

First Lieutenant William E. Koch
301st Bombardment Group
Fifteenth Air Force
Fifth Bombardment Wing
Foggia, Italy

Dedicated to those who died
that we, the living,
remain free from tyranny. . .

. . .and to Bruce

The time was 4 a.m. The date was February 25, 1945. I sat in the ready room staring at the drape-covered map showing our target for the day. I wondered where I would be flying to on this eleventh mission of my career as a Bombardier of a Boeing B-17. Shortly, my mental wanderings became real as the Colonel stepped up to the drape and pulled it back to show the all-too-familiar map of Germany and the surrounding countries. The target was Linz, Austria. The Colonel carefully explained that Linz was a railroad yard that fed troops and ammunition to the western front as well as to the eastern front where the Russians were advancing, and as such it was imperative we reign total destruction on this yard. The importance of Linz hit home when the Colonel pointed out that the city was surrounded by no fewer than seven hundred and fifty 88 millimeter ack ack guns. Little did I know at that moment what Linz, Austria would come to mean to me.

I was concerned about the 88's, but was soon to learn that they were only part of the build-up of this fateful day. The Colonel went on to say, "I know you are used to flying at an altitude of 32,000 feet. Today, however, you'll be flying at an altitude of 25,000 feet. This will give you an idea of how important this mission is toward victory. This target must be destroyed if we are going to prevent the Germans from feeding their fighting forces with ammunition against our men as well as the Russians." Now I was really worried. We all knew we were sitting ducks for the 88's at that altitude. We all left the briefing room knowing we had a job to do and this was, actually, no different than our previous flights as far as our goal was concerned. Our mission was to beat the hell out of Hitler so, to the man, there was no doubt about the part we played to this end.

Following routine procedure, I went to our revetment and checked out the loading of the bombs, the oxygen levels and checked with each member of the crew to be sure everything was in readiness. Just as I finished this routine, a jeep came running up to our plane. I was informed that a bombardier had just one more mission to fly before he could go home. Our crew had been assigned to fly off the right wing of the lead ship in our squadron. As a result of this change our ship was moved to what is called the "diamond slot," which was directly behind the lead ship. This would come to have more meaning as we approached our target.

As usual, the weather in Foggia, Italy was overcast and misty. We took off in our "Big Bird" and broke through the clouds only to see the bright sunshine and blue skies with the white tops of the clouds looking very much like puffs of cotton. The flight to the target was routine, since we no

longer had to worry about being attacked by the German Luftwaffe. Our American and British flyboys in their P-51's, P-47's and Spitfires had blown them out of the skies for good.

As we approached Linz we turned toward the railroad yards. The Germans quickly ascertained our target was the yards and began sending up the flak fast and furious. It was the heaviest I'd seen in my previous ten missions. It didn't matter. There was a job to do and as such I set the Norden bombsight in readiness for the bomb dropping time. As per procedure, the bombardier begins thirty seconds from the target to call off the seconds over the intercom to keep the crew apprised of the action. I was counting, "20 seconds, 19 seconds, 18, 17, 16," and that was it! We were hit!! As I mentioned previously, we were in the slot behind the lead ship. The ack ack that was aimed at the lead ship fell short resulting in our taking four direct hits meant for them, but wiping us out. The noise of the 88's exploding was earsplitting. The plastic nose in front of the bombsight was blown out. Fire and smoke filled the entire nose section, swirling around like a small tornado. I hit the salvo switch to release the bombs, clearing the bomb bay and giving the pilot, copilot, upper turret gunner and radio operator an opening through which they could bail out. I shed my flak vest protecting my chest parachute pack and turned to the navigator expecting him to bail out ahead of me. He was just sitting there. I hit his helmet trying to get him to go out through the door in the bulkhead behind which was the emergency escape hatch. He just looked at me and pointed to his parachute. . . it was lying under the drift sight and was on fire. For one split second I thought "piggyback." He could jump with me and hang on my back, which would not interfere with my chest pack. He began trying to put the fire out on his chute. In my panic I dove through the doorway in the bulkhead wall, which was now filled with flames. Knowing the emergency door was just on the other side, I gambled I would find it in time to get out. The good Lord guided my outstretched hand right to the door release, the door popped out and I rapidly followed its release into the cold, minus-fifty degree temperature over Linz, Austria.

The first sensation I felt was the slipstream. It was though Babe Ruth had hit me in the back of the head with a home run swing of his bat. I quickly pulled the rip cord on the chest pack, but it did not open! I frantically clawed at the chute and much to my relief it finally popped open. Phew! The next impression I noticed was that it was so quiet. I had listened for hours to the roar of four Wright Cyclone engines. Quiet, that is, until I realized they were now firing their 88's at me. Apparently they came close enough that pieces of flak were cutting the cords to my chute that were beginning to fall

around me. I remember I was crying and praying. I was truly scared. This was all I remembered because, mercifully, I passed out.

