

The Flying Fortress of pilot Sterling Bristol: Crashed August 9 1944 near Kusel

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Translation from German by Manja Jonas

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The Research story

The author first heard about this case when Helmut Gras from Rammelsbach, an eyewitness, told him about the crash in the Winterhell Forest near Kusel at the event of a meeting in the winter of 1996 with veterans of the Flying Fortress "Toonerville Trolley", which crashed near Bubach. On February 2, 1995, a report by Karl Emrich for the "Westricher Rundschau" of the "Rheinpfalz" gave important additional information. Several more eyewitnesses confirmed the crash in 1944. Rumors of Americans from this plane visiting Kusel a couple of years ago went around. Then my research colleague Uwe Benkel from Kaiserslautern found another clue in the Kusel cemetery register that gave us hope for a further successful research. On August 9 of 1944 there was an entry of "3 American fliers" without names. The serial number of one of them was recorded as "0-818575". We thought that one possibility to go on in this case might be finding a grave with this number in one of the American cemeteries in France, Belgium, or Luxembourg, thus revealing the name of the soldier. So Uwe Benkel drove to St. Avold in Lorraine and asked the staff of the American Cemetery to run a search in their computerized data bank to see if this man was registered there. It would only have taken a few minutes to do this, but the staff was in a particularly bad mood that day. They refused to give up any information (which usually was not the case), and asked Uwe Benkel to first get the written permission of a government office in Washington. If not, he could instead go himself and look at the 12,000 gravestones in St. Avold and see if the name was noted on one of them.

Frustrated, Uwe Benkel walked around between the graves in St. Avold for hours until the dawn, and recorded hundreds of names on a tape recorder. A couple of days later when he went over the records at home the number "0-818575" actually showed up. The recorded person was 2nd Lieutenant Sterling Bristol from Connecticut, of Bomber Group 385, Squadron 550, died August 9, 1944. Now we had the most important information, the nut was cracked. And this is why most of the appreciation goes to Uwe Benkel, but thanks also goes to all the people here and in the U.S. who by their clues and information helped with the production of this essay.

Only one more obstacle had to be climbed over. Unexpectedly, the American National Archives ignored, for whatever reasons, a request to send a copy of the MIA report on Sterling Bristol. Only the intervention of American friends resulted in the Archives sending this essential document. The author was then able to locate 4 of the 6 survivors of the crash near Kusel, and in addition several other relatives of the crewmembers who were killed in the crash, and relatives of others who passed away afterward. Together with eyewitnesses from the area, they helped to document the crash and the human destinies connected with it for future generations.

The attack

In the previously mentioned newspaper article, Karl Emrich described the situation in the middle of 1944 like this: *"Life also seems to be taking its regular and peaceful way in the Western Palatinate in the summer of 1944 during the fifth year of war. So far the people have worried most about the fathers and sons in action on the front lines. But now more often they can see signs that their home area might be involved in the action of war. More and more often heavy bombers of the Allies fly by with loud roaring and long contrails streaming behind them, going towards the east to drop their lethal loads on some south German city. German planes are only rarely seen*

anymore. On their way back, the bombers' motors sound noticeably lighter, in sure proof of the completed work. On the next day the newspapers will report which cities were the victims of the 'terror attack'. At the same time, records of planes shot down by the Germans show the citizens that the enemy has had to pay severely for what they did."

On August 9, 1944 the United States Eighth Air Force planned to penetrate deep into southeast Germany to destroy tank factories and fuel storage facilities. Our area was supposed to only be passed by without the dropping of bombs. The three Bomber Divisions together were supposed to send 577 heavy bombers of type B-17 (Flying Fortress) and 247 of type B-24 (Liberator) into the target area. 847 fighter planes were supposed to function as protection to the bombers. But everything happened differently. The planes flew directly into a front of bad weather that developed at an altitude of 10,000 meters. Only 25 of the 800 bombers that had started reached a planned primary destination (Sindelfingen). 30 bombed the secondary target Ulm, 145 the secondary target Saarbruecken (marshalling yards) and 215 planes looked for targets of opportunity, like Pirmasens, Karlsruhe, Luxembourg, Aachen, and places in Belgium and Holland. Actually half of the airplanes (304) had to return to their bases without doing their job or hadn't even taken off..

Not much was to be seen of the German Air Force (Luftwaffe) on August 9, 1944. So it was mainly the air defense (flak batteries) that fought against the bombers. The flak activity in the flight path was described by the following in the American Mission Report:

AREA	INTENSITY	ACCURACY
<u>Saarbruecken</u>		
First Force	<i>meager to moderate</i>	<i>inaccurate to accurate</i>
Third Force	<i>moderate to intense</i>	<i>generally accurate</i>
<u>Karlsruhe</u>	<i>meager</i>	<i>inaccurate</i>
<u>Kaiserslautern</u>	<i>moderate</i>	<i>accurate</i>
<u>Liege</u>		
First Force	<i>meager</i>	<i>inaccurate</i>
Second Force	<i>moderate</i>	<i>accurate</i>
<u>Aachen</u>	<i>meager to moderate</i>	<i>inaccurate</i>
<u>Antwerp</u>	<i>moderate</i>	<i>fairly accurate</i>
<u>Duren</u>	<i>meager</i>	<i>inaccurate</i>
<u>Bonn</u>	<i>meager</i>	<i>inaccurate</i>
<u>Eindhoven</u>	<i>meager</i>	<i>fairly accurate</i>
<u>Maastricht</u>	<i>moderate</i>	<i>accurate</i>

The Flak Unit defending the Kaiserslautern area on this day, which fired "*moderate*" but "*accurate*" on that day was equipped with four 8.8-cm and four 10.5-cm anti-aircraft guns. These were stationed in the meadows in the valley between Kindsbach and Landstuhl. It was this flak unit which shot down the Bristol plane which crashed into Herchenberg Hill near Kusel in the Winterhell Forest. The American Mission Report stated an overall loss of 18 bombers. Among them were bombers that crashed near Puettlingen/Saar (pilot: Harry McGregor), Busenberg near Dahn (Pilot: Lucas E. Finney) and Densborn/Pruem.

The local air defense leader in Saarbruecken spoke of a "*very heavy terror attack, probably the worst so far.*" Three people had lost their lives in the Saar metropolis, 1660 became homeless, and the capital damage was tremendous. The American report says for example: "*Pirmasens: good results. Six concentrations of G. P. bombs in target area, fires started and damage should be severe.*" In reality the city was razed to the ground, and 188 people had died in this bomb attack in Pirmasens.

