

# World War II letter delivered after 40 years

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More than 40 years after World War II came to an end, a letter from a Russian prisoner of war was delivered to his family, thanks to the help of a Napoleon man.

Lee Quate was a platoon sergeant with the 104th infantry division during the war. While at war, his platoon freed a group of Soviet POWs near the Nordhausen concentration camp.

"When we freed those people, they scattered, they went home," Quate said. "But one of the Russian soldiers attached himself, you could say, to our platoon. ... He stayed with us for a couple weeks. Our platoon adopted him and he adopted us. We found him a G.I. uniform and weapons and he fought alongside us."

When the soldier eventually left, he gave Quate a letter and asked if he could mail it to his family. The postal service was unable to deliver it during the war, so Quate brought the letter home with him when the war ended.

Forty years later, Quate was at his home watching an episode of "Unsolved Mysteries" when he was reminded of the soldier's request. The episode involved a bag of letters from World War II, which had not been mailed to family and friends during the war. The show made it possible to have the letters mailed to their correct recipients, so Quate

decided to contact the show to see if the staff could help.

"Unsolved Mysteries" did manage to help Quate, by suggesting he contact the U.S.S.R. Embassy in Washington, D.C., which he did in August of 1988.

The Soviet Union vice-consul responded in September and was eager to help Quate, asking him to send the letter to the embassy so the soldier and his family could be located. In his letter, Quate had explained he and his platoon knew the soldier only as "Roosky," but the envelope and the embassy identified him as Victor Prokopenko.

Finally, Quate learned of the delivery of his letter in late May 1990.

"In turn, through their efforts and the Russian Red Cross, it was delivered to his family," Quate said.

Quate then sent a letter in December 1990 to Prokopenko explaining who he was and how his life changed since the war, telling him he and his wife Betty had two sons, a daughter and seven granddaughters.

Prokopenko responded with information on his life. He was retired and living in Germany with his wife. They have two sons, four grandsons and one great-grandson.

Since then, Quate and Prokopenko have ceased correspondence, due to difficulties with translation.

The event had slipped Quate's mind until he was recently leaf-

ing through items in his desk and uncovered the letters from Prokopenko, the embassy and "Unsolved Mysteries."

The delivery of the letter

nearly 40 years after its composition proves "it's a small world," Quate said.

*E-mail comments to [nwsignal@bright.net](mailto:nwsignal@bright.net).*



Photos courtesy of Lee Quate

**LETTER DELIVERED** - A letter from a Soviet POW was delivered more than 40 years after the conclusion of the war, with the help of "Unsolved Mysteries," the U.S.S.R. Embassy and Napoleon resident Lee Quate. Above right, Quate, the POW Victor Prokopenko and a truck driver take a break during the war and (at left) the envelope which sealed the letter to Prokopenko's family.