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THE FAUSTBALL TUNNEL

German POWs in America and Their Great Escape

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and why they provoked Holden's ire. Hans Werner Kraus thinks an Iron Cross must have equaled "troublemaker" in American eyes. Emmerich von Mirbach says only a few men knew precisely why the colonel transferred them to his special compound. But all agreed on one thing once they got there: if the Americans thought they were "troublemakers," then, like good soldiers, they must live up to their reputation.

Yet there was no point in following Wattenberg's example and causing trouble merely to cause trouble. Mirbach, Kaiser, the four captains and their comrades agreed that whatever they did must have a purpose, a reason. Once they began to dig underground, much of what they did aboveground was designed to throw sand in American eyes, keep their guards and officers confused and unaware of what was actually going on in Compound 1 A on the banks of the Arizona Crosscut Canal.

Chapter 7
GETTING READY FOR CHRISTMAS

By the last week in November, thirty-one of the sixty POWs in Compound 1 A had formed twelve escape teams composed of two or three men. Several petty officers in 1 B, although unable to dig, expressed keen interest in joining them. At first Maus and Guggenberger were opposed. Activity from the adjoining compound could wreck the entire operation. Maus insisted that only those who dug should go out, but Wattenberg's stern announcement that he was leaving and taking two men from the *U-162* with him, Kozur and Kremer, undercut this argument somewhat.

Prime candidates from among their neighbors were Reinhard Mark and Heinrich Palmer, the young petty officers from the *Weserland.* Instrumental in passing food to 1 A during the hunger strike, they said they would go out together, collect their own provisions, clothing, everything. On the twenty-fourth Guggenberger told Kremer to pass the word: Mark and Palmer could go.

That same day the two men began a rigorous training program, jogging around their compound, first for only fifteen minutes, slowly building up to forty-five minutes, then an

hour. Each day, hot, cold, rain, wind, Mark and Palmer made their rounds. Some 1 B men, not aware of the tunnel, thought they were nuts, "the two crazy runners." Guards wrote them off as a couple of health freaks, taunting them as they splashed through puddles of water or passed by a tower, sweat streaming down their faces.

Since contact with 1 A was somewhat limited, these two men were on their own. They had to prepare for Christmas as best they could. To get American money Palmer, with Mark's assistance, speeded up his production of Nazi paraphernalia. Using shoe polish and sand for molds and melted toothpaste tubes as metal, he turned out Iron Crosses, Eagles, shoulder clasps, and so on, all eagerly snapped up by GIs as soon as these souvenirs were properly painted and scuffed a bit to show wear. Occasionally, instead of demanding money, they traded some knickknack for a shirt, socks, any piece of clothing that might come in handy.

By December 20 these petty officers were packed and ready to go. Each of them had fourteen bags of bread crumbs, canned milk, a canteen of water, some German Red Cross food packets, extra socks, a sweater, a jar of brewed coffee, six bars of chocolate, several packs of cigarettes, matches and toilet articles. Each man also carried a prize item, a personal contribution to the success of their venture. Mark had a Conoco highway map of Arizona and northern Mexico given to him by a *Weserland* seaman from Compound 3 who found it one day while on a work detail near Mesa. Well, he didn't actually "find" it; the man lifted it from the seat of a parked car near a field where he was picking cotton.

Palmer's treasure was a tube of shaving cream into which, by carefully opening one end and then with equal care and skill resealing it, he had inserted two $10 bills wrapped securely in cigarette paper. Palmer also had a very valuable going-away gift from a friend in Compound 2: a compass appropriated from a U.S. Army truck.

Holiday preparations in 1 A were similar, although more coordinated. Walter Kozur, who, it turned out, would be one

of the last men to go out through the tunnel, eagerly took on the task of creating the cover to be placed over the exit. Early in December he spent several minutes with Mirbach and Guggenberger, found out precisely what size the opening would be, and then built two shallow boxes out of scrap lumber. Each was about a foot wide and a foot and a half long. Placed side by side, they would fit neatly over the opening.

One afternoon Kozur and Kremer worked on the faustball field for several hours while actually analyzing the ground outside the fence. The cover must blend in well with nearby soil and bushes. That evening they filled the boxes with dirt, sand and tufts of grass. Twigs and leaves could be added later. Within ten days, carefully watered and placed under an empty barracks, the crop was doing nicely.

Karl Heinz Frenzel and Kremer became the tailors for the escapees. Anyone with clothing to be repaired or transformed into civilian garb saw them. Frenzel, a twenty-one-year-old youth with wavy blond hair, spoke English quite well. Captured by the British near Bengazi, he and another youngster, Herbert Fuchs, were promoted to 1 A after they escaped from a branch camp in August 1944. Fuchs, a year older than Frenzel, was a U-boat veteran from Dresden. Their six-day vacation puzzled the Americans. The pair obviously made no attempt to go far or head for Mexico. "These mountains," Frenzel said with a grin when captured, "remind us much of home. We only wished to hike and go on holiday."

