest the peanut crop before bad weather threatened their livelihood. At that time, when POWs would be "permitted to go into the cotton fields was not known." Responding, the Fourth Service Command sent an undesignated number of Italian POWs from Camp Wheeler to Camp Gordon.<sup>50</sup> Early in September 1943, a newspaper headline read, "German Prisoners Harvest Peanut Crop in Aiken Area: War Captives Go About Tasks in Fields With Will; None Shows Displeasure at Work." Reporter, Maurice Getchell, wrote:

*With Aiken counties 13,978 acres of peanuts in the ground ready for harvest and the growers faced with a critical shortage, the*

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<sup>47</sup>Letter, Father Kohlhaas to Dr. Coker, 19 July 1988, Father Radbert Kohlhaas Papers, USASC&FG Archives; Edward J. Cashin, The Story of Augusta, (Augusta, GA: Richmond County Board of Education Historical Society, 1980), p. 269; and Interview, Mr. Albert D. Cromer with Dr. Kathy Roe Coker, 8 November 1988, Oral History Collection, USASC&FG.

<sup>48</sup>Interview, Mr. Joe Buck with Dr. Kathy Roe Coker, 7 November 1988, Oral History Collection, USASC&FG Archives and Colonel Callie H. Palmer, Director, Security and Intelligence Division, Army Service Forces, Office of the Commanding General, Headquarters Fourth Service Command, Prisoner of War Instructions and Information Letter No. 23, 21 August 1945, RG 160, NARA.

<sup>49</sup>Letters, Father Kohlhaas to Dr. Coker, 17 November 1988 and 19 July 1988, Father Radbert Kohlhaas Papers, USASC&FG Archives, and Letter, Father Kohlhaas to Mr. and Mrs. Page, 30 September 1986, Father Kohlhaas Papers, USASC&FG Archives.

<sup>50</sup>"Prisoners Begin Farm Work Today," The Augusta Chronicle, 30 August 1943, p. 1; Lester Moody, to General Blackshear M. Bryan, Assistant Provost Marshal, War Department, 11 September 1943, POW Operations Division, RG 389, NARA; and Colonel John E. Hatch, Director, Internal Security Division, Army Service Forces, Fourth Service Command, to Provost Marshal, War Department, 20 January 1945, POW Operations, RG 389, NARA.

*United States army came to the rescue with 250 German prisoners of war to help the farmers prepare their crops for market ... [T]here has been no evidence of laziness or attempts to shirk their tasks. They go about their work with a will, sing and whistle and joke with one another in their native tongue ... There are no weaklings in the group of war prisoners ... here. Each is a fine specimen of physical manhood.<sup>51</sup>*

Perhaps "a fine specimen" succinctly characterized the attitude of many, at least farmers and others, who desperately needed farm labor, and even echoes the Old South's attitude toward its "colored" population. POWs were laborers, interesting novelties of observation. At least this is the impression given by some of the early newspaper accounts.

A month later, the same reporter co-authoring an article about a funeral given for the accidental death of a POW, wrote, "His name? Well that matters little." Then the reporters went on to describe the ceremony near Camp Gordon's gate number two, stating, "He was a captured soldier. Captured honorably and as such was given a military funeral, a tribute that one soldier accords another, whether friend or foe."<sup>52</sup> That seemed to echo the attitude of most American soldiers toward the POWs in their custody.

What about the attitude of civilians not in want of laborers? There is evidence that not all welcomed the POWs. Some of that feeling stemmed from several escape attempts. In one case, a POW thought to have escaped but actually hiding in an attic of the POW camp was reportedly "seen in many, many places in Georgia and South Carolina."<sup>53</sup>

In another case, a reporter wrote that "the nomadic habits of the German prisoners of war, stationed in the Forest Hills vicinity [of Augusta], are causing quite a stir of alarm among the residents." While working in her backyard, one woman suddenly spotted "a man standing there with his back to her. The big PW across his shirt gave her a momentary feeling of alarm, but she quickly recovered and slipped quietly into the house." Once in the house, she found her husband's pistol and ran back outside. When the POW "found himself looking into the dangerous end of a gun he turned and ran, half stumbling in his haste, down an embankment." She chased him and came upon a group of some 30 prisoners. She saw no guard. After yelling for the guard several times, he appeared. Not satisfied with the guard's reply to her questions as to how the POW escaped, she told him "that the prisoners should be kept in barbed wire enclosures and not allowed to bother anyone." Continuing she railed, "This is not the first time we have been annoyed by prisoners wandering around our grounds." The "irate" woman proceeded to tell the guard of another incident of a POW in her yard and the fact that her children and her neighbors' children were afraid to play in their favorite area for fear of the POWs.

Other complaints came from motorists travelling past an excavated area

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<sup>51</sup>Maurice Getchell, "German Prisoners Harvest Peanut Crop in Aiken Area: War Captives Go About Tasks in Fields With Will; None Shows Displeasure at Work," The Augusta Chronicle, 12 September 1943.

<sup>52</sup>John F. Battle, Jr., and Maurice Getchell, "American Soldiers Do Honor To German Killed at Gordon," The Augusta Chronicle, 31 October 1943, pp. 1, 16.

