



**Excerpts from: Memoirs of George Schutz
Chippawa Herald March 2008
By Millie Link, Special to The News**

George Schutz still vividly remembers the day in July 1942 when he was working on his father's farm, harvesting peas.

His mother came out to the field (just north of the house where his son Allen now lives) carrying a letter. It had his orders to report for military service in Milwaukee — that very day. Stabbing his pitchfork into the pea stack, he rushed to the phone to call up his brother to take him to Eau Claire to catch the Omaha "400." After hurriedly packing his duffel bag and saying a quick good-bye to his family, he was on his way.

Schutz had previously taken his Air Corps examination, met with the examining board several times, passed the tests and was inducted as an Air Force cadet at Stevens Point on Jan. 23, 1942. For some reason, he was given several extensions and wasn't called for duty until July 23.

Born in Boyceville to Albert and Bess Schutz, George was the youngest of the couple's six boys. He attended high school at Boyceville and Dunn County Aggie.

His family moved to the Dallas area after he graduated from high school in 1937, and he farmed with his father until he went into the service.

Schutz attended bombardier ground school at Santa Ana, Calif., before taking bombardier training at Victorville, Calif. He graduated with the class

of 1943 exactly one year after he signed on. He was with the first class that was trained for dual rating of bombardier-navigator.

The purpose of dual training was to ready student officers for the new B-29s which were just being developed. However, the B-29s weren't ready when Schutz graduated in May 1943 at Selman Field in Monroe, La., and he was assigned to a Consolidated B-24. He then reported to Davis Monthan Field, Tucson, Ariz., for his first phase training.

His crew was put together there, and in a short time they progressed to second phase at Briggs Field, El Paso, Texas. The summer of 1943 was spent flying out of El Paso, and towards the end of September the crew went to Harrington, Kan. where they were assigned to a brand-new B-24.

Their orders to go to England came while the World Series were being played in New York. Another crew in a B-17 made headlines that day as they flew low over Yankee Stadium to see what the score was.

They were all on a course in Bangor, Maine and their flight took them to Labrador and Greenland where they had to spend several days because of bad weather and fog. The extra time gave the fellows an opportunity to do some mountain climbing. From there, they flew to Iceland, and Scotland without incident.

When they landed at Prestwick, Scotland, they left the plane so an experienced crew could take over. They traveled by rail to Wendling, England where they were stationed a short distance from the North Sea. Arriving in England, late in October 1943, Second Lt. Schutz was assigned to the 392nd Bomb Group 8th Air Force.

The crew soon found out that flying in England was far different from their training in the clear weather and wide-open desert around El Paso. It was a whole new ball game for pilots and crews as they adjusted to flying in the rain and fog over the densely-populated English countryside.

The first time his crew went up, another plane crossed in front of them, and they had to make a circle, causing them to spend two hours trying to find their base again.

From B24.net mission profiles

MISSING AIRCREW REPORT: #01733 AIRCRAFT: #42-7506 "SOUTHERN COMFORT" "C" 7th Mission

AIRCREW: BINGHAM * SQUADRON: 576th

CREW POSITIONS AND STATUS:

P 2/LT Bingham, Milford O. KIA
CP 2/LT Winkler, Robert D. KIA
N 2/LT Schutz, George T. POW
B 2/LT Graham, John F. KIA
EnG S/S Helmes, Curtis F. KIA
R/O SGT Massimiani, Orlando A. KIA
WG SGT Harris, Melvin C. POW
TG SGT Nemeth, John L. KIA
WG S/S Arnold, Leroy D. KIA
NG S/S Claffey, Lawrence A. KIA

MISSION LOSS CIRCUMSTANCES: There are no eye-witness accounts in the record from any returning 392nd aircrews regarding the loss of this crew and plane. The only account given is that of the surviving crewmembers who were taken as POWs.

INDIVIDUAL ACCOUNTS OF CREWMEN FATES: One survivor, **Lt. Schutz**, the Navigator, gave this brief account later after the war upon returning to U.S. control from POW status. He noted that only himself and Sgt. Harris, the other surviving member, were able to bail out of the crippled ship. In the target area, this aircraft was attacked and severely damaged by enemy fighters. The nose section was badly hit and the ship caught on fire. The pilot had asked for a heading away to some location (not readable in this man's account) which points to this aircraft not being in the bomber formation at the time of attack. The Navigator notes that he got out of the ship by virtue of falling through the nose section damage, and the surviving gunner, **Harris**, had gotten out the waist window. The report stated that it was positive - no other crew members were able to egress this stricken plane. The attack on this aircraft occurred about 1200 hours in the target area at an altitude of 22,000 feet.

From Chippawa Herald:

As George Schutz got close to the ground, he heard shots that were directed at him and his parachute. He discovered later that his elbow had been hit, the only injury he received.

He had landed near Dortman, Holland, just off the shores of the Zuider Zee. He watched as his crippled plane continued flying, still alternately diving and climbing, before crashing.

As soon as he hit the ground, he hurriedly stuffed his parachute into a drainage ditch by the edge of the garden in a Dutch community. He walked but a short distance, just across the backyard of a home, when a German Luftwaffe (Airforce) sergeant met him with a weapon over his arm.

The officer stood there calmly and waited while the two young boys — members of Hitler youth corps — who had been shooting at his parachute came charging at Schutz with their rifles. They were promptly scolded by the sergeant and informed that this was not the way things were done. He made them put down their guns, dig out the parachute and neatly fold it up.

There was an unwritten code between the American and German armies that no one shot at a man bailing out in a parachute, but evidently the boys weren't aware of the rule. The sergeant then called the authorities, and two German officers came to pick him up.

While they were waiting, two little Dutch boys came out of the house, and Schutz gave them each a candy bar. He wasn't even handcuffed when they put him in the back seat of a little old German two-door car and took off at full speed.