When I came to, I realized I was standing. I knew not where. I could not see. All I could make out was a dark gray color. Added to that, my hearing had gone. Gradually the gray became lighter and lighter until all of a sudden I could see again. Before me stood about 30 or 40 civilians dressed like farmers. With the return of my sight, my hearing returned also. I looked down and saw a double-barreled shot gun just below my nose. It looked like a cannon. Then a man standing next to the one holding the gun asked, "Are you English or American? Are you English or American?" I said, "I am American." He went on to say, "It's good you are an American, because had you said you were English my friend would have blown your head off. For you, the war is over." The man then put the gun down to his side. It seems that after weeks, months and years of nighttime bombing by the British, the Germans decided that if they killed every English airman the word would get back to England and they would stop nighttime bombing. Obviously, this had no affect on the English bombing efforts. The English-speaking farmer asked me, "Do you carry a gun?" I told him I did, but I didn't move a muscle. He said, "Please take it out very carefully." With that, the man with the gun brought it back up to my face. I very slowly reached into my jacket and lifted my 45 out by its handle. He went on to say, "Do you have any cigarettes?" I told him I did, reached into my jacket again and gave him the cigarettes enclosed in a container having a photo of my wife, Dorothy. You've never seen a pack of cigarettes go so fast. Those who got a cigarette were laughing happily. For the brief moment, I was almost a hero. I asked if I could have Dorothy's photo back, but it was lost in the confusion. Many times later I wished I'd had it to look at.

They handed me my parachute and told me to start walking. I was led through several small villages with the English-speaking farmer and his gun-toting friend. As I was passing through one of the villages an SS officer came out of one of the small houses. He walked up to the edge of the street, pulled out his Luger, cocked it and aimed it at my head. He had a sneer on his face that told me I was in deep trouble. I thought to myself, "My God, he's going to shoot me." I waited as I walked past him, fully expecting a bullet in the back. It never came, but I thought for sure I was dead.

I ended that day in a jail in Weir, Germany. As I sat there, two Nazi's brought in an American Air Force officer. He was Lieutenant Evans, our co-pilot on the mission. As per military procedure, we pretended not to know

each other. The next thing I knew we were in a truck being taken somewhere in the middle of the night.

The next morning about sixty of us were marching to where we did not know. It turned out we were headed for Frankfurt-On-Main, Germany. As we marched into the city, the air raid alarm began to howl. We were told to double-time into the city. The idea was to get us into an air raid shelter. But no way! As we started to enter the shelter, those Germans in the shelter began yelling at us. One of our men who understood German told us they were yelling, "Get the hell out of here, you bastards."

So we ended up being lined up outside in the town square. I looked up and fast approaching the town was, believe it or not, a squadron of B-17's. I remember praying they were headed for the marshaling yards and not the town itself. As it turned out, they flew further on and you could hear the bombs exploding in the distance. All of this hardly endeared us to the local populace. As the Germans began coming out of the shelter it was apparent they were not a happy group. We had three men in our group who understood German. They passed the word along that the mob wanted to hang us. This, in itself, was bad enough, but when they started to pull ropes out of the military vehicles we knew we were in deep trouble. We were scared. The good Lord must have heard all of our collective prayers, because just at that moment a German jeep carrying a Luftwaffe Colonel in his bright green uniform came through the crowd. The mob became silent. The Colonel spoke saying, "Go home. These men fought for their country as our fighting men have. Let them be. They are no longer a threat to you." With that the crowd began to disperse, but as we started to march the crowd began throwing rocks at us. In light of this we were ordered to run, which we did, but it was not easy as we were very hungry and weak. The stones sailed by us and I was hit with a rock on the back of my head, but I kept running as fast as I could.

We finally arrived at the Frankfurt-On-Main headquarters. The jail cells were so small I could reach both walls by stretching my arms out to the sides. We were told to leave our shoes outside the cell in the hallway to prevent us from hanging ourselves in an attempt to commit suicide with our shoe strings. They didn't have to worry about me. I was struggling to survive, not die.

That night I heard strange noises. I looked out the small window of my cell door and saw two German guards carrying an American between them. The

back of his neck was swollen like a football where he had been beaten in an attempt to get information from him about the American air power. I thought to myself, "Dear God, what would I say if I went through that kind of torture?" It wasn't long before I was to find out. I was called to the interrogation office early the next morning. At about 10 AM the guards opened my cell door and grabbed me none too gently by the arms and led me to an office. As I entered the office I came to attention and saluted the officer behind the desk. He was Lieutenant Ulrich Hausemann of the Luftwaffe.