<sup>53</sup>"German Listed As 'Escapee' Concealed Himself in Attic," The Augusta Chronicle, 11 May 1944, p. 1.



across from Daniel Field who said the POWs there "whoop and yell at all passers-by." The reporter cited an editorial referring to "a ruckus" in Arizona and in Washington, D.C. caused by Arizona's Senator McFarland who had read "'half a dozen irate letters"' complaining of German POWs "roaming at large, pilfering from homes, stealing and displaying the Nazi swastika." One Arizona judge said the prisoners do not escape from the guards but "'just walk off from the job." Continuing to cite the editorial, The Augusta Chronicle reported that "'vigilance in guarding the PWs should be maintained. And civilians should be extremely wary of prisoners." After referring to women jailed for having "'illicit dates with prisoners," a federal judge in Michigan warned that "'aiding war prisoners could be punished with the death penalty ... "' All civilians were reminded "'that PWs are potentially dangerous criminals with whom they should have no dealings."'

In the particular case of the Augusta woman, military personnel gave her permission "to fire a warning shot at prisoners found roaming around her grounds, if the laxity of assigned guards permits them to annoy her again."<sup>54</sup>

Also in the city, Augusta Arsenal employees were warned to abide by the "published regulations regarding prisoners of war ... " After one employee was discharged for failure to abide by the rules, the camp's commanding officer, Colonel J. McD. Thompson, issued a statement, "Any employee found guilty of violating the rules laid down concerning prisoners of war will be subject to prosecution in federal courts for giving aid to the enemy." Fraternization was "forbidden" and prisoners were not to come in contact with women employees. In fact, "[d]ividing partitions ... [were] required between women work areas and prisoner of war work areas." Even talking to prisoners was not allowed. Colonel Thompson added, "'It has been found that most trouble which occurs in dealing with prisoners of war is caused by the civilian element rather than a failure of prisoners to observe rules and regulations ... The inborn discipline of the German prisoner," Colonel Thompson believed, "'especially causes his observance of regulations."<sup>55</sup>

Attitudes among Augustans and Americans over the presence of POW's in their city to say the least varied. While farmers and businessmen saw them as essential to the work force, others considered them to be "'potentially dangerous." Overall from the available evidence, relations between the POWs and Augustans was more similar to what Kohlhaas, Cromer, and Buck recalled.

#### **Germany's Surrender and Changing Treatment of POWs**

When Germany surrendered on 8 May 1945, the treatment of prisoners changed. "Thereafter," as Kohlhaas recalled, "conditions declined considerably due to orders, which called for a certain retaliation provoked by the horrible conditions discovered in the Nazi concentration camps in eastern Europe." Rations were cut.

[T]here was no more fresh meat, there was no more oleo, there was no more milk, no butter, and, for instance, our woodcutting details had to go out to cut, clean out, and stack three cords of wood a man on six slices of bread with mashed beans. That was their lunch ... Everything was taken out of the

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<sup>54</sup>"German War Prisoner Chased From Yard By Irate Woman," The Augusta Chronicle, 17 February 1945, p. 5.

<sup>55</sup>"Arsenal Employees Are Warned Against Fraternization With PWs," The Augusta Chronicle, 3 April 1945, p. 5.



PX. All we could buy was bootblack and razor blades. No more cookies, no more soft drinks, no more whatever else. It took the International Red Cross about half a year to change things a little bit so we could buy milk at the PX which we loved.<sup>56</sup>

Using their ingenuity, prisoners sometimes resorted to other means to acquire food resulting in "some funny things happen[ing]." Kohlhaas described one incident at Oliver General Hospital involving the POW kitchen work detail. Told not to eat anything save their six slices of bread and mashed beans, one morning members of a detail eyed a skillet of sausages. "... [O]ne of the men went over ... and grabbed a sausage and put it in his pocket and was not aware of the fact that he was trailing another twenty feet of sausages." The men started laughing. Fortunately the American mess sergeant had a sense of humor and offered the prisoners breakfast. Another prisoner working at a motor shop, "where there is nothing to eat," took an empty tool box with him and "would walk over to an American mess hall where some German prisoners were working as kitchen detail. He would park that tool box next to a refrigerator ... and you would see that box be filled as soon as possible. Then he would walk up to the mess sergeant" with a monkey wrench and screw drivers in hand, telling the sergeant that he was there "to check on the pipes and wiring." After making "repairs," the prisoner would near the refrigerator and ask the other prisoners if the tool box was full yet. Then he would leave taking the tool box with him, returning to the motor shop for breakfast.<sup>57</sup>

While these incidents may have been "funny," they did not mask the seriousness of affairs. A Department of State representative visiting the Charleston branch camp in July 1945 reported the need for better refrigeration of the food the prisoners managed to receive, a problem with lice, and numerous prisoner complaints. He added, "the physical condition as well as the morale of the prisoners seems to have deteriorated very much in recent weeks." Elsewhere prisoners of war faced similar conditions.<sup>58</sup>

### Closing Days of the War Felt by POWs

In the closing days of the war, an uneasiness spread over the POW camp. "None of us, Kohlhaas, explained, "had any idea of what to expect. We had come to experience the first genuine fear since being prisoners. The freedom we had behind barbed wire was the only freedom we'd known."<sup>59</sup>

Contributing to the low morale, was the American re-education program intended to democratize or de-Nazify the prisoners, made more stern by the news of the concentration camps. "Security was strict," Kohlhaas commented, "but sometimes--as in the case of Nazi activities--malfunctioning to the point that the very same people who had been sitting opposite the chapel entrance

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<sup>56</sup>Letter, Father Radbert Kohlhaas to Dr. Coker, 17 November 1988, Father Radbert Kohlhaas Papers, USASC&FG Archives. For related information see, for example, "Anger at Nazi Atrocities Is Rising but U.S. Treats Prisoners Fairly," *Newsweek*, 25 (7 May 1945), p. 58 and "Prisoner of War Fare Is Changed," *The Augusta Chronicle*, 29 April 1945, p. 4.

