

Oflag 64 Newspaper – “Get Wise-- ITEM-ize”

In the fall of 1943, Kriegies Frank Diggs and George Juskalian, had an idea to publish a camp newspaper to help bolster the morale of the POWs. Frank had been the city editor for the Washington Post and George had experience with his college newspaper. They took a dummy layout to Colonel Drake, who approved, and then to Oberst Schnieder, the Camp Commandant, who, to their surprise, also approved. They dubbed it “The Oflag 64 Item” with the tag line “Get Wise – ITEM-ize” on the masthead. The first edition was published in November of 1943 and continued monthly through January 1945. The original newspaper staff consisted of 10 talented Kriegies to include a Pulitzer Prize winning AP reporter, Larry Allen, who had been captured covering British Naval Operations in the Mediterranean.

The Item was extremely popular among the POWs who would ask at the beginning of each month when the next issue would be available. Every POW received a copy. The circulation grew as the camp population grew with 225 copies of the first issue printed to 1400 for the last. Editor Frank Diggs described the paper as, “Informative, often funny, and with heavy emphasis on news from home, theatrical productions held and planned in the camp, sports events, and upcoming camp projects.” As it evolved the paper added line drawings and cartoons created by staff artists Jim Bickers and Alexander Ross. In time “photographs were added, leading to photo contests to choose the best looking girls back home and later a best looking baby.” Kriegy Howard Holder, one of the staff, said, “The Oflag Item was one of the biggest morale factors in the camp.” Of course every issue was censored by the Germans so the Kriegies were careful never to include any information gleaned from “The Bird”, their secret radio.

How “The Item” got printed is an interesting story for another post.

First Issue of the Item

All the News That's Been Gephrit

The Oflag 64 Item

Largest Circulation Inside the Wire

"Get Wise -- ITEM-ize"

No. 1 Althurgund, Germany -- November, 1943 Price: 50 Pf.

"Brother Orchid," Zippy 3-Acter, Hi-lites Thanksgiving

The first modern American three-act play to be presented at Oflag 64 will usher in the Thanksgiving holiday with a belly full of laughs in place of turkey.

"Brother Orchid" by Leo Brady is the name of the show.

Frank Maxwell handles to perform the double duties of director and leading man, portraying Little John Sarto, big time gangster recently of Alcatraz.

Little John descends unceremoniously into the cloistered life of a monastery, where the pious Little Brothers of the Flowers, enacted by Lts. Conner, Sharpe, Hubbard and Bickers take up a bug of war against mobsters and racketeers for the soul of their new brother, Lt. Geyer, Lobb, Hessler, Scherman and Koch provide worthy opposition as the gang element.

The show is tentatively scheduled to run November 25, 26, 27 inclusive.

Newest Arrivals Represent Twenty States, Mostly Texas

72 New Kriegies Report Here In October

The Oflag's Welcome Mat took a helluva beating last month when 72 new officers trooped through the gate.

Most of these are officers of a Texas regiment now fighting in Italy. Others include officers captured in Tunisia, an airborne battalion commander captured near Naples, an Associated Press correspondent with the British Royal Navy and a Catholic chaplain.

Lt. Col. Doyle Vanzley was the first of the new comers, arriving here October 1. A paratrooper, he was captured before day break on September 15, having jumped at midnight with his battalion and landed near a panzer division command post.

On October 7, Capt. Newton Linton and Joe Emerson, Lt. Dalton Hedden and W.O. Roger Cannon, all of Texas, Lts. Theodore Pawloski and Steve Barocovic of Pennsylvania, and Lt. Willard Davis of Illinois arrived. They were captured near Naples.

They were followed on October 16 by Lt. P. D. Lampen.

Thirty officers arrived on October 19, including the new chaplain, Lt. S. Brach of New Jersey, and three doctors, Capt. Wynn and Marder of Ohio and Capt. T. E. Corcoran of Iowa.

With this group came AP correspondent and Pulitzer prize winner Larry Allen of West Virginia. Allen, in his three years as writer with the British Mediterranean fleet, had, up to the time of his capture, seen every naval operation in that sea and had been five times hospitalized, three times sunk.

Most of the officers in the October 19 group had been captured in Tunisia.