Kraus and Clarus handled passports and identification papers. Getting recent photographs was an easy matter. Although no one in the compound had a camera or any way to obtain or develop film, their captors proved to be surprisingly obliging. Eager to show how well the troublemakers were being treated, an almost steady stream of photographers snapped portraits to be shipped home to relatives in Germany. Some, of course, stayed in Papago Park, and with the aid of official-looking stamps cut from leather and rubber scraps, soon looked somewhat like passport photos. For example, a

document carried by Wolfgang Clarus during the escape, purported to be of Guatemalan origin, was copied from an illustration found in *Life* magazine.

"If I ever run a prisoner-of-war camp," Hans Werner Kraus declared three decades later, "the very first thing I would do is ban photographers. Every last one of them." This ex-captain noted it might be well to outlaw radios, too. Given the expertise in their midst and the fact that enlisted men who worked in and around U.S. Army installations easily could pick up all sorts of equipment (and did), almost every POW compound in America soon was listening to stations broadcasting from the Third Reich. Needless to add, 1 A in Papago Park was no exception. Each day the troublemakers had two versions of the news: Otto Reuter's little sheet, which Colonel Holden permitted him to produce, and their own handwritten edition compiled from sources at home.

Since all of these POWs were navy men, their disguises, in one way or another, whatever tales they chose to weave, began with that fact. Like Guggenberger and Maus before them, most planned to pose as foreign sailors of Allied or neutral persuasion somehow cast adrift in Arizona's desert country. If accosted by local authorities, each group would say it was trying to get from the Gulf Coast to California or vice versa.

Perhaps this was not a very believable tale, but given the circumstances, what other story was possible? The object of the game was, of course, to get into Mexico so quickly that they would meet no one. With luck they might not have to produce phony documents or tell stories of any kind.

To some extent, food was a personal matter. Each man had to hoard his own and provide a bag or rucksack for his gear. Yet, since everyone had to get by with less in order to pile up these stores, food was a compound problem as well. Nearly all of the supplies for the escape were placed on shelves in the compound kitchen, where they attracted no special attention. Since the prisoners ran their own mess hall, where and how they stowed things away was pretty much

their own business. As long as the compound was neat and reasonably clean, few questions were asked.

Each group was free to chart its own course once it got outside the camp. All would travel by night, hide and rest during daylight hours. Whether they would use trains and buses provoked some debate. Quaet-Faslem did not think it would work. "More than thirty men dressed in strange clothing and speaking with foreign accents showing up in Phoenix and Tucson at about the same time? No, it's much too risky. Also, I don't believe we are familiar enough with the idiosyncrasies of everyday American life. The slightest misstep could be disastrous, you know. It will take longer but it will be much safer to strike out across the open country. Move only in the dark. Speak to no one."

For all of these reasons, Guggenberger and Kraus agreed. And there was another very compelling fact: they would need every cent they had when and if they got south of the border. Money, it was rumored, was one language almost any Mexican understood.

Wolfgang Clarus listened intently to whatever the four captains had to say concerning escape techniques. They had experience. This would be his first attempt. Yet every time he looked at a map of Arizona he already felt tired. He was a naval officer, not a foot soldier. The border was at least 130 miles from Phoenix. By the time he and the men in his group went up and down mountains, around towns and villages, backtracked to find just the right spot to hide during the day, lost and found their way, they probably would trudge another forty or fifty miles, perhaps even more. That was nearly two hundred miles . . . 320 kilometers!

Clarus studied the map closely. Sasabe, Lukeville, Ajo, Gila Bend. These were strange names. Gila Bend. His eyes narrowed as his right index finger traced a river, the Gila, winding its way from a juncture with the Salt just west of Phoenix to Liberty, Buckeye, then south to Gila Bend. After making a large U turn, as the name of the town suggested, the Gila flowed southwest to join the Colorado, almost at the

international boundary. The Colorado was huge, and according to the map, the waters of the Gila increased substantially about forty miles west of Phoenix.

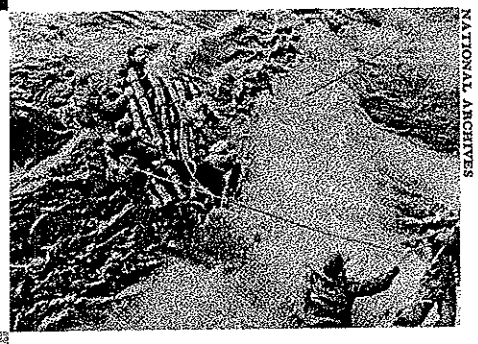
Excited, his mind filled with a wild scheme that just might work, Clarus measured the distance from Gila Bend to Yuma on the Colorado. It was perhaps 120 miles. Why not float down the mighty Gila? They could walk forty or fifty miles westward from Papago Park, then ride that river's waters the rest of the way to freedom.