<sup>57</sup>Interview, Father Kohlhaas with Dr. Coker, 25 April 1989, Father Radbert Kohlhaas Papers, USASC&FG Archives.

<sup>58</sup>Moore, "Nazi Troops In South Carolina," p. 314.

<sup>59</sup>Conger, "Freedom behind barbed wire, POW recalls old memories," *The Signal*, 3 May 1989, p. 11, USASC&FG Newspapers, Public Affairs Office, USASC&FG Archives.

on a Sunday in order to take down the names of the prisoners attending Sunday services ... [who] were to be punished in case of a final German victory[,] were appointed leaders of the re-education program after the German surrender in May 1945 ... They were still hoping for the secret weapon or whatnot."<sup>60</sup>

### **The Return Home**

When the POW camp at Daniel Field was closed in March 1946, Kohlhaas and the other remaining Camp Gordon prisoners were sent back to Europe in U. S. Army trucks via Camp Wheeler and Fort Benning, Georgia and then by rail via Camp Forrest, Tennessee onward to Camp Shanks, New York. Brief stops at the various posts were made for processing before repatriation. By July 1946 all prisoners of war had left the United States, save one hundred and forty-one Germans, twenty Italians, and one Japanese held in federal prisons along with twenty-eight Germans and fifteen Italians at large in the country.<sup>61</sup> Recalling his "Odyssey" home, Kohlhaas wrote:

*We sailed from Staten Island, N.Y., aboard the USS "Waycross," a Victory ship this time...[early in the morning] on March 21, 1946, and arrived at Antwerp, Belgium, after an extremely stormy crossing, on March 31. We disembarked on April 1 and were turned over to the British, who took us to a tent-camp near Brussels (Villevorde). By a mistake of the British bureaucracy I was discharged right there on April 24, 1946, and after an unbelievably adventurous Odyssey I crossed the German border in the disguise of a Belgium army-chaplain at 9:30 P.M. on July 10, 1946. But that would make a real novel.*

The following day Kohlhaas met Monseigneur Ferdinand Cammaert, "the Belgian Chief of Chaplains, who was supposed to return ... [him] to British custody." Kohlhaas told Monseigneur Cammaert that he planned to join the Benedictine monastery of Maria Laach. The monseigneur, who was on his way to the same monastery, volunteered to take a letter in Kohlhaas' behalf. "He would see to it that I would get to Maria Laach in due time. But that's the novel. Imagine the one prisoner out of 100,000 wanting to become a monk of Maria Laach meeting the one Belgian chaplain, who was going there at that very moment!" exclaimed Kohlhaas.

### **Life After Camp Gordon**

Indeed, Kohlhaas fulfilled his dreams and became a Benedictine priest at the Abbey of St. Hildegard in Rudesheim, Germany where he still resides. Commenting on the "general effect of ... [his] prisoner of war experience," Dom Radbert Kohlhaas, commented,

*I shall be grateful for it to the end of my life. As you will*

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<sup>60</sup>Letter, Father Kohlhaas to Dr. Coker, 19 July 1988 and Interview, Father Kohlhaas with Dr. Coker, 25 April 1989, Father Radbert Kohlhaas Papers, USASC&FG Archives.

<sup>61</sup>Letter, Father Kohlhaas to Dr. Coker, 17 November 1989, Father Radbert Kohlhaas Papers, USASC&FG Archives; Colonel Catesby Jones, Director of Security and Intelligence Division, Army Service Forces, Headquarters Fourth Service Command, Atlanta, Georgia to Commanding General, Army Service Forces, Washington, DC, 7 May 1946, Army Service Forces, Fourth Service Command, RG 160, NARA and Moore, "Nazi Troops In South Carolina," p. 311.

have gathered from my record, I was a student of theology, and I made up my mind to join the Benedictine monastery of Maria Laach, W.-Germany, right at Camp Gordon, Ga., where I also met an American Benedictine priest, Dom Francis A. Zimmerer of New Subiaco Abbey in Arkansas, who was an Army-Chaplain at Camp Gordon.