Without looking up, he began reading from a file the following: "Your name is William E. Koch. You are the son of Mr. & Mrs. Paul W. Koch, Sr.; you lived at 317 W. St. Charles Road in Elmhurst, Illinois; you were born March 27, 1921, and had brothers Paul, James and Richard along with sister Margaret; you graduated from York High School in 1940; you went to the University of Illinois and joined the Phi Delta Theta fraternity; in 1942, you were called into service and joined the Glider Corp; it was disbanded so you went into the Air Force and became a bombardier as a Second Lieutenant." With that he looked up at me and said, "There is much more, such as you marrying Dorothy Hayes October 12, 1943. You can see we know a lot about you thanks to our spies who have lived in the U.S.A. since shortly after World War One." With that he offered me a chair and asked if I would like a cigarette, which I certainly did! He was soft-spoken and had a friendly smile. I was surprised he didn't ask me any questions about the military. Rather, he went on to tell me what I flew in, where I was stationed and how long I had been flying out of Foggia. With that, he excused me and I was escorted back to my cell.

The next morning he called me into his office at about 10 AM. Naturally I was more than worried, thinking, perhaps, this was the torture session. I was ushered into his office, sat down and enjoyed another cigarette. Then the most amazing scenario began! He said, "Lieutenant, I've interviewed many, many American and British soldiers during this terrible and useless war. I can tell from your background and our conversation yesterday that you are a person I could trust." I was, quite naturally, suspicious about what he was leading up to. He went on, "This war has got to end!! It will end if your forces can kill Hitler! He is now at his alpine chalet in Obersalzberg near Berchtesgaden. When you go to Neurenberg, contact your camp officer in charge and get this message to the Allies to bomb Obersalzberg. He can send the message with one of the repatriated men sent back to England."

As a result of this conversation, I contacted the officer-in-charge at camp Nuerenberg. He was an English Major who had flown Spitfires. He told me, as we walked around the compound away from the guards, that he was about to return a P-51 pilot to England in exchange for a German prisoner in one of England's P.O.W. camps. The P-51 pilot was being returned because he was severely burned when he crashed during a strafing mission. Both ears, his nose and both eye lids were completely burned off. The message did get back to the allies as noted in the attached letter from Special Agent Robert Geers.

Back to Lt. Haussmann. He said, "My secretary is Jewish. Her parents were sent to camp. I have been able to conceal the fact that she's Jewish because of her fair complexion, but I just learned she's been found out. Because our railroads are no longer usable as a result of the bombings, she can't be transferred to camp. As a result, and she doesn't know this, she's to be executed by firing squad tonight or tomorrow. Please, please get my message through to the Allies quickly. This madness has to end!!" At that point she entered the office and laid a folder on his desk. She smiled at me. I smiled back. My heart sank. I can't possibly tell you my feeling of sadness. I turned to him and he was wiping tears from his eyes. He had risked his own life in an effort to save her from the gas chamber. He stood up, looked me straight in the eye and said, "You cannot fail me. I know you will succeed." With that, he saluted me. I returned the salute, but I was fighting back my own tears. Then he shook my hand and smiled. Turning his back to me he said, "Don't fail me. Good luck."

When I got back to my cell, I sat on the cot and cried. To this very moment as I type this, I can still see that beautiful young girl and her warm smile. She didn't deserve to die. I don't know if what he told me was true. He seemed so very sincere. What he told me about bombing Obersalzberg was proven to be true. In any event, I hope he was wrong about the girl. I will never know for sure.

We arrived in Nuerenberg March 8th. The camp was filled with wooden barracks and very high barbed wire. The cots were covered with gunny sacks filled with straw. You could hear the bugs crawling through the straw at night. We were not allowed out of the barracks after 9 PM. As a result, each bed had a helmet liner next to it for urination at night. One P.O.W. decided he had to answer nature's call, and he left the barracks after 9 PM. We yelled at him to come back, but he kept on running and before our very eyes we saw him gunned down by the tower guards. His cot was empty the next day.

The food was something else. At 10 AM we would receive a bowl of hot water with what looked like dandelion leaves. With this we would receive a very thin slice of bread. The Germans called it "black bread." It was dated and stored for years. I actually saw a loaf with the date 1937 imprinted on the top. At 3 PM in the afternoon we received another bowl of hot water with more dandelion leaves, and this time a small potato was included. That was it. This beats Jenny Craig's diet for losing weight when you consider the fact that I was at a healthy 185 pounds when I was shot down and ended up at a sickly 125 pounds the day I was liberated, which was 65 days later!

On the lighter side of prison camp was what we did a number of times for kicks. Myself and several others would wander over to the corner of the compound and sing "Don't Fence Me In" to the guards in the tower. They would laugh and applaud after we finished, and we would walk away and in a quiet voice say, "You bastards!"

One day at about 9 AM we watched as an old civilian driving a horse-drawn wagon came through the gate with a dead horse in back with all four legs pointing to the sky. About twenty minutes later, returning from the mess hall, was the same wagon, but now the horse only had three legs. Don't say "yech!" We had a piece of meat with our hot water that afternoon, and it was delicious, believe it or not.