Günther stared at Clarus, his mouth hanging open in disbelief. This young man had taken a train from Tunis to Bizerte when it couldn't be done. Now he wanted to build a boat and cruise down some river instead of hiking to Mexico. Günther burst out laughing. It was so outrageous that it was worth considering. The coast artillery captain turned toward Friedrich Utzolino, the third member of their escape unit. "What do you say, Fritz? Do you want to go to sea again in the middle of the great American state of Arizona?"

Utzolino, slightly shorter than both Clarus and Günther and a year or so older than the captain, also coast artillery and like them captured in North Africa, rubbed the two-day growth of red-blond stubble on his chin. He neither smiled nor laughed. By nature Leutnant Utzolino was a serious man. "Clarus," he asked in an even, matter-of-fact tone, "how do we get our boat out through the tunnel?" The word "our" indicated that Utzolino was ready to go into the boat-building business at once. As far as he was concerned, the matter was settled. He assumed, as did Clarus, that they could find scrap material easily enough.

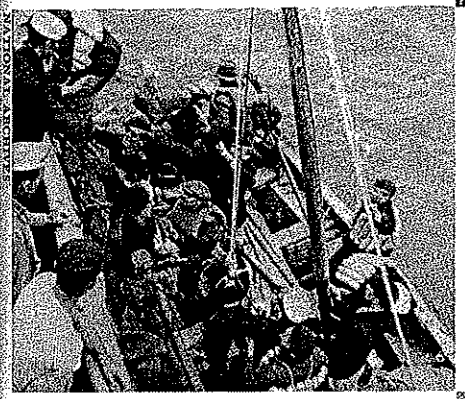
"It seems to me that we can make a canvas skin which can be rolled up, and a wooden frame—struts, if you will—that could go into a second bag." As Clarus talked his hands cut through the air outlining what he had in mind. "Each part will have to be no more than eighteen inches wide when folded up. One problem is, in contrast to the other men we will be carrying the boat, and food and clothing, too. But I think it can be done. It will not be heavy, just awkward. Once

LEFT: The *U-185*, caught off the Azores in August 1943, nearly completed a hair-raising cruise marred by French sabotage and numerous air attacks which also included the rescue of two other U-boat crews from doomed craft.



NATIONAL ARCHIVES

RIGHT: Sailors on a Canadian destroyer pick up survivors of the *U-569*, the first sub sunk by American carrier-based planes in the North Atlantic in May 1943. About half of the forty-six-man crew of this over-age 500-ton craft, destined to be retired from service when it returned to France, were rescued.