Dom Zimmerer was the first benedictine priest to whom Kohlhaas told his plans. "I hold only fond memories of Americans and my days as a German POW," Kohlhaas concluded.<sup>62</sup>

### **Remembering the Past and Lessons for the Future**

Memories of the World War II POW camp at Camp Gordon still linger today not only in the mind of Father Kohlhaas but, no doubt, in the minds of all those associated with this generation. A startling physical reminder today of that era is the prisoner of war cemetery located near Fort Gordon's gate number 2 where that first prisoner was buried in October 1943. It was there that Father Kohlhaas silhouetted against twenty-one headstones ended his pilgrimage with a silent prayer.<sup>63</sup>

As we reflect on this episode of our nation's history, we are mindful of the need to remember the nation's struggle for continued freedom in World War II, the sacrifices made both by the Allied and Axis powers, and the evolution of their relationships over the past to today's end of the Cold War. As Lieutenant General Charles A. Horner, commander of U.S. and Coalition Air Forces in the Persian Gulf War, recently wrote, paraphrasing the Spanish-born American philosopher George Santayana, "People who fail to study their history, are destined to repeat it."<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>Letter, Father Kohlhaas to Dr. Coker, 17 November 1989; Letter, Father Kohlhaas to Mr. and Mrs. Page, 30 September 1986, Father Radbert Kohlhaas Papers, USASC&FG Archives; and Todd Conger, "Freedom behind barbed wire: Former German POW recalls old memories," The Signal, 3 May 1989, p. 11, USASC&FG Newspapers, Public Affairs Office, USASC&FG Archives.

<sup>63</sup>As noted in Appendix B, most of the one Italian and twenty-one German prisoners of war buried there died of accidental or natural causes while prisoners either in South Carolina or Georgia prisoner of war camps. Prisoners of War Interred in the United States, Camp Gordon, GA., POW Division, PMGO, RG 389, NARA and Letter with copies of Basic Personnel Records and Death Certificates, Prisoners of War, Camp Gordon, GA., from German Federal Archives, to Dr. Kathy Roe Coker, Command Historian Office, USASC&FG, 22 December 1986.

<sup>64</sup>LTG Charles A. Horner, "The Air Campaign," Military Review LXXI (September 1991), p. 17.



## APPENDIX A

### Local News Stories

# German Prisoners Harvest Peanut Crop in Aiken Area

War Captives Go About Tasks in Fields  
With Will; None Shows Displeasure at Work

By Maurice Gotchell

AIKEN, S. C., Sept. 11—With Aiken counties 13,978 acres of peanuts in the ground ready for harvest and the growers faced with a critical shortage, the United States army came to the rescue with 250 German prisoners of war to help the farmers prepare their crops for market.

Contracts for the prisoner labor were made with the government through the Aiken county farm agent on the basis of pay per stack. This agreement follows closely the cost to farmers in previous years.

The government pays the prisoners at the rate of 80 cents a day. A portion of their wages is set aside for the prisoners for future use.

All prisoners of war employed on farms in this section are selected through a volunteer system. Practically all who are physically able prefer to work in the fields to being confined to the concentration centers.

So far as has been noted by those in charge of the prisoner group here, there has been no evidence of laziness or attempts to shirk their tasks. They go about their work with a will, sing and whistle and joke with one another in their native tongue.

## FEW SPEAK ENGLISH

Although few of the prisoners working in this area are familiar with the English language, they are quick to grasp instructions by signs given them by the farmers in whose fields they are working.

The universal sign language seems to meet practically all requirements. Very little time is lost in teaching the enforced visitors to this country to pull and stack peanuts properly.

At the end of their first day's work, farmers generally were pleased with results.

Evidence that prisoners have had previous farming experience is shown by the manner in which they go about their job. They display a thoroughness that reflects minute training. There are no weaklings in the group of war prisoners at work here. Each is a fine specimen of physical manhood. Their skin is tanned to a nut brown. Their muscular development is evidence of rigid army training and vigorous campaigning.

This group ranges in age from 19 to 39 years. Most of them have seen action on the battle fronts of Europe and North Africa. Surprisingly, they seem pleased that Italy had been knocked out of the war.

## IMPRESSED WITH COUNTRY

Officers and men in charge quote the prisoners as saying they are impressed with the little they have seen of America, but would rather be here as free men than prisoners of war.

One of the American non-commissioned officers of the guard escort who can converse with the prisoners in German, told the writer that one of the men expressed a desire to take him back to Hamburg with them when the fighting is over.

Soccer is the most popular ath-

letic sport. They play a game they have identified as hand ball, which is a form of soccer, only the ball is knocked about with the hands. The great American game of baseball still is not clear to them, and for that reason is not in very high favor.

Every effort is made to safeguard the health of the prisoners. The water taken by them into the fields from their camp is tested for purity. Water drawn from wells or cisterns on the farm where they are working is not used under any circumstances.

## GET GOOD FOOD

The food they receive is identical with that of the army guards over them. When time comes to allot food for the day it is divided equally between the prisoners and their guards.

The prisoners have their own camp cooks. When they leave the detention centers, they carry along their lunches, each carefully packed in a dustproof bag. Each lunch consists of several sandwiches, and a variety of fruit, usually varying daily. In their canteens they carry coffee which they use instead of water, until the supply is exhausted. Then the water is brought into use.

The Germans are rapidly picking up American slang expressions. Such expressions as "O. K." and "Chow," they understand readily. A German lad of nineteen has interested himself in the undertaking of teaching them simple English words he has picked up in some way previously.

## TWO FORMS OF SALUTE

Two forms of salute are used for the American officers in charge of the prisoners. One of them is a sort of half-hearted Nazi hand raising, when they are not in formation. The other is a snappy regulation salute when in formation. This is similar to that of our own soldiers.

