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Everett Perry

OPTION # 1

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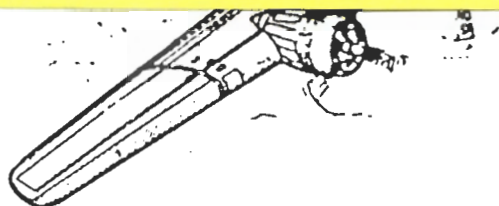
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EVERETT D. PEERY

B-17 PILOT



## INTRODUCTION

This Section of my life story covers a period that had a profound effect on my life. While I was in High School we were aware of the growth of Nazi Germany and the potential threat to the peace of the entire world. Some of my classmates joined the National Guard. In 1940, after I had been in college for one very unsuccessful year and one semester of much improved effort, I had an opportunity to learn to fly under the Civilian Pilot Training Program. This was an effort by the government to begin preparation for our participation in the conflict which seemed inevitable by that time.

With that effort, and the fact that I had two years of college by the time we entered the war, I wanted to become a military pilot.

I will always be grateful for the support I received from my wife, Lorys, all during those trying years.

This is not designed to be a history of the war or a profound discussion of the ethics of war, but a brief description of my small part in it.

## OVERSEAS

After about twenty months of training, we were finally ready to take part in the combat operations for which we had been preparing.

I had reported for duty on 11 November 1942 after having enlisted in May. I was assigned to Santa Ana, California for Basic Military training and Pre-flight. I was a part of the Class of 43-I.

From Santa Ana I was sent for Primary Flight Training at Cal-Aero Flying School. This was a "Private" Flying school just south of Ontario, California. We flew the Stearman Bi-plane designated the PT-13. Since I had a private pilot license from training in the Civilian Pilot Training program (CPT), I was among the first to solo.

My Basic Flight training was at Merced Army Air Field. It was located where Castle Field is now. I went through the anxiety of a "Check Ride" there, but was able to continue my flight training.

The next assignment was to a rather desolate spot just a few miles north of Douglas, Arizona. This was Advanced Fight Training in a Twin engine aircraft called the Cessna "Air-car." It was designated the C-78 or AT-17. I really enjoyed flying that plane.

After receiving my Silver Wings and a Commission as a Second Lieutenant, I was assigned to Hobbs, New Mexico for transition training in the B-17. This was one of the "Heavy" bombers. I developed a life-long attachment to that airplane.

When I had finished training at Hobbs, I was sent to Avon Park Florida where I trained my crew of six enlisted men and four officers.

Our training was finished the first part of June. Our Training Group was then designated a Provisional Group for overseas deployment. We went from Florida to Savannah, Georgia then to Camp Kilmer for our final outfitting before going overseas. We received gas masks and other equipment and some last minute training. I was appointed Group Education Officer and scheduled a variety of training exercises. There were times when I was alone watching a training film. The others seemed to have more important things to take care of.

On June 30, we were taken aboard a ship headed for "Overseas." We travelled in convoy for about two weeks and arrived in Liverpool, England and spent about ten days in a "Replacement Pool." I had sent the enlisted men from my crew along with the enlisted men from the crew of John Haba, our Provisional Group Commander, to help with the luggage for the group. They got to see some country the others didn't see and enjoyed this special assignment.

## THE PROUD 95th BOMB GROUP

When my Crew had finished their special assignment with the luggage they came to the replacement depot and we received orders. After about ten days at the depot, we were assigned to the 95th Bomb Group at a Field located a short distance from the little village of EYE. We started attending classes, learning about the new field, receiving an issue of clothes, getting passes, and taking trips to town. We became acquainted with Base Operations, Missions, the Planes, and the Field. We found out where Headquarters was located, bought Bicycles, and visited the Officers Club. We were assigned sleeping quarters in a Quonset Hut with the officers from a couple of other crews. Our enlisted men were in a Hut across the walk from us. Joe and I each bought a bicycle to use on and off the base. It was convenient, but we didn't use them long. We watched the planes take off on missions and return. We went by train to Norwich and Ipswich and walked into the town of EYE a few times. There seemed to be no square corners. The streets were crooked and branched off at odd angles. Practice missions, briefings, target study and talk with combat men all helped prepare us for our first mission.