THE BRISTOL CREW

<u>POSITION</u>	<u>NAME</u>	<u>RANK</u>	<u>COMMENTS</u>
Pilot	<i>Sterling W. Bristol, jr.</i>	<i>2nd lieutenant</i>	<i>b. 14 Feb 1922, Collinsville, CT; killed.</i>
Copilot	<i>Billy H. Allison</i>	<i>2nd lieutenant</i>	<i>b. 22 Oct 1923, Tifton GA. Now lives in Valdosta, GA.</i>
Navigator	<i>John F. Faulkner</i>	<i>2nd lieutenant</i>	<i>killed.</i>
Bombardier	<i>John H. Campbell</i>	<i>2nd lieutenant</i>	<i>b. 27 Feb 1919, Ohio, d. 28 Sept. 1994.</i>
Flight engineer/ Top turret gunner	<i>Anthony Burroughs</i>	<i>S/Sgt</i>	<i>b. 1922, Danielsville, GA Killed.</i>
Radio operator	<i>Earl I. Hansen</i>	<i>S/Sgt</i>	<i>d. 15 Jan 1973</i>
Ball turret gunner	<i>Anthony J. Mosca</i>	<i>S/Sgt</i>	<i>b. 1925; lives in Lumberport, WV</i>
Tail gunner	<i>Buell S. Martin</i>	<i>S/Sgt</i>	<i>b. 1922, CT. Lives in Unionville, CT.</i>
Waist gunner	<i>Julius L. King</i>	<i>S/Sgt</i>	<i>lives in Panama City, FL</i>

Pilot Sterling Bristol Jr. came from a farm in Collinsville, CT, which is still inhabited by his family. In memory of him, the street leading to the farm was officially named Sterling Drive. Bristol first worked in a gun factory. He received his military training in 1943 and 1944 on various Air Force bases in Alabama, Mississippi, Indiana and Florida. Then he was transferred to the 385th Bomb Group in Great Ashfield, England, which flew the B-17 Flying Fortresses. Bristol only flew the following five missions:

2 August 1944, Paris (as copilot)

4 August 1944, Hamburg (as Copilot)

6 August 1944, Berlin (as pilot)

8 August 194, Caen/France (as Pilot)

9 August 1944, Fuerth/Bavaria (as pilot)

Bristol and his crew flew together in bomb missions for only one week before they were shot down over Kusel. From the original crew that day several people were missing: the radio operator, Alfred R. Christopher, who was sick; also Bristol's original gunners, William Newlands, Jr., Henry L. Dowd, and Conrad D. Hornbeck, who had all been transferred to another unit. Instead, the command sent Bristol two gunners, Buell S. Martin and Julius King, and radio operator Earl I. Hansen, who, without exception, were all seasoned fliers with a lot of experience. Such changes in the crews were nothing unusual and were more frequently practiced in the summer of 1944 because the number of crew members was reduced from 10 to 9. This reduction resulted in the possibility of a more economical deployment of military personnel. It was possible because by then the German Air Force had been that much weakened that it no longer posed as great a threat as before. One consequence of this revamping process was of course that the number of American crew members could be increased in the future.

The crash

On that August 9, 1944, Sterling Bristol and his men as part of the Third Bomber Division were supposed to drop bombs on an airplane factory in Fuerth, Bavaria. The Mission Report first stated "*Haze, 3/10 undercast, visibility 3 miles*". These were no dramatic conditions that should have interfered with the crews, but these related to our area (Kusel) and not to the way they planned to go. On the way to southeast Germany, there would have been a bad weather front to fly through. That's why the Third Bomber Division was called back by its command. It is not possible to determine any more where exactly the planes were at that point. It is, however, clear that they made a 180-degree turn back towards England to drop their bombs en route on secondary targets over Belgium and Holland.

On this route they flew right in front of the cannons of the Kindsbach flak station, which finally hit them with their third round: *“Last sighted at 49°30’ N – 07°30’ E, downed by enemy anti-aircraft”*, the American Missing Aircrew Report for the Bristol plane states. These coordinates describe exactly the Landstuhl area. In addition it says *“Aircraft 43-38256 was hit by enemy anti-aircraft over Germany. The number two engine was hit by flak and it burst into flame. The aircraft flew level for a minute or so and then went into a steep climb through the formation, then stalled out, going into a dive, breaking up as it went down. Two chutes were seen to come out of the aircraft when it was first hit, four more were seen coming out just when it was first hit, four more were seen coming out just before it started to climb through the formation and one more came out just as the aircraft broke up”* The first two men who jumped out were waist gunner Julius King and tail gunner Buell Martin. The next four were radio operator Earl Hansen, ball turret gunner Anthony Mosca, navigator John Faulkner, bombardier John Campbell, and then top turret gunner Anthony Burroughs. Finally copilot Billy Allison got out of the plane. Pilot Sterling Bristol did not manage to bail out.

A number of eyewitnesses watched what happened from the ground. They saw, partly from several kilometers' distance, how the plane came falling down like a spinning ball of fire. Helmut Gras from Rammelsbach for example remembers: *“The planes came flying from the northwest, from Landstuhl. All of a sudden one of them, a silver, shiny B-17, started flaming on the left side, and still at full speed, went into a stall, then all engines failed. It fell backwards and was in a balance for a few seconds, hanging straight up in the air without moving. Then all engines failed. In this short period several parachuters jumped out. The plane then toppled over to the right and started flipping over. When flipping over for the second time, it broke into two parts in the middle of the waist escape hatch. The front part with the cockpit and the incendiary bombs went down with a swooshing sound, turning over and over and fell with a loud bang into the Winterhell Forest near Kusel. The top turret broke off and crashed into a field on the edge of the forest. The rear part with the tail section fell down NE of this forest into a field on the Herchenberg hill.”*

The crash site of the front part in the woods immediately turned into a flaming inferno because of the incendiary bombs. Today you can still recognize the site because of a shallow hole in the ground with black burned ground where no tree has ever grown again since then. Numerous small parts of metal, rubber, plastic, and plexiglass are lying scattered around on the surface. Back then, the MG (machine gun) still poked out of the tail section. Members of the Kindsbach Flak came to see the crash site in the afternoon, set up their camping chairs near the tail section and enjoyed the scenery. Also small parts of the airplane lay around the area. The upper part of the top turret was torn off and lay about 200 meters down hill from the tail toward Kusel. Also one of the wings had come down on Herchenberg Hill. Eyewitness Helmut Gras found a fur boot on the side of the Winterhell Forest. In a collective report about planes shot down on August 9, 1944, the German Oberst Muenninghoff summarizes the events as follows in a telegram to the Evaluation Center West at Oberursel near Frankfurt: *“Kusel, 2 km SW, 30 km NW of Kaiserslautern, time: 10.30, Boeing B 17 G, 98 % damage, identification not known, licence number on side rudder no. 338156, 6 Prisoners of War, 3 dead, downed by flak.”*

