

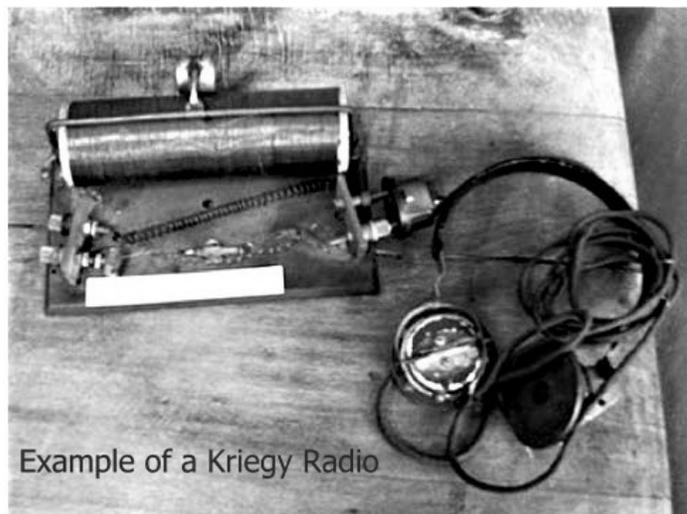
When the “Bird” sang, the Kriegies were listening.

The “Bird” was the code name for a secret radio receiver which was built by a Kriegy Lt. Jim Shoaf inside the camp and was kept tuned in on BBC every day. According to Kriegy Frank Diggs, Lt. Shoaf “was an electronic genius who kept us in touch with the outside world by creating a workable secret radio out of unlikely stuff available in a remote prison camp plus one smuggled-in vacuum tube.” Such items as foil from cigarette packs were used to make an electrode, wax paper from Red Cross parcels for an insulator, coil wire from an abandoned camp speaker and a field coil magnet found in main barracks became useful components of the radio. Since electricity use in the camp was monitored and also unreliable, a manual generator powered by hand to power the radio was built by the Kriegies in a machine shop they set up. Pure genius!

With guards posted to warn of prying Germans, every afternoon the news from the BBC was received over the “Bird” and was written down by Kreigy Frank Maxwell who knew shorthand. Afterward, the “news” was read to Kriegy “newscasters” who read it that night after lights out to the men in each of the barracks. To avoid detection by the “Goons” during the reading, a look-out was positioned who had full view the grounds. If a “Goon” approached a barrack where the briefing was being given, the lookout would move to another location. His movement was the signal to end the briefing. The men would disperse and the briefing would resume when the coast was clear.

To avoid detection the “Bird” was disassembled each day and each component hidden individually until needed the next day. In the two years of operation, the radio was never found by the Germans. When the POWs were marched out of Oflag 64 in January 1945, the “Bird” went with them and they continued to listen to the BBC each night.

After the war Lt. Shoaf worked as an engineer for RCA. He passed away in January 2007.



Example of a Kriegy Radio