### 'STAND-BY'

We became "Operational" after about four weeks and were listed for our first mission. As night settled on the peaceful English Countryside, we strolled leisurely back from the mess hall to our hut. It was August 24, 1944 and at the top of the little hill in the Squadron Area, we glanced automatically at the call flag. A white and yellow "Stand-by" flag moved lazily in the gentle breeze, but we thought little of it since we had not had the customary initiation run. We were told that the Pilot would fly as a co-pilot with a seasoned crew and perhaps some of the other crewmen would fly with other crews before we were sent out together.

We lived with two other crews and we all settled into some pastime or amusement for the evening. Jim Daniels started a poker game on one of the beds with some of the men. Larry Kleinman, worried about his wife who was about to make a presentation. She was very demanding and he was constantly worried about her and borrowed money to send to her. He worried about the baby like a hen with a brood of chickens and we all teased him good naturedly about it. He just naturally got the name, "Junior." He sat in on the Poker game because he was confined by the flag.

Joe Merlo, sat at the table surrounded by his correspondence and proceeded to turn out letters. He has a firm sense of justice and a strong standard of morals. He is ambitious and anything he attempts will be done with the full force of his energy and zeal. He is always busy. I have grown to depend upon him more than anyone I have ever worked with.

### A SURPRISE

As the evening passed, I read a little, wrote a letter or two and went to bed to rest for the mission, just in case. I was reading when word came in that we were ON THE LIST!

Joe looked at me with that understanding look that men develop after working closely and dependently with one another for some time. Words were unnecessary. We were both thinking, wondering what was in store for us on the mission tomorrow. Would we hit fighters? Would we come back? Would all of the men be alive? So Many things could happen.

The Poker game soon broke up formally and continued as individual bets. Jr. decided to go in for high stakes and lost 40 English Pounds. Jim lost almost that much before they decided to go to bed.

I lay awake thinking for a while. Afraid, Yes. I think a man is a fool if he isn't afraid of battle. The man who overcomes that fear is brave and everyone enjoys being called brave. I had a brave crew.

The men on my crew could do the job this mission would require and would do it efficiently and without hesitation. I wondered how I would react if one of the men were killed. I asked the Great Power for His assistance and protection and soon my thoughts changed to dreams.

#### PREPARATIONS

I was awakened by the light when the orderly came in. "It's four o'clock, Sir." he announced. "Briefing in Room A."

"OKay, Sgt., Thanks." I said and raised up on one elbow, watching him as he left to call the crews for the mission. I yawned, stretched, threw back the covers and rolled out. I looked over at Joe and saw him sitting up putting on his clothes. I called quietly to Jim as I pulled on my pants. Joe jumped down from his bunk and called Jr.

I picked up my kit, towel and flashlight and started out to the wash house. Outside it was black as pitch and pretty cool on my bare shoulders. As I passed another Hut, I noticed the lights were on and my crew was up, so I hurried on.

Joe came in and we washed by the light of our flashes, shivered with the cold and joked about the card game, the darkness and about what we expected to consume for breakfast in preparation for a long mission. Jim came in and swore light-heartedly about different things and things in general. We left him and started back to the hut. A flashlight was moving toward us in the darkness and I recognized Jr. "Make it snappy, Chum!" I said, "The trucks are already waiting."

We dressed carefully to be sure we had candy, pencil, paper and various and sundry other incidentals we might need or wish we had. Jim and Jr. came in and soon we were all ready to leave. We stumbled through the darkness to the waiting trucks and climbed in the back. The truck growled off toward the mess hall and we sat huddled up in the darkness as the wind whipped in under the canvas. We hopped out at the mess hall and went in to get our bacon and eggs. We ate plenty and took our time because it would be a long time before we would eat again. When we were finished, we climbed back in the truck and Jim and I were taken to the Briefing room. The other men went on out to the plane.

## BEYOND BERLIN!

When we got a look at the map, we saw a red line running all the way past Berlin. Long! Yes, it was pretty long and we were putting up quite a few ships. We got our assignment and were given the information for the trip and then grabbed a truck and rode out to the plane. It was getting light when Jim and I arrived at the plane, we were on double daylight savings time. We found the men busy placing guns and checking the ship. We gave her a once over and satisfied ourselves that things were in order. Joe was placing his guns in the nose and said things looked good up there.