Aside from my world of unhappiness was an incident that is well worth mentioning. I prayed every day that my recent bride, Dorothy, my mom and wonderful brothers and the greatest sister in the world, Maggie, would know that I was alright and not one of the crew that went down with the ship. Well, as it turned out, Dorothy was having lunch at York Drugs in Elmhurst one day and a friend asked if she had heard any news about me. All of a sudden it was like a cool breeze on a warm night swept over her and she said, "Bill is alright. He's alive." She knew it to be true and never doubted again that I would someday be home. Hard to believe? Not really. God touches us all in our lives. This was just one example and one most welcomed by Dorothy. Another incident was, as I mentioned, about God guiding my hand through the flames to the escape hatch, resulting in my escape. While in Nurenberg I met the crew who flew off our left wing when we were hit. They said, "We saw you were hit real hard. Smoke was seen in the cockpit. The pilot pulled the plane up slightly. The bombs came out of the bomb bay, shortly followed by a crewman using the bomb bay area to escape. At this point the plane pulled to the right out of formation, but still

keeping up with the squadron. All of a sudden a crewman shot out of the escape hatch at the very instant the plane blew up in a huge ball of flame. We saw no more chutes." It bothered me after I was shot down that I didn't take the navigator "piggy back" with me, but after hearing from that crew, I realized that had I hesitated even one second more I, too, would have gone down with the ship. Does God touch our lives? He did mine.

We were told we were being sent to Mooseberg 80 miles to the south. Just before we left, Red Cross was able to get food parcels to us, one for every two men. What a wonderful surprise! I can't give Red Cross enough credit for getting those parcels to us despite the war still going on around us. Those parcels literally saved many, many lives. As it was, men died during the march, being beyond the help of Red Cross; but hundreds returned home thanks to the parcels containing concentrated foods.

I shared my Red Cross parcel with a British bombardier named Bruce who flew Lancasters. He found out my birthday was March 27th and wanted to give me his half of the chocolate in the parcel for my birthday. I refused his kind offer knowing he needed the nourishment, just as we all did, but what a wonderful gesture! More about Bruce later.

On April 4th we headed off for Mooseberg with the chill of winter winds penetrating through to the bone. Around 10 AM of the first morning out we looked up and saw two American P-47's. Much to our horror we realized that one of them began diving toward us with all of his caliber 50's wide open. Everyone dove for the ditches. Going back a bit, Bruce had said to me, "Hey, Bill, my pack keeps slipping. Do me a favor and get in back of me so's you can push my pack up when it slips." So I did. It was then after the strafing that I looked in front of me and there was Bruce. He had taken a shell to the head and was dead. Had we not changed positions, that could have been me; a victim of what is called "friendly fire." I was shaking so much I needed help just to stand up and begin marching again after the planes flew away.

The next morning we were ordered by our leader, a General who was captured in the African campaign, to not go for the ditches if attacked again, or he would see to it we were shot for disobeying a direct order. Man, as if we didn't have enough problems. Much to our dismay we spotted two P-51's flying overhead. I remember the terrible fear that came over me. But, if you like happy endings, stay with me.

One P-51 stayed up high and the second one dove for our column, but this time no flashing of caliber 50's. The pilot dropped down to about 200 feet, cut back on the throttle to near stalling speed, threw open the canopy, smiled and waved as if to say, "We know you're here. We'll protect you now." With that, he poured the coals to his ship, shooting straight up until he reached his buddy who took his turn up and down the column, smiling and waving, giving us the best "thumbs up" signal you had ever seen. And so it was every day we had our "protectors" visit us until we hit Mooseberg.

Arriving at Mooseberg we found it to be the same filthy barracks as in Nuernberg. The big difference was that they had us digging a huge ditch, which was supposedly for a latrine, but we were to find out differently later.

To find any bit of happiness in this miserable life as a prisoner was not easy. But, believe it, or not, I found a wonderful moment in the name of Captain Ray Keil. Ray was with the Fourth Army, 23rd Tank Battalion under General Patton. Ray had been captured in Hammelberg and marched, like myself, to Mooseberg. There he was looking at me with his thinner, but still handsome face and smile. We hugged each other unabashedly. What a sight to behold! Who the heck was Ray? I'll tell you. Ray and my oldest brother, Paul, were lifetime friends. Many a time I would see Ray at the house to visit Paul. He was a memory of better times in Elmhurst where I longed to be.

On the night of April 28th Ray and I were talking outside the barracks. He said "Listen to that." I said "To what?" We had been talking about Ray's beautiful wife, Barbara, and I about Dorothy. He was dead serious. He went on to say "Can't you hear that?" I thought he was cracking up, but he went on to say "If I've ever heard a Ford motor in a Sherman tank I'm hearing it now." He was very insistent saying "They are up on the hill east of us." I said "O.K. Ray if you say so," thinking my good friend was ^{really} cracking up. We went back to our particular barracks.

