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**The National Heritage Museum
Presents
Journey Out of Darkness: American Heroes in Hitler's POW Camps
May 20, 2006 through January 7, 2007**

How do we perceive soldiers who suffered as prisoners of war? How can we know them and what they have endured? The answer, surely, is by knowing them one by one, story by story, soldier by soldier. The National Heritage Museum presents "Journey Out of Darkness: American Heroes in Hitler's POW Camp," a powerful and moving exhibition that explores through words and images the stories and experiences of 19 American soldiers and airmen held as prisoners. The exhibition is on view May 20, 2006 through January 7, 2007

"Journey Out of Darkness" is a collaborative project between writer Hal LaCroix and photographer Jörg Meyer. Meyer originally became interested in POWs when growing up in Bavaria near former camps and U.S. military bases. LaCroix and Meyer feel that the POWs of World War II—and by extension the POWs of every war—deserve special attention because they actually fought two wars. The 19 men featured in "Journey Out of Darkness" endured not only great risk in combat, but were then forced, as POWs, to fight an unrelenting battle against brutality, malnutrition, overwork, loneliness, and their own feelings of guilt, shame, and abandonment. Eleven of the men featured were infantrymen captured between the D-Day and the Battle of the Bulge in 1944. One soldier was captured during a battle near Anzio, Italy, while the lone paratrooper in the group was taken on D-Night. Five other POWs profiled were airmen who dove from burning planes into enemy territory. A Navy submariner imprisoned for four years by the Japanese is included to honor those captured in the Pacific Theater.

The exhibition reveals that, more often than not, in the soldiers' hearts and minds, the time in the POW camps eclipses actual combat. The incarceration left most of its victims with chronic or debilitating physical problems, as well as searing emotional and psychological damage. Joe Ciccarello, currently of Peabody, but who grew up in

Boston's North End, brooded in his German stalag, as he was starved down to 65 pounds, about his decision to double back during a retreat to cover the bodies of mortally wounded friends. Cosmo Fabrizio of Plymouth endured a hellish, 23-day ride in a cattle car packed with 100 POWs. After his camp was liberated by Russian troops, he walked a thousand miles from Germany to Odessa with only burlap bags on his feet. Bob Cournoyer of North Easton was forced to do hard labor in factories, fields, and bombed-out buildings, which left him with a number of physical ailments including permanent damage to his hands and feet. Soon after his capture, Sam Palter of West Roxbury faced the difficult decision to throw away his dogtags that identified him as Jewish. These, and the 15 other singular encounters in the exhibition, speak to universal truths about the human condition under the stress of captivity in wartime.

“Journey Out of Darkness” also seeks to truthfully honor the heroic endurance of American POWs. Hollywood movies such as *The Great Escape*, and the television show *Hogan's Heroes*, have presented a distorted, unrealistic view of what POWs lived through. The exhibition demonstrates that POW experiences in WWII were far grimmer, more surprising, fascinating, and inspiring than Hollywood could ever depict.

Writer Hal LaCroix is communications director for the CBR Institute for Biomedical Research at Harvard Medical School. Previously, LaCroix wrote for the Appalachian Mountain Club, the Nature Conservancy, and regional newspapers, and he taught at Boston University for several years. He lives in Belmont. Photographer Jörg Meyer grew up in southern Bavaria, Germany, and emigrated to the US in 1995. Out of his Boston studio, Meyer has photographed for clients including Citizen's Bank, TJ Maxx, Boston Neighborhood Health Plan, Harvard Medical School, New York University, *Boston Magazine*, and *Italian Vogue Bambini*. He lives in Mission Hill.

The National Heritage Museum is dedicated to presenting exhibitions on a wide variety of topics in American history and popular culture. The Museum is supported by the Scottish Rite Freemasons in the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction of the United States. The Museum is located at 33 Marrett Road in Lexington, at the corner of Route 2A and Massachusetts Avenue. Hours are Monday through Saturday from 10 am–5 pm, and Sunday, noon–5 pm. Admission and parking are free. Heritage Shop and Courtyard Café on site. For further information, contact the Museum at (781) 861-6559 or visit our web site at www.nationalheritagemuseum.org.