

SMS 1243
14 January 2021
Schreck, Christopher J.

STECK, WALTER
1944-1945

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Walter “Wally” Steck (1921-1983) was a Second Lieutenant and Navigator in the 571st Squadron of the 390th Bomb Group. He was captured by the German army and held as a prisoner of war at Stalag Luft III from 1944-1945. In the camp he was the leader of the band “The Flying Syncopators,” and together with other performers he put on shows for the enjoyment of other prisoners.

Sources: Ulana Steck Proffer of Gift, November 13, 2020; Collection Contents, SMS 1243

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The highlight of the Walter Steck Collection is his journal, which includes over sixty pages of drawings, poems, and songs produced by Lt. Steck and other prisoners of war at Stalag Luft III between May 1944 and April 1945. Some of these pieces are humorous while others are serious and solemn, and all of them display the creative talents of Stalag Luft III prisoners. Lt. Steck, being an artist and musician himself, produced a number of show programs that are also included in this journal. These programs include colorful artwork, along with the names and roles of numerous other prisoner-performers who sang, played instruments, or acted in various plays and skits. It also includes a log of the evacuation of the Stalag Luft III prison camp and his march to Nuremburg, Germany.

Additional items include memorabilia such as medals and pins, photographs, newspaper articles, and several articles of clothing. These items have been divided into three series based on the types of materials included. Series 1 consists of all paper documents that were either written, drawn or typed. Series 2 consists exclusively of photographs, most of which appear to have been taken at Stalag Luft III while Lt. Steck was a prisoner there. Finally, Series 3 consists of the collection’s non-paper artifacts including medals, pins, and clothing. This collection was donated by Ulana Steck, wife of Walter Steck, to the Friends of the Air Force Academy Library in November 2020.

Keywords and terms: Stalag Luft III; World War II; World War, 1939-1945; Prisoner of War; POW; Zagan, Poland (Sagan)

Names: Steck, Walter (Wally); Hughes, Dave; Moulton, "Moose"; Young, L.G.; Cook E.V.; Boyle, J.; Alder, Bob; Kunda, T.E.C.; Krohn; Levinson, Larry; Vooz, Phil; Coyle, Quentin; Durante, Arthur; Harmston, H.L. "Hynam"

ARRANGEMENT AND DESCRIPTION

SERIES 1 PAPER MATERIALS

BOX 1

- Folder 1 The Wartime Log of Walter Steck
- Title Page: A Wartime Log: A Remembrance from Home Through the American Y.M.C.A.
 - Page 9: Drawing - "And there we were-almost out of gas"
 - Page 11: Drawing - "They'll fly no more," May 12, 1944
 - Page 13: Drawing - "A Polite Discussion in Room 11"
 - Page 15: Drawing - "Post War Plan No. 690069069"
 - Page 17-18: Drawing and Poem - "Last of the Bombardiers"
 - Page 21-22: Poem - "The B-17" by Lt. Dave Hughes
 - Page 23: Poem - "Price of Success"
 - Page 25: Poem - "Thunderbolt" by Lt. "Moose" Moulton
 - Page 27: Poem - "The B-25"
 - Page 28: Drawing - Face
 - Page 29: Drawing - Face
 - Page 30: Poem - "Mother"
 - Page 31: Poem - "God Gave Me You" by Lt. L.G. Young

- Page 32: Drawing – “Big Bash Tonite”
- Page 33: Poem – “Comrades to Freedom”
- Page 34: Drawing – “The Well-Dressed POW of 1944”
- Page 35: Poem – “Just a POW” by Lt. E.V. Cook
- Page 37: Drawing – “Flying Syncopators”
- Page 38: Poem – Untitled
- Page 39: Poem – “Fate” by Lt. J. Boyle
- Page 40: Drawing – “The Liberator B-24”
- Page 41: Poem – “The B-24”
- Page 42: Drawings of three men including “Rumor Joe”
- Page 43: Poem – “Source of News” by Anonymous
- Page 45: Drawing – “I Wanted Wings”
- Page 46: Drawing – “Pleasant Past-time”
- Page 47: Program – “4th of July Finale” by Wally Steck & Bob Alder
- Page 49: Program – “Barrel of Fun” by Wally Steck and Bob Alder
- Page 51: Program – “Happy Hour 1” by Wally Steck and T.E.C. Kunda
- Page 53: Program – “One Act Plays” by Krohn, Larry Levinson, and Phil Vooz
- Page 55: Program – “Labor Day Show”

- Page 57: Program – “Kriegie Minstrels” by Quentin Coyle and Arthur Durante
- Page 59: Program – “Happy Hour 2”
- Page 61: Program – “Midnight at the Mermaid: A Tribute to Shakespeare”
- Page 63: Program – “Holiday Harmonies”
- Page 65: Drawing – “Magdeburg,” May 28, 1944
- Page 67: Drawing – “Sunday Symphony”
- Page 71: Drawing – “Post War Kriegie”
- Insert Pages 1-10: Newspaper Illustrations
- Insert Page 11: Drawings – “Life” and “Signal”
- Page 89-99: Diary entry – “Remember Muskau” (Sagan Evacuation), written on the march
- Page 100: Bread ration ticket
- Page 101: German rations list
- Page 103: Red Cross food parcels list
- Page 108-111: “Chronological Events of War” list
- Page 114: Drawing – “Ye Olde Draft Dodger”
- Page 115: Poem – “Letter to the Draft Dodger”
- Page 121: Drawing – “G.I. Red Cross Truck” by H.L. “Hynam” Harmston

- Page 141: “Compound Staff”: List of Allied Forces officers and their positions (8 names). Includes home addresses.
- Page 142-143: “Theatre Comrades”: List of names of performers and their roles (20 Names) Includes home addresses.
- Page 144: “Comrades in Arms”: List of fellow prisoners (50 names). Includes home addresses.

*Unless otherwise noted all poems and artwork are believed to have been produced by Walter Steck.

- Folder 2 571st Squadron-390th Bomb Group
- Folder 3 Correspondence
- Folder 4 Newspaper Articles
- Folder 5 Publication-*Yank Weekly*, 1945. Fragile-Handle with Care
- Folder 6 Miscellaneous
- Poem
 - Prisoner of war parcel lists
 - Gunnery School Flyer, May 12, 1943
 - Navigator’s Log (blank)
 - Artwork with soldier list “Shoo Shoo Baby” (inverse image)

SERIES 2 PHOTOGRAPHS

BOX 1

- Folder 7 Photographs
- Water Steck, 1942-1943
 - Stalag Luft III
 - Guard Towers
 - Prisoners
 - Color photos of bombers from a magazine

Total of twenty-eight black-and-white photographs and three double-sided magazine pages

SERIES 3 ARTIFACTS

BOX 2

- Hat with propeller
- 9 medals:
 - Purple Heart
 - WWII USA Medal
 - WWII European, African, Middle Eastern Campaign Medal
 - 2 x Air Medals-1 with three leaves and engraving reads: 2D Lt Walter Steck
AC
 - Conspicuous Service Medal
 - Good Conduct Medal
- Zippo lighter with emblem
- 2 x U.S. Air Force Ribbons
- USAF Pin-on patch
- 11 pins
- Shell-.50 Caliber stamped: F A 41
- Utility belt with pouches
- Belt (clothing)