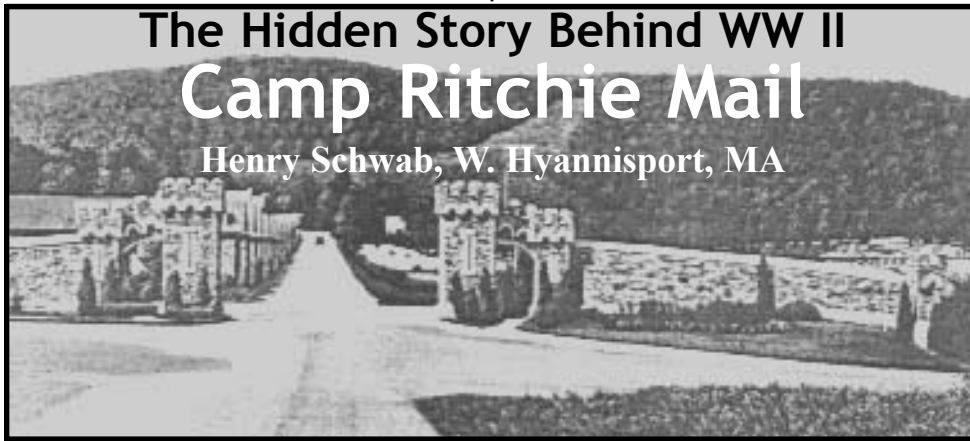


The Hidden Story Behind WW II Camp Ritchie Mail

Henry Schwab, W. Hyannisport, MA



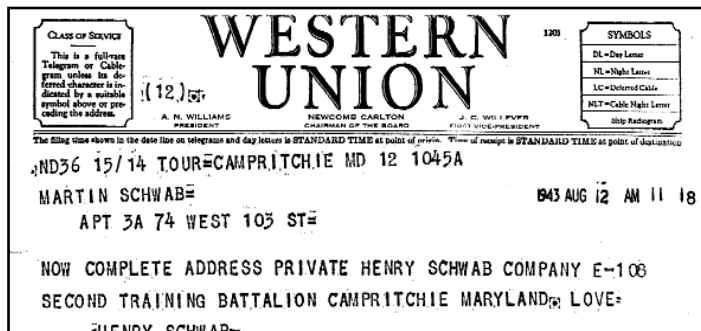
The mail featured here, addressed to "Private Henry Schwab, Company E-108, Second Training Battalion, Camp Ritchie, Maryland," tells a wartime tale hardly known by the general public, and perhaps only slightly known by the Jewish readership. But the story of Camp Ritchie has recently gained more attention in the U.S. and Germany because of a film, "The Ritchie Boys," produced by the German filmmaker Christian Bauer.



duties in the military intelligence sector ultimately prepared me and inspired my consequent intensive activities in researching and writing about Holocaust Postal History.

My Camp Ritchie "Second Training Battalion" address appears unremarkable, but as Bauer's film explains, in 1943 and 1944 Camp Ritchie had become a major US Military Intelligence Training Center. The soldiers stationed there were part of elite World War II US Army intelligence units, made up mostly of young German Jewish refugees. Their background combined with their knowledge of the German language and psyche made them well suited for information gathering and psychological warfare. They were assembled from a multitude of different units. In my case, I was reassigned from an Infantry Division finishing its training at Camp Blanding, Florida. I became a US citizen on 25 June 1943 in Ocala, Florida.

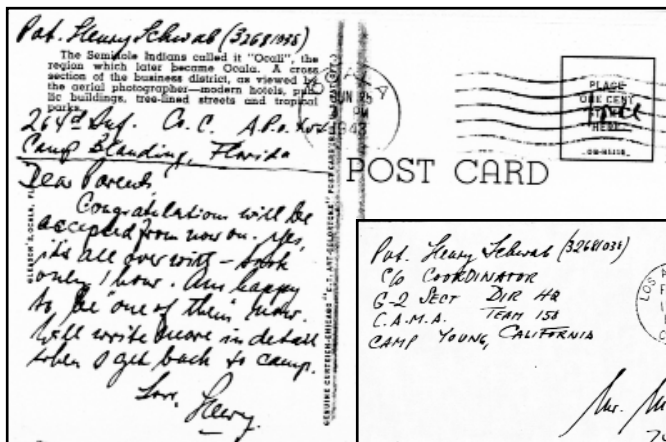
I, like most of the other "Ritchie Boys," eagerly entered into our wartime assignment as an interrogator of prisoners-of-war (IPW). I was fully committed to helping my new country win the war against the tyranny of Nazi Germany; and I was a compulsive letter writer. The items shown here are only a small cross-section of my "war memoirs," which I am pleased to have for my family. As my early correspondence reveals, I, like so many others, was not able to face up to the great ongoing Jewish tragedy in Europe until considerably later in the European campaign. But my wartime experience and my