## A SPECIAL B-17

"Natchasha" (It looked a little like HAMAWA.) was the name on the nose of the ship. We asked the crew chief what it meant. He said, "It's Russian meaning 'First Born.' This was the first ship to land on a shuttle run to Russia and was given that name there." He assured us that She was OK and warned me to watch the brakes because they were new.

Sgt. Maffetone, came and told me that everything was in, checked and ready. I went in to check the radio. Sgt. Sulick, our radio operator, was working on the liaison set when I came in. "Everything is OK, Sir." he said as he removed his head-set.

"Fine, you can check again when we are airborne. I want all the crew outside pretty quick." I said and crawled out.

The crew gathered by the rear hatch just before engine time and I explained the mission. "We are flying in low element of the low group of the low wing. We stay low for a while and climb before we get to the enemy coast up near Denmark. I'll tell you when you can check your guns. Stay on interphone and keep your eyes open. We were warned about the new German Jet fighters on the way back, so be pretty careful. Any Questions? OK, All Aboard."

## AWAY WE GO

We climbed in and settled ourselves. At engine time we started and checked them. Everything was in order. A steady line of planes was moving along the taxi-way in front of us. Time to move out and we motioned for the chocks to be kicked out and we started to roll. We moved into line and followed onto the runway. Our take-off time was 0830:30. We locked the tail wheel and Jim started the count-down as I advanced the throttles and held the brakes. We were at fullthrottle as Jim counted four, three, two and at one, I released the brakes and we started to roll. "Hang on. This is it!" I called over the interphone as we slowly gained flying speed. At sixty, Jim started calling out the airspeed. She's pretty heavy with a full load of bombs and full Tokyos. Near the end of the runway. It felt like we were in the air and I called for "Gear Up." Jim flipped the lever without hesitation. Only then did I realize that we were still on the ground. I eased the Yoke forward to keep her on the ground a few seconds longer and then pulled back hard as the end of the runway raced toward us. We staggered into the air and averted disaster. I had never taken off with such a heavy load before and had been caught following procedure instead of "feeling" my aircraft.

We circled to the right to move into formation and relaxed as much as possible as we circled for rendezvous. Soon, we turned from the coast and moved out across the North Sea. The guns were checked, turrets, oxygen, radio and the plane in general. All OK.

#### ANOTHER SURPRISE

Up ahead we could see a bank of clouds. We had been told that we should be able to fly under the front that stretched across the North Sea and our route. Without warning the planes in front of us started to disappear and we were alone in a sea of whiteness. There had been some open space to our right as we entered the cloud, so I started a gentle right turn. This was real "Blind" flying. I was on instruments as we started a gentle spiraling climb up through the cloud. The intercom was quiet and I knew the crew was hoping I knew what I was doing! A couple of times the plane shuddered as we crossed through the turbulence from another plane. At something above 10,000 feet we broke out on top! B-17s were all over the sky. Some in small formations and many more flying singly or in pairs. Where was our formation?

#### A MAKESHIFT FORMATION

I decided to continue to fly on our assigned route and we moved over to check out some of the small formations. A plane came and positioned itself on my wing. At last we found some of the ships from our formation and we moved into position to fly with them. The plane from my wing moved over to another position and I was in the Tail-end-Charlie position again.

We went on Oxygen at 12,000 feet, as we continued to climb to reach 21,000 over the target. Jr. warned us that we were getting close to the coast of Denmark. Off in the distance to the left we could see little black puffs and knew that the ships over there were getting some flak. On all sides there were formations of planes as far as we could see and sprinkled among them were the protecting fighters.

Interphone was kept pretty busy with reports. Things were going pretty well. We emptied the Tokyos and everything was going smoothly. We flew over the Baltic Sea and after an hour or so it was time to turn south and then west toward the I.P. Everything was checked again and all was in readiness. Our target was an oil refinery near the city of Stettin, located on the estuary of the Oder River northeast of Berlin. We could see formations in front of us that must be nearing the Initial Point (IP). They were starting to line up on the target.

#### CHARGE

Instead of being 500 feet below the group in front of us, we were following at the same altitude. The German Gunners were able to get us in their sights with no problem!