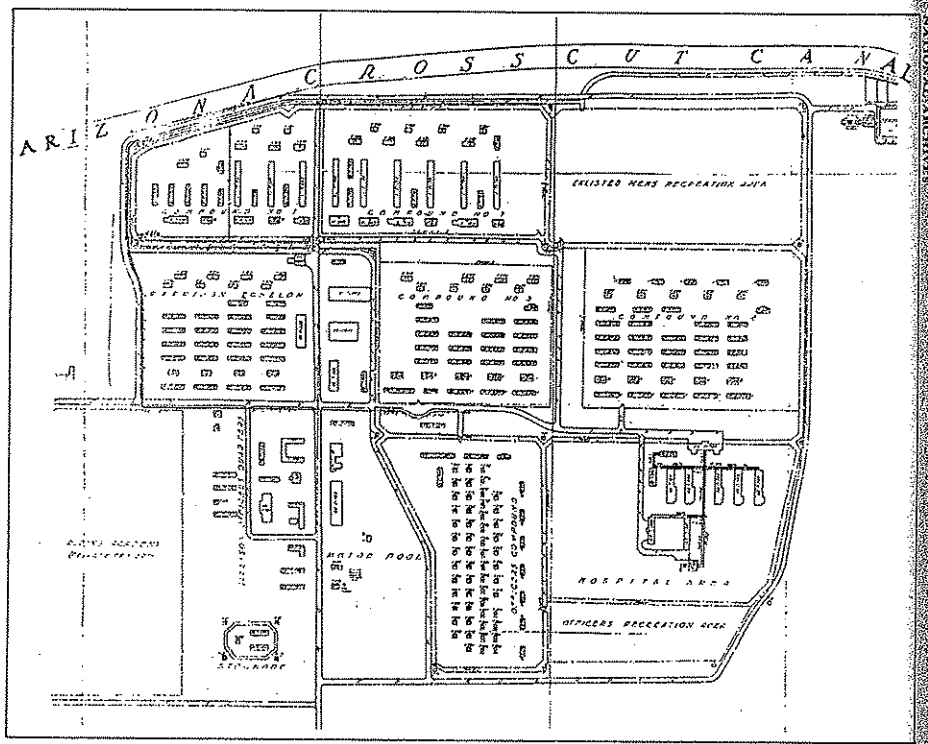


NATIONAL ARCHIVES

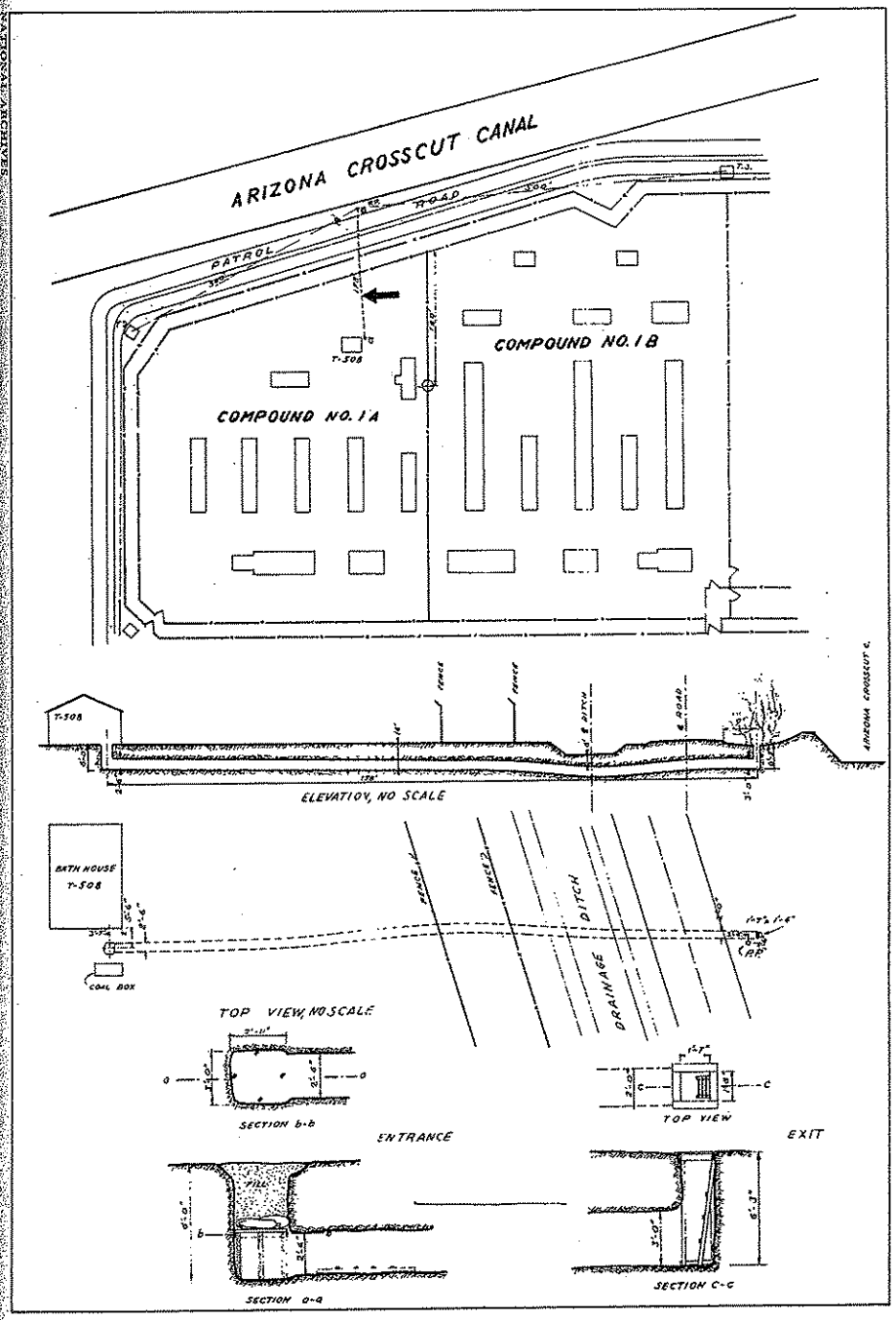
LEFT: Men from the *Weserland*, a German blockade runner en route from Japan to Europe, wait to board a U.S. warship. The *Weserland* and two other large ships laden with war supplies from the Far East were sunk in the South Atlantic, January 3–5, 1944.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

RIGHT: Moment of capture. August Maus, age twenty-eight, dazed commander of the *U-185*, is helped aboard the *Core*, the American carrier whose planes have just sunk his submarine.



Camp Papago Park near Phoenix, Arizona. Compound 1 (in upper left-hand corner close by the Arizona Crosscut Canal) was divided so as to provide special quarters for "uncooperative" POWs.



Compounds 1 A and 1 B and the 178-foot tunnel. According to the tunnelers, this U.S. Army diagram of their work is much too complimentary. It actually zigged, zagged and went up and down. "Nobody had the slightest idea how to dig a tunnel," says Hans Werner Kraus. "It was our first, you understand."

