

# AIR FORCE BASIC TRAINING IN EUROPE 1951-1953

By Ralph A. Lurvey  
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March 2013

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In writing this history of the USAF Basic Training program in Europe I wish to acknowledge the official unit histories of the 7010<sup>th</sup> Personnel Processing Squadron in Sonthofen, Germany and the 7551<sup>st</sup> Personnel Processing Squadron in Sealand, England. They are recorded in detail in the Archives of the Air Force Historical Research Agency (AFHRA) Maxwell AFB, AL.

I have tried to summarize their sometimes redundant styles into a brief understanding of the times. Also, the current information available on the internet has proven to be a great asset in explaining the history of Burg Sonthofen. Check-out US Constabulary School, Sonthofen, Germany and Ordensburg Sonthofen.

## AIR FORCE BASIC TRAINING IN EUROPE 1951 – 1953

Headquarters USAFE in Wiesbaden, Germany initiated a program of recruitment on 5 April 1951 to enlist American citizens, presently residing in Europe, into the Air Force. It was a Twelfth Air Force responsibility to organize a basic training school designed to initiate basic and indoctrination training in order that these new airmen may more readily assume their responsibilities in the USAF. The school student load will be approximately 150 enlistees per class with the first class starting about 10 May 1951. The basic training course will be a 5 week course. The mission was to be responsible for the processing, indoctrination, classification, and basic military training of newly enlisted recruits in the United States Air Force in Europe.

The task fell upon the 7010<sup>th</sup> Personnel Processing Squadron located on *Ordensburg Sonthofen* a Kaserne, known as *Burg Sonthofen* in south-western Bavaria, Germany near the Swiss and Austrian borders. This is a winter sports area of Upper Allgaeu, at the foot of the Bavarian Alps. *Burg Sonthofen* had originally been constructed as a school known as the *Adolf Hitler Schule* to train youthful candidates for positions of leadership within the Nazi party.

The 7010<sup>th</sup> Pers Proc Sq had the responsibility of organizing and implementing the USAFE basic training center in Sonthofen, Germany. As of 30 June 1951 no classes of basic trainees had been graduated, although training was in progress. The bulk of these enlistees and reenlistees were recruits who were enlisted under the program to enlist 2500 aliens to take training at Sonthofen, Germany.

From July 1951 through February 1952, 187 men trained in basic principles of USAF life at Sonthofen, Germany. On 25<sup>th</sup> Feb 1952, because it was apparent that more enlistees were coming from the United Kingdom, the basic training program at 7010<sup>th</sup> Personnel Processing Sq at Sonthofen was deactivated.

The basic training section was transferred to the 7551<sup>st</sup> Personnel Processing Sq located at Sealand, Wales, United Kingdom under Hq 3<sup>rd</sup> Air Force. Graduation of the first two flights of 51 airmen was held 26 April 1952. Each subsequent flight undergoing training showed a marked decrease in personnel. The decrease in trainees coupled with lack of understanding of the American language resulted in a recommendation to discontinue the training center in the United Kingdom. A total of 278 recruits passed through RAF Sealand. The unit was inactivated

31 March 1953.

## USAF BASIC TRAINING IN EUROPE MEMORIES

I have been putting-off for many years of writing the history of the USAFE basic training in Europe in 1951 – 1953. Recently I received my second wake-up call to jot down my memories of AF basic training in Sonthofen, Germany in 1951. Looking back to the summer of 1951 as an Army Brat living in Bamberg, Germany I had recently graduated from Nurnberg High School. August found me knocking on the Air Force door in *Generaloberst-Best-Kaserne* in Sonthofen, Bavaria. Sonthofen is located in an enclave in south-western Bavaria near the Swiss and Austrian borders.

Our class, which was the third class at Sonthofen, included recruits from England, Germany, France, Spain, Norway and Denmark. New recruits were identified with AFSN AF 10 610 XXX, while those re-entering from prior service retained their old service number. We were a mixed trendy lot, doing our “hut-one-two, left-right-left”, some in AF Blues, some in O.D.’s, some wearing black shoes, some wearing brown shoes, some still wearing civilian shoes. Raw recruits graduated as PVT and prior service as PFC.