Each prisoner group is permitted to select its own leader in camp. This leader is recognized as the highest ranking officer and directs the work in the fields. He sees to it that the workers keep moving.

According to reports of farmers, the record for the first day was considered remarkable, although part of the time was taken up in teaching the men the methods used in gathering and stacking peanuts.

A total of 1220 full-sized stacks of peanuts were harvested in approximately two-thirds of the average working day. It is a little wonder that the farmers in this section of Aiken county are handing bouquets to the war prisoners. Their efforts make the difference between success and failure of the country's peanut crop.







# German Prisoners To Gather Peanuts

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## Chambers Announces Availability to Farmers

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German prisoners of war are going to be available to help Richmond county farmers harvest peanuts, according to an announcement by J. W. Chambers, county farm agent, yesterday.

A meeting of farmers interested in securing laborers for the peanut harvest has been set for tomorrow afternoon by the Farm Labor Advisory committee, Chambers said.

The meeting has been called for 3 o'clock in the municipal court room at the county courthouse.

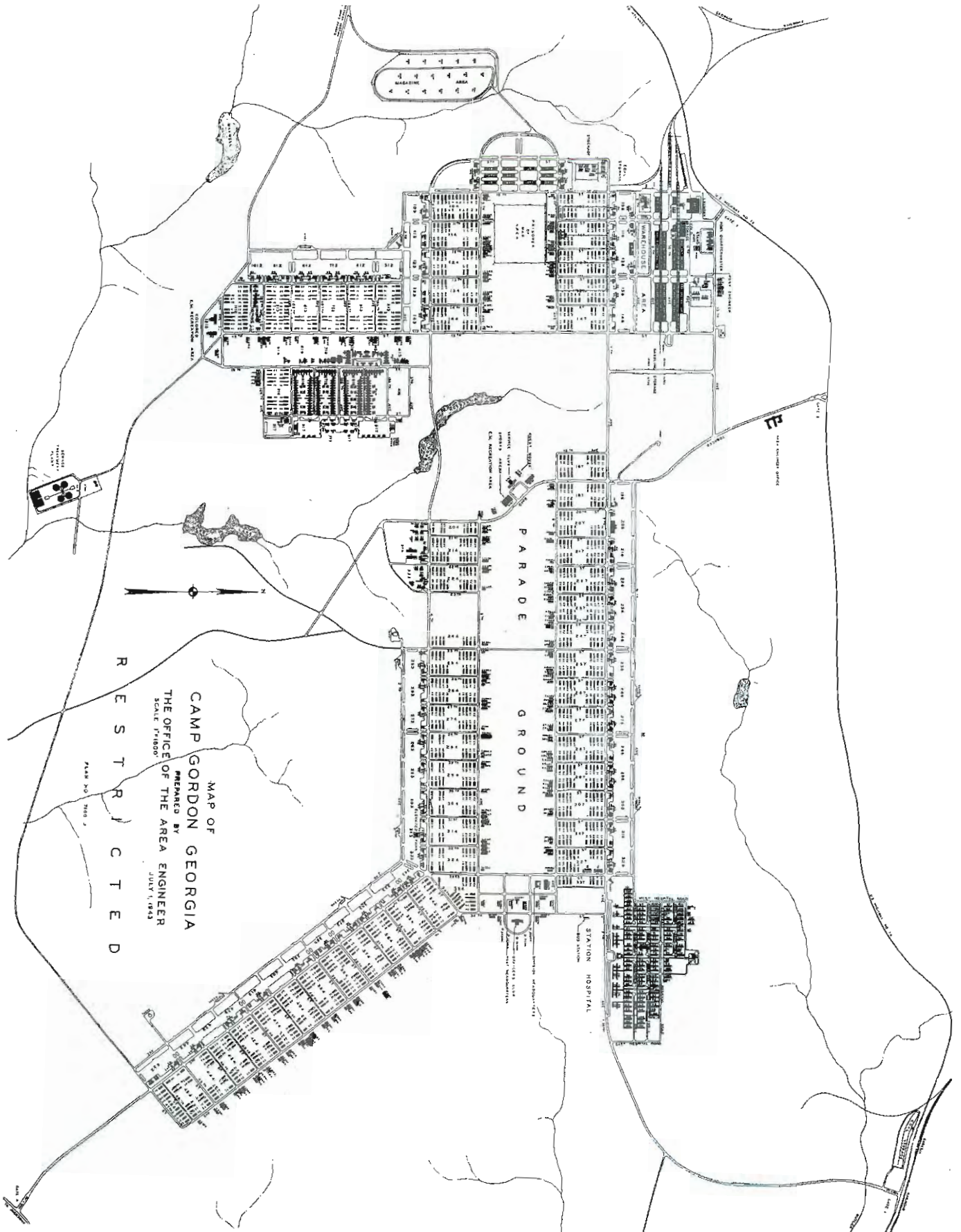
The war prisoner labor will be available here only a short time, the county agent said, and added that the number of workers required would be estimated from the number of interested farmers in attendance at the meeting.

