

Sierra Flight 27



(Sacramento, California)
Flyer 20-04 April 2020

2020 FLIGHT 27 OFFICERS:

Flight Captain:
Lt Col Dave Froehlich
davefro@gmail.com
(916) 786-7774

Vice Flight Captain:
Col James Wilson
jrwilson@surewest.net
(916) 786-5103

Flight Adjutant/Rules:
Col R. Austin Wiswell
wizbec@comcast.net
(916) 833-8015

Flight Treasurer/Finance:
Col Larry Winchell
larryw@wavecable.com
(916) 521-5954

Flight Provost Marshal:
Col Leon Tuttle
lrtut@sbcglobal.net
(916) 624-3912

Flight Programs:
Vacant

Flight Membership:
Lt Col Jerry Glasser
habucom@comcast.net
(916) 944-3479

Flight Publication/Publicity:
Lt Col Bob Blanton
rvblanton@comcast.net
(916) 742-4792

Flight Chaplain/Pers Affairs:
Col Evans Warne
ebwarn@aol.com
(916) 962-1591

Flight Historian:
Col Doug Jewett
dougjewett55@gmail.com
(916) 709-5476

From The Flight Captain:

Hey All!

First, I want to thank the Flight 27 staff who, out of an abundance of caution, moved forward and cancelled the March 19th luncheon. As it turns out, the Governor's guidance would have dictated that cancellation anyway, but the staff was pro-active, and saved a last-minute flurry of activity! Using the same guidance and caution, we are **also cancelling the April 16th luncheon**, but we'll leave the May 21st luncheon alone for now -- watch for your May Newsletter with the May luncheon status -- we'll let you know!

The only other message I want to send to our members is a strong reminder to **please, please take care of yourself!** Almost all of us are in the high risk "senior or elderly" group, and as such, we should be absolutely obsessive about handwashing, social distancing and self-isolation! I'm told that I'm high risk, having just celebrated my 75th birthday, I came off a cruise ship from South America (primarily Argentina & Brazil) two weeks ago, and then flew 7 hours on packed Southwest flights (with 150+ coughers and sneezers) to get home! Since we returned home, I have no symptoms but have listened and religiously followed all of the guidance from all of the various agencies!

The bottom line is that we don't want to lose any of our Flight 27 members to sickness or worse! So again, **please take care of yourselves!**



Dave Froehlich

**Flight Captain
Sierra Flight 27
Order of Daedalians**

Fifty-seven years ago, the 1963 film “The Great Escape” captured our imaginations with its portrayal of heroic POWs focused on escaping their confinement. The screen writers, of course, were very liberal in creating their story line to include the antics of Steve McQueen in one of cinema’s iconic motorcycle sequences. Leon Tuttle, our Flight Provost Marshall, shared an email with the staff containing the following excerpt from a 2011 edition of the “Daily Mail,” a British newspaper, regarding the tunnels depicted in that movie. Here it is for those of you who haven’t seen it.

THE GREAT ESCAPE TUNNEL

Untouched for almost 7 decades, the tunnel used in the Great Escape has been finally unearthed. The 111-yard passage nicknamed 'Harry' by Allied prisoners, was sealed by the Germans after the audacious break-out from the POW camp Stalag Luft III in western Poland. Despite huge interest in the subject, encouraged by the film starring Steve McQueen, the tunnel was undisturbed over the decades because it was behind the Iron Curtain and the Soviets had no interest in its significance.



British archaeologists excavated it and discovered its remarkable secrets.

Many of the bed boards which had been joined to stop it from collapsing were still in position. And the ventilation shaft, ingeniously crafted from used powdered milk containers known as Klim Tins, remained in working order. Scattered throughout the tunnel, which is 30 feet below ground, were bits of old metal buckets, hammers and crowbars which were used to hollow out the route.

A total of 600 prisoners worked on 3 tunnels at the same time. They were nicknamed Tom, Dick, and Harry, and were just 2 feet square for most of their length. It was on the night of March 24 and 25, 1944, that 76 Allied airmen escaped through Harry. 1/3rd of the 200 prisoners, many in fake German uniforms and civilian outfits and carrying false ID papers, who were meant to slip away, managed to leave before the alarm was raised when escapee



Tunnel vision: A tunnel reconstruction showing the trolley system

number 77 was spotted.

