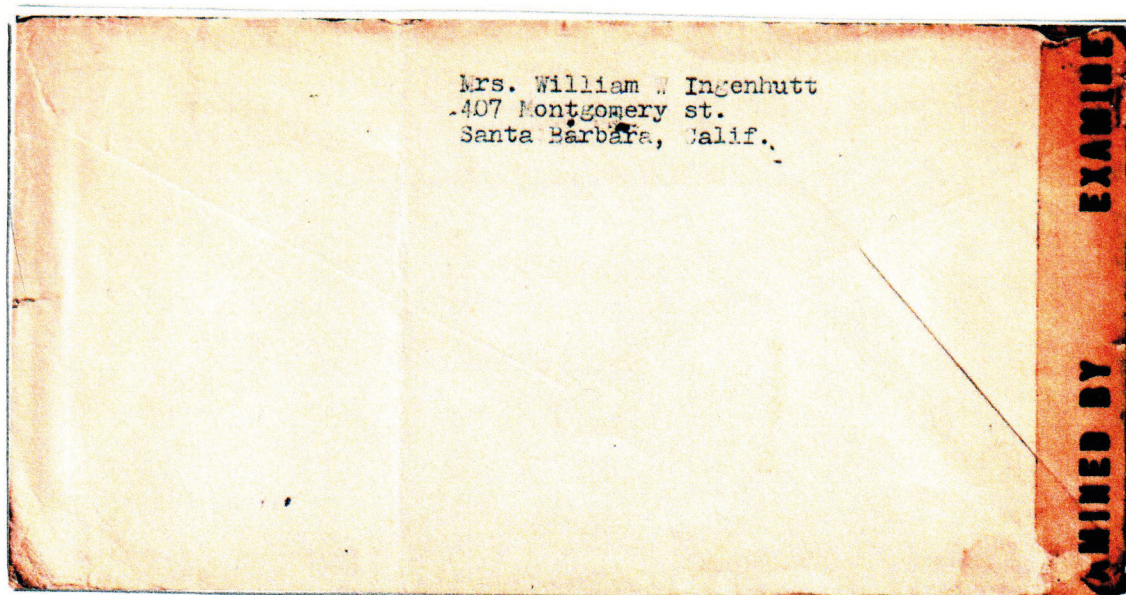
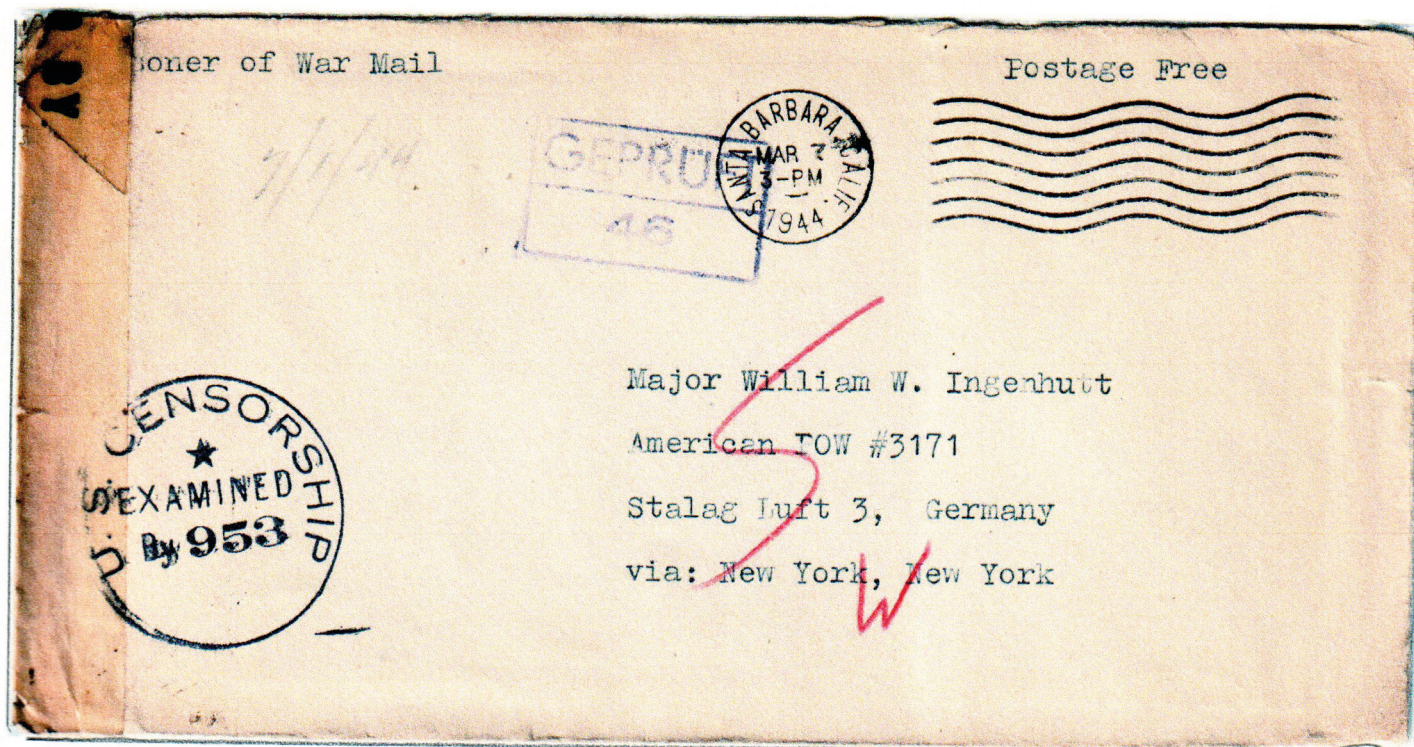


