

Major (R) Herbert R. Brucker, DSC

Special Forces Pioneer

SOE France, OSS Burma and China, 10th SFG, SF Instructor, 77th SFG, Laos, and Vietnam

by Charles H. Briscoe

THIS photo essay introduces an early Special Forces pioneer, Herbert R. Brucker, former radioman of a three-man Special Operations Executive team that operated in France before D-Day. British special operations unlike the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) Jedburgh and OG (Operational Groups) had been working behind German lines since late 1940. Technical Sergeant Four (T/4) Brucker was detailed to the SOE in England as “Herbert E-54,” because he had been raised from infancy in the bilingual Alsace and Lorraine provinces of France.¹ On 26 May 1944, Second Lieutenant “Albert Brunion” (code-name “Sacha”) and Second Lieutenant Roger B. Henquet jumped into France to establish the “Hermit” circuit, replacing “Prosper” that had been “rolled up” by the Germans. Their third teammate, Frenchman Henri Fucs, a surgeon recovering from a bicycle injury, joined them later. Having attributed the majority of the “Hermit” team success to “Albert Brunion,” Brucker was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.²

After returning to England in September 1944, the U.S. Army second lieutenant agreed to another OSS assignment in the Far East. 1LT Brucker was first attached to

The “Hermit” radio section of SOE France. They were north of Vendôme. Lieutenant Brucker (in uniform) indicates that this picture was taken after D-Day.



Detachment 101 in the Naga Hills of North Burma. “The weather was wet and your clothes, boots, and equipment quickly mildewed. That place was full of termites, leeches, and scorpions. Since most of Detachment 101 were with the Kachins fighting there was little for us to do with the Naga tribesmen. They shipped us to Detachment 202 in Kunming,” said Brucker. “However, I did run into Major Aaron Bank in Burma. He chewed my butt for having a goatee and mustache.”³

Team Auk in China was led by Major Alfred C. Rogers with Captain Leon Demers as second in command. Auk’s mission was to reconnoiter the Mongolian border in anticipation of Russia’s entry into the war against the Japanese. Having successfully completed that mission Demers and Brucker became Team Ibex. After training fifty Chinese warrant officers as guerrillas, they became the 4th Marauder and Brucker led them behind Japanese lines. Their eventual mission was to seize the Japanese Army records at K’ai-feng. It was a mission impossible. The Japanese controlled the city and surrounding area with two divisions (Japanese Imperial Army and a Chinese collaborator force) supported by tanks. Fortunately, the atomic bombs were dropped. That was enough to convince the Japanese to parlay with the OSS force. This mission essentially ended World War II for Brucker.⁴



Lieutenant Herbert R. Brucker and Captain Leon Demers, Team Ibex, Detachment 202, OSS China.



“Che Guevara” look alike is First Lieutenant Herbert R. Brucker leaving the OSS in China for Calcutta and his return to the States.



Captain Herbert R. Brucker wearing the Airborne Command patch (10th SFG) at Fort Bragg before leaving for Germany.

After returning to the United States, 1LT Brucker was re-assigned to Europe. He served three years with the Army Counter Intelligence Corps in Passau and Munich, Germany. Then, the highly decorated veteran was assigned to the 82nd Airborne Division. Captain Brucker was at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, when the North Koreans invaded the south on 25 June 1950. As the commander of Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 505th Infantry he learned that Department of Army was seeking volunteers for Special Forces.⁵

Despite a war going on in Korea, it took an old OSS connection to break his application clear of the 82nd Airborne Division personnel freeze. "America's Guard of Honor" was part of the Army strategic ready force. Second Lieutenant Caesar J. Civitella, one of the early officers assigned to Special Forces, had served the OSS in an Ital-



1955 Black Forest 10th SFG left to right: Major John L. Striegel, U.S. Air Force Major Richard Grant, Gasthaus owner/agent wearing the "AB" sign (because he looked like Aaron Bank), Master Sergeant James A. Tryon, Gasthaus waitress, Captain Herbert R. Brucker, and Master Sergeant Myron A. "Mumbles" Johnson.

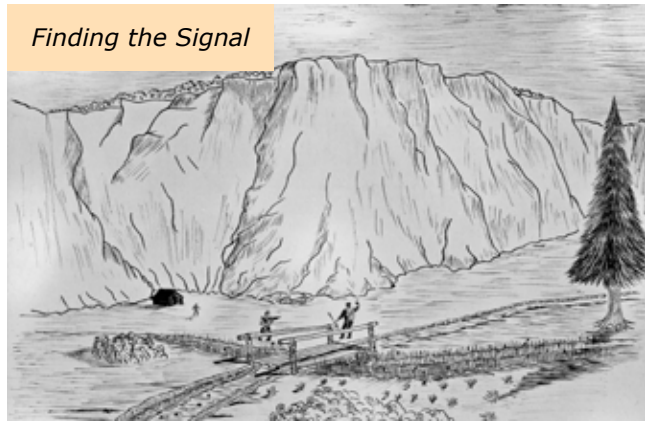
ian Operational Group during the war. Sent on a recruiting mission by Colonel Bank, the former 505th Airborne Infantry Regimental intelligence sergeant went to the officers club. There he met Brucker, who told him that his request was being "stonewalled." Less than two weeks later Brucker received orders from Washington.⁶

Escape and evasion course lesson plan sketches drawn by Captain Herbert R. Brucker to illustrate various aspects associated with successfully evading and escaping with assistance. These techniques came from his OSS and SOE training. Brucker conducted this course several times for NATO airmen between January 1954 and April 1957.

