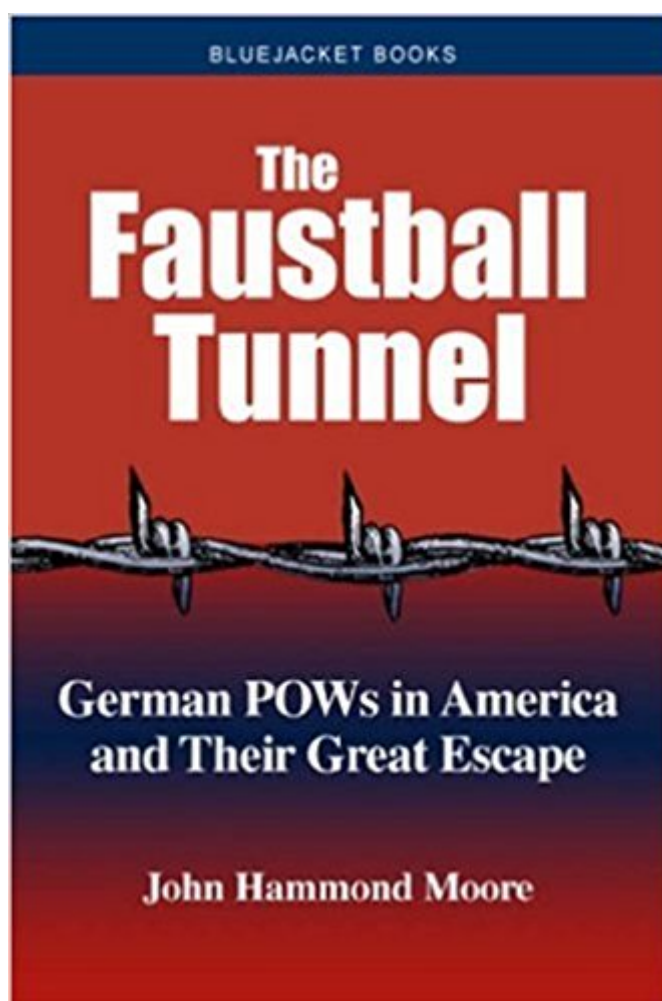


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The Faustball Tunnel: German POWs In America And Their Great Escape (Bluejacket Books)



Synopsis

On December 23, 1944, twenty-five German prisoners of war broke out of an Arizona prison camp not far from the Mexican border by crawling along a 178-foot tunnel. By Christmas day, they were looking for ways to reach Mexico and Axis sympathizers who would help them. Drawing on extensive interviews with the escapees and formerly classified documents, John Hammond Moore tells their incredible story— one of the few untold dramas of the war. Many of the men imprisoned at the Papago Park camp were among the Nazis' toughest and smartest U-boat commanders and their crews. Expecting trouble, their American guards marveled at how well the men adjusted to camp life. Spirits were high and the compound neatly raked several times each day. But the guards failed to realize the men were digging a tunnel right under their eyes. They hid their activity by building a volleyball (faustball) field. Twenty-five escapees used makeshift tools and coal shovels issued them by the camp to hack through the rocky soil. Once free, they disguised themselves as merchant seamen, consular officials, and workers armed with false identification papers. The men lasted six weeks on the outside before being recaptured. Their breakout, told here in breathtaking detail, remains the most sensational mass escape ever to take place from a POW camp on American soil.

Book Information

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Military > Prisoners of War #4416 in Books > History > Europe > Germany #11640

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Customer Reviews

John Hammond Moore is the author of numerous books, including Albemarle: Jefferson's County,

an area where a POW camp was located, which piqued his curiosity in the subject of Germans held in America during World War II.

Wonderful deep history of the Germans housed in the US during the war. Very well done

Arrived in perfect condition. Haven't read it yet, however, I will take it along with me when I go to Arizona. I like to read about things in the area. I heard a presentation on this tunnel a year ago. Was interested in learning more about the subject. The presenter recommended reading this book. Hope it is as good as I expect it will be.

Great supplier. Recommended! A+

Awesome story, great read if you're familiar with Phoenix, would make a good movie.

EXCELLENT READING THANK YOU !

Interesting, although the "great escape" of the title was a fizzle. If it ever hits you that German POWs must have been kept somewhere and you're casually wondering where and how, this is a good place to start reading -- it's the story of one camp and some of the men (on both sides) who served there, not an academic-style "history" full of facts and figures and analysis.

"The Faustball Tunnel". By John Hammond Moore. Subtitled: "German POWs In America And Their Great Escape". Random House, New York, 1978. When I pulled this book from the library shelf, my rudimentary German told me that the title was "The Fistball Tunnel". When I looked in my German/English dictionary, I found that "Faustball" was a form of volleyball, and this, naturally, was explained in the beginning text of the book. I should have started to read the book in the library. It seems that German Prisoners of War (POWs) had the same ideas as their British counterparts on the other side of the world. The German POWs were mainly maritime individuals: either Kriegsmarine or German Merchant Marine. In their prison in Arizona, these German sailors hit upon the idea of building a volleyball court so as to hide the dirt that was coming up from the tunnel they were building. "Hide in plain sight". This was quite similar to what some British were doing in their prison camp in Germany (see "The Great Escape" by Paul Brickhill). However, the German escape into the Arizona desert was NOT made into a major motion picture. In the Arizona camp, the

American Army guards were lackadaisical, to say the least. Some Germans escaped. The German escapees were surprised by the distances involved, and Arizona is not as big as Texas! Further, they were surprised to find people who did not speak English, but spoke Spanish. In this regard, I wonder why the Germans wanted to escape to Mexico, a country that was also at war with Nazi Germany; the German POWs were at greater risk inside Mexico than they were in the U.S. Interestingly, after their recapture, the German sailors learnt that the buzzing noise in the desert was the sound of rattlesnakes shaking their warning tails and that rattlesnakes are dangerous. All in all, the German escapees were as deficient in their knowledge of North America as the contemporary American/British escapees were about Europe.

My great uncle was part of the escape and he was telling us a lot of things about it unless he died in 1998. A great guy, a great story. Original documents have been provided by us to the POW museum at Papago Park. I love this bit of my families history. It was even in the schoolbook Arizonas History, when I was over in 1986.

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