From the perspective of the crew members, Buell Martin described the dramatic event in a letter to the author as follows. *“We were going to Fuerth to bomb an ME-110 factory. There was a weather front building up ahead of us that we were not going to be able to get over, so the mission was recalled to England. This was about 10:30 a. m. Soon after we turned for home we got into a terrific Flak barrage. The tail compartment started to fill with gray gasoline smoke. We had been hit in No. 2 engine (to left of pilot). The fire had rapidly gotten to the fuel tanks. I heard the pilot tell the copilot to take over. In recent years the copilot told me there was so much smoke in the cockpit he slid back his window to see while trying to get the plane out of formation. Lt. Bristol must have been trying to work fire extinguishers. Then the interphone went out and we could not communicate with each other.”*

Five of the six survivors of the Bristol plane were first processed at the Kusel police station on the corner of Trierer Strasse/Gartenstrasse, then taken to a basement room under the Kusel City Hall (as usually practiced in cases like this) to be handed over to the Baumholder Military Command later. Erwin Weber, living in Kusel at that time, watched the following after the crash: *“In the year 1944 I was out on my lunch break. I saw how some Americans were taken to*

the courtyard of the Kusel police station. Immediately a crowd gathered, mostly women who angrily shook the heavy iron gate and verbally insulted the prisoners.” Paul Rapp from Kusel adds: “They threatened the Americans with their fists and spat at them. One of them had his arm in a sling.”

The Kusel Police Station reported on August 9, 1944, to the Baumholder Military Command::

“On 9 August 1944 around 11.00 a. m. an enemy bomber has been shot down southeast of Kusel. It burst in the air and crashed burning.

Inventory of personal property that has been confiscated from the crewmembers:

1. *Campbell, John, 0-76556, Lt.: 1 bracelet, 1 package of photos, 1 open package of cigarettes.*
2. *Martin, Buell, 31328830, Sgt.: 1 bill fold with photos, 21 English pounds, 1 mech. Pencil, 1 comb, 2 identification tags, several clippings of letters.*
3. *Mosca, Anthony, 35758779, Sgt.: 1 knife, 2 identification tags, 1 wrist-watch.*
4. *Hansen, Earl, 39201488, Sgt.: 1 knife, 1 fountain pen, 1 note book, 2 identification tags, 1 handkerchief, 100 francs (French), 8 5-shilling pieces, 3 one-shilling pieces, 6 six-pence pieces, 5 copper coins.*
5. *Allison, Billy, 0-710867, Lt.: 1 pair of leather gloves, 1 tie, 1 fountain pen, 1 bracelet, 2 identification tags, 2 flight decorations, 2000 francs (French).*

Except these items has been confiscated from a dead flier, who has been identified as Bristol S. W., 0-818575: 1 package of photos, 1 wrist watch, 2 identification tags.

These items and the prisoners have been handed over on 9 August 1944 to Wehrmacht district commanding office at Baumholder.”

The prisoners were then turned over to the Evaluation Center West in Oberursel by the Commanders in Baumholder. They added to their report to Oberursel *“Enemy flier Anthony Mosca, 35758779, has been delivered to garrison hospital at Birkenfeld (heavy burnings).”* Don't let it surprise you that Julius King was not mentioned in these accompanying papers. This is because he was not handed to the police in Kusel but to officials in Kaiserslautern County, who passed him on. Besides pilot Sterling Bristol, top turret gunner Anthony Burroughs and navigator John Faulkner lost their lives in the crash.

Soon after the author had found the still living crew members in the United States, they provided him with partially very detailed reports about the events. But it remained unclear for a long time where exactly some of them landed with their parachutes. The flight route pointed to the villages at the Potzberg Hill and the villages southeast of it. Research in those places, partly with the help of the press, finally did lead to success. At this point I want to say thanks to Hans Kirsch from Selchenbach who made sure that articles requesting details from eyewitnesses were published.

Landed near Weilerbach: Waist gunner Julius King

In between Kaiserslautern and Potzberg Hill many people saw how two parachuters jumped out of the hit plane. One of them was Julius King who had his machine gun station very close to the main escape hatch on the right fuselage side of the Flying Fortress. When the plane got hit by flak, he dropped the door and was the first to jump out of the bomber.

King landed on a downhill field between Weilerbach and Schwedelbach. It was not long before a group of angry civilians surrounded him and roughly pushed him around with their weapons, shovels and pitchforks. He was very happy when a German soldier came driving up on a motorcycle and got the people away from him. Ilse Storck from Weilerbach still remembers the *“handsome and tall man”* who arrived as passenger on a motorcycle in front of the mayor's office building where also the police department was located. King had his parachute tucked under his arm and sat down on the entrance steps of the office building. Then he was led into an office where he had to wait for 4 or 5 hours before they put him on a train to transfer him to Frankfurt late that afternoon. In the transit camp (“Dulag”) at Oberursel a couple of days later he met copilot Allison again. They eventually got to the main camp Stalag Luft VI in St. Wendel. Four weeks later he was transferred to Stalag Luft IV at Grosstychow/Kiefheide in Eastern Pomerania. Today he lives in Panama City, Florida.

The St. Wendel prisoner of war camp is hardly remembered by anyone nowadays. And the experiences that the men from the Bristol plane endured there is still to be dealt with in a separate chapter.