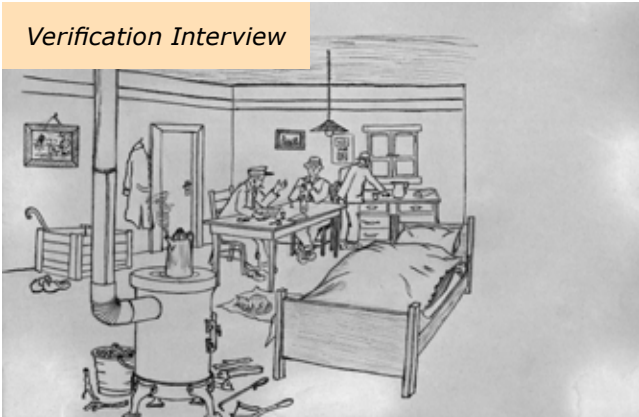
Contact Signals



Finding the Signal



Verification Interview



Safe House



Colonel Bank, Commander of Special Forces, Psychological Warfare School, made Brucker the acting S-2 (security), responsible for processing all Special Forces security clearances, a major job, and the chief of clandestine operations training. "Bank realized that he had a 'jewel' in Herb based on his OSS and SOE training and experience. He set up the first escape and evasion training for the U.S. Navy at Camp Mackall, 'Operation Tenderfoot I.' Instead of getting in their aircraft the 'ready alert' pilots were taken directly to a waiting transport plane and flown to Camp Mackall. It was so realistic and professional that it became part of the Special Forces qualification course," said Civitella, one of the original course instructors.⁷

When Special Forces (by 1953, it numbered over 1200 soldiers) was divided into two tactical commands—the 10th Special Forces Group for Europe (first slated for Aviano, Italy, and ultimately Bad Toelz, Germany) and the 77th Special Forces Group at Fort Bragg, Colonel Aaron Bank kept Brucker with him. Lieutenant Colonel Jack Shannon, the deputy commander of Special Forces, initially assumed command of the 77th Group.⁸ Thus, CPT Herbert R. Brucker became one of the Special Forces pioneers. The photos and sketches reveal his important role in early Special Forces training. Future *Veritas* articles will chronicle the contributions made to the Army SOF community by retired Special Forces Major Herbert R. Brucker, DSC. ▲

Endnotes

- 1 Major (Retired) Herbert R. Brucker, interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 21 November 2005, Fayetteville, NC, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC. General Dwight D. Eisenhower restricted the OSS from employing Jedburgh Teams and Operational Groups until after D-Day (June 6, 1944).
- 2 Major (Retired) Herbert R. Brucker, interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 27 March 2006, Fayetteville, NC, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 3 Brucker interview, 27 March 2006.
- 4 Major (Retired) Herbert R. Brucker, interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 20 March 2006, Fayetteville, NC, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 5 Brucker interview, 27 March 2006.
- 6 Major (Retired) Herbert R. Brucker, interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 14 November 2005, Fayetteville, NC, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC; Major (Retired) Caesar J. Civitella, interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe and Dr. Kenneth Finlayson, 19 January 2001, Fort Bragg, NC, tape recording, USAJFKSWCS Archives, Fort Bragg, NC; Major (Retired) Caesar J. Civitella, telephone interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 14 April 2006, Fort Bragg, NC, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.

Exfiltration



Captain Herbert R. Brucker with several of his Special Forces team conducting a field exercise in a German forest in 1955 (Neue Illustrierte, Cologne, Germany). Brucker had received 25 sets of U.S. Marine Corps camouflage fatigues for providing escape and evasion training to U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps pilots at Camp Mackall. Left to right: Captain Brucker, Master Sergeant Anthony Kuselka, Master Sergeant Myron "Mumbles" Johnson, Sergeant First Class Clyde "Doc" Knox, and Sergeant First Class Robert Stedman.



Captain Herbert R. Brucker applies camouflage before conducting a field exercise in a German forest in 1955 (Neue Illustrierte, Cologne, Germany).

After cutting through a barbed-wire fence Captain Brucker and his Special Forces team attack their target (Neue Illustrierte, Cologne, Germany).