Leaving the I.P., we could see ahead of us a black cloud of Flak Smoke forming over the target and knew this was going to be no picnic. Joe's voice came over the intercom, "This is the I.P. You can start the Chaff."

"Bomb bay doors coming open."



"Bomb bays, Clear."

The formation straightened out and tightened up preparing to drop those eggs. The lead group was being hit. We were moving into that black cloud entirely too fast! The Flak was on us now. The black puffs were exploding around the lead ships. There was some over to the left. They had our altitude perfectly.

#### WE LOSE ONE

The plane shuddered from a near-miss between our right engines. I called for Jim to check #4. "We are loosing oil from #3!" Sgt. Natt called from the waist. As the oil pressure started to drop, Jim started to move his hand toward the feathering button. I looked at him and nodded my head and he feathered the prop. This made it more difficult to keep in formation. I moved the other three engines to "Military Power" to try to keep in position.

A ship just ahead of us got a direct hit in #3 engine. It rolled into a bank and started down. The black bursts of Flak were getting closer every second. "Can you get in a little closer?" Joe called. I tried to move in, then the bombs started to go. The flak was sprinkling against the ship and we could see the red flash as the shells burst near us.

"Bombs Away!"

"Roger, get those doors closed. We got a hit in the bays."

One of the planes just ahead of us exploded from a direct hit. My view was through the astrodome on the nose which gave it an eerie, distorted image as it disappeared below the nose of my plane. We could hear the Flak very clearly over the roar of the engines and the fragments sounded like hail on the wings and fuselage. Then suddenly, we were out of the Flak. I pulled the throttles back to save the three remaining engines and we started to drop back from the formation. I called for a report if anyone had been hit.

"Tail OK."

"Waist OK"

"Ball OK"

"Top OK"

"Nose OK"

Jim gave me the OK sign with his fingers and checked the engine instruments. I motioned for him to take over and pressed the mike button. "Is everyone OK?" I asked. "Let's have a little check. We are dropping back a little with three engines. We have several large holes in the right wing and a few smaller holes in the left wing. Report your conditions. Over."

"No hits in the tail. Can I come out and relieve myself?"

"Better wait a little bit till we get clear."

"We have several holes in the waist. One of them is big enough for us to get out of without using the hatch." Natt reported.

Sulick reported that the command radio had been hit, but we still had some radios operating. Maffetone leaned down from his top turret and gave me the OK sign. Detweiler said there was no damage to the ball and asked if he could come out. I told him that he could come out now and told Sutphin to come out also. Within a few minutes, the fact that those two men were out of their positions might well have saved their lives.

Joe reported that there was a good sized hole in the plexiglass of the nose and he had stuck his helmet in the hole to reduce the wind and he was holding it there with his foot. Jim indicated that he was OK and I had a small scratch on my left cheek just below my eye. I had at times knicked myself worse than that while shaving. Jim and I were sitting on our flak vests and our helmets were still hanging on the backs of our seats.

#### ABANDON SHIP

I called Jr. and asked him for a heading to get to Sweden. I thought that perhaps, if we had lost enough fuel and could lose another engine, we might make it to Sweden so we could be interned there. He didn't have a quick answer.

"Fire in #4, Sir!" Natt called.

Jim and I snapped our heads to the right to confirm this frightening message from our waist gunner. I signaled for Jim to try the Fire Extinguisher. He pulled the lever and we could see the flames withdraw for a few seconds only to flair back brighter than before.

As the flames started to show along the trailing edge of the wing and move closer to the fuselage, I spoke to my crew on intercom. I gave them our altitude and general location and told them to prepare to abandon ship. I suggested that they try to delay opening their chutes until they got down into air with more oxygen.

As the flames moved closer to the fuselage, I ordered, "Abandon Ship."

Since Sutphin and Detweiler were in the waist with Natt, I was sure they would have no special problems. (Later I learned that Sulick and Sutphin were the last to leave from the rear hatch.)

By this time we had dropped some distance behind and below the formation and I could see the north coast of Germany not far ahead. We would soon be out over the water. I started to set the auto-pilot, hoping it would help keep the unstable aircraft from falling into a spin before I was able to get out. Sgt. Maffetone helped me snap on my chest-pack parachute and I motioned for him to go on out. Jim was checking to see that everything was ready for us to leave, then he followed Maffetone.