Landed near Kollweiler: Radio operator Earl Hansen

Radio operator Earl Hansen was the third to leave the bomber. He touched ground between Kollweiler and Reichenbach-Steegen on a downhill area called "Auf dem Wasen." This used to be a field but today it is a grassy area. Soon farmers equipped with hoes, shovels, and sticks arrived to capture him. A little girl wanted to give him an apple, but her mother interfered, loudly screaming, and pulled the girl away from the stranger. Theo Klinck from Schwedelbach remembers: *"In the summer of 1944, shortly before noon, I saw a parachute come down near Kollweiler. Immediately I 'borrowed' my father's motorcycle and drove toward Kollweiler. On the road between Kollweiler and Reichenbach-Steegen I eye-witnessed how the parachutist was led away by the Reichenbach policeman. He was a tall, young, and strong man and he wore thick fur boots. On his wrist he wore a beautiful watch."* August Bardens from Kollweiler has some more details: *"I saw the tall man standing in front of the Kollweiler fire station. He had his parachute with him and seemed to be very afraid. Most hostile acted Ludwig G., a teacher and a fanatic Nazi. He violently pushed the American around and probably would have killed him in his state of agitation if others had not stepped in. When the man pulled a book out of his pocket (it was a Bible) and started reading in it, Ludwig G. angrily pulled it away from him. My mother wanted to give the prisoner something to drink, but she was kept from doing so. Then a car with Land Watch officials came and they picked him up."*

Hansen was brought to Kusel where, as we have seen already, all the men from the Bristol plane except for King landed. Hansen's widow, Midge Hansen, writes to the author that on the way the vehicle got a flat tire, which, of course, did not improve the captors' bad mood. During his imprisonment, Hansen kept a diary on cigarette boxes. About the first days after the crash he writes in it: *"I bailed after waist gunner. Harness hurt terrific. Very quiet up there. And there I was at 21,000 ft. without an airplane. Hit ground powerful hard. Hurt my back, was knocked out. Civilians found me, kicked me. Tore my bible up. Turned me over to Gestapo. [It was actually the Land Watch, not the Gestapo.] Were kinda rough. Drove me about 20 miles [to Kusel]. Put me in a dungeon. Took one of my dog tags. Met part of my crew there. Stayed there till about 8 that night. German 'soldaten', soldiers, took us via truck to a German army camp [Baumholder]. Made me go with 'Jr'. [Anthony Mosca] to hospital [at Birkenfeld]. Gave him a shot of morphine. Came back to cell. Lots of Jerrys came in to look at us. Civilians, all stared at us. Next morning soldiers took us to station (barefooted), only had flying coveralls. Oh and it was very cold! Rode for about 5 hrs to Frankfurt and Oberursel 'Plea Center'. Put us in a cell. Took pictures. Took my watch (G. I.). Put us in solitary for 3 days with 2 slices of bread for breakfast. Soup for dinner and bread for supper. Interrogated us. Then guards took us to Wetzlar 'Dulag'. Gave us Red Cross kit. First food for 4 days. Stayed there 3 days, then shipped out to train station. Then to a compartment. Spent 3 miserable nights on train. Were bombed by our bombers. Sure scared. Got to Stalag VI St. Wendel."*

Earl Hansen lived in Vancouver, Washington, after the war and died in a car accident in 1971. His widow so kind as to make his war diary and pictures available for this report.

Landed near Neunkirchen am Potzberg: Tail gunner Buell Martin

Tail gunner Buell Martin was the second crew member to jump out of the burning B-17. He still remembers many details: *"Then flames started to trail back from the left wing tanks. (to my right in the tail) I thought : 'This is where I get off.' We used the small 24-foot chest pack. My pack was lying to my left and to my rear. I had a fur parka over my heated suit as it was so cold back there. I could not clip the chute to my harness until I unzipped the parka. My oxygen mask blocked my vision of the zipper, so I tore off my mask helmet, and goggles to open the parka and*

clip on my chute. I jettisoned the tail door/hatch and with my arms folded over the pack and on my knees I leaned forward, and out.

It was suddenly very quiet, with no sensation of falling. I was head down, face up, looking at my feet. I wanted to turn over and look down but the open parka under my arms may have hindered this and it seemed I could not turn. I had briefly thought of making a delayed chute opening and avoiding capture. That is humorous now, where did I think I was going to go walking around Germany in a flying suit? . But I did want to delay enough to slow down below the speed of the plane, but when I opened the chute my boots nearly snapped off. I wanted to see if my chute worked while it was still under warranty. If it failed I would want my money back.

One of my boots was nearly off, I pulled it back on, then I saw our Squadron receding from me and I had the strange feeling that they were leaving me behind. Sort of 'Hey you guys wait for me!' Then I saw our plane falling, seemingly in slow motion, below our formation. It was a ball of fire by then. I looked for other chutes, but I looked in the wrong direction. I did not know then that I had been the first man out and all the other chutes were between me and our plane and higher and. I saw none of them. I then saw our plane had crashed into some woodland. There was the central fire, with a perimeter ring of fire around it. I took this outer ring to be our load of incendiary bombs that had scattered. We had not dropped any bombs (most likely magnesium). Now here my memory is unsure. I think as I descended I saw a road near the crash site and some people on the road. The road would be to the N.E. of the crash if I remember it well." [Martin most probably saw a section of Federal Highway 420 between Kusel and Altenglan.]

Next to picture on page 180, in the magazine:

Prisoner photographs of Buell Martin. Martin's dry comments today: "I did not feel as bad as it looks on the pictures. I was just trying to look like the bad guys in the movies." and : "Would you buy a used car from this guy??"

Next to the picture on page 181:

The emblem of the 550th Squadron that Buell Martin had on the back of his leather jacket, together with the writing "CONNECTICUT" and several bomb symbols representing his missions.

In Neunkirchen am Potzberg people watched how the parachutists slowly came floating down and eventually landed in an uphill field north of the village. The site is located on the road to Foeckelberg, 200 meters outside the village, left of the S curve on the so-called street "Rosenweg." Several village inhabitants remember what happened in August 1944. According to them, the man dropped his parachute when he landed and first wanted to run uphill towards Potzberg Hill to get out of there. But when he saw all the people running toward him, he gave up. He still tried to tear up some letters that he had carried with him. Then he was taken captive. With a gun pointed toward him he was led towards the village when soldiers that were on home leave joined them. It was them that the American approached on purpose. The policeman Maurer from Reichenbach showed up on his bike too. A boy, Karl Jung, who was sixteen years old at that time (today lives in Neuhausen/Filder), tried to speak English with the American. Martin was brought to a farm estate, estate Mueller, in the lower village about 200 meters outside the village. An upset village inhabitant kicked him several times then took his watch from him. Then a police car arrived that had a prisoner with severe burns (Anthony Mosca) already in it. The car drove off with the Americans toward Kusel. It is amazing how accurate the oral accounts and documentations are in this case. Rudi Walter from Neunkirchen am Potzberg recognized Martin immediately from the picture that the author presented to him. Martin himself has an amazingly detailed memory and wrote a very visual report. Now we will let him speak up again:

"I estimate it takes 15 minutes for me to land. Once I hit an updraft, and the sudden up and down is like a fast elevator. This is the only time I have any sensation of movement on the way down until I get close to the earth. I suddenly remember I have a packet of letters from my wife in the upper pocket of coveralls I have on under my heated suit. I am able to get a few out and tear them in pieces. (I might be fined for littering!) I can hear voices shouting on the ground even while still relatively high in the air.