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

The tunnel entrance was strategically placed between a bathhouse and a coal box shown in the foreground. Note sand bags which filled the opening and for several hours thwarted all efforts to locate the entrance.

The carefully constructed exit. Dirt-filled boxes covering this opening held grass and weeds cultivated to blend with the surrounding area.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

PHOENIX GAZETTE
Phoenix, Arizona
Thursday, December 28, 1944

Wily Germans Elude Chase

The greatest man hunt in Arizona's history continued to baffle authorities Thursday as they pressed the search for the 19 escaped German prisoners of war.

Each tip received by authorities is being checked, but so far all have been without results.

Twenty - five Germans, many of them officers, escaped from the Papago Park camp last Sunday evening. Within a short time six had been captured or had surrendered. The remaining 19 have since remained at large.

Capt. Jurgen Wattenberg

The search is being concentrated in the desert area between Phoenix and the Mexican border, 191 miles to the south and extending to points near the Gulf of California.

Military personnel, agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, sheriff's deputies and other police officers, in addition to interested citizens, are taking part in the search.

Officials are authorized to pay up to $25 to the person or persons capturing a prisoner of war. They will pay $25 if the man is captured and returned to the camp. If the army is called to return a captured man, $15 will be paid.

Pictures of the 19 escaped Germans have been released to newspapers by the FBI in a hope that their publication will help lead to apprehension.

$25 REWARD FOR EACH OF THESE MEN

Kurt Mohrdieck; Capt. Jurgen Quaet Faslem; Reinhard Mark; Second Lt. Martin P. Reese; Johann Kremer; Heinrich Palmer

Walter Kozur; First Lt. F. Utzolino; Capt. Hans Werner Kraus; Capt. Wilhelm Gunther; First Officer Jurgen Schroder; Second Lt. Helmut Drescher

Capt. Fritz Guggenberger; Second Lt. Hans Zundorf; First Lt. Wolf Clarus; Friederich Sternberg; First Lt. Otto Hoferichter; Artur Karstens

ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF LIBRARY, ARCHIVES, AND PUBLIC RECORDS

Countless Arizona ranchers and Indian scouts carried this clipping from the Phoenix *Gazette* (December 28, 1944) in their pockets, and several put it to good use.

COURTESY HANS WERNER KRAUS

LEFT: The masterminds. These four U-boat captains coordinated and carried out this daring exploit. *Left to right:* Hans Werner Kraus, Friedrich Guggenberger, August Maus and Jürgen Quaet-Faslem. All except Kraus had escaped from Papago Park once before.

RIGHT: The troublemakers in Pima Camp. All of these men played some role in the escape plot. *Left to right, standing:* Fuge, Hoffman, Guggenberger, Kraus, Schröder, Wattenberg, Maus, (unidentified), Clarus, Quaet-Faslem and Strehle. *Left to right, kneeling:* (unidentified), Mohrdieck, who escaped from Papago Park three times, and Ender, the "mystery man."

Three decades later. Margarete Kozur of Dortmund listens intently as her husband, Walter Kozur (*center*), tells the author about his tunnel adventure and weeks spent in the mountains of Arizona.

GERD KUTSCHA, WAZ-DORTMUND

out of the tunnel, most of our troubles are over. And once at the Gila, we simply drift downstream to Mexico. Let the river do the work. Here is a sketch I've made."

Three heads bent intently over the small piece of paper Clarus spread out on his bed. Günther, a man of considerable practical experience who had come up through the ranks, studied the drawing carefully and with a short laugh pronounced the plan feasible. He suggested that the cross pieces be somewhat stronger and was about to propose another minor alteration when he saw Mirbach approaching their barracks. "Emmerich, do you have a moment? See what you think of this. After all, you are an engineering man and have served on U-boats."

Like Günther, Mirbach thought the scheme ridiculous, preposterous, wonderful. Taking a folding boat out through a 178-foot tunnel was insane, of course. But Mirbach agreed that it was just insane enough to be feasible. They probably would not be able to float all the way to Yuma. There would be dams and open stretches near towns and villages. Nevertheless, he agreed it could be a quick, easy, even comfortable way to cover many miles.

Within an hour the boat, still only a sketch, was the talk of 1 A. By suppertime Wattenberg had offered to christen the craft, and others already were proposing names: "Gila," "Freedom," "Faustball," "Oberst Holden," "Watson's Warship," "The Arizona," "The Troublemaker," "The Papago Park Packet Line," and so on. Clarus, Günther and Utzolino scoffed goodnaturedly at all of these suggestions. "If you wish to help," Clarus announced in serious tones, "then give us not names, ceremony and advice, but wood. Pieces of wood, that is what we really need."

