

REINER PROCHASKA

CAPTIVES





Overview

- ▶ Quiz
- ▶ Establishment of the Camps
- ▶ POW camps in the United States
- ▶ Organization of the Camps
- ▶ Political Tension
- ▶ Contribution to Agricultural Efforts
- ▶ Escapes
- ▶ Q & A

Quiz

- ▶ Question 1: What was the highest number of Axis POWs interned in the Continental United States?
- ▶ A. 50,736
- ▶ B. 267,827
- ▶ C. 425,871

Quiz

- ▶ Answer 1: C. 425,871 (in May 1945)
- ▶ German: 371,683
- ▶ Italian: 50,273
- ▶ Japanese: 3,915

Quiz

- ▶ Question 2: Were POWs in the U.S. paid for the agricultural and industrial labor they performed?
- ▶ A. Prisoners of War are never paid for forced labor.
- ▶ B. They were provided housing and food.
- ▶ C. POWs were paid a standard rate of 80 cents per day.

Quiz

- ▶ Answer 2: C. POWs were paid 80 cents per day (\$12.43 in 2021)—payable in canteen coupons.
- ▶ When certain areas of agriculture required labor beyond the normal eight-hour workday, incentive plans were created for up to \$1.50 (~\$23.32 in 2021)

Quiz

- ▶ Question 3: Where had the majority of the first wave of German POWs in the United States been captured?
- ▶ A. The Soviet Union
- ▶ B. North Africa
- ▶ C. Normandy

Quiz

- ▶ Answer 3: B. North Africa
- ▶ German surrender in North Africa in May 1943
- ▶ Tens of thousands of prisoners are herded into hastily built compounds in Oran, Casablanca, and Marrakech

Quiz

- ▶ Question 4: In what year did the last fugitive German POW surrender?
- ▶ A. 1949
- ▶ B. 1956
- ▶ C. 1985

Quiz

- ▶ Answer 4: C. 1985
- ▶ Georg Gärtner surrendered on national television in September 1985—40 years after he had escaped from Camp Deming in New Mexico.

Britain's Plea for U.S. Support

- ▶ Britain, struggling to support the ever-increasing number of captured enemy combatants, requested that the U.S. absorb some of the POWs.
- ▶ Initially, the U.S. refused.
- ▶ Undaunted, Lord Halifax, Britain's emissary to the State Department, continued to lobby.
- ▶ In August 1942, the State Department reluctantly decided to accept an "emergency batch" of 50,000 enemy prisoners from Britain.

North African Campaign

- ▶ June 1940-May 1943
- ▶ Libyan and Egyptian Deserts (Western Desert Campaign)
- ▶ Morocco and Algeria (Operation Torch)
- ▶ Tunisia

Northern Africa and the Middle East



German Surrender in North Africa

- ▶ Following the German surrender in North Africa, the Allies built processing compounds in Oran (Algeria), Casablanca (Morocco), and Marrakech (Morocco).
- ▶ By the spring of 1944, more than 190,000 prisoners had arrived in the U.S.
- ▶ To accommodate the large numbers of POW, the Army utilized abandoned Civilian Conservation Corps camps, regular military installations, fair grounds, auditoriums, and tent cities.



POW
Camps in
the U.S.