As you near the earth in a chute, it seems as if you are descending at an ever increasing rate of speed. Suddenly you are there! I land in an ideal spot, with a gentle breeze carrying me down a long hill. I let myself go limp and tumble down the slope of tall grass, or hay. I lie still

holding onto the grass. At that moment I want to hug the earth, as if somehow in letting go I will fall back into space. I love our mother earth.

I lie still. Thinking if I get up I might be shot at. I release the chute harness while lying down, then cautiously get up and see that far up the hill there are woods. Could I get to the woods? But then what? Then a man is coming up the hill. He is of stocky build, not tall. He is wearing a brown pinstripe suit with a Nazi party pin in the lapel. He is about 45 years old. When I turn toward him he stops as if thinking I have a gun. I am only pulling more letters from my wife from under my suit that I started to tear up. We are not carrying our 45 automatics at that time. In any case I will not be so foolish as to harm that man.

I start down the hill with the man. I see a group of people running toward us, up the hill. It is not an unfriendly mob coming after me, but women of diverse ages who charge past us, then soon run back down the hill, laughing and talking and dragging my chute.

We meet another man with a Luger. He is I think short, and slight of build. A turtle neck sweater? (It is August) A cap, not a mountain trooper, or a forager, but the old golf or English sport car driver type. He has a resemblance to Josef Goebbels. He has me raise my hands as high as I can while he searches me for a pistol. Two more men come up the hill. They are in uniform of some type that does not appear to me to be of any particular service. Their uniforms seem to be a lighter blue than the Luftwaffe. They are about 18 to 20 years old. One has a rifle, one a pistol, and they seem disinterested and appear to be waiting orders from the two civilians.

We go down the hill until we reach a path into woods to the left, or more open ground to the right. I have been apprehensive about the thin man with the Luger since he first appeared. Now he wants to take me into the woods. He and the man with the brown suit start to argue. The brown suit man wants to go the other way. The kind man in the brown suit (I shall always think of him that way) prevails.

We come to a road and are walking. At some point I see a small sign 'Kusel'. Someone comes up behind me and tries to kick a field goal with my tail end. The kind man shouts 'Nein, Nein!' at a man in overalls who drops back, but then returns for a few more kicks. The kind man orders him away again, he does not return. A boy of 12 - 14 yrs. rides along side of me for awhile. He speaks perfect English. He asks: 'Are you English or American?'. He gives the answer to some civilians that are following us.

Now we are passing some houses to my right, and we are walking west, there are people standing along the road to my right and some are old. The boy on the bike asks 'Why do you come to bomb these people?' I have no ready answer. Then some shredded aluminum foil comes down from the sky. The boy says: 'More of your planes are destroyed.' It is only what we called chaff, used to confuse the "Flak" radar (foil to foil the Flak).

At some point everybody has disappeared except the two bored young men in the blue uniforms. I take my parka off and they see my Elgen watch. Then one of them takes my watch I took the parka off before this but someone insisted I put it back on. This person has turned it inside out and the fur is now on the outside.

We are walking along and the two young men seem quite pleased with my watch. (I don't know which one will keep it.) Then a car comes up. An Opel 'Olympia'. I have always been a car nut. I would have preferred a 540-K (but this is not the movies). I am put in the back-seat. There is a sweet and sickly odor in the car, a man I do not at first recognize. It is 'Jr!', Mosca the 19-year-old member of our crew. His head is badly burned, the skin hanging down from his face, some fingers are fused together. I only recognize his voice. He says: 'Will I be scarred?' The Opel driver is wearing an Afrika Korps type soft cap. The other man is turned around and pointing a pistol at my chest. It is the man with the golf cap on the hill, the man that had the pistol on the hill. We seem to be going very fast. I can see the speedometer, it is over 80. Later I realize it was 80 K.P.H, not M.P.H. but it is a trifle fast for the country road we are on.

We stop at a police station [in Kusel]. We are going into a small door, and a raised typical police desk appears to the right. Two or more police. They take my parka, heated suit, and boots. Why, I do not know, I take a comb from my coveralls and start to comb my hair. And I don't know why this causes the police to get very angry and to shout at me. I have to put my hands up again and am searched once more.

A doctor of 50 to 60 years of age comes in. He nods to me with a friendly greeting and smile. He takes 'Jr' to a back room and puts something on his face, then bandages his head and

hands. But 'Jr' needs more than that, but will not get it until after midnight. I am very stupid here. EVERY PARACHUTE HARNESS HAS TWO SHOTS OF MORPHINE SEWN ONTO THEM. I DID NOT ASK THE POLICE TO RETRIEVE SOME FOR 'Jr.' I COMBED MY HAIR!

Someone comes into the station with the navigator's bag. Not burned, intact. I wonder how this is possible, knowing how our plane has burned. At that time I do not know the nose fell off our plane. Against regulations, I have my wallet with photos of my wife, my car, and about \$ 150.00, in English pounds. I don't know why I have that much cash. All my pay except for \$ 5.00 per month has gone home to my wife. I must have won playing Black Jack and have not as yet sent the money home. My wallet also contains my Connecticut drivers license. All the above are of course taken from me at the station. But all except the pounds are returned to me 4 days later at Oberursel. The nice man in the brown suit has gathered up my torn letters.

I am taken out of the station. 'Jr.' is hobbled as he also has sprained both ankles when he landed. We get into a truck, or car. It may have been the Opel again, but this is one of the strange blank spots I have about my travels in Germany. We drive out into the country to a grassy hilly place. We are put into the strangest kind of cell [basement under the Kusel town hall]. It is cut into the side of a hill. It has a large barred door so we can see outside and there is plenty of fresh air. The walls are stone and there is a large double wooden bunk. There are names scrawled the walls. It looks like it might have been used to store coffins at one time but has been used more recently to store drunks.

Eventually five of us six survivors are the cell. 'Jr's' head has swelled until his eyes are closed. He is very thirsty. Someone brings us a pitcher of water, and we pour water down 'Jr's' throat. A tall man in a wide brim hat and long coat comes too into the cell. He says to us: 'Three of your comrades are dead. Won't you give me their names?' It made no sense that we would not give the names. It only made a longer wait for the dead men's families.