Let me take you fast forward to April 29, 1945. We were called out to formation at 7 AM. As we stood there we suddenly heard gunfire. It turned out to be a P-51 attacking one of the two gates to the prison. At first we could hear the Germans firing back at the plane, but they were silenced almost immediately. A few minutes later the same action, but this time it was at the other gate. As the planes flew off there was silence, but not for long. In the meantime we were ordered into our barracks where we hit the floor, but hard, and stayed as low as we could.

Captain Ray Keil was right, Sherman tanks had surrounded the area around Mooseberg. As I dared to peek out, I could see the older Wehrmacht

soldiers running with their hands up toward the allies. Unfortunately, as they attempted to surrender, they were shot down by the remaining hard core SS soldiers. All of this took place over about a 30-minute period.

Like the music of a symphony, we began to hear the wonderful voices of American GI's yelling, "All right you goldbricks, get your butts out here." I am not mentally capable of describing the happiness within my whole mind and body. Free at last. I'm going home!!!

With the firing fading off in the distance many of us surged toward the north gate and were in for another surprise. A Sherman tank lumbered slowly through the gate. In a jeep directly behind the tank was, believe it or not, General George Patton with his ~~pink~~^{ivory}-handled guns at his side. But that wasn't all. Directly behind the General was an enclosed truck. I couldn't believe my eyes. The sides opened and there were two Red Cross darlings ready to serve coffee and doughnuts. We couldn't have attacked them faster if they had been naked. Orders rang out to "Eat slow. Chew your doughnuts a long time. You're in no shape to gulp the doughnuts." As it was, two men didn't follow the advice and developed stomach seizures and died before the medics could save them. Sorry. Back to happiness.

Patton got out of his jeep and entered the German Headquarters. Shortly he came out and said, "Major, read the military order written by that bastard, Hitler." The Major read the following, translating the German to English. "All prisoners of Camp Mooseberg will be executed May 8, 1945." There was complete silence as each of us realized we were only eight days from being killed. Now we knew why we were digging that huge ditch. Mass burial.

Patton went to his jeep. Standing up he asked for quiet. He went on to say, "All of you have been brave soldiers. We'll get that son-of-a-bitch, I promise you. For you, the war is over." I had heard that same phrase 65 days earlier in the field the day I was shot down. Patton stood ever so erect. He looked at us and saluted as he said, "I salute you." We all came to attention and returned his salute. There wasn't a dry eye in the compound. As he pulled away we cheered and cheered and cheered some more. We cheered so loudly that, by comparison, the cheers from the devoted Notre Dame football fans on game day would have sounded like a moment of silent prayer. Oh yes, Germany surrendered May 8th, remember? Interesting. By the way, Hitler committed suicide the next day, April 30th. What more can I say? Truly, for me the war was over, thank God!

APRIL 29, 1945
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With the proficiency of the military, we were all flown in C-47's to Lehavre, France where Camp Lucky Strike was located. We were assigned barracks, showered and given clean uniforms. Man, oh man, were we happy!! Throughout the camp were located booths serving chocolate milk shakes. We were ordered by top command to never pass a booth without having a milk shake, and if an officer caught us going by without getting a shake, we were to be "punished". . . a tongue-in-cheek order. Besides, who the heck would want to pass up such a delight?

We were informed that our loved ones had been notified of our release and that we would be sailing to the States in a few days. . . and so we did.

Frankly, from that point on with respects to getting back to the states, I was a bit fuzzy. I know many of us were loaded on a big Liberty ship. I can recall leaning on the railing watching the large waves of the Atlantic Ocean. Reluctant as I was about thinking back over those days in prison camp, I found myself counting the times I came near dying. There was the day our ship was hit; then the SS Nazi with the gun to my back; the near-hanging in Frankfurt-On-Main; the strafing during our march to Mooseberg; Hitler's orders to execute all of us at Mooseberg and, of course, the ever-present specter of starvation. I shook these thoughts off quickly, because I was now free and, hot dogs, I'm going home at last!

We entered the New York harbor with the city lights shining along the shoreline. When we landed we were taken to what I think was Central Station. We were put on a New York Central passenger train headed to Chicago and points west. We pulled into the Union Station in Chicago, and I grabbed my duffel bag and ran to where the Northwestern was waiting to leave for Elmhurst. Once in Elmhurst I hopped into a taxi and happily told the driver "317 West St. Charles, please." We talked about the war. He asked me where I served and I told him Foggia, Italy in B-17's and that I had been a P.O.W. We arrived at the house, and I asked him how much for the fare. He said, "Forget it. You've earned a free ride. Welcome home." What a nice guy. I thanked him and jumped, I mean jumped, out of the cab and went through the always opened, never locked doors of home.

It was late evening when I arrived, but I expected to see Mom sitting in the living room, or sister Maggie and, hopefully, Dorothy. Instead Mike, our very large setter, jumped up with one huge paw on my left shoulder and another huge paw on my right shoulder and a large tongue licking my face like crazy. Well, I thought to myself, "Mike sure wasn't Mom, or Maggie, or Dorothy, but what the hey did I care...I was home at last!!!"