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**THE AUGUSTA CHRONICLE**  
**10 AUGUST 1943**

# APPENDIX B

## Map Showing the Location of the POW Camp





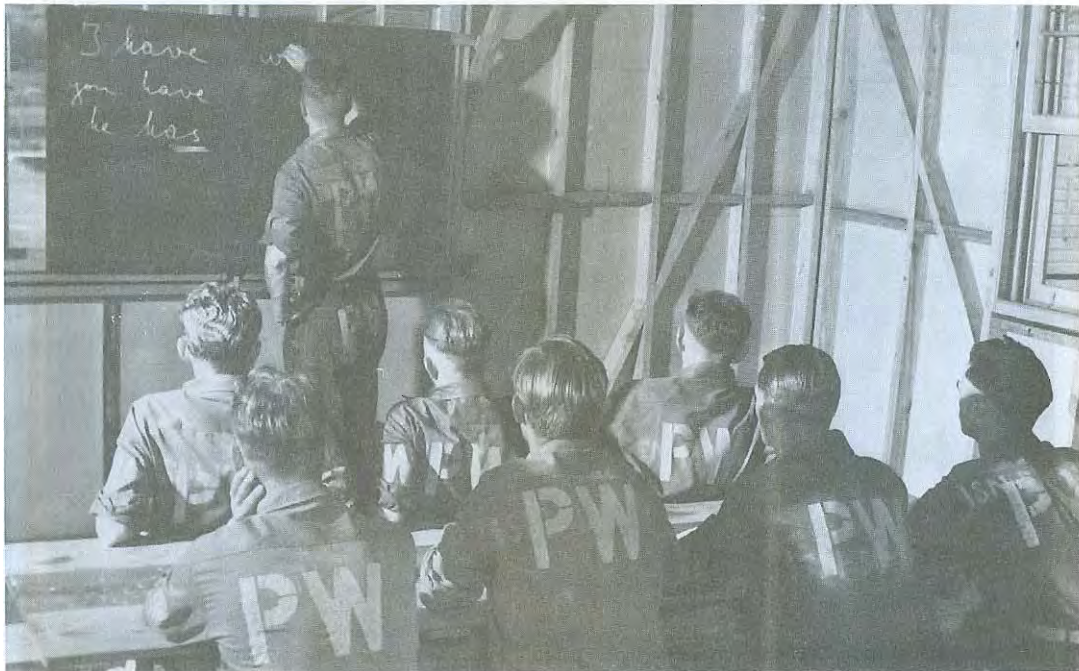


## APPENDIX C

### Photographs

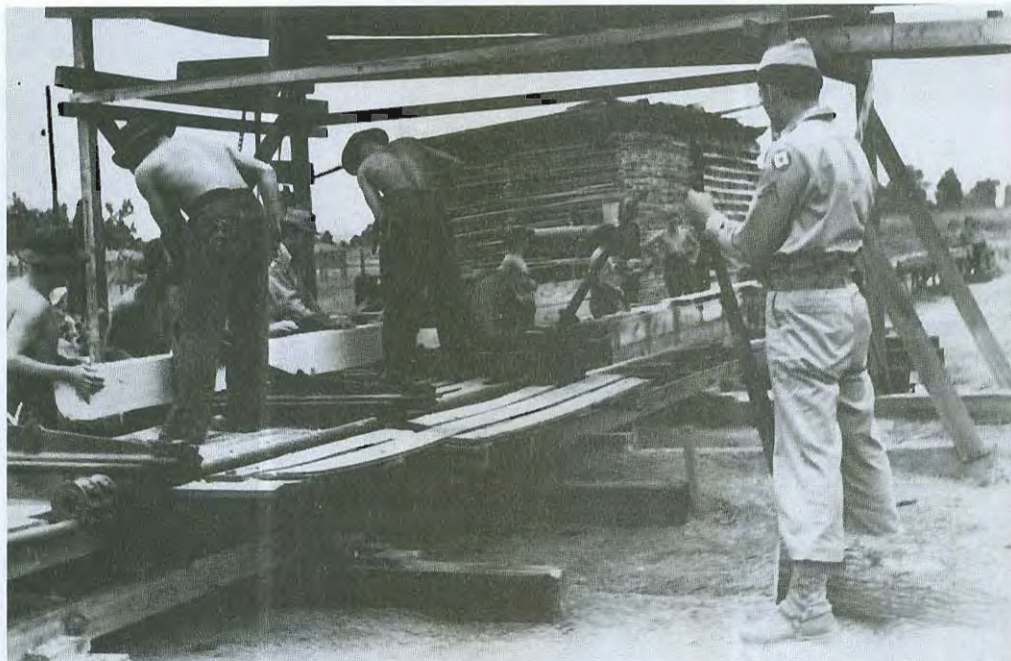


Father Radbert Kohlhaas with Mr. and Mrs. Joe Page during his visit to Fort Gordon, April 1989. Father Radbert Kohlhaas Collection, USASC&FG Archives.



POWs learning English, 1943. SC Photograph #187472, National Archives and Records Administration. Copy in USASC&FG Archives.





POWs working at a saw mill, September 1943. SC Photograph #257149, National Archives and Records Administration. Copy in USASC&FG Archives.

