

Kriegie Kids: On Our Fathers' Trail -- Film Explores WWII POWs 600-mile Death March in 1945

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ATLANTA, GA, UNITED STATES, May 9, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Kriegie Foundation, a newly formed foundation dedicated to preserving and honoring the memory of WWII Prisoners of War, announced the release of its hour-long documentary entitled Kriegie Kids: On Our Fathers' Trail. The film will debut on Memorial Day, May 26, 2025, on WABE TV, Atlanta, (PBS-30) and other PBS stations.



Kriegie Kids with officials at Stalag Luft IV in Poland

The film follows five strangers, brought together almost eighty years after the end of World War II, to follow the paths their fathers endured as German prisoners of war. They call themselves "Kriegie Kids," children of US airmen who were shot down and taken as prisoners of war by German forces. The Kriegie Kids follow their fathers' trail through Germany and Poland, learning about their fathers' closely guarded secrets. Their search for the truth honors the collective experience of the airmen who fought in the deadly skies over Nazi Germany and acknowledges the impact such events have had on subsequent generations.

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All the Kriegie Kids are sons or daughters of airmen who

were imprisoned at Stalag Luft IV, a POW camp for non-commissioned Air Force officers located near the Baltic Sea in what was Pomerania (now Poland). Part of their quest was to follow the path of the brutal forced march from that camp, often referred to as the Death March or the Black March, over 86 days and covered 600 miles. Many developed severe frostbite. They had very little food and lost a massive amount of weight. At night, they were locked in drafty barns, packed tight, side-by-side. Some nights were spent outside in freezing temperatures. There was

no ability for the men to keep themselves clean. All became infested with lice and fleas. No clean water was provided. Almost all developed dysentery. The story of this march chronicles the sufferings of a patriotic and heroic group of young men who sacrificed for both American and European freedom. This story is not part of most WWII history books.

This documentary was created by the award-winning director Christine Rutten, and produced by ACAM Network in cooperation with Hessischer Rundfunk and PBS Station WABE.

Kriegie Kids include:

- Michigan natives and sisters, Laura Edge and Ellen Bett-Witt, are daughters of T/Sgt Lawrence Lee Witt, who flew seven missions with the 8th Air Force as an engineer/gunner aboard a B-17 Bomber. Laura spent years researching her father's story wrote *On the Wings of Dawn: American Airmen as Germany's Prisoners*. (On Amazon.)
- Ellen Weaver Hartman, from Atlanta, GA, is the daughter of Joseph D. Weaver, who flew fifty-two missions as a B-26 radio operator/gunner for the Eighth and Ninth Air Forces (386th Bomber Group) His final mission came on August 6, 1944, when FLAK caused his B-26 Marauder Bomber to crash near Trouville Sur Mer, Normandy. He spent nine months in captivity.
- Jim Hemphill from Mississippi is the son of James V. Hemphill, Jr. Jim's father was 15th Army Air Force B-24 gunner flying from southern Italy when he was shot down on February 23, 1944, over Austria. Imprisoned in Stalag Luft VI in East Prussia, he was later evacuated with other POWs in the terrifying hold of a rusty Baltic coal scow to Stalag Luft IV; forced to run two miles shackled to a buddy and urged on by bayonet stabs and guard dog bites to the prison. The trip on the Baltic became known as the "Baltic Cruise" and the run simply "The Run Up the Road."
- Rich Ruben, originally from Philadelphia and now living in South Carolina, is the son of T/Sgt Manuel (Manny) Ruben, 8th Air Force radio operator/gunner on B-17s. He was shot down on his 27th mission when his plane exploded with him in it.

For more information, or if you would like to learn how to exhibit the documentary for non-commercial purposes, please inquire at info@kriegiefoundation.org.

To view the documentary: <https://youtu.be/xSHNgP5fUcY>

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