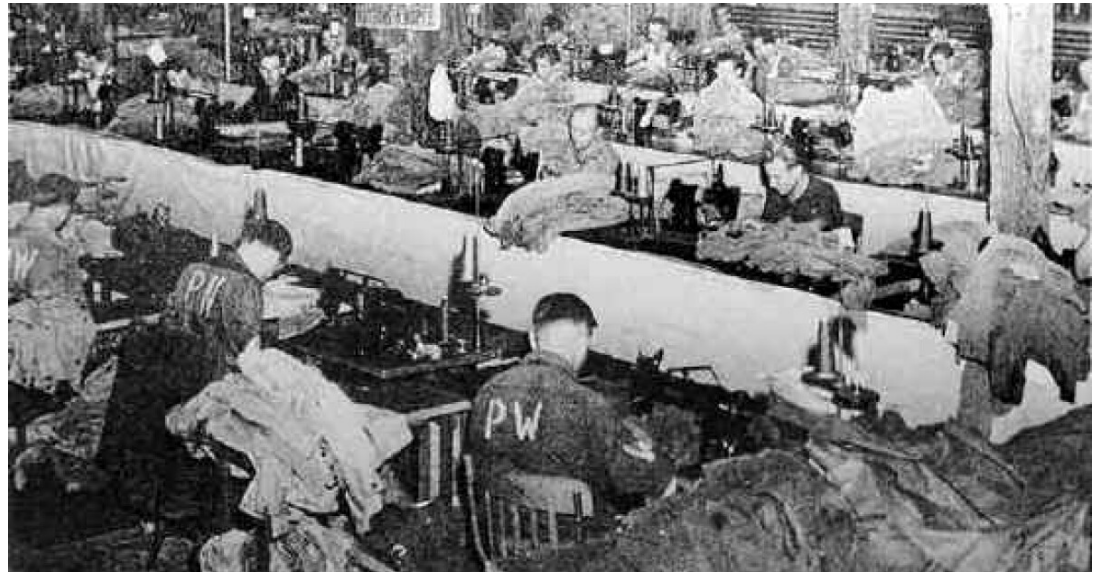
POW Camps in Maryland

Maryland was home to five base camps and fifteen branch camps.



Base Camps

- ▶ • Camp Somerset
- ▶ • Edgewood Arsenal
- ▶ • Fort Hunt
- ▶ • Fort Meade
- ▶ • Holabird Signal Depot



Branch Camps

- ▶ Fort Howard
- ▶ Camp Hoffman
- ▶ Gaithersburg
- ▶ Fort Washington
- ▶ Smith Point
- ▶ Flint Point
- ▶ Pikesville
- ▶ Camp Frederick
- ▶ Camp Ritchie
- ▶ Westminster
- ▶ Berlin
- ▶ Cambridge
- ▶ Church Hill
- ▶ Easton





Camp Organization



Political Tension in the Camps

- ▶ The average POW was a nationalist but not a fanatical ideologue
- ▶ Some prisoners were professional soldiers, others wartime conscripts.
- ▶ Some were members of the Nazi Party; most were not.
- ▶ Confidence in Adolf Hitler did not correlate to an attraction to National Socialism.
- ▶ Blind obedience to military orders and traditions did not indicate fascist leanings.
- ▶ A prisoner who was anti-American was not necessarily pro-fascist.
- ▶ A German nationalist was not necessarily an advocate of racial atrocities.

Administrative Challenges

- ▶ Lack of German-speaking guards
- ▶ Perceived German organizational skills/sense of order
- ▶ Camp commanders allowed Germans to control their own camps
- ▶ Camp commanders often preferred Nazi “efficiency” to anti-Nazi “chaos”

Colliding Ideologies

- ▶ Nazis (who believed in a final victory)
- ▶ Anti-Nazis
- ▶ Political Moderates
- ▶ Pacifists (who wanted to war and suffering to end)
- ▶ Communists

Nazi-controlled Camps

- ▶ In most camps, an estimated 5-10% of POWs were fanatical Nazis.
- ▶ Often, they controlled the activities of all other prisoners.
- ▶ Hardline Nazis convened “kangaroo courts” to penalize fellow POWs who did not conform to Nazi expectations
- ▶ At Camp Grant, Illinois, a group of Nazis attempted to murder 42 suspected anti-Nazis by burning their locked barrack.
- ▶ Politically motivated killings were often staged as—and subsequently ruled—suicides.
- ▶ A French study claims 167 as the exact number of clandestine executions of German POWs in the United States.



Saving American Harvests

Agricultural Labor Shortages

Within one year of entering the war, the domestic labor market already experienced a drain from the war effort.

Production demand increased while the supply of labor dwindled.

By 1942, the federal government had begun recruiting foreign workers from Mexico, Jamaica, and the Bahamas to supplement farm labor.