That evening at dusk we are put onto a military truck. The type with the canvass canopy over the back. There are two guards on the tail gate. At least one has a machine gun, and he has only one eye, and he laughs much of the time. We drive until about 10:00 p. m. The truck turns up a long driveway and we come up to a large rather foreboding looking brownstone building. It is some kind of military headquarters, or is it a prison? [Baumholder Military Training Area Headquarters] We are taken to the cellar and put into dungeon type stone cells."

In the interrogation center at Oberursel near Frankfurt, Martin finally received back his personal items except for the money. He also got to Stalag Luft VI in St. Wendel first, for about four weeks, and later was transferred to Stalag Luft IV near Grosstychow/Kiefheide in Eastern Pomerania. The American that was seen visiting the crash site in the Winterhell Forest "a couple of years ago" was probably Buell Martin. He was there together with his wife on a Sunday of 1989 and showed up at the present day police station. Martin still lives in Connecticut with his wife. He still uses his old aluminum drivers license. His comment: "They don't make them like that anymore."

Landed near Neunkirchen am Potzberg: Ball turret gunner Anthony Mosca (Junior)

Ball Turret Gunner Anthony Mosca ("Junior") was at the age of 19 the youngest crew member and even today is still scarred by the events of this crash. In a letter to the author he writes: "When we were hit, I swung the turret around and could see a hole in the left wing. Fuel was pouring out of it like a fire hydrant. I called the pilot, but got no answer, so I came up out of the turret to see what was going on. When I opened the door, fire hit me in the face and burnt me badly. I pulled at my mask and helmet to get them off. I thought I was going down with the plane.

God saved me and led me out of that plane, because I did everything right to escape death. I had my parachute in the turret with me, but could only get one side of my chute snappers to the harness. The plane seemed to be flying level at about 20,000 feet. The waist gunner [Julius King] had already parachuted out before me, so I got to the door and fell out. I fell for a long time and couldn't see anything, I don't know if from being burnt or lack of oxygen but finally my eyes cleared and I pulled the chute, then everything was quiet and peaceful.

I came down near a clearing in the woods, my chute catching in a tree. I hit the ground hard enough to sprain both of my ankles. I walked out to the clearing, then down a dirt road that

dropped over some hill to some little white houses. There were some women there and they put something like flour on me because my head, hands and ears were burnt badly."

Under the photograph on page 184:
Ball Turret Gunner Anthony Mosca in full flying gear.

Mosca had landed near Neunkirchen am Potzberg below a clearing on the Pferdskopf Hill (in an area called "Beim Foehrwald"), about 500 meters away from Buell Martin. Back then Neunkirchen's soccer field was located nearby. Rudi Walter remembers: *"The man had severe burnings especially on the neck and fingers. He dragged himself painfully moaning down to the first house in the village. There some women in a farmhouse treated him with flour. He wore a gold necklace around his neck that they had to remove. Then they took the severely injured man toward the center of the village, pulling him gently along by holding his jacket sleeve. Together with another parachuter, he got picked up by a ca of the Reichenbach police."*

Mosca also still remembers today the following short stay in the cellar below Kusel's City Hall: *"They took me to what looked like a basement of a house, but there was no house atop the basement and no windows in the basement. I was in a lot of pain. Three other crew members had already been picked up. The crew totaled 8 members, 3 were killed in the crash and 5 were captured. They put me in a separate corner from the others, and when they closed the door to the basement, it was totally dark. I could hear the other crew members discussing what had happenend. I had no idea where I was whether in Germany or France."*

As we have already seen, after his short stay in the Baumholder garrison prison, Mosca was driven to the Garrison Hospital in Birkenfeld, accompanied by radio operator Earl Hansen. Mosca continues: *"The next morning I couldn't see, or talk from the burns or walk from the sprained ankles. They carried me out and loaded me on what seemed like a flatbed truck and took me to a hospital. There was only 1 other patient there, an English paratrooper. There was a French doctor and a French soldier, both POWs, who wrapped me in paper bandages. There were no medical supplies there. I stayed there maybe 2 weeks or more. During air raids they would put me on a stretcher and carry me to a shelter."*

Later Mosca was transferred from Birkenfeld to a bigger hospital where several other American, British, Canadian, and Russian prisoners were held. There British POW doctors performed skin transplants on his face and hands. After one month he got transferred to the military hospital of Bad Soden, where doctors attached an eyebrow and eyelid. There he stayed until his liberation eight months later: *"A U. S. Army jeep came up the road and got us in April 1945. I had been a POW for 9 months form August 1944. I was never mistreated by any Germans while I was there. There just wasn't a lot to eat during that period of time."*

Since his return to the United States Anthony Mosca has lived in his hometown in West Virginia in the small town where he grew up. He had to go through numerous more operations. He lives with his four sisters and enjoys excellent health except for his war injuries. Of course, he has never forgotten the events near Kusel. *"These events have changed my life in a dramatic way,"* he summarizes.

Landed near Kusel: Bombardier John Campbell

Bombardier John Campbell was probably the first one who jumped out of the injured plane, through the nose escape hatch. Helmut Gras from Rammelsbach was an eyewitness to his apprehension. After observing the crash and several parachutes from Rammelsbach, he and his friend Erich Fauss ran toward the road Haschbach-Kusel: *"One of the parachutes (the one of Campbell) came floating down and landed slowly left of the road. I hid in a corn crib on the opposite side of the road and watched what happened from there. The parachutist was kneeling on the ground and fumbling with his straps. When he stood up, a car of the type 'Adler' came driving up from Kusel and stopped. Three men with white armbands (that means they were members of the home guard) jumped out. The crew member immediately started walking toward the men and took off his helmet. The man had blond hair and was bleeding on the left side of his head. One of the men from Kusel pushed him toward the car. The prisoner stumbled ahead,*

dazed and shaken, and was put into the car which then drove back towards Kusel. A heatable suit with cords and a white parachute were later found near the woods which bordered the cornfield.”

John Campbell was admitted to Stalag Luft IV near Sagan, Nether Silesia. He died in 1994, so unfortunately we cannot cite any documents written by him.