Some minor changes here and there to make up for the lack of materials, and within a few days the frame of a flatboat just large enough to carry three men and their gear began to take shape. The "three mad boatmen," as they were now called, did much of the work under the eyes of guards. But for all they knew, this was simply another silly handicrafts

project. Pieces were fashioned during the day, then assembled and tested at night, only to be immediately broken down and stored in an empty barracks, the same building where Quaet-Faslem, Guggenberger and others now were training regularly with forty-pound rucksacks.

The skin or covering presented a small but not insurmountable problem. Wattenberg easily convinced Lieutenant Watson that the roof of Barracks 5 needed repair, which was true. Being seamen, he added casually, they believed canvas and tar would work best and the men would gladly do the job themselves. Watson was delighted. The troublemakers were coming out of that silly roll-call strike quite nicely. They even were offering to fix up their own quarters for the winter.

"Sewing that canvas was a tremendous job. I broke needles, fingernails, thread. It must have taken me at least two weeks," Clarus recalls, shaking his head in mock sorrow. "Without the help of Frenzel and others it would have been impossible. About mid-December, perhaps ten days before we were to go out, the covering was finished."

At last they were able to put the boat together. All that remained to be done was tar the skin, test the boat in water, and then break it down for packing so it would go out through the tunnel. The assembled craft, tarred, stood in an empty barracks for nearly a week. Clarus still wonders how come the Americans didn't discover it.

"They were, I am certain, lulled into a sense of false security. Lock up sixty men behind double fences eight feet tall, have guards watch them around the clock . . . what could they possibly do? What difference did it make if some of the barracks in 1 A were empty? Actually, it made considerable difference. We put that space to good use. And, strangely, any shakedown or impromptu inspection always concentrated on the buildings we were living in. The Americans assumed the empty structures were locked tight. I suppose they were, I can't remember now, but it was a simple matter to go through a window or pry open a lock so it easily could be closed again if necessary.

"Testing the boat for leaks was a compound-wide affair, almost a celebration. One evening, as soon as it got dark, we simply dug a hole between two of the barracks, filled it with water and put our boat in it. The 'ship' floated beautifully. If it hadn't, I am sure I would have burst into tears. First I crawled in, then Günther and Utzolino. It was big enough, just big enough. Scores of faces loomed at the windows above us, all eager to see the 'three mad boatmen' and their crazy creation. Our combined weight forced the boat to the bottom of our shallow test tank, but the craft seemed waterproof. It did not leak, not a bit. We had done our work well. It was a proud moment. Later it turned out that we actually had made one very serious mistake. In fact, two."

Santa Claus, Bastogne, citrus-fruit schnaps, Field Marshal Karl Rudolf Gerd von Rundstedt, curtailment of beer-drinking privileges. At first it is rather difficult to see how these items are related. Yet on Saturday, December 23, 1944, they melded into a marvelous brew that almost blew the lid off Compound 1 B in Colonel Holden's Papago Park. Rundstedt, a brilliant, thin-lipped veteran of World War I, led the Christmas offensive of 1944, the so-called Battle of the Bulge. It proved to be a "last hurrah," but for a week or more, rolling westward into Belgium, killing and capturing thousands of Allied soldiers, German legions made one last grasp for the laurel leaves of victory. This Nazi onslaught cast a dark pall over the holiday season of their adversaries, increased rationing and war-bond sales in the United States, and delighted German comrades scattered throughout the world. POWs in Staffordshire, England, rioted in celebration, and every camp in Canada and the United States seethed with excitement and unrest. Perhaps, just perhaps there was a chance, after all.

This unexpected offensive by a supposedly beaten enemy even pushed Joan Barry, Charlie Chaplin and Lupe Velez off the front pages of American tabloids. Miss Barry claimed Chaplin was the father of her daughter. The fiery Lupe took an

Chapter 9
"RIGHT THROUGH SOLID ROCK, HUH?"

The next morning, December 26 and the first working day after the long holiday weekend, both the Pentagon and the 9th Service Command headquarters at Fort Douglas, Utah, still were pretty much in the dark concerning developments at Papago Park. At 8:35 A.M. an officer on duty at the Provost Marshal General's Office in Washington made this entry in his log: "Report was heard on radio that twenty-five POWs escaped from Papago Park, Arizona. Five have have been recaptured. No official report received from 9th Service Command."

Twenty-five minutes later he received a telegram from Colonel William Holden sent from Phoenix at 4:59 A.M. on the day before telling of the escape and listing the names of twenty-one German POWs. The names of Palmer, Mark, Schröder and Sternberg were not mentioned in this dispatch. Ten hours after the mass break was detected the American officers at Papago Park apparently still did not know precisely who was missing.

This was simply too much for General Blackshear Bryan,

Assistant Provost Marshal General. Fuming at such bumbling incompetence, he ordered the operations department to contact the 9th Service Command concerning this matter. A few moments later Bryan decided to put in a direct call to Papago Park himself.