The group included:

Capt. W. Walters, Ark.; Yarock, Miss.; and Hughes, Mass.; Lts. Straight, W. Va.; Higgins, Ia.; Jones, Pa.; McLoughlin, N.Y.; Wagand, Okla.; LaChasse, Ala.; Eitzen, Ark.; Hirt, Ill.; Mattson, Okla.; Carney, Ind.; Deussen, Ala.; Fellman, Miss.; Victor, Ill.; Freese, Okla.; Long, Va.; Johnson, Pa.; Halt, N. C.; Bender, N. Y.; Ward, N. Y.; Bryant, Ill.; Lowe, Ariz.; and Blevins, Okla.

The day following, the latest batch of arrivals from the Italian front arrived. They were:

Lt. Col. Gaines Barron, Md.; Roy Irving, Capt. Robinson, Ferguson, Tennessee and Bond, all Texas; Capt. Brown, Ill.; and Casdoff, Okla.; Lts. Williams, Carlisle and Yaden, Texas; Lts. O'Brien, Hase, and Hanson, N. Y.; Lts. Shank, Okla.; Young, Ohio; Hart, S. C.; Livingston, Miss.; Graham, Pa.; Grimes and Bricker, N. J.; Morrow, Wade, and Swanson, Calif.

OF FLAG CALENDAR

No.	Event	Time
3	"Wednesday at 7:15"	7:15 p
4,5	German Silent Films	7:00 p
6	Quir Program: 20:15-21	7:00 p
8	Lecture, Larry Allen	7:00 p
11,12	Rings	7:00 p
13	Quir Program: 22VS:23	7:00 p
15	Lecture, Capt. Wilson	7:00 p
17	"Wednesdays at 7:15"	7:15 p
16	Book Review	7:00 p
18,19	Minstel Show-Ford	7:00 p
20	Quir Program: 22VS:23	7:00 p
22	Travel Talk, Col. Alger	7:00 p
24	"Wednesdays at 7:15"	7:15 p
25	Thanksgiving	
25,26,27	"Brother Orchid," Maxwell	7:00 p
	Sundays - Catholic services	9:30 a
	General church services	10:30 a

Five Officers Receive Silver Star Awards

Silver Star awards will decorate the honors of five more officers here, recent mail from the States reports. Post-capture citations have been made to Capt. Maynard Files and Lt. Milton Johnson, Herbert Johnson, John Creech and Anthony Opiet.

These officers earned the "Gallantry in Action" award during the fight in which they were taken prisoners.

Capt. Files received his first Silver Star for gallantry during the landing operations at Dress. He won the Oak Leaf Cluster to the Silver Star for an attack at El Guettar, Tunisia, March 23, 1943, in which his company was in assault.

Lt. Johnson successfully evacuated the major portion of two platoons from an encircled position at Kasrouine Pass, Tunisia, on February 19, 1943.

Lt. Creech was on a mission ten miles beyond his own lines observing enemy movements. He was captured in the El Guettar area March 24, 1943.

For leading an assault platoon in an attack at El Guettar on March 23, 1943, the Silver Star was awarded to Lt. Opiet.

Lt. Johnson was captured near Ouesbelle, Tunisia, while leading a support party to aid a company which was being cut off.

Prem to Pinch-Hit For Turkey

All-American clubs in large quantities will overlook the Oflag tables on Thanksgiving, according to Lt. Col. W. W. Oakes, mess officer.

No, it isn't turkey, but the menu still is pretty good. Look:

Breakfast: American Oatmeal.

Dinner: Meat and Vegetable hash a la Oaker.

Supper: Peas, mashed potatoes, peas, carrots - and may be dessert, depending on what shows up.

Minstel Due Nov. 18-19

Blackface will take the spotlight when Russ (Al Tolson) Ford brings his twenty-odd minstrels to the footlights of The Little Theatre on November 18-19.

Howard Holder plays the dual roles of scriptwriter and interlocutor.

Cast men: Messrs. Thal, Fabian, Wafal and Gypman.

Scharpe, Marlowe, Willis and Fabian, supply special numbers.

Lt. Straight Awarded DSC

For continuing a counterattack after his commanding officer had been put out of action, Lt. Fay Straight has been awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, it was learned this week.

During the course of the battle, Lt. Straight and his men were caught under heavy fire. Straight was able to evacuate most of his command but was unable to escape himself.

He was captured near Tebourba, Tunisia on December 6, 1942.

In Sheep's Clothes...

Cartoon From October 1944 Item

"I say, Lieutenant, your stay in Germany didn't affect you any, did it?"