Landed near Kusel: Copilot Billy Allison

Christa Loos, who back then lived on the Holler in Kusel, witnessed the following on 9 August 1944: *“When the crashing plane came closer, it looked as if it would crash directly into Kusel. Shortly before it reached the town, it turned slightly left near the Winterhell Forest. I ran toward it together with my brother and another kid. Immediately we heard a gigantic ‘bang’ which was caused by the impact of the plane. Together with a farmer we were the first to approach the crash site. Above the site a parachute was hanging in the trees. In its straps there was a man, obviously not injured and alive. The farmer who accompanied us warned us not to go any further. There was a possibility that the flier would shoot at us, he said. Then he sent us away.”*

This American was Copilot Billy Allison. In this case as well we are able to present a first hand eyewitness documentation. Allison experienced the crash and his landing as follows: *“Immediately after we were hit, the plane caught on fire. The interphone system went out of order and we were of order and we were not able to talk to the rest of the crew. Sterling and myself being up front were not able to see the fire until it was much under way. Sterling then rang the bail out bell and motioned for me to jump. I got out of my seat, snapped on my chute and started for the escape hatch. The last I saw of Sterling, he was leaving his seat. Burroughs had opened the front hatch and I told him to jump and he did. Just before I reached the escape hatch the plane went into a spin to the left. Until yet I don’t know how I got out of the plane. I received a blow on my head during the spin and the next I remember I was falling through the air, and parts of the plane were falling all around me. I could not see the ground, but decided that it must be time to pull the ripcord. I must have been no more than a hundred feet from the ground for as soon as I pulled the cord, the chute opened and I immediately landed on my back n a pint tree. The impact broke a limb about six inches in diameter as I fell through the tree. As I was lying on the ground, parts of the plane were still falling. I saw Faulkner lying close to the crash site, and I knew he was dead. My chute was still in the tree, so I unfastened my harness and crawled away since fire and exploding ammunition seemed to be everywhere.”*

Under the photograph on page 186:

Report about the missing Copilot Billy Allison in the Atlanta Journal.

In 1997, the author and eyewitnesses visited the crash site in the Winterhell Forest near Herchenberg Hill. Erwin Hoffmann, who used to live in Kusel in 1944, was also present. He led us to an old quarry SE of the Winterhell Forest that today is partly filled up. There, as a teenager on 9 August 1944, he had a memorable encounter with an American from the crashed bomber. We agreed that it would be a great thing to find this American man after more than 50 years, and get into contact with him. A few months later, the author was able to find him in the United States, in the state of Georgia. The man was copilot Billy Allison; he was the flier who had the involuntary meeting with Erwin Hoffmann in 1944. Today we are in the lucky situation that we can have a look at this event from the perspectives of both participants.

Erwin Hoffmann still remembers exactly that it was a summer day with a bright blue sky, and contrails of the passing bomber formations were visible. After the crash he also went to the Winterhell Forest. In the woods, next to a body, he found an open parachute that he rolled together and took into Kusel. This must have been Allison’s parachute. The body was certainly John Faulkner.

After the crash Allison walked around in the area for a little while. He had injured his leg and was limping; also his back was very painful. Dazed and worn out, he eventually sat down on the ground. He could hear voices in the distance. He planned on staying in his hiding place until dawn when he would try to leave the area.

But everything turned out differently. In the afternoon, Erwin Hoffmann was one of the people who swarmed out to search for fliers who had parachuted. He remembers: *“On the side of the old quarry I noticed a man lying behind the bushes on the ground. Quickly I walked back to the trail and handed my bicycle to one of the people passing by. Then I slowly sneaked back hoping to be able to use the surprise effect, and shouted: ‘Hey American soldier, come out!’ Immediately the man jumped up, scared, and raised his hands. On the ground was a map that he must have studied and some money. He was slightly injured on his eyebrows. I searched him in case I needed to disarm him. While doing that, some coins fell out that I picked up later and took with me. Soon the flier realized that I was just an unarmed boy and no danger for him. He lowered his hands and said with a strong American accent, ‘Where am I?’ “* The following short dialog developed:

Allison: *Where am I?*

Hoffmann: *You are in Germany. Now come with me!*

Allison: *Where to?*

Hoffmann: *To a prison camp.*

Allison: *No!*

Even today, Allison still remembers Hoffmann’s comment when the coins fell out: *“Ah, English coins!”* he exclaimed. After this unexpected encounter, Allison wanted to get away and took off as well as he could with his injured leg, westward toward an open field. When he noticed people there, he quickly turned in the opposite direction and walked off towards the woods. But he had made his plan without consulting Erwin Hoffmann. He was not to get rid of Hoffmann, who followed him persistently. Hoffmann reports: *“The whole time I followed him at the distance of about two meters and continued to talk to him in English about Churchill and peace offers and the like to distract him. But I felt a lot better when Helmut Dick showed up with a pistol and disarmed the man. Together we led him through the Winterhell Forest, passing the soccer field toward the city. On our way more people joined us. One of them was a fanatic Nazi in uniform who rode a motorcycle. He encouraged Dick to save all the inconvenience with the ‘terror flier’ and simply to shoot him with his pistol. This was not at all what Dick wanted to do. To get himself out of this situation he replied to the Nazi that in the presence of the boy, that means me, this was absolutely impossible. If I had not been present at this particular time, this encounter could possibly have had horrible consequences. We felt relieved when we turned the American flier, with no further injuries, into the custody of the police at Kusel. In the courtyard of the police station there was at this time another American [probably Martin]. Both were roughly searched by the officers, and maps and coins were found.”*

Erwin Hoffmann was rewarded with 50 German Marks for his *“brave action”*, which was common practice in such cases.

During the event of the crash a metal splinter had lodged in Allison’s eye. In the Interrogation Center at Oberursel he therefore asked for medical attention, but this was not granted to him with the admonition that only if he answered all their questions would he receive medical care. In his solitary cell Allison could hear another prisoner in a neighboring cell singing the hymn *“The Old Rugged Cross”* with loud voice. This touched his emotions so deeply that he began to weep and in this way the splinter was washed out of his eye. Even today Allison sees this event as a powerful sign of God’s help to him. Allison, like Campbell, was taken to Stalag Luft III near Sagan in Nether Silesia.

After the war, Allison worked for a large agricultural company as the engineer for grain silos. Because of his rough landing in the Winterhell Forest near Kusel he is still fighting back problems that have worsened in recent years. He lives in Valdosta, Georgia. Erwin Hoffmann has contacted Allison through letter and by telephone. A few years ago one of Allison’s relatives who was stationed in Germany with the military came to Kusel and visited the cellar under the City Hall and the crash site of the bomber. Allison himself would like to go back to Kusel with his wife, but his back problems keep him from making such a long trip.

Killed in Action near Kusel:

Pilot Sterling Bristol, navigator John Faulkner and top turret gunner Antony Burroughs

As already mentioned, Pilot Sterling Bristol, after he had rung the bailout alarm bell, got up from his seat but, possibly because of centrifugal force, was not able to get out of the spinning and falling plane. His badly burned and shrunken body was found in the Winterhell Forest, still in the cockpit, lying over the pilot's joystick, wearing his flak steel helmet. In the evening his body recovered from the plane. Because of his dogtags, it was possible to identify Bristol without any doubt.