Schutz was having serious thoughts about kicking the front seat down and knocking the two into the windshield, but just as they came to a likely spot near a wooded area, they met about 50 German soldiers on motorcycles. He laughed about it now, saying he would have been caught in a rather embarrassing position climbing out of the car in his blue American flying suit.

They didn't have to go very far to an army post in that heavily fortified area along the Holland coast. There were only two other prisoners there, but Schutz didn't dare talk to them, not knowing if they were Germans dressed in American uniforms. He was held there a short time before being taken to Dulag Luft II in Frankfort where they interrogated Air Force prisoners.

At Frankfort, Schutz was held in solitary confinement in a small cell that was alternately very cold or too hot for comfort. They were taken out one prisoner at a time for the interrogation sessions.

He was questioned extensively there, but he didn't have any secrets that the German intelligence didn't already know. They severely lectured the American men with good German names like Schmidt or Messerschmidt telling them they were fighting on the wrong side!

Schutz said he was fortunate to be captured by the Luftwaffe since as airman to airman, they were given better treatment. Had the German Gestapo captured him, it would have been a different story.

The men were put on a train with a group of 30 other prisoners en route to a POW camp. One might expect to hear they traveled in a cattle car, but he says that they were on a regular passenger train. Their compartment, meant to hold six people, had eight men crowded in.

To make more room, three of the guys would line up and hoist the two smallest fellows up in the coat racks to sleep. Among his companions were three P-38 pilots and two P-40 pilots so he felt well escorted.

They reached Barth, Germany on Christmas of 1943. When they got off the train, officers using guard dogs tethered to 10-foot leashes escorted them to the prison camp. The guards would urge the dogs to lunge full speed towards them to force them to march closer together.

They were now residents of Stalag Luft I prison camp and were officially Kriegesgefangenen (war prisoners) or "Kriegies." The camp was set up for American and British Air Force officers and as prisons went, it was considered the "Hilton" of prison camps.

One of the reasons that Barth was fairly tolerable to live in was the whole array of convenience agreements that the Germans and English had made

in their four-year co-existence. He was interrogated again here, but it seemed one of the main questions asked at Barth concerned what his mother's maiden name was. He thought it should seem obvious when they knew his middle name was Taylor.

The fact that their camp was easily accessible to the Red Cross in Sweden assured them of regular supervision and supplies. Under the Geneva Convention, officers could not be forced to work. In effect, it was a showcase for how prisoners should be treated.

In later years when George attended groups with other POWs, they all remarked, "You had it easy." After hearing how the men who were taken prisoner in the Battle of the Bulge never had a permanent camp, and the atrocities committed in Japanese prisons, he had to agree. Even with only one toilet for 180 men, cold showers and food shortages, it was the best prison camp the Germans provided. Still, the 18 months he was incarcerated were no picnic.

George and his fellow prisoners were ushered into the south compound of Stalag Luft I. His compound consisted of three barracks, each one holding up to 200 people.

Two barbed wire fences about 10 feet apart and 10 feet tall surrounded the prison. Towers equipped with searchlights and armed guards were stationed at the corners.

Each barrack was divided into rooms of different sizes, some holding 30 or more prisoners. The 12x16-foot room George was in held 10 men. Double bunks equipped with mattresses filled with wood chips were lined up around the room. A table, benches and stove completed the furnishings.

There was a wide array of men from all backgrounds and cultures in his room. Freddy from South Dakota was a victim of the dust bowl who had moved to California to work in an aircraft factory. Tom had studied French at Dartmouth and went to college in France in his sophomore year.

Sam, a Temple University graduate, came from a wealthy family who owned clothing stores. He had been a gold medal gymnast in the 1936 Olympics and "Der Fuhrer" himself had placed the medal around his neck.

The barracks were built up on stilts so guard dogs could search for escape tunnels. When asked if that type of buildings wasn't pretty drafty, George promptly replied, "It wasn't their feet that were getting cold!"

At 6:45 each morning the "Kriegies" fell out in formation to be counted by the Lager officers. Between times, they were free to do as they liked.

For breakfast, they were fed barley cooked in a swill cooker — a large cast iron kettle used to cook garbage for the pigs. George still chuckles when he thinks of Tom Breen, a fastidious, well-educated man, nonchalantly eating the worm-infested barley soup, saying, "They'll just have to look out for themselves!"

In George's compound, they cooked most of their own food, using the communal kitchen or the small stove in their room. They set up a schedule so everyone took a turn at preparing the food.

The Red Cross parcels that were issued every week were eagerly looked forward to. A typical parcel would include powdered milk, margarine, chocolate, sugar cubes, crackers, coffee, cheese, liver paste, fish, pork, raisins, soap and usually five packs of cigarettes.

All the cans of food were punctured before they got them to keep the men from hoarding food for escape. Pepper was removed from the parcels so they couldn't use it on the guard dogs and ruin their sense of smell.

It took a lot of ingenuity to cook with their limited ingredients. They learned that their vanilla-flavored toothpaste could be used in baking and crackers could be pulverized and used for flour. If they needed leavening for baking cake or pancakes, someone had to report to "sick call" and get some bi-carb pills.

One time their cake was over baked and got so hard they couldn't eat it. They didn't know what to do with it, so one of the fellows nailed it up on the wall over his bed.

George made a pancake griddle from a heavy piece of scrap metal he polished up with a brick. The griddle was used on the small stove in their room and loaned out to anyone that wanted to use it.

One of their more interesting food experiments was making liquor out of prunes. Everyone saved their prunes and dumped them in an empty water

barrel and let them ferment. They rigged up some equipment to distill it and after a month it turned out to be pretty potent stuff.

However, with their limited toilet facilities, it wasn't a very good idea...