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**MS – 197: Meine Militärdienstzeit**

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MS – 197: Meine Militärdienstzeit

Description
The collection includes one photo album with 48 pages and 263 pictures, three missing, and two sheets of newspaper, one dated June 1, 1937, and the other dated November 21, 1937. Below is a list of the places visited by the officer in the course of the album that could be identified, and the images he included in the album, including their page numbers. Some of the images, particularly the tank picture on page 10 and the locations depicted on pages 42-43, may be chronologically out of order.

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Keywords
World War, 1939-1945, Personal Narratives, German, Germany, History

Disciplines
European History | Military History
Guide to the
MS-197: Meine Militärdienstzeit
[My Military Service]

Jesse Siegel ’16, Smith Project Intern
July 20, 2016
MS – 197: Meine Militärdienstzeit
(1 scrapbook)

Inclusive Dates: 1939-1945
Bulk Dates: 1940-1942

Processed by: Jesse Siegel ’16, Smith Project Intern
July 20, 2016

Provenance
Purchased from Between the Covers, 2014.

Biographical Note
The presumed creator of this album is unnamed, but is referred to as “The Weimar Officer”, was called up in the winter of 1939, probably as a replacement officer for the 37th Antitank Battalion of the 1st Panzer Division. He passed through a period of training and bonding with his fellow soldiers at Mühlhausen, at either the General Fuchs Barracks¹ or the Wendewehrstraße Barracks, before being sent to join his unit in the Eifel Mountains in March of 1940. He appears to have been part of the baking unit for the battalion. The officer then participated in the major events of the 1st Panzer Division’s long career: the invasion of France, the Battle of Sedan, the encirclement of Allied forces at Dunkirk, and the drive south that ended France’s capacity to fight. Later the unit was transferred East Prussia, taking part in the invasion of Russia, documenting the reception from locals, the destruction of Russian tanks, the harshness of the Russian winter. His tour included momentary breaks, such as a transfer to France and stationing in Greece in 1943. It is after his return to the Russian front that his pictures end, suggesting a very difficult two years during the German retreat from Russia, possibly now in a frontline role. He was imprisoned Graz, presumably after being captured in the 1st Panzer’s defense of the city in April 1945.

Historical Note
The 1st Panzer Division was among the first tank units created by Hitler when he repudiated disarmament in 1935. It would go on to play a key role in many of the major German military campaigns of the Second World War. The 1st Panzer Division was stationed in Weimar, part of the Ninth Wehrkreis (military district), that included Mühlhausen, where some of the division’s units, such as the 37th Antitank Battalion, were raised and trained. After participating in the Hitler’s gradual occupations in

Austria, the Sudetenland, and Czechoslovakia, the 1st Panzer first saw action in Poland in September 1939. Transferred to the French border, the division was part of the attack through Luxembourg and the Battle of Sedan, as well as the Battle of Dunkirk in May 1940, before helping to defeat the Weygand Line in June. The rest of the division’s battlefield experience came on the Russian Front, joining Army Group North in its attack on the Baltic States in June 1941 before being sent to the battle of Moscow that winter. They remained on the Russian Front until being transferred for “resting and refitting” in 1943 to France, later sent to Greece to defeat the expected Allied invasion and were involved in preventing the defection of Italian forces there after Italy’s capitulation in September 1943. The 1st Panzer Division was sent back to the Russian Front, where it suffered heavy casualties in retreating from Russian forces, fighting in Ukraine, Poland, Hungary, and Austria. Much of the unit was destroyed at Szekesfehervar in Hungary in January-March 1945, but remnants of the unit survived to retreat into Upper Bavaria and surrender to American forces in May 1945.2