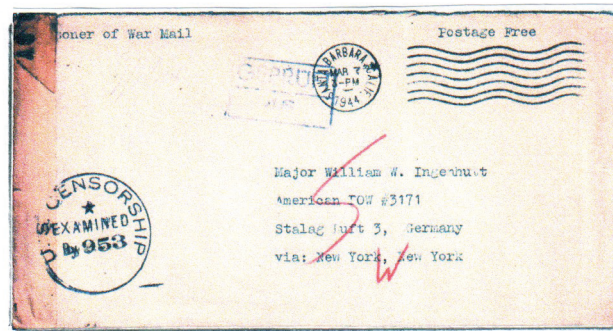
KRIGSFÅNGEPOST POSTUTVÄXLING USA – TYSKLAND



POSTUTVÄXLING USA – TYSKLAND

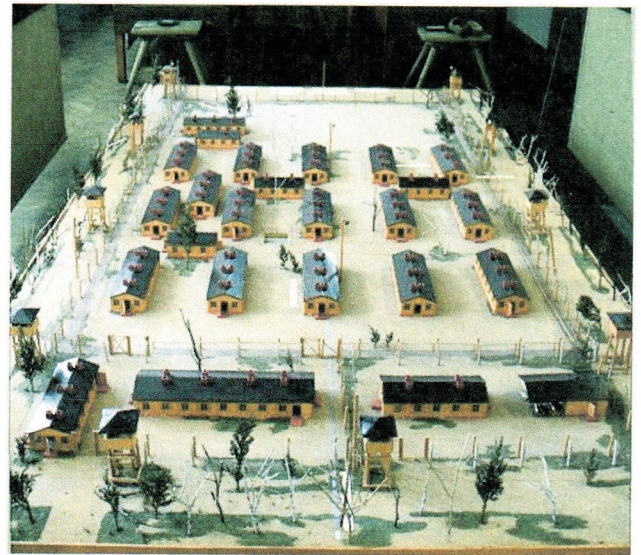
Krigsfångerbrev från SANTA BARBARA / Calif / USA den 3.3.44 till Stalag Luft 3 / Tyskland med hanskriven ankomstnotering "7 / 1 / 44". Försändelsen har censurerats i New York. Kuvertets kortsida bär en censurförslutning "EXAMINED BY" samt censurstämpel "U.S. CENSORSHIP / EXAMINED / BY 953". Försändelsen bär även tysk lägercensurstämpel "GEPRÜFT / 46". Vid detta krigsfängeläger gjordes ett stort flyktförsök, vilket har gått till historien som "The Great Escape".

"THE GREAT ESCAPE"



Historical accuracy

The film accurately represented many details of the escape, including the layout of the camp, the different escape plans employed, and the fact that only three escapees successfully made it to freedom. The characters are fictitious, but are based on real men, in most cases being composites of several. However, a number of changes were made to increase the film's drama and appeal to an American audience, with some scenes being heavily or completely fictionalised. The screenwriters also significantly increased the involvement of American POWs in the escape. A few American officers in the camp initially helped dig the tunnels and worked on the early plans, but they were moved away seven months before the escape, which ended their involvement.^{[37][38]} The real escape was by largely British and other Allied personnel, with the exception of American Johnnie Dodge, who was a British officer.^[31] The film omits the crucial role that Canadians played in building the tunnels and in the escape itself. Of the 1,800 or so POWs, 600 were involved in preparations: 150 of those were Canadian. Wally Floody, an RCAF pilot and former miner who was the real-life "tunnel king", was engaged as a technical advisor for the film.^[39]



Model of the set used to film *The Great Escape*. It depicts a smaller version of a single compound in *Stalag Luft III*. The model is now at the museum near where the prison camp was located.