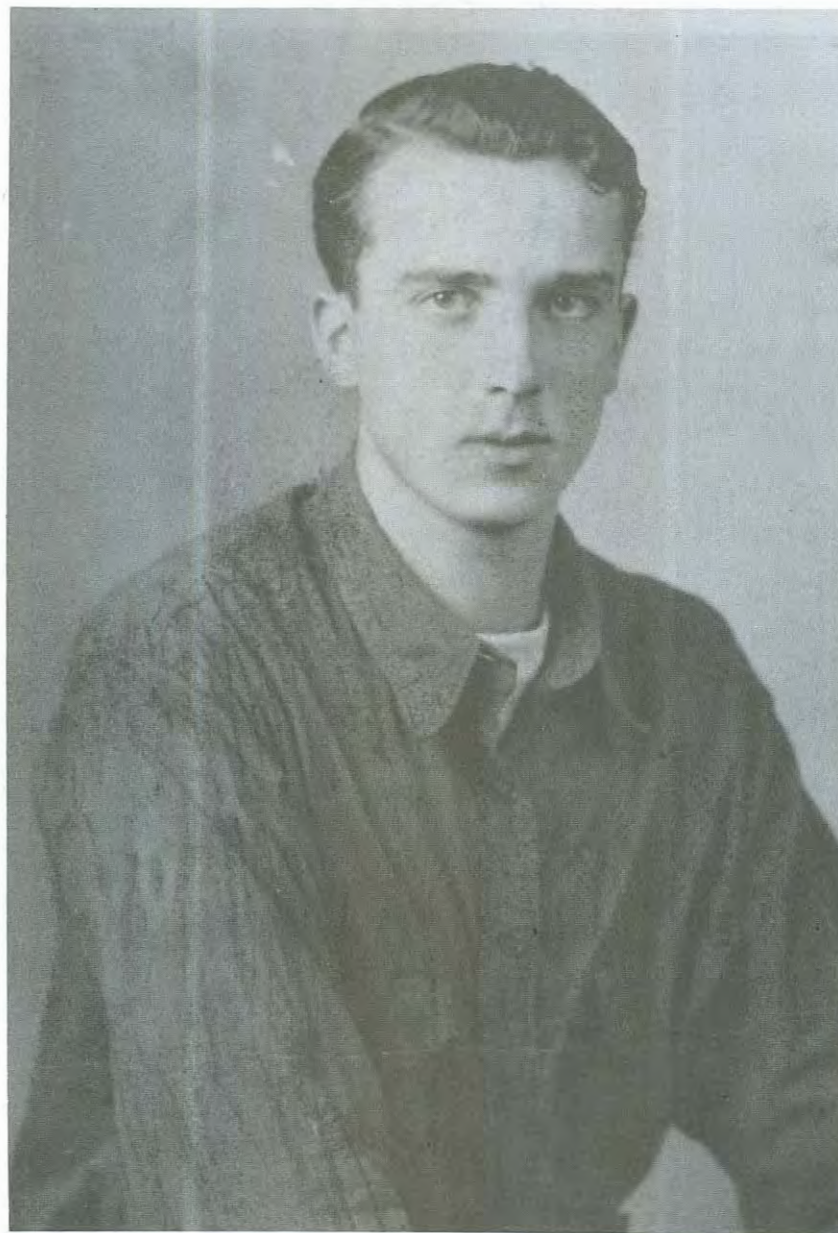


POWs working in a mess hall, August 1943. SC Photograph #182696, National Archives and Records Administration. Copy in USASC&FG Archives.





Gustav Gectmann, a Camp Gordon POW. Camp Gordon POW Camp,  
Photographs, USASC&FG Archives.



Walter Odenwald, a Camp Gordon POW. Photograph donated by  
Joseph A. Buck, Sr., Oral History Collection, USASC&FG  
Archives.

Dröschchen 21.2 den 23.64

My dear father!

Since 4 weeks I am at home again. It is been a long time with I have not been in Germany and many things are changing. Still I hope for a better future everytime.

Of course, you will be interesting how long we needed to across the Atlantic. 10 days only. We left America at the 25. April near New York; 2 days I was sea-sick. That is not very pleasant. At the 5. May we arrived in Le Havre (France). From there I was in 14 days at home. Frankfurt, that is my home town, is very destroy and it is a fortune that nothing is happened at my home. — Kind

how are you, my dear father? Are you in health yet? I hope the best for you and your family. Please, be writing anytime. Now I will finished my letter and hope that I shall be hear anything about you in brief. All my best wishes for you and your family

I remaind yours

Walter

My adresse:

Walter Odenwald

(16) Sprendlinger/b. Frankfurt a. Main  
"Landsitz Odenwald"  
Germany

### LETTER FROM GERMAN POW, 1946

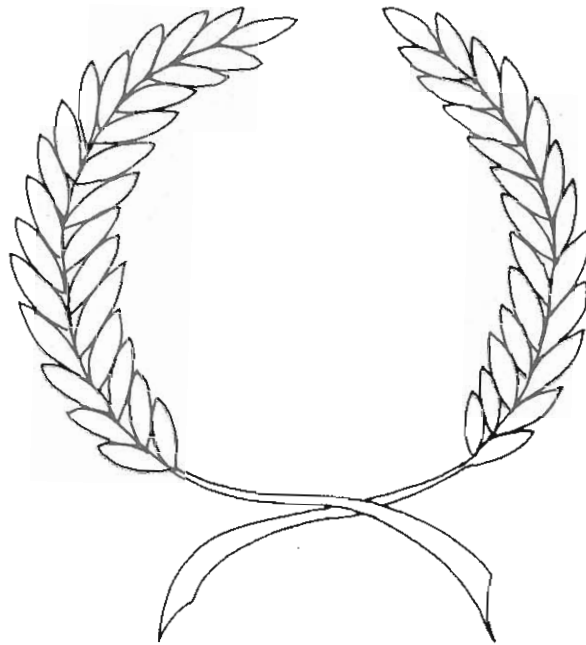
Former POW Walter Odenwald writes a former employer in Augusta. Letter donated by Joseph A. Buck, Sr., Oral History Collection, USASC&FG Archives.





