

Why are German POWs buried in the Camp Lewis Cemetery?



Karl Simon died at Madigan General hospital on Ft. Lewis on January 20, 1945, of tuberculosis at 21 years old. Karl was born in Garmisch-Partenkirchen Germany December 28, 1923.

According to his German military records, Karl's last unit was the 3rd Paratroop Division nicknamed the "Green Devils". He was captured in Rome Italy June 4, 1944.

Article 76 of the 1929 Geneva Convention

states, "The belligerents shall ensure that prisoners of war who have died in captivity are honorably buried, and that the graves bear the necessary indications and are treated with respect and suitably maintained".

The Camp Lewis Cemetery was established in 1918 and is the final resting place for soldiers, families and the three German prisoners.



Karl Simon German Military Identification



Leo Paluczkiwicz died at a Prisoner of War Camp in Walla Walla, Washington at the age of 27 on July 4, 1945. He died of a heart attack from prior injuries. His body was moved to the Camp Lewis Cemetery for burial on July 6, 1945.

On May 11, 1943, Leo was captured in Tunisia North Africa. No known photos have been found. German military records indicate that Leo was born in Duisberg-Meiderich Germany July 30, 1917. He trained with the regular German Army and was attached to an aviation unit.

Translation of Prisoner of War Letter by "Oberarzt" (Department Head/Attending Physician) Dr. Kurt Messner 4-WG-19816 Prisoner of War Camp Camp Ft. Lewis, Washington c/o GPO Box 20 New York, NY USA

Mrs. Olga Milles Cranbrook Bloomfield Mills, Michigan USA

Dear Aunt Olga, Ft. Lewis, December 18, 1944
I can still remember that your birthday is in the month of January. Even though I cannot remember the exact day anymore, I hope that you will receive this letter at the right time. Now that you are on the threshold of the 8th decade of your life, you can really take note with satisfaction: Until now my life has not trickled along like a little creek serenely and without a care, but it was often hard and busy but then again also always peppered with many, many beautiful sunny days. In regards to your physical and mental condition, as you informed me in your letter, so it's not the time, which is something intrinsically eerie in its irretrievability, that counts for you but the [indecipherable world]: One is as old as one feels! Now, as a prisoner of war I cannot surprise you with a present, but instead I can inform you that all your relatives are doing fine and are healthy – a message that will certainly contribute to making your birthday celebration much nicer. Many more beautiful and happy days wishes you and Uncle Karl your nephew Kurt

Translation By Sabine Patterson January 2019.
Letters compliments of the Smithsonian Archives



Kurt Messner died of suicide, on August 18, 1945, at the age of 37. His death records indicate he was born in Greifenburg-Kaernten, Austria. On November 4, 1943, Dr. Messner was captured by American troops while he was working as a doctor in a field hospital located in Tunis, Tunisia.

From there he was shipped to the U. S. and spent time at the POW camp in Crossville, Tennessee. He was transferred to Madigan Army Medical Center where he would take care of other German POWs. No photos have been found.