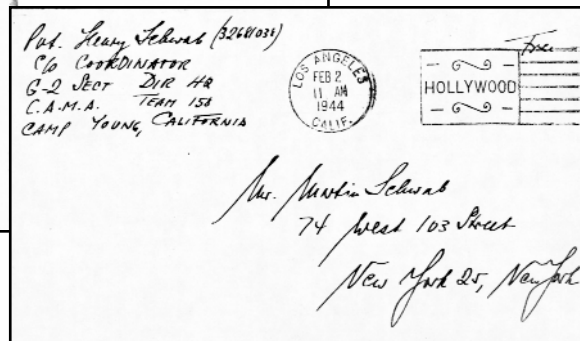
Notification of Camp Ritchie address

During my time at Camp Ritchie, I took part in various training maneuvers. In the winter of 1944, my unit participated in California/Arizona desert maneuvers out of Camp Young, California. The makeup of our future IPW teams was established there. Wartime conditions were simulated, and we inter-

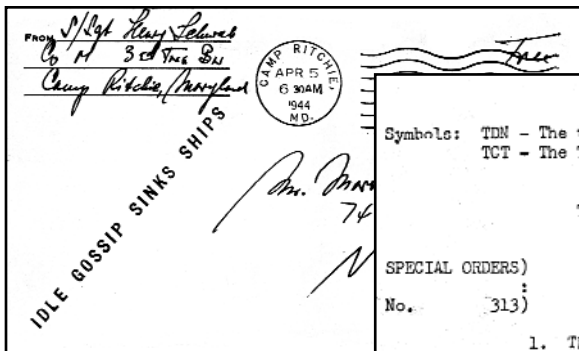
rogated our fellow US soldiers as if they were members of the opposing force. On our time off, we had some fun by visiting Hollywood



Announce becoming US citizen



Souvenir of Hollywood visit



Sailing to Europe on the SS Queen Mary

and other points of interest.

In March 1944, prior to shipping out to Europe, my promotion to Staff Sergeant came through. The journey, setting out on 10 April 1944 from New York City bound for Glasgow, Scotland aboard the SS Queen Mary-with thirty thousand troops on board, was unescorted and stressful, but the seas were smooth.

I soon found myself stationed in Broadway, England and since my U.S. address was in New York City, I felt almost at home. Broadway was a beautiful small village in the Midlands that was being used to assemble the XX Corps Headquarters unit of the Third Army. I lived there at the advanced training center for two months. The Camp Ritchie trainees performed such duties as daily posting of the



Henry in Brittany

R E S T R I C T E D

Symbols: TDM - The travel directed is necessary in the military service.
TCT - The Transportation Corps will furnish the necessary transportation.

WAR DEPARTMENT
THE MILITARY INTELLIGENCE TRAINING CENTER
CAMP RITCHIE, MARYLAND

31 December 1943

SPECIAL ORDERS)
No. 313) **E X T R A C T**

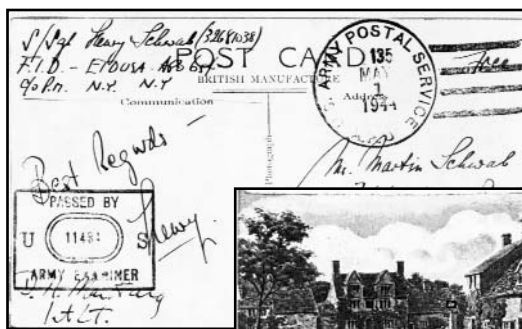
1. The following Interrogator Teams consisting of named off and EM will travel separately and proceed for this sta o/a 1 Jan 1944 to Camp Young, Calif, on temp dy in connection with MI activities, reporting upon arrival thereat to Dir, Hq California/Arizona Maneuvers, for dy. Upon completion of this temp dy, named off and EM will return to their proper sta.