**Scope and Content Notes**

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Mühlhausen, Germanz (1-2) Wittlich, Germany (3), Moseltal, Germany (4-6), Irzich, Germany (5), Zeltingen, Germany (5-6), Bernkastel-Kues, Germany (5), the Eifel Mountains, Germany (7), Boullion, Belgium (8), Chevenges (Cheveuges), France (9), Auxi-le-Château, France (9), Monument Aux Morts des Armees de Champagne, France (10), Châlons-en-Champagne, France (11), Besançon, France (11), Belfort, France (12), on the Loire, France (13), Paris, France (14-15), Versailles, France (15), Rustenburg, Germany (16), Wartenburg, Germany (17-18), Tannenburg Memorial, East Prussia (19-20), Tilsit, East Prussia (21), Tauragé, Lituanua (22), Ostrov, Russia (23); Kalumus, Russia (24-26, 43); Chadovo, Russia (29); Kalininsky District (?), Russia (32); Kolesnikovo, Russia (37, 43); Loos, France (40); Graz, Austria (44)

**Pictures**

(All captions in bold are the original captions provided by the officer; all other captions and translations are provided by Jesse Siegel)

*Meine Militärdienstzeit vom 1.12.39—25.2.40. in Mühlhausen i. Thr.,* My period of military service from December 1, 1939, to February 25, 1940 in Mühlhausen in Thüringia: barracks with small monument in foreground (1), soldiers in wintercoats

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posing (1), soldiers posing with officer in snow (1), soldiers posing with officer in front of barracks (1). Die Stubenbelegschaft, the room staff: am M. G., in the military area, practicing using machine guns (2), soldiers posing in snowy woodland (2). 

Bei guter Stimmung., to be in good spirits: group in the bunk room (2), dress up as Muslims or French Foreign Legionnaires (2). Spaziergang, a walk, officers posing in front of small monument (2), mit der Soldaten-Braut., with the soldier’s bride: four young women in a garden (2), officer and wife in snowy wood (2). Beim Feld-Ers.-Truppenteil Bäckerei-Komp. 26.2.40, at the first field unit, bakery company, February 26, 1940: Wittlich barracks parade ground with band (3), III. Schicht, third shift: 2 photographs of baking unit (3). 

bei exerziern., at exercises: 2 photographs of troops in the woods (3). Heitere gemütliche Abende, serene, comfortable evenings: 2 staged photographs of unit (4), posed party scene, with sign “Absicht von Clemo—“(4). 


Gasthaus zur Post in Zeltingen, Inn at the Post Office in Zeltingen, (6), Moseltal, Mosel Valley: 3 photographs of the mountains and soldiers hiking (6). 

Spaziergang an der Eifel., walk in the Eifel Mountains: 4 photographs in the mountains, two of posed group photos of soldiers (7). At a restaurant in the mountains (7). 

Abmarsch von Wittlich nach Frankreich, marching off from Wittlich to France: 2 photographs of soldiers by trucks (8). “Bouillion”, Bouillon, Belgium: 2 photographs of burned out homes along the river (8), soldiers with horse (8). Im Einsatz, in deployment: “Chevenges”, Cheveuges, France: baking machines covered from air attack (9), dead animals in a field (9). “Auxi le Chato”, Auxi-le-Château, France: 2 photographs of encampment disguised from air attack (9), 2 photographs of men at play and at rest (9). 

Panzer, tank: (1 missing photograph), destroyed BT-7 (possibly photograph misplaced from Russian campaign) (10). Bunker und Gefangene, bunker and prisoners: French prisoners by the side of a road (10), German soldier posing by French bunker. in der “Champagne”: 2 photographs of German soldiers posing at the Monument Aux Morts des Armees de Champagne, France (10). 


„Gersthina“, 1 photograph (35), „Graßnikolm“, 1 photograph (35). Knüppeldämmen müssen hier helfen, the log causeways must help here: 3 photographs of soldiers cutting down trees (36), 1 photograph inside timber barracks (36), 2 photographs of road building (36). Hackenkreuzfahne in „Kolesnikowo“ und Bunker, swastika flag over Kolesnikovo and bunker: 2 photographs of flooded road and bridge (37), 4 photographs of bunker and defensive construction (37). Die aufgeweichten Straßen in Russland, the rain-sodden roads in Russia: 1 photograph of bus in mud (38). Bauern bei der Feldarbeit, farmers at the field work: 3 photographs (38). Fahrt nach Frankreich, Trip to

**Subjects**
World War, 1939-1945—Personal Narratives, German
Germany. Heer -- History -- World War, 1939-1945

**Series Description**

This collection is one series, consisting of one photo album with newspaper pages within.