FIFTEENTH AIR FORCE
Office of the Commanding General
A. P. O. 520

10 March 1945

Mrs. Dorothy M. Koch
386 Rex Blvd.
Elmhurst, Illinois

Dear Mrs. Koch:


The Linz railroad yards in Austria were attacked by our Flying Fortresses on February 25, 1945. From this mission, your husband, First Lieutenant William E. Koch, O-2061240, and his crew failed to return.

Bill was serving as bombardier aboard a bomber which became disabled when it was hit by flak while over the target. The stricken aircraft left the formation almost immediately, at which time two parachutes were seen to emerge. With one engine seriously disabled, the ship went into a steep dive and was soon lost to the view of observers. Since that time, nothing has been learned concerning the fate of the crew.

Your husband's personal possessions have been gathered and will be sent to the Effects Quartermaster, Army Effects Bureau, Kansas City, Missouri, from which point they will be forwarded to the designated beneficiary.

In recognition of the meritorious service he has rendered while serving as a member of this command, Bill has been awarded the Air Medal. Please rest assured that should there be any change in his status, you will be notified immediately by the War Department. I earnestly hope that good news will be forthcoming very shortly.

Very sincerely yours,


N. F. TWINING
Major General, USA
Commanding

1st Lt. K o c h
317 West St. Charles Road
Elmhurst Ill.

Dear Sir:

Mr Ulrich Haussmann former Luftwaffe Lieutenant of the German Interrogation Camp, Dulag Luft says that he was your interrogation officer while you were held PW at the above named camp in February 1945. Haussmann asserts that after having voiced his opinions to you he asked you to get in touch with the probably existing PW organisation immediately upon your arrival at the Stalag in order to inform the USAAF through the secret channels of big preparations which were being made at the Obersalzberg, the alpine chalet of Hitler near Berchtesgaden, to fortify and stock up this largely undermined place for Hitlers last stand. Haussmann suggested the place to be bombed. He told you that he had heard from high sources that Hitler intended to defend himself there and for this end SS troops were being concentrated in this area.

The Obersalzberg was bombed out somewhat later. The last Chief of Staff of the Luftwaffe, general Koller, had told Haussmann while they were PW in England together that Hitler had changed his mind ~~and~~ ^{only after} he had heard of the destruction of his chalet and forthwith had not left Berlin as first intended.

If Haussmanns assertions are true, please send affidavit stating these facts. Furthermore could you state whether you were able to pass on the above information or not?

If the bombing had taken place upon your and Haussmanns initiative and actions it would be of historical significance for both of you, as the war would have dragged on for quite a while yet, had Hitler gone to the Obersalzberg.

THIS LETTER REFERS TO MY
DISCUSSION WITH LT. HAUSSMANN
ABOUT KILLING HITLER WHILE
HE WAS AT OBERSALZBERG.

Robert M. Clegg
Special Agent
CIC Regim V
AO 225 % P.M. N.Y.

Capt. Witter

Dulag-Luft. Kriegsgefangenenkartel.

Gefangenen-
ErkennungsmarkeDulag-Luft
Eingeliefert

Nr. 1684

am: 8.3.45 W

NAME: K O C H

Vornamen: William

Dienstgrad: 1.Lt.

Funktion: Bomb.

Matrikel-No.: 0-2 061 240

Geburtstag: 27.3.21

Geburtsort: Elmhurst, Ill.

Religion: prot.

Zivilberuf: College Student

Staatsangehörigkeit: amerikan.

Vorname des Vaters:

Familiennamen der Mutter:

Verheiratet mit: ja

Anzahl der Kinder: -

Heimatanschrift:

Mrs. William E. Koch
386 Rex Blvd.
Elmhurst, Ill.

Abschuß am: 21.2.45 bei: Linz

Flugzeugtyp: B 17

Gefangennahme am: " bei: "

Nähere Personalbeschreibung

Figur: mittel

Größe: 1,73 m

Schädelform: oval

Haare: braun

Gewicht: 74 kg

Gesichtsform: oval

Gesichtsfarbe: gesund

Augen: braun

Nase: dick

Bart: -

Gebiß: gesund

Besondere Kennzeichen:

Narbe a.d.r. Schulter



Rechter Zeigefinger



Charge to the account of

CLASS OF SERVICE DESIRED	
DOMESTIC	CABLE
TELEGRAM	ORDINARY
DAY LETTER	URGENT RATE
SERIAL	DEFERRED
NIGHT LETTER	NIGHT LETTER

Patrons should check class of service desired; otherwise the message will be transmitted as a telegram or ordinary cablegram.

WESTERN UNION

1206

CHECK

ACCOUNTING INFORMATION

TIME FILED

Send the following telegram, subject to the terms on back hereof, which are hereby agreed to

FOR VICTORY
BUY
WAR BONDS
TODAY

MAY 16 WILLIAM KOCH O-206124 LT. REQUESTED DOROTHY H. KOCH 386 REX BLVD ELKHURST BE NOTIFIED HIS LIBERATION

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS
AMERICAN RED CROSS

THIS IS TELEGRAM INFORMING
DOROTHY OF MY LIBERATION
FROM CAMP.