—Colonel Holden, this is General Bryan in Washington, what's the dope on that escape out there?

—Well, sir, it was a tunnel job.

—A tunnel job?

—Yes, they tunneled through some 200 feet of solid rock and came out under the high water mark of the Crosscut Canal. It is difficult to figure out just how much start they have on us and so far we haven't picked up anything but small fry.

—Right through solid rock, huh? Do you have any leads on which way they went or anything?

—Last night we worked over some people a bit and we got a tip that one of the high-ranking officers has a collapsible boat he made himself, and the story back of that is he thought there was water in the river down here. It was absolutely dry, before this rain, that is, and we got a road net out here and pick up a little information now and then on some fellows here and there who are probably prisoners. The way it shapes up, sir, is now it looks like we will probably pick up some more enlisted men, but I think Wattenberg probably has a pretty good plan in mind. We are getting ready to start out . . . I was just starting myself, to get down to Yuma and come back up to that river bend. I was going to ask for plane operations as soon as I found out what the FBI was doing. Now the Border Service are quite active with their planes and we might pick up something that way.

—How many men are out now? Twenty?

—No, sir, nineteen. We have caught six enlisted men.

—How many officers are out?

—Twelve.

—Twelve officers? How long after they got out before you discovered the thing out there?

—I think it was Sunday night. Roll call is when the shortage showed up.

—And you don't know just when they got out exactly?

Tucson. This trio was dressed in GI boots, dyed U.S. Army trousers, American broad-brimmed campaign hats cut down to look like civilian clothing, and a collection of unmarked shirts and jackets. None of these men spoke English. They had only $3.33 in U.S. currency in their possession, no papers, no maps. Six hours later they were back at Papago Park.

On New Year's Eve, Guggenberger and Quaet-Faslem walked partway up a mountain near Fresnal. They finally decided they could not make it over the top to a safe hiding place by daylight, so reluctantly they dropped their rucksacks (which Guggenberger says were unbearably heavy during the first few rainy days), rested, ate some chocolate, wished each other a happy, prosperous 1945, and trudged back down the mountainside.

"We were extremely careful during the first week," Guggenberger recalls. "After that we let our guard down a bit. We saw searchers from time to time, true, but we never thought the whole region—police, Army, border patrol, customs agents, FBI, Indians—would turn out to get us. We didn't think we were that important. Even women fliers in small aircraft were hunting for us. We met some of them later. They were youthful, slim, beautiful, astonished to discover they had flown right over us many times.

"One night, I remember, near an Indian village a pack of dogs started toward us, barking and yelping as they ran. Jürgen and I froze. Then it turned out they really were not after us. They had not even seen or smelled us. They were after a trapped coyote which lay in our path. That was another close call.

"Jürgen and I tried every trick we knew. Remember, in a hunt he who is moving has the advantage; the choices are his, not the hunter's. We walked backward in the sand, the way Karl May says the Indians did. The best water holes—and getting water was a key problem—were those near windmills. Some water holes were dry, others dirty and muddy and soft around the edges. We always boiled the water. Once, again remembering what we had read in May, Quaet-Faslem

cut into a cactus to get water. All Jürgen did was slash through a wren's nest. A bunch of startled birds flew out, no water.

"There was no drama in our capture. A group of Indian scouts found us during the day as we were sleeping. It was January sixth. We were less than ten miles from Mexico. The first thing I heard was this deep voice: 'And Captain Quaet-Faslem, did you have a good sleep?' Hard to believe, but it was one of the same men who had captured Jürgen eleven months earlier.

"They put us in a small jail in a little village. There was an Indian in there, too. Through the back window, when the guard was busy, we talked with a kid who bought some food for us. After a few hours a truck, several GIs and an officer showed up from Papago Park. It was a long, boring trip back. The Americans had big lunches, but all of our food was gone. After eating, they went to sleep, and as we bounced along, I reached out with my foot and pulled the lieutenant's bag toward me. Jürgen and I were able to get his sandwiches and some cake, too. One or two of the enlisted men must have known what we were up to, but they said nothing. When we got back to camp the officer was astonished to find his bag so light."

At four-thirty on the afternoon of January 8, Joe Bodillo of Three Points and Sergeant Herbert Stockton of the POW camp at Florence arrested Hans Zundorf and Otto Hoferichter near Sasabe. This pair, whom the Americans had been tracking for several days, planned to use the Gila River as their guide but got lost in the heavy rains, and having no map, simply wandered in a southerly direction toward the border. They had two handmade compasses in their possession, $6.39 in U.S. currency, and an assortment of Italian lire and French francs. Both men were back at camp five hours later.