English language was a problem for many and as stated in the AF unit history was one reason for the close of AF Basic Training program in Europe. After graduating only 187 recruits in Sonthofen the USAFE program moved in March 1952 to RAF Station Sealand, Wales, England. Here too, the program failed, with only 278 recruits passing through Sealand. Between language problems and lack of new recruits, USAFE inactivated the basic training program 31 March 1953.

Thanks for waking me to the challenge to relate a little known USAF history before it gets lost in the cracks of time. This story would not be complete without a special acknowledgement to fellow Sonthofen grad MSgt Virgil Crosley. We departed the Bamberg Bahnhof together all those years ago in August 1951 to join the USAF in Sonthofen, Germany. These are our memories. *Erinnerung.*

In summary, the USAF Basic Training program in Europe was activated May 1951 in Sonthofen, Germany and moved in March 1952 to Sealand, United Kingdom where it was inactivated 31 March 1953. During its brief life of 20 months it gave military training to 465 Airmen; Sonthofen 187 and Sealand 278.

RALPH A LURVEY, MSgt, USAF (Ret)

AF 10 610 726

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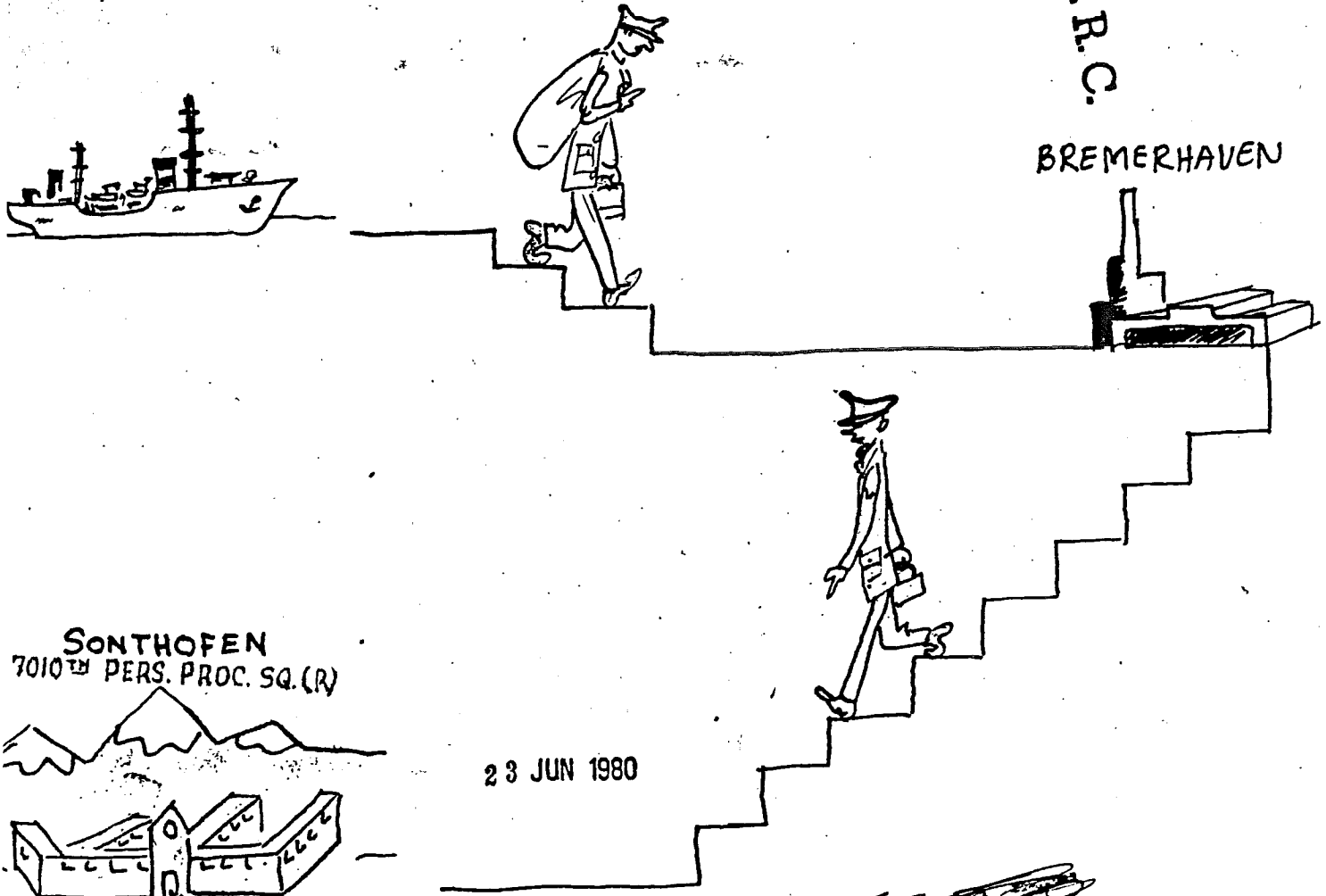
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JUL 1951