CLASS OF SERVICE

This is a full-rate Telegram or Cablegram unless its deferred character is indicated by a suitable symbol above or preceding the address.

WESTERN UNION

1201

SYMBOLS

DL = Day Letter

NL = Night Letter

LC = Deferred Cable

NLT = Cable Night Letter

Ship Radiogram

The filing time shown in the date line on telegrams and day letters is STANDARD TIME at point of origin. Time of receipt is STANDARD TIME at point of destination

(C) 44 GOVT= WUX WASHINGTON DC 17 915A

MRS DOROTHY H KOCH=

386 REX BLVD

THE SECRETARY OF WAR DESIRES ME TO EXPRESS HIS DEEP REGRET THAT YOUR HUSBAND FIRST LIEUTENANT WILLIAM E KOCH HAS BEEN REPORTED MISSING IN ACTION SINCE TWENTY FIVE FEBRUARY OVER AUSTRIA IF FURTHER DETAILS OR OTHER INFORMATION ARE RECEIVED YOU WILL BE PROMPTLY NOTIFIED=

J A ULIO THE ADJUTANT GENERAL

On a WU follow
Western Union Tel Co
Elkhurst



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON 20330

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

MEMORANDUM FOR RECIPIENTS OF THE PRISONER OF WAR MEDAL

In accordance with your request, it is a pleasure to forward the enclosed Prisoner of War Medal.

This medal was authorized by Congress for any person who served honorably as a prisoner of war after April 5, 1917. It is estimated that 142,000 United States Service members were held as prisoners in World War I, World War II, the Korean Conflict, and the Vietnam Conflict. The medal recognizes the special service prisoners of war gave to their country and the suffering and anguish they endured while incarcerated.

The United States Army's Institute of Heraldry was tasked to design the medal. Designs were solicited from the military Services, veterans associations, and private citizens. Over 300 proposals were submitted. A Joint Service Panel reviewed all of the proposals and selected the design submitted by Mr. Jay C. Morris, a civilian employee of the Department of the Army.

On the front of the medal is an eagle, symbol of the United States and the American spirit. Although surrounded by barbed wire and bayonet points, it stands with pride and dignity, continually on the alert for the opportunity to obtain freedom, symbolizing the hope that upholds the spirit of the prisoner of war. On the reverse, below the words "Awarded to," is space where the recipient or next of kin may engrave the prisoner of war's name. Below it is an inscription naming the purpose of the award, "For honorable service while a prisoner of war." The shield is from the coat of arms of the United States of America.

The public law authorizing the Prisoner of War Medal specifies that the medal shall be accorded a position of precedence in relation to other awards and decorations, immediately following decorations awarded for individual heroism, meritorious achievement or service, and before any other service medal, campaign medal or service ribbon authorized to be displayed.

Please accept this medal with my best wishes.

E. C. Aldridge, Jr.
Secretary of the Air Force

1 Atch
Prisoner of War Medal

Kriegsgefangenenpost

Postkarte RUFT

An

3

MRS. William E. Koch

Gebührenfrei!

Absender:

Vor- und Zuname:

1st Lt. William E. Koch

ASN-82061240

Lager-Bezeichnung: Stalag-Luft 3

Deutschland (Germany)

Empfangsort: 386 REX BLVD

Straße: ELMHURST, ILLINOIS

Land: U.S.AMERICA

(Landesteil, Provinz usw.)

Kriegsgefangenenlager

Datum: MARCH 9, 1945

DARLING, JUST A CARD TO LET YOU KNOW I
AM A PRISONER OF WAR. I CAME THRU IT ALL WITH
NO INJURIES. THE RED CROSS IS DOING A GOOD JOB.
I AM DOING WELL - HONEST - I AM BEING
TREATED FAIRLY. KEEP YOUR CHIN UP, STINKER,
AND REMEMBER I STILL LOVE AND ADORE YOU.
KEEP FAITH - I AM. SPARKLE, ANGEL, PLEASE.
I LOVE YOU SO. AS ALWAYS - I'LL SEE YA LATER. Bill.

THIS TELLS A LOT ABOUT CONDITIONS IN CAMP.

Copy of questions and answers filled out on form "Application for Living Ex-Prisoners of War Compensation for Compulsory Labor and/or Inhumane Treatment"

Questions 1 thru 6 were on identity - Name, address, date of birth, place of birth, serial number, branch of service, rank.

#8. Places or camps of confinement:

Linz, Austria	February 25, 1945	March 2, 1945
Dulag Luft-Frankfort on Mein	March 2, 1945	March 8, 1945
Nuremberg, Germany	March 8, 1945	April 4, 1945
10 day march to Mooseberg	April 4, 1945	April 14, 1945
Mooseberg, Germany	April 14, 1945	April 29, 1945 - Liberated

*Note: Travel time between camps not included except for march to Mooseberg.