With the capture of Zundorf and Hoferichter, only six men still were not accounted for: Wattenberg and his two aides,

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and the three boatmen. After leaving that schoolhouse near Phoenix, Clarus, Günther and Utzolino continued west toward the Gila. Early on the morning of December 28 they reached its banks. They were somewhat disappointed. The river was not as large as they had hoped. It looked much bigger on maps but obviously would have to do. Just after sunrise they waded out to a small island and made camp.

"It was a very pleasant spot," Clarus says. "A fine place to hide. After sleeping, we tried to put the boat together, and it was then that we discovered the skin had shrunk. So we lost six or seven hours shortening all of the struts."

There was a yet more pressing problem. The waters of the Gila were falling rapidly. Eventually the three men decided to remain on their "island" one more day, but by the evening of the twenty-ninth, when they tried to set out, where they had waded twenty-four hours before there was no water at all, just mud.

Several miles downstream from their "island," now no longer surrounded by water, they tried to launch the boat, but once they put their gear in, it just sat there, resting on the bottom. "There simply was not enough water in the mighty Gila to float our tiny craft," Clarus recalls with a grin. "It was one of those frustrating moments in life when you don't know whether to laugh, cry, swear or kick the ground in disgust. All that work for nothing!"

During that night and the next they tried to use the boat, tugging it along behind them like some huge toy. Occasionally they would find a short section of the river with sufficient water to float the craft, then they would have to carry the boat, their packs, everything, around a dam to another stretch of water, often too shallow for their purposes. At last they gave up, destroyed the boat and set out on foot for Yuma. "We should have known," Clarus says, "that the Gila wasn't much of a river. Of course, everyone who lives in Arizona knows that. We didn't."

One day they lay near a single railroad track close by a

turnout, watching as trains went by, trying to figure out where they stopped and when. However, there did not seem to be any pattern and they were unable to get aboard any of them.

At first, food was no problem. They had bread crumbs, milk, chocolate and coffee, and found some grapefruit and oranges as they hiked along. One night near a ranch house they caught a duck and roasted it. "*That* was the best duck I ever tasted," Clarus says.

Shortly after dawn on the eighth of January, still following the river, such as it was, they set up camp near Gila Bend on the bank of an irrigation canal in the midst of some tall grass. It was warm and dry and Utzolino decided to wash out his underwear. Günther told him to wait until it was dark. They were still talking as Clarus dozed off. "The next thing I knew," he says, "all hell had broken loose. It must have been sometime after noon. There were cars, people, soldiers all over the place. Despite Günther's warning, Utzolino, he was a stubborn man, went ahead and washed his clothes. Some cowboys saw him and called the police.

"By the time I realized what was happening a GI had spotted me. He was perhaps a hundred meters away, so I pretended to be a member of the search party, walking along, trying to maintain that distance as long as I could. 'Where is your car?' he asked. I replied that it was over there along the road. The soldier nodded and suggested we go to it. 'I want to see your license.'

"When we got near a car—he was then about fifteen meters away—I shrugged and said with a grin, 'I think, sir, I am perhaps one of those you are looking for.' The soldier was stunned. He almost dropped his rifle. Of course, that was the end of my escape.

"They wanted to know if there were others. Since our food was nearly gone, there seemed little reason to hide the existence of Günther; they would have flushed him out anyway, I suppose. So I led them back to our little camp and

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they had to wake him up! He had slept through the entire uproar. That man could sleep anywhere and under any conditions."

By January 9 only the "big boy"—Wattenberg—and Kozur and Kremer still were at large. During the preceding eight days Indian scouts and various search parties had tracked down sixteen of the escapees, each capture being duly noted by a flurry of telegrams from Colonel Holden to his superiors at Fort Douglas and in Washington. Then, for nearly a fortnight, nothing happened. There were no arrests, no telegrams, nothing, except that this tunnel escapade suddenly took an extremely bizarre turn, one of those unforeseen developments which no one, be he American, German, Indian, Mexican, guard, prisoner or civilian, could have anticipated.

Chapter 11 THE SNOBECK FACTOR

Fritz Snobeck, a twenty-year-old youth captured in North Africa, yawned and scratched his new beard as the truck rolled along the highway toward Papago Park. He had traveled this same road several times. There was nothing much to see except a few houses, cacti, dust, sand and bushes. Another prisoner, Heinrich Schmidts, sat beside him, and a German doctor, Frithjof Breidthardt, also a POW, rode in the cab with the driver, Corporal Nathan Stafford. There were no guards.

It was Saturday, January 20, a bright, warm morning, and these men had left Eleven Mile Corner Camp near Casa Grande at nine o'clock, bound for Papago Park. Snobeck, who complained of chest pains, and Schmidts were to have physical checkups. Eleven Mile Corner, a branch facility under Papago Park, housed four hundred German POWs, most of whom picked cotton six days a week.

Snobeck, who had been at Papago Park until three months before, did not like Eleven Mile at all, nor did he like picking cotton. It was a dirty job, something he heard only black people did in much of America. Besides, most of his friends

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