In March 1943, the government ordered a draft exemption status for "essential" farm and factory workers—but the situation was already critical.

Thankfully, the Geneva Convention stipulated that prisoners-of-war could be required to work for the benefit of their captors.

In both, Washington and Berlin, guidelines were provided by the Geneva Convention to establish guidelines for enemy workers.

Article 27: The Backbone of POW Work

- ▶ Officers could not be required to work, but they could work if they specifically requested it.
- ▶ Non-commissioned Officers were required to perform supervisory labor only.
- ▶ Enlisted men—provided they were physically fit—could be required to work.
- ▶ Article 31 protected POW workers from furnishing labor directly related to the war effort (i.e. manufacture of arms/munitions)

Wartime Labor Policy

- ▶ Any work outside the combat zones not having direct relation with war operations and not involving the manufacture or transportation of arms or munitions, and not unhealthy, dangerous, degrading, or beyond the particular prisoner's physical capacity, is allowable and desirable.



Frederick County Agricultural Cooperative Association

Initially, the U.S. Army was reluctant to establish a branch camp in Frederick.

The FCACA, under the leadership of James H. Grove Jr. encouraged local farmers, manufacturers, fruit growers, and canners to invest in the construction of a local camp for farm labor.

With contributions from the University of Maryland, they raised \$20,000 (roughly \$300,000 when adjusted for inflation).

POWs were paid 40 cents per hour for agricultural and 50 cents per hour for industrial work.

They kept 80 cents of their daily pay while the balance was paid to the U.S. Treasury.

Notable Agricultural Achievements

- ▶ In 1944 in Louisiana, 246,000 acres of sugar cane harvested
- ▶ More than 1 million stacks of peanuts in Georgia
- ▶ In 1945, 4,890,000 bushels of potatoes harvested in Maine
- ▶ In Mississippi, from October to December 1943, over 6,675,000 pounds of cotton seed picked
- ▶ In New York, over 2 million tons of fruits and vegetables harvested and processed



Two Notable Escapes

- ▶ Papago Park Camp: 25 prisoners escaped through a 200-foot tunnel
- ▶ Georg Gärtner escaped from Camp Deming in September 1945; surrendered on national television in 1985

The “Faustball” Tunnel Escape

- ▶ December 24, 1944, at Papago Park Camp near Phoenix, AZ
- ▶ Other POWs created a distraction to divert guards.
- ▶ 25 prisoners, mostly submarine officers, escaped through a 200-foot tunnel.
- ▶ The tunnel, 12-15 feet below the ground was bored through rocky ground—probably with coal-stove fire shovels.
- ▶ The prisoners used the dirt from the excavation to build a faustball (a sort of volleyball) court.
- ▶ The three U-Boat captains who led the escape had made a trial run all the way from the camp , 130 miles, to the Mexican border
- ▶ They were 40 miles into Mexico when they were captured and returned to the camp with all the information for the later mass escape.
- ▶ All 25 escapees were recaptured; some carried packs of nearly 100 pounds (spare clothing, cereals, canned goods, medical supplies, maps, and cigarettes)

Georg Gärtner: the last German Fugitive

- ▶ Gärtner escaped from Camp Deming, New Mexico in September 1945.
- ▶ As camp translator, he had learned about the U.S. government's decision to repatriate POWs to their hometowns—his was in Soviet-occupied East Prussia (now Poland).
- ▶ He rolled out under the barbed wire and caught a freight train to California.
- ▶ He lived under a variety of names for the next 40 years.
- ▶ He worked as a lumberjack, ski instructor, and various other jobs.
- ▶ The Army launched a manhunt that lasted until 1963; Gärtner was on the FBI's most wanted list for 40 years.
- ▶ In 1985—at the urging of his wife—he “surrendered” to Bryant Gumbel on the Today Show.
- ▶ He became a U.S. citizen in 2009 and died, aged 92, in 2013.



Questions?



Additional Questions...

- ▶ Please feel free to email me any additional questions at ReinerPro@gmail.com



Autographed Copies of the Novel

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