# History Of The 7010<sup>TH</sup> Personnel Processing Sqdn. (R)

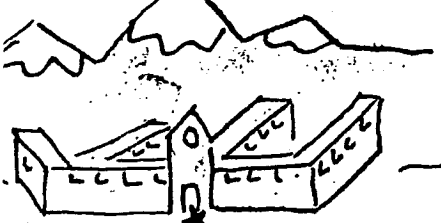
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U.S. ARMY

JULY 1951 TO 31 DECEMBER 1951



SONTHOFEN  
7010<sup>TH</sup> PERS. PROC. SQ. (R)



USA  
GERMANY  
FRANCE  
ENGLAND  
ITALY  
AUSTRIA

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SECURITY INFORMATION

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P.R.C.  
BREMERHAVEN

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HEADQUARTERS  
UNITED STATES AIR FORCES IN EUROPE

APO 633, USAF  
10 MAY 1951

OOPH 352

SUBJECT: Basic Training School

TO: Commanding General  
Twelfth Air Force  
APO 633, US Air Force

1. In accordance with recently announced USAF policy, the Air Forces in Europe initiated a program of recruitment on 5 April 1951. This program is designed to enlist American citizens, presently residing in Europe, into the Air Force.
2. In order for these enlistees to become a useful part of our team, it will be necessary that they receive proper guidance and instruction in the initial stages of their Air Force careers.
3. It will be the responsibility of the Twelfth Air Force to organize a basic training school designed to initiate basic and indoctrination training in order that these new airmen may more readily assume their responsibilities in the USAF. Available information indicates that school student load will be approximately 150 enlistees per class.
4. Estimated starting date of the first class is on or about 10 May 1951. Ensuing class starting dates will be at discretion of Commanding General, Twelfth Air Force.
5. It is a policy of this headquarters that instruction given Air Force basic recruits will be presented by Air Force instructor personnel. All instruction will be based on publications, policies, and procedures of the Air Force to insure the laying of a foundation for successful Air Force careers.

BY COMMAND OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL NORSTAD:

Tp: Wiesbaden 7383

/s/ J Kwasnik  
/t/ J. KWASNIK  
1st Lt USAF  
Asst AAG

A TRUE COPY:

*Francis R Stokes*  
FRANCIS R STOKES  
1st Lt USAF



OCPH-12 353

1st Ind

SUBJECT: Basic Training School

HEADQUARTERS, TWELFTH AIR FORCE, APO 633, US AIR FORCE 10 MAY 1951

TO: Commanding Officer, 7010th Personnel Processing Squadron (Replacement),  
APO 872, US Army

1. The mission of the 7010th Personnel Processing Squadron is amended to include the organization and operation of the USAFE Basic Training Center, and the mission letter is being revised accordingly.

2. Three (3) officer and twenty-eight (28) airmen spaces are being authorized to augment the present strength of the organization to allow for the operation of the basic training center.

3. Attached is a program of basic training to be used as a guide. Hours of training in each subject are approximate and may be adjusted to conform to a firm program prepared by the squadron staff. Initially, the basic training course will be designed as a 5-week course, to be altered as necessity dictates.

4. Starting dates of classes subsequent to that to which reference is made in basic communication will be determined by Squadron Staff and coordinated with ACS/A-1, this headquarters, to insure scheduled flow of trainee personnel.

5. Attention is invited to policy contained in paragraph 5, basic communication.

BY COMMAND OF MAJOR GENERAL STROTHER:

Added:

1 Incl:

1. Basic Training Program

/s/J Kwasnik

/t/J. KWASNIK

1st Lt USAF

Asst AAG

Tp: Wiesbaden 7383

A TRUE COPY:

*Francis R Stokes*

FRANCIS R STOKES

1st Lt USAF

# BURG SONTHOFEN