German & Italian Cemetery at Fort Gordon. USASC&FG, Photograph Collection, USASC&FG Archives.

# German-Italian Memorial



## Wreath Laying Ceremony

20 November 1988

German-Italian Memorial Wreath Laying Ceremony held every year  
at the USASC&FG.

## APPENDIX D

POWs Interred at the Cemetery



## German Prisoners of War Interred at Fort Gordon

**CPL Fredy Gehrman:** Age 24, musician, captured in Africa on 9 May 1943; died from a lumber yard accident on 8 August 1945 in McRae, Georgia.

**L/CPL Horst Gunther:** Age 23, locksmith, captured in Tunisia on 9 May 1943, murdered 6 April 1944 at POW camp in Aiken, South Carolina.

**PVT Friedrich Hamer:** Age 44, laborer, captured in Aachen, Germany on 21 October 1944; died from a heat stroke on 23 August 1945 in Twiggs County, Georgia.

**SGT Kurt Hoessle:** Age 26, gardener, captured in Africa on 23 April 1943; died from an accident while on a wood cutting detail on 30 April 1945 at Elm Grove Estate, 17 miles north of Charleston, South Carolina.

**PFC Richard Huther:** Age 20, auto mechanic, captured in Tunisia on 10 May 1943; died from an accident on 6 March 1945 at the POW branch camp in Waynesboro, Georgia.

**CPL Ludwig Janson:** Age 24, farmer, captured in Tunisia on 11 May 1943; died from suicide on 3 October 1944 at POW branch camp in Waynesboro, Georgia.

**GEFR (PVT) Erwin Kerz:** Age 34, chauffeur, captured in Tunisia in 1943; died from a gunshot wound on 23 October 1943 at Camp Gordon POW camp.

**GEFR (PVT) Wilhelm Krauss:** Age 19, farmer; captured in Remiremont, France on 23 September 1944; died from a automobile accident on 3 July 1945 at Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.

**GEFR (PVT) Josef Lackner:** Age 42, driver/helper, captured in France on 24 September 1944; died from an injury on 2 December 1944 at Fort Jackson, South Carolina.

**SGT Ernst Link:** Age 23, farmer, captured in Tunisia on 8 May 1943; died from an injury on 13 February 1944 at Camp Gordon POW camp.

**Obergefreiter (CPL) Friedrich Maise:** Age 25, locksmith, captured in Tunisia on 11 May 1943; died from an injury on 20 August 1945 at Florence, South Carolina.

**OGEFR (CPL) Christian Pfeifer:** Age 22, painter, captured near Florence, Italy on 30 July 1944; died from drowning on 13 July 1945 at Cheraw State Park, South Carolina.

**CPL Adolf Reichert:** Age 23, miller, captured in Tunisia on 9 May 1943; died from an injury while working on a pulpwood detail on 9 May 1945 at Vidalia, Georgia.

**PVT Wilhelm Riechmann:** Age 19, butcher, captured in Tunisia on 8 May 1943; died from drowning on 15 July 1944 at Myrtle Beach, South Carolina POW camp.

**PFC Hans Salmhofer:** Age 23, Austrian citizen; died of cancer on 17 November 1945 at Camp Gordon POW camp.

**UFFZ (SGT) Heinrich Schafstall:** Age 31, lathe hand, captured in Grenoble, France on 24 August 1944; died from an accident involving a tractor and a trailer on 17 February 1945 at Chatham Field, Georgia.

**STAB-GEFR (Specialist 4) Karl Schroedersecker:** Age 27, factory worker, captured at Tivoli, Italy on 6 June 1944; died 4 October 1944 at Charleston, South Carolina.

**SGT Edmund Schwalbenberg:** Age 23, auto mechanic, captured at Viersen/Rhld on 1 March 1945; died from wounds incurred in the North African theater on 21 May 1945 at Camp Wheeler, Georgia.

**MED CPL Herman Walter:** Age 43, compositor, captured in Southern France on 9 September 1944; died from suicide on 7 May 1945 at Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.

**OBERSTABSARST (MAJ) Karl Heinz Werner:** Age 33, physician, captured in Tunisia on 9 May 1942; died from suicide on 4 February 1946 at POW camp in Whitmire, South Carolina.

**GEFR (PVT) Alfred Heinrich Zeller:** Age 19, chemical worker, captured in Brest, France on 7 September 1944; died from a rope strangulation on 12 November 1944 at Camp Gordon POW camp.

#### Italian Prisoner of War Interred at Fort Gordon

**Antonio Zadel:** Age 36, member of a construction battalion, died 7 June 1944.