Navigator John Faulkner also left the plane through the nose escape hatch and was probably killed in the air by falling airplane parts. He was probably not able to pull the ripcord to open his parachute. As already mentioned, Allison had seen Faulkner's body lying a few meters away from him in the forest. This place was located about 100 meters above the crash site of the front part of the plane. Faulkner lay on a tree stump close to the branch that was broken off by Allison's landing. According to eyewitnesses, he did wear an opened parachute. He had a hole in his skull, his shin bone was broken and projected though his pants leg, and his face was colorless. Besides these, no other injuries were seen. Some women angrily kicked the body.

Top turret gunner Anthony Burroughs also managed to get out of the bomber. His body was severed diagonally in half, probably by falling plane parts. Guenther Cassel from Etschberg remembers the following: *"Together with my father and a school mate, I was harvesting grain on the hill between Schellweiler and Etschberg, only about 200 meters away from the Winterhell Forest. Immediately we ran toward the crash site. On the edge of the woods we found an angled plastic flashlight like the Americans used to have. Below the crash site—about ten minutes had passed since the impact—we saw a horrible sight. Lying there was a body, or more exactly said, a diagonally cut off body including the head and the left shoulder but with no legs. The open side was very bloody and flies swarmed around it."* Other eyewitnesses have confirmed this version. The dead flier's wristwatch is said to still have worked. A little further down they found a part of the plane's wing, and nearby a burned, torn off leg with a burned shoe. This was probably one of Burroughs' legs and part of the wing that might have hit him.

The three bodies were put on a trailer attached to a tractor and brought to the Kusel Cemetery. There they were buried.

In connection with the research, in 1997, the author came into contact with Burroughs' niece, Jan Loftis, and his (at that time) 97 year-old-mother. Although Burroughs is now buried in a small cemetery in Georgia, his family never knew exactly how he lost his life. Jan Loftis writes to the author: *"His mother often wondered why she had been allowed to live so long, and that this must have been why: to finally learn what happened to her son. We were both comforted to see the photos of the cemetery. Your compassion has brought us peace, and we feel that you must have a very generous and loving heart."* Just shortly after this letter, Anthony Burroughs' mother died.

Imprisoned in Stalag Luft VI in St. Wendel:

Waist gunner Julius King, radio operator Earl Hansen, and tail gunner Buell Martin

As already mentioned, waist gunner Julius King, radio operator Earl Hansen, and tailgunner Buel Martin were, after their interrogation in Oberursel, transferred to Stalag Luft VI in St. Wendel. Over the past few years, the history of this camp, almost unknown to us, was researched by my research colleague Roland Geiger from St. Wendel. When he first found information about it in American literature, he reacted rather skeptically, because nobody in St. Wendel knew anything about it. More and more often he heard about former American fliers who had been imprisoned there, so the clues proved to be correct. After the war several former prisoners came to St. Wendel to visit the site of their captivity. They checked with officers of the city legislature, police, post office workers, or asked pedestrians, but nobody could help them. In the meantime, as a result of many contacts with people in the United States, Roland Geiger has accumulated detailed material and reports by former prisoners. The publication of these sources

must be left to him, though. In the following, we shall briefly describe the conditions found in St. Wendel by our three Bristol crew members.

The most important camps in which Allied fliers were imprisoned:

Stalag Luft I in Barth (near Greifswald);

Stalag Luft III in Sagan (Nether Silesia);

Stalag Luft IV in Grosstychow/Kiefheide (Eastern Pomerania);

Stalag Luft VI in Heydekrug (Eastern Prussia);

Stalag Luft XVII in Krems (Nether Austria).

Stalag Luft VI in Heydekrug in Eastern Prussia was dissolved in the middle of July, 1944, because of the approaching Eastern Front. None of the prisoners held the rank of an officer. They were all enlisted men who were transferred to Stalag Luft IV in Grosstychow/Kiefheide (Eastern Pomerania) under bad conditions. Also all other American fliers except for the officers who were arrested at this time were planned to be admitted to Stalag Luft IV. But nobody there was prepared for this new "rush", so that Stalag Luft VI was transferred from Heydekrug to St. Wendel where it temporarily existed as a camp for another six weeks. Why St. Wendel was chosen is unknown.

The camp buildings were located outside the city in an area that was formerly used by a flak battery, between today's streets "Am Schlaufenglan" and "Alfred-Friedrich-Strasse". The prisoners arrived by train and probably had to march up the hill to their new accommodations, from where they had a good view over the town, by passing the town's center in the south. The first group probably arrived at the end of July, 1944. The camp was eventually filled up, if we believe the estimate of one inmate, with 750 - 1000 Americans; another one speaks of 400 - 450 prisoners. It mainly consisted of one huge hall that used to be a repair and storage place for vehicles. There they had set up three-tiered bunks. At first, there were no sanitary facilities available and the inmates relieved themselves in a ditch and in old wine barrels that were then thrown into the ditch. There was no medical care and the food was very poor. The whole area was fenced in with barbed wire and some watchtowers. When the guards tried to force the inmates to fill up a nearby hole in the ground with earth, they first refused to do so. But they changed their minds when they were threatened with the withdrawal of food.

On 5 September 1944, Stalag Luft VI in St. Wendel was dissolved after about six weeks and all men were transferred to Stalag Luft IV to Grosstychow/Kiefheide in Eastern Pomerania. Radio operator Earl Hansen kept a diary during the time in St. Wendel and made the following entry: *"Got to Stalag Luft VI St. Wendel new camp. I'm hungry, no food for 2 days. Then we got thin soup once a day. Got ptomaine poisoning. Could not eat for a week. Lost weight, very weak. No blankets. 19 air raids in 24 hrs. Heard our artillery, so yanks were not far off. Then on Sept. 5 we evacuated the place. They herded us on boxcars, 56 plus 7 guards. So crowded we could not sit or lie. Stopped in long tunnel and almost suffocated. Guards put on oxygen masks. Sorta scared again. First nite guards dropped candle and started car on fire in straw. Finally got it out. Next morning we were very stiff. One Red Cross parcel for 6 men. Had many air raids by our bombers. Had full parcel week of Thanksgiving [in Stalag Luft IV]. Very thankful to be alive and well. Hoping and praying people at home are well and getting along."*