2D LT	ARTHUR R. MARINELLO	01556176	ORD	Co "I", 3d MI Tng Bn
Tec 5	HARRY S. LORD	32338927		Co "M", 3d MI Tng Bn
Pvt	HENRY SCHWAB	32681038		" " " "
Pvt	SAMUEL KERN	32907126		" " " "
Pvt	ARTHUR WEIS	32891487		Co "K", 3d MI Tng Bn

Travel Orders

nature. We submitted typed reports daily to our XX Corps Headquarters, sometimes at a considerable distance, which were then attached to the Third Army reports.

My visit to the Buchenwald Concentration Camp on 14 April 1945, just days after its liberation two days earlier, left an unforgettable impression on me. I searched in vain



Broadway, England



war room maps for Lt. General Walton H. Walker, our commanding XX Corps General. We also worked on aerial photo intelligence and the translating of German documents. Then, in the final days before DDay, we transferred to the coastal town of Marlboro, to be in readiness for our commitment in France.

IPW Team 57 adventures with

for traces of my father's brother, Iwan Schwab and his wife Hilda, as well as for my mother's sister Marta Spier, her husband Dagobert and their two sons. I did not yet know that they and my mother's other sister, Selma Loewenthal, had died in Auschwitz in 1943 and 1944, or that my cousins, Kurt (age 28) and Rolf Spier (age 22), had been deported and killed in Maly Trostinets (near Minsk, Belarus) in July 1942.

I later learned that Rudolf Marx, the father of my future wife, had been incarcerated in Buchenwald in 1938, following the 9-10 November "Kristallnacht" massive arrests of Jews. He was released weeks later after signing

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NO LOCATION COULD BE IDENTIFIED
Germany..... OTHER THAN GERMANY
14 April 1945

Dear Parents,

This evening we spent 5 minutes in silence for our President....believe me, the news shocked us as much as it did you. I consider this the worst thing which could have happened to us at this stage of the war. There is so much work to be done immediately after this war has ended and Roosevelt will be missed. I only hope that our leaders in Washington will carry on the work which Roosevelt had planned.

Received mail yesterday and to-day, however only one letter from you- a birthday card. I have missed your mail very much in these last few days.

Meanwhile we have gone much deeper into Germany- just look on the map..... I have an idea now what inspired Goethe to write his world famous poetry...the scenery in this particular part of the country is quite attractive.....so are the Autobahnen...! What are not so attractive...in fact it should remain as an ever lasting monument of Nazi (or German..) culture...are the concentration camps. Werner and I stopped at one of these huge camps- well known already many years ago- it probably rates second or third, next to Dachau. That some 30000 living creatures still remain there is simply a mistake- other plans had been made for them- only Patton, by his speedy breakthrough prevented what was in store for them. Of the above named total, only approximately 1200 are German Jews (all men). In spite of the fact that there is so much these people need right now, apparently they have no other desire, but to enjoy their newly won freedom. We also went to the office and checked the names of Schwab and Spier- there were some with those names, but not the right ones.... Its very depressing to listen to, and to hear the truth, but I feel that one should be exposed to this from time to time, in order not to forget. There are many people, I am sorry to admit, who like to close their eyes and ears at such moments....I despise them! At another camp in the vicinity some very terrible facts were bared, and I was glad to hear, that all...of our leaders saw the facts there....!! I missed this particular scene..and am not sorry...I can picture it in my mind, and that is bad enough. What also is very depressing, is that I am afraid many a man with his hands full of blood will get lost in the crowd.... So you see, in spite of victories and glory, there are also the dark sides to this colorful picture!

Received a letter from Lie, dated March 29th...she is fine!

At the moment we are living again in a very nice house- with electric light (not water though) in a fairly large, and very historic German city. That such a famous concentration camp should be only several miles outside of this city- famous for its culture and art- is ironical!

Have been fine all the time- the work hasn't been too terribly hard- things are moving too fast these days and our work is not as vital as in past times. My "sightseeing tours" have taken me through parts of this country quite new to me- father, don't worry I have it all traced on a map- for future detailed study!

