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## Writer focused on war secrets speaks in East Berlin

**Shirley A. Knight**

*Staff Reporter/Dillsburg Banner*

Secrets of United States Prisoners of War that were kept for more than 40 years are now being revealed in the documentaries of one researcher, writer and producer.

David C. Taylor recently spoke and presented excerpts from three of his documentaries at a program by the East Berlin Historical Society held at the Veterans of Foreign Wars building in East Berlin.

A British-born American, Taylor is known widely for his documentary films and is winner of Peabody and Emmy awards and an independent producer for the British Broadcasting Channel, Public Broadcasting System, the History Channel, Arts and Entertainment and The Learning Channel.

To get to the real information for this project, he

also needed the help of the Central Intelligence Agency—and this was the information held secret for over 40 years.

Taylor has produced three independent films on the topic of how the U.S. government worked to save the lives of prisoners of war from World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War and to garner information about the enemy.

Working with the BBC, the CIA and the History Channel, he slowly unraveled the highly secret tale of intrigue and deception. "It is the true story behind the popular American movie 'The Great Escape,'" he said. "It is the story about how governments from several countries merged to get inside the prison system of their enemies during these three wars."

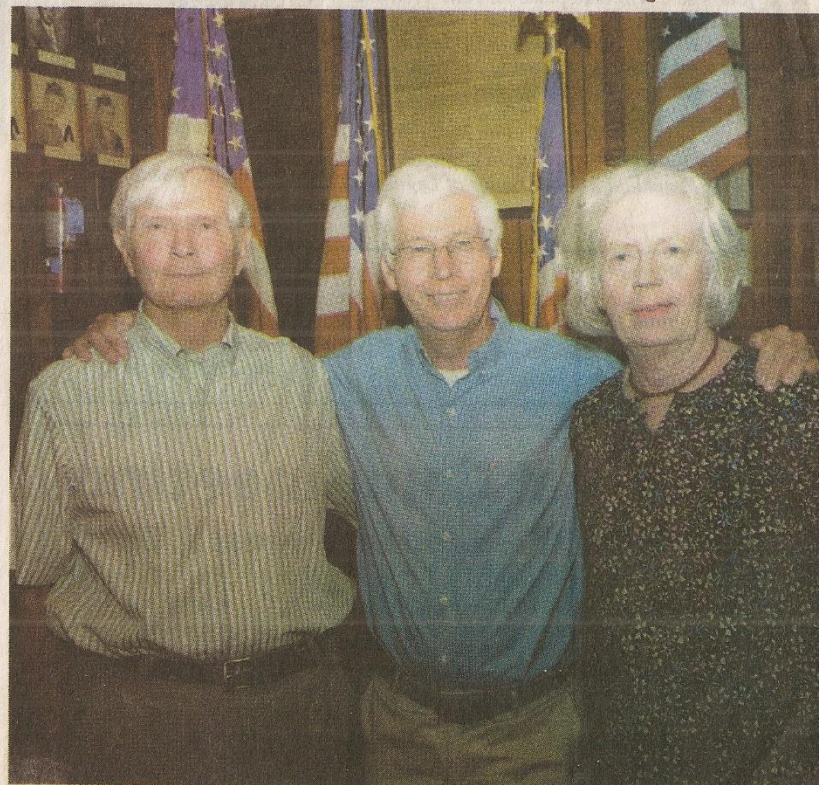
According to Taylor, governments often destroy or bury all information when wars come to an end.

He was trying to uncover the truth as to whether the prisoners indeed had a way of corresponding with the CIA during their incarceration. To produce a film for the Smithsonian, he needed to use information from the CIA on prisoner encryption of their letters home.

Another means of communication involved the use of Kool-Aid which seems humorous but proved quite useful. Prisoners were allowed to accept care packages occasionally so, a system was devised that involved the use of a special microscopic lens to gather the information from purple Kool-Aid.

Prisoners were held in 63 German camps during World War II and the communication issues were referred to as the Miss X Project, which was mounted out of Fort Hunter in

*See Writer speaks. 5A*



*Curt Werner/Dillsburg Banner*

On Wednesday, July 18, David Taylor, center, producer, director and writer, spoke to nearly 100 people at the East Berlin VFW sponsored by the East Berlin Historical Society. To his right is Michael Hrinyak, president of the East Berlin Historical Society and on his left is Lucia Hrinyak, East Berlin Historical Society board member.

## Writer speaks

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Virginia by the CIA. All information was still classified when Taylor began his research. He was eventually given tapes, film and letters.

The British devised the code system used and the U.S. joined the program in 1942. It involved letters home and care packages. Each officer was allowed three letters home and four post cards. These came through Ft. Hunter and were decoded before being sent home. Radios were sent into prisons hidden in cribbage boards. Planning the great escape included building three tunnels. In 1944, 77 men were caught trying to escape from Stalag III, three eventually got home.

During the Vietnam War no prisoners escaped the north and none escaped from Laos. In the question and answer period after the presentation, a question

came up about Jane Fonda's role in the war. Taylor made little comment except to tell one funny incident involving her that he uncovered. While she was making a speech to anti-war demonstrators, a letter was delivered from a prisoner and Fonda's cohorts did not know what it contained and passed it on to authorities, thus helping the war effort.

A few of the documentaries to look up for more information are: "The Escape Factory" on the National Geographic Channel, "JFK: A Presidency Revealed" on the History Channel, "Nixon: A Presidency Revealed" on the History Channel, "FDR: A Presidency Revealed" on the History Channel and "Perfect Valor: The Battle for Fallujah" a 90 minute film theatrical release.