

Eight comrades

Basic training

To replace the young men born in 1926 who had to report for duty with the Reichsarbeitsdienst (RAD) [Reich Labor Service] in the middle of February 1944, all 5th and 6th grade high school students in the Reich born in 1928 were drafted to serve as Luftwaffe Anti-Aircraft Assistants (AAA), and as Navy Assistants on the northern coast of the Reich.

Thus, on January 5, 1944, we eight boys from the 6th grade of Amstetten High School, together with those from the 5th, traveled as a group by train from Amstetten railway station to Linz-Wegscheid. There, we joined the camp of the Heavy AA Replacement Battalion 38 where, over the next four weeks, we were to be inducted into military life. As we were still students and always had to be under adult supervision when moving from one place to another, we were accompanied by a member of the teaching staff of our school. This still applied when we had become student-soldiers, only then it was someone with a military rank from the Luftwaffe who accompanied and supervised us.

With numerous other students of the same age from Gau Oberdonau¹¹, nowadays once again Upper Austria, we moved into hut 4 of barrack no. 9 of the apparently huge training camp. It was equipped with wooden bunks for straw mattresses and lockers, tables and stools for 12 to 16 men. There was also a wood-fired stove with chopped billets stacked at the end of the center gangway. At the front end of this gangway, close to the main entrance, stood the rooms of our three non-commissioned officers Sinn, Wengel and Weddehage. They had all been detached from the batteries of AA Group Linz-Steyr to train us.¹² In all there were 15 corporals and one sergeant supervising some 480 AAA, split into 4 batteries, each with around 120 men.¹³ We were assigned to 1st Battery under Lieutenant Werkhausen.

¹¹ Apart from the boys from Horn, we Amstetten youths were the only ones from Lower Danube; the other students, e.g. those from Melk or Waidhofen were sent to Vienna/Küniglberg.

¹² PFC Sinn who was popular with us; he was later assigned to our neighboring battery Kronstorf, 3./695 (o).

¹³ According to Banny/Rappersberger, the total was 479.



In the middle, our Instructor, NCO Sinn

In addition to the living quarters there were kitchen and mess wings where we ate cooked lunch, or picked up sandwiches and the like, as well as the ghastly coffee, to consume in our hut. There were also barracks for ablutions as well as latrines. Neither area was heated but this did not dissuade the tougher elements among us from washing stripped to the waist. In those January temperatures, however, many of us, including myself, preferred to take a walk unwashed around the facilities and stare in admiration at our more hygienic comrades.

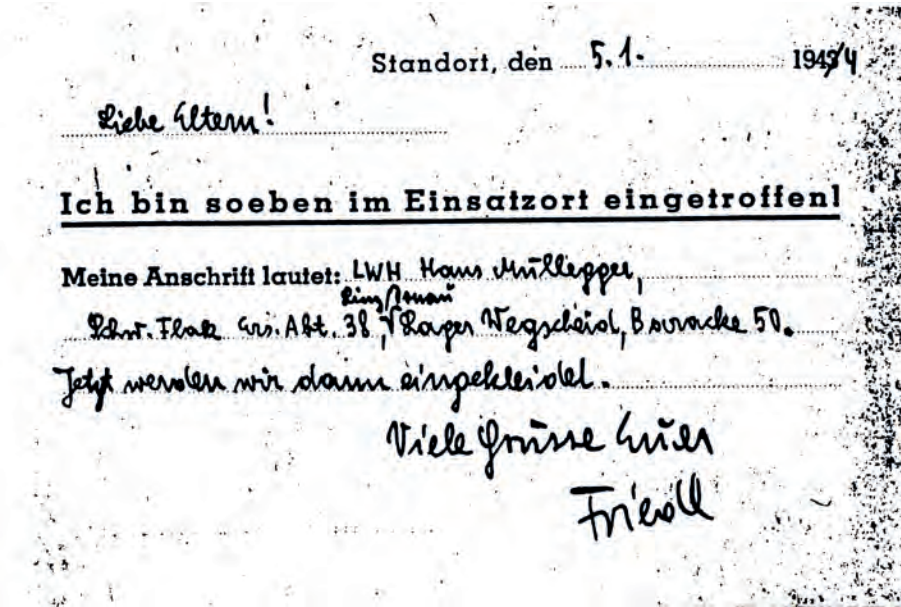
With the exception of our dress uniforms, we, the most recent draftees, were equipped entirely from Wehrmacht inventories. It seems that our dress uniform, consisting of a battledress blouse, trousers, overcoat and forage cap, cut in the style of the Luftwaffe HJ uniform and made of a fine gray-blue cloth, had been tailored specifically for us. We looked quite smart, the only annoying features being the swastika armband and the HJ cap badge.

Items originating from the Wehrmacht quartermaster's stores were:

- The spare, gray-blue fatigues with a forage cap as headgear
- Dungaree blouse and trousers including one pair of jackboots
- Long underpants, sports trunks, socks, handkerchiefs, vests etc.
- Bread bag, mess kit, field flask, steel knife and fork that left an unpleasant aftertaste
- Rucksack, blanket, padlock, cleaning kit and dog tags
- Gas mask with container and steel helmet were issued later in the battery position.

Basic training

The first days were taken up with writing postcards informing the folks at home that we had just arrived at our destination, were about to undergo a medical examination and that we were busy drawing our uniforms and equipment.



Postcard from one AAA Hans Müllepper to his parents.



The author Gerhard "Gertl" Oberleitner.