



The Bugler

Official Newsletter of Roll Call - Friends of Camp Hearne

www.camphearne.info

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Train Tagging....

'Train tagging' is a form of art expressed on an unusual media...the side of a railroad car. This is not the painted graffiti seen on so many boxcars today. It is the expressive signature of a worker/artist that 'tags' a given car with a unique marker that states his or her identity and location. Some will even include a message or motto that is important to the artist. Another difference between this art and everyday graffiti is the use of chalk instead of paint.

When this 'tagging' began is anyone's guess. However, we have recently become aware of some interesting evidence that Hearne, Texas, may have played a role.

It was 1946, and a group of young sailors was headed home. Discharged from the service, they were riding the rails from San Diego to Houston. For reasons unknown, the train stopped in Clovis, NM. The boys were told the delay would be about six hours and they were free to visit the city.

Staying out of mischief was not the order of the day. They were headed home and this delay was not welcome. Soon, boredom gave way to old fashioned tomfoolery. One young



sailor chose to express his most prominent thoughts on the side of the passenger car, in white chalk. He was discharged, going home

to his beloved Texas and specifically headed for Hearne, Texas.

This young sailor was Gary Gordon Pennington (HHS, 1944). He said he meant no harm and was just killing time. However, the conductor was angry and said the train would not move until he removed all the markings. Gordon was somewhat concerned until someone his senior yelled back "the \$%& he will". A small standoff ensued. When asked if the 'tag' weathered the storm and made it to Texas, the answer is **you bet**.

Whether Gordon really initiated an art trend called *train tagging* is questionable. What is important is that Gordon served his County and proudly returned home to Hearne, TX.

Today, our thoughts are with all of our young men and women serving in the military. May they too come home to family and friends. If they should leave 'tags' here or there, may these symbolize peace, understanding and love of Country.

Depot to Reflect the Heyday of Train Travel

The Depot Committee announced the renovation of the Hearne Depot would reflect the late 1940's, early 1950's, when passenger train travel was at its peak. With the Depot and Camp Hearne developing the same period, a consistent tourist theme is emerging.

Camp Hearne's primary purpose will be to tell the story of rural America's contribution to the war effort, highlighting the benevolence of our Country's performance as the Victor. The Depot will reflect a new America strongly affected by War and post-War prosperity.

Recently, Hearne's Economic Development Director coordinated the donation of a period passenger train car, its transport to Hearne and its subsequent restoration/preservation by GATX (always a good corporate neighbor).

Hearne is reproducing its past to provide a future travel destination for others. Who does not like to go back in time to remember and experience a different, seemingly more simple existence? Think USO, Victory Corps, men in uniform, big bands, picture shows, monogrammed sweaters, Coke floats, poodle skirts (well, may be not)...this is going to be fun.

Lone Star Stalag

The Story of the WWII German Prisoner of War Camp at Hearne, Texas, by Michael R. Waters, PhD.

Many local residents interviewed during Dr. Waters' excavation of Camp Hearne have been waiting for 'the book'. Well, time is near. Waters' book, *Lone Star Stalag* has made it through most of the editing phase and is scheduled to go to the printers by the end of the summer.

As stated in Dr. Waters' Preface, although many books about the POW experience have been published, no single POW camp has ever been extensively investigated. His study of Camp Hearne provides a comprehensive account of the POW experience at a typical POW camp. This was accomplished by studying historical documents in the archives and repositories of many organizations, interviewing former POWs, guards, and citizens who experienced the camp, and conducting archaeological investigations at the camp.

Dr. Waters continues by stating that each of these three data sets, the documents, personal accounts, and archeological evidence, provide a different perspective on Camp Hearne. The archival research provides dates, facts, and figures about the camp such as: how many prisoners were at the camp, when they arrived, when they left, what types of problems occurred at the camp, how many prisoners worked, and other data. The interviews provided firsthand accounts that bring a human element to the research, including information about daily life not documented in archival records or existing books. The oral histories provide insights into camp life, activities and events. Finally, the archaeological excavations uncovered artifacts that were made and used by the POWs and features built by the POWs, that are not recorded in the archival documents and only remembered by a very few. By melding these historical, archeological, and ethnographic data together, a compressive and multi-dimensional account of the POW experience at Camp Hearne emerges.

Excerpts from *Lone Star Stalag* will be included in future editions of the Bugler.

Have you visited www.camphearne.info lately?