Only 3 made it back to Britain. Another 50 were executed by firing squad on the orders of Adolf Hitler, who was furious after learning of the breach of security. In all, 90 boards from bunk beds, 62 tables, 34 chairs, and 76 benches, as well as 1000's of items including knives, spoons, forks, towels and blankets, were squirreled away by Allied prisoners to aid the escape plan under the noses of their captors.

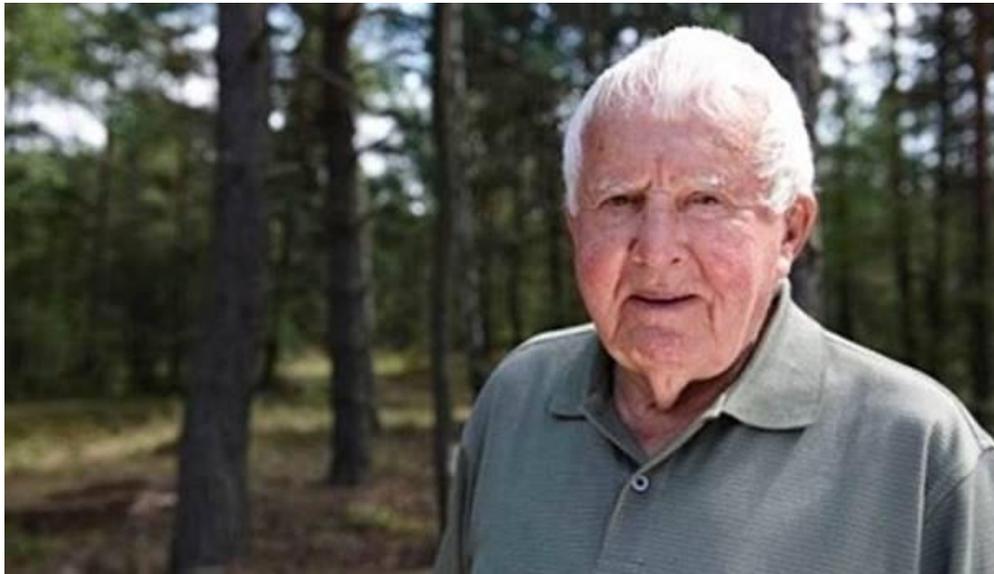
No Americans were involved in the operation. Most were Brits and Canadians, (all the tunnelers were Canadian personnel with backgrounds in mining) Poland, New Zealand, Australia, and South Africa.



The site of the tunnel called George

The latest dig located the entrance to Harry, which was originally concealed under a stove in Hut 104. The team also found another tunnel, called George, whose exact position had not been charted. It was never used as the 2,000 prisoners were forced to march to other camps as the Red Army approached in January 1945.

Watching the excavation was Gordie King, 91, an RAF radio operator, who was 140th in line to use Harry and therefore missed out. 'This brings back such bitter-sweet memories', he said as he wiped away tears. 'I'm amazed by what they've found.'



Gordie King, 91, made an emotional return to Stalag Luft III

Postscript: In the movie, the breakout occurs during beautiful spring conditions. The above article does not mention that the escape transpired during the coldest winter that part of Poland had endured in 30 years. The temperature was below freezing, and the ground was covered in a thick layer of snow. As a result, the exit hatch at the other end of Harry had frozen shut, and it took over an hour and a half to get it open. Additionally, tunnel collapses, men getting stuck, and a one-hour blackout during a midnight air raid also slowed the operation. Of the 76 men who made it out before the 77th was spotted exiting the hatch, 73 were recaptured. Two Norwegian POWs made it to Sweden, and a Dutchman wound up in Gibraltar and was flown from there to England, where he would rejoin the RAF and go on to fight during Operation Overload. Fifty of the recaptured men were executed by a direct order from Hitler. Although the movie depicts the men being killed in a single massacre, the Gestapo actually carried out the Fuhrer's orders by killing the men singly, or in pairs along quiet country lanes and in secluded locations. In 1947, a military tribunal found 18 Nazi soldiers guilty of war crimes for shooting the recaptured prisoners of war, and 13 of them were executed.