It's 11 P.M....and time to go to bed! Hope you are well

X BUCHENWALD KZ Camp
XX OHRDRUF KZ Camp

Love of Love, Henry

VE -

"Somewhere in Austria on V-E Day"
8 May 1945

Dear Parents,

Amid the ringing of the church bells, amid the continuous news reports about the end of the war, about the celebrations in all the great Cities of the Allied Nations, I will get the greatest satisfaction to have a long distance chat with you. It's a great day to-day, great in many respects. Above all we are thanking God for having guided us in achieving this great victory, in having guided us in surviving this great struggle. I am thrilled to think of the great joy back home- much more noticeable than over here. Although this event has been expected for some time, it is hard to grasp its full meaning and importance. For the people back home, peace means that their loved ones will come home after some time- that they are out of danger- that there will be no more worries, except about the date of the homecoming. Peace for the people of Europe, those of the conquered nations, as well as those of the Allied Nations, will mean much more. A new leaf is being turned to-day, a new life will begin to-morrow. I must mention again that we Americans are the luckiest of all people, we will eventually return to a country untouched by war, with the exception of those unfortunate people who have lost their lives over here. Although we do not consider ourselves as the soldiers who *actually* battled and won this war, we do feel a certain degree of satisfaction of having contributed to its successful conclusion. The fact that we are celebrating V Day in Austria is a very appropriate event as part of Gen Patton's forces. We have come a long way with Pattons Army- and are proud of having been a part of this Army throughout this entire campaign.

The churchbells are still ringing in this Austrian town, they will be ringing for an entire hour. Just about an hour ago, I helped the lady of this house, a grocery store, replace her white flag with an Austrian flag- red-white-red. From what I have seen of the Austrian people, they are a very friendly lot, and it is very pleasant to talk to them.

Inspite of the end of the war, our own "little" business is carrying on as before- at least for the time being. It's almost discouraging to have to follow the same routine, do the same work, write the same reports....but that is just such a minor thing.

I hope that at least to-day I shall receive some mail from you- haven't had any in about one week!

I hope to read and hear in detail about the celebrations in New York- and especially how you spent the evening- I was tired, after a day of moving and work- I went to bed at 10:30...

My thoughts are very much with you to-day, and am sure that this is also the case, visa-versa. You know how much I would give to be able to celebrate with you at home- but as I said above I am very thankful to be well, happy and content on this day- and I hope you also will be content with those thoughts.

More some other day.....Best regards to everybody!

Lots of Love,
Mary

an agreement to leave Germany immediately. He and his family of four faced many dangers and narrow escapes as they fled across Belgium and France. They finally secured passage to Portugal two years later, sailing to the United States from Lisbon in January 1941.



**Buchenwald Concentration
Camp**

In May 1945, after the armistice in the European Theatre, our IPW Team 57 was transferred back to Southern Germany and billeted in Tutzing, to begin a new phase of our intelligence work: namely, attempting to locate suspected war criminals among the surrendered German troops and hospital patients. This processing was done together with US Army medical personnel and our military police.

Finally, my time for returning to the United States, based on a point system, thankfully arrived. I shipped out of

Marseilles, France, on the USS Admiral Capps on 3 October 1945 and arrived at Norfolk, VA on 10 October 1945. Soon after I had a joyous homecoming and reunion with my parents. I was discharged on 28 January 1946 at Fort Dix,, N.J.

Not all “Ritchie Boys” were Jewish refugees, but among those that were, a majority had all lost family members in the Holocaust. Much like my own experience, most of these tragic revelations did not surface until the end of the war. During this special 60th anniversary year of commemorations, this account serves the dual purpose of honoring the memory of “The Ritchie Boys” and our relatives lost in the Holocaust.



Henry and his mother

Readers who are able to contribute to the story of “The Ritchie Boys” are encouraged to do so - contact Henry Schwab at HSAS2229@AOL.COM. ■

Particular thanks go to Barry D. Hoffman, who for many years has been a consistent collaborator, advisor and friend to me in my work with "Holocaust Postal History" projects. He also has been a valuable contributor to this "Ritchie" article.

Henry Schwab
Mai 23, 2005