Questions 9 through 13 pertaining to labor during imprisonment and were not answered as they did not apply.

#14.(a) Describe the living conditions and sleeping facilities (crowded conditions, heating, ventilation, bedding, fire protection, etc.)

Crowded Conditions: Exact number of men to each barracks not known, but sleeping equipment was arranged from zero feet to two feet away from one another.

Heating: None in Nuremberg or Mooseberg camps.

Ventilation: Poor condition of buildings provided adequate ventilation. Cold air was constantly present in barracks during March and April.

Bedding: Boards ranging from two to four for each bed supported straw mattresses in gunny sacks. Bed bugs were present in such quantities that extinction was impossible. All men suffered bites continually.

Fire Protection: No portable equipment present at any time. Even water buckets were not present to fight any fire. Camp fire protection was not known to this writer.

Lighting: One to two bulbs per barracks. Very poor lighting equipment/

(b) What clothing, linens, or footwear, if any, were furnished you?

Clothing: None issued to this writer.

Linens: None issued at any time.

Footwear: One pair of extremely small shoes issued. Size of shoes caused serious foot trouble (blisters and infection).

#15.(a) Were sanitary measures taken to assure cleanliness and healthfulness of camps and to prevent epidemics? No. If the answer is no, describe the conditions of the camps. There was no attempt to keep barracks or grounds clean. Rats seen running around building. Usually caught and eaten by prisoners because of starvation diet. General filth was present in all areas seen by this writer.

(b) State whether toilet facilities were adequate and if sufficient water was provided for bathing to maintain cleanliness.

Non-flush type toilets which were filled with small quantities of water. When bowls became filled from usage very little, and in some cases no attempt was made to relieve situation by cleaning of bowls. This was in Nuremberg. Mooseberg was not quite as bad, but as best was filthy. Many men had diarrhea and the situation was never helped through medical care or cleaning of toilet areas. Cold water was provided by pumps at Mooseberg and faucets at Nuremberg. No attempt was made to provide warm water, or equipment for heating water.

(c) Were you allowed to exercise in the open air?; Yes.

- #16. Describe what medical care, supplies, or facilities were available. Medical care given to "basket cases" only. These men were sent to hospitals. I had an infection along the lower left jaw and was completely ignored when I requested some first aid. Through washing infection and sunning jaw, it cleared up after two weeks.

I was shot down February 25, 1945 and was not permitted to shave until March 21, 1945. Finally I was able to get ahold of a smuggled blade, some soap and shaved with cold water with the assistance of three men to hold me while one "pulled" the beard off. This was the time I had the jaw infection. We were, however, shortly after this issued shaving equipment from the Germans.

Food consisted of two meals a day. The morning meal was one small bowl of soup and one thin slice of bread. The afternoon meal was one half of a potato and bread. Sometimes soup was added to the afternoon meal in place of bread. When we started for Moeseberg, we were issued one Red Cross parcel for two men to last us two weeks. My weight in sixty five days as a prisoner went from 185 pounds to 125 pounds. In this writer's opinion, the poor living conditions, poor medical care and lack of food caused the death of many Americans and British prisoners.

- #17. Were you permitted to retain personal effects and objects, other than arms, military equipment and papers? No.
In Linz, Austria they took an expensive diamond studded ring from me the morning after I was shot down. I asked for a receipt and the officer pulled his gun and through the interpreter I was told "No receipt. Shut up, or be shot." This ring was never recovered.

- #18. Describe here any other conditions to which you were subjected that may be relevant to provisions of the Geneva Convention of 1929 as to the humane treatment of prisoners of war (e.g. abuse, ridicule, humiliation, subjection to attack, bombardment, etc.)
As we marched into Frankfor, Germany the town was bombed by Americans. We were forced to stand in the open street while the Germans stayed in the air raid shelters. Fortunately no one was hurt. At that same time a German officer after the raid, attempted to get the mob to shoot or hang us. There were about 80 of us at this time. The attempt was almost successful, but an Air Force Colonel interrupted and commanded the other German officer of lesser rank to free us. He did and we were then told to double-time out of town. As we ran the Germans stoned us, hitting and knocking out three prisoners who had to be carried. That afternoon we ended up at Frankfor on Mien where we were interrogated.

- #19. (a) Having read the requirements of the Geneva Convention of 1929 outlined above with regard to labor and/or inhumane treatment of prisoners of war, do you allege that the enemy government which held you prisoner continually failed to comply with those requirements? Yes.

(b) If you believe your answer to (a) above should be "yes" for most of the period of your imprisonment, but you wish to except certain periods when you received treatment in compliance with the Geneva Convention of 1929, give dates of such periods. None.

- #20 and #21 - Questions on who, if anyone helped fill this form out - Does not apply written in