Ramsey tells Von Luger that it is the sworn duty of every officer to attempt escape. In reality, there was no requirement in the King's Regulations, or in any form of international convention.^[40]

The film shows the tunnel codenamed "Tom" with its entrance under a stove and "Harry" in a drain sump in a washroom. In reality, the entrance to "Dick" was the drain sump, "Harry" was under the stove, and "Tom" was in a darkened corner next to a stove chimney.^[41]



End of the real "Harry" tunnel (on the other side of the road) showing how it does not reach the cover of the trees

Former POWs asked the filmmakers to exclude details about the help they received from their home countries, such as maps, papers, and tools hidden in gift packages, lest it jeopardise future POW escapes. The filmmakers complied.^[42]

The film omits any mention that many Germans willingly helped in the escape itself. The film suggests that the forgers were able to make near-exact replicas of just about any pass that was used in Nazi Germany. In reality, the forgers received a great deal of assistance from Germans who lived many hundreds of miles away on the other side of the country. Several German guards, who were openly anti-Nazi, also willingly gave the prisoners items and assistance of any kind to aid their escape.^[40] The need for such accuracy produced much eyestrain, but unlike in the film, there were no cases of blindness. Some, such as Frank Knight, gave up forging because of the strain, but he certainly did not suffer the same ocular fate as the character of Colin Blythe in the film.^[40] In fact, no one in the film says that Colin Blythe's blindness is the result of eyestrain. He identifies his problem as "progressive myopia", suggesting that he has not only heard of the condition but has also been diagnosed.

The film depicts the escape taking place in ideal weather conditions, whereas at the time much was done in freezing temperatures, and snow lay thick on the ground.^[40] In reality there were no escapes by aircraft or motorcycle: McQueen requested the motorcycle sequence, which shows off his skills as a keen motorcyclist. He did the stunt riding himself (except for the final jump, done by Bud Ekins).^[43]

In the film, Hilts incapacitates a German soldier for his motorcycle and uniform, Ashley-Pitt kills Kuhn, a Gestapo officer, when he recognizes Bartlett at a Gestapo checkpoint at a railway station and is shot dead in return, Hendley knocks out a German guard at the airfield, and Sedgwick witnesses the killing of German officers at a French cafe by the French Resistance. No German personnel were killed or injured by the real escapees. Blythe is shot and mortally wounded by a German after their plane crashes just short of the border; this incident never happened. The film depicts the three prisoners who escape to freedom as British, Polish, and Australian; in reality, they were Norwegian (Jens Müller and Per Bergsland) and Dutch (Bram van der Stok).^[44]

At the end of the film, three truckloads of recaptured POWs drive in three directions. One truck contains 20 prisoners who are invited to stretch their legs in a field, whereupon they are all machine gunned in a single massacre, with the implication that the prisoners in the other two trucks were killed in the same manner. In reality, the majority of the POWs were shot individually or in pairs, killed by pistol shots taken by Gestapo officers; however, at least ten of them were killed in a manner like that portrayed in the film: Dutchy Swain, Chaz Hall, Brian Evans, Wally Valenta, George McGill, Pat Langford, Edgar Humphreys, Adam Kolanowski, Bob Stewart and Henry "Hank" Birkland.^{[45][46][47][48][49][50][40]}

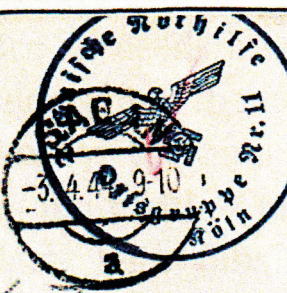
In 2009, seven POWs returned to Stalag Luft III for the 65th anniversary of the escape^[51] and watched the film. According to the veterans, many details of the first half depicting life in the camp were authentic, e.g. the death of Ives, who tries to scale the fence, and the actual digging of the tunnels. The film has kept the memory of the 50 executed airmen alive for decades and has made their story known worldwide, if in a distorted form.^[31] British author Guy Walters notes that a pivotal scene in the film where MacDonald blunders by replying in English to a suspicious Gestapo officer saying, "Good luck", is now so strongly imprinted that historians have accepted it as a real event, and that it was Bushell's partner Bernard Scheidhauer who made the error. However, Walters

points out that a historical account says that one of the two men said "yes" in English in response to a Kripo man's questions without any mention of "good luck" and notes that as Scheidhauer was French, and Bushell's first language was English, it seems likely that if a slip did take place, it was made by Bushell himself, and says the "good luck" scene should be regarded as fiction.^[40]

Kriegsgefangenenpost

GEPRÜFT

75 An



Frl. Kerstin Dillert.

Gebührenfrei!

<p style="text-align: center;">Absender:</p> <p>Vor- und Zuname: <i>Marius Eriksen</i></p> <p>Gefangenenummer: <i>1344</i></p> <p>Lager-Bezeichnung: <i>M.-Stammlager Luft 3</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Deutschland (Germany)</p>	<p>Empfangsort: <i>Stockholm</i></p> <p>Straße: <i>Linnégatan 34 III C</i></p> <p>Land: <i>Schweden</i></p> <p>Landesteil (Provinz usw.)</p>
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Krigsfångeförsändelse från en norsk frivillig i allierad tjänst internerad i "STALAG LUFT 3" Sagan / Tyskland den 3.4.44.
Försändelsen bär en violett lägercensurstämpel "GEPRÜFT / 75".