#### ALONE AT LAST

I set the Auto-pilot, turned it on and called once more on intercom to see if anyone was still hooked up. I got no response. The auto-pilot seemed to be holding the plane pretty steady, so I swung my feet out and **looked back into the bomb bays.** I couldn't see into the Radio Room because of **the smoke and flames.** I dropped down into the tunnel and crawled up so I could **look out the side of the front compartment at the lower surface of the right wing.** **It was engulfed in smoke and flame.**

I swung around and put my feet out the hatch into the 160 mph slipstream. I said, "Lord, you have brought me this far, now it is all up to you!" (I'm not really alone!) I looked down to the earth five miles below and rolled out.

I seemed to be spinning and I felt as if I might pass out. I thought it would be better to open my 'chute at this altitude than to pass out and not come to before I "cratered."

I pulled the rip cord and the parachute began to open. When it was deployed I was jerked upright and swung violently for a few swings before I could get it under control. I looked up at that 'chute and thought I had never seen anything more beautiful in my life.

#### ONLY SECONDS TO SPARE

I looked immediately for the plane. I found the smoke trail and followed it northward with my eyes. Just as I sighted the plane, there was an explosion and the right wing seemed to come off and the plane went into a spiraling spin. I was glad the Lord had let me get out before the wing came off.

Suddenly I realized how quiet it was! I started to sing, "Nearer, My God, To Thee." It seemed quite appropriate at the time.

I tried to whistle, but my mouth was dry. I worked at getting saliva to flow and finally got enough to spit. I thought, this will be a long distance spitting record. When I spit, it started down and then it started back up toward me! I said, "Don't you dare get on me!" as it passed me and went on up into the canopy. Then, it turned around and went down past me again and went out of sight.

I looked for other parachutes and then down at the ground to see where I might land. I could see that I was right near the coast and seemed to be moving toward the water. I drifted down over a town and I thought I heard a shot. I said, "Hey, that isn't fair!" I heard no more shots.

I realized that I was about to land in the water. I tried to unbuckle my parachute harness so I wouldn't be tangled in it in the water. I hit the water and tried to swim up-wind so I wouldn't come up under my 'chute. On the surface, I pulled the string to inflate my "Mae West." I got one section to inflate, but couldn't get the other one inflated until I got my parachute harness unbuckled and clear.

The water was choppy enough that waves were spashing over my head. It was much better when I got the second half of my life vest inflated. I looked around to see which direction I wanted to try to go to get to shore. I saw a small fishing boat coming toward me.

#### RESCUED

The boat swung around, the sail dropped and the boat stopped just a few feet from me. I started swimming toward it and the old man held a boat hook out toward me and drew me over to the side of the boat. He gestured and asked if I had a gun. I was glad I could assure him that I had none. He motioned to a young boy who came and helped him pull me aboard. I was exhausted! The old fisherman took off my jacket and noticed the un-opened pack of cigarets in my shirt pocket. He

asked if he could have them. Sure! I was just carrying them for Jim since I didn't smoke. He tossed my jacket to the boy and he put it below deck. I lay sprawled on the deck shivering with the cold, but enjoying the warmth of the sun.

"Grandpa" raised the sail and we swung around and gained speed. In a couple of minutes I could see someone in the water ahead. Grandpa deftly swung the boat around and stopped just a few feet from the bobbing head. He reached out with the boat hook and Sutphin was drawn to the side of the boat. After the same ritual about the gun, he was pulled aboard.

My tail gunner moved over near me and lay down on the deck. "We didn't make it did we, Sir?" was his greeting.

INTO THE HANDS OF THE ENEMY

INTERROGATION

KRIEGIE HOME

KEEPING BUSY

## INTO THE HANDS OF THE ENEMY

Just as we finished our greetings and had checked on each other's health, we became aware of a motor launch heading our way. It came along side and we were told through more gestures and some shouted commands, to get on board the launch. We stood in a small well-deck just behind the little cabin. A German soldier stood next to the cabin watching us. In the bow of the boat was a man who was handling the boat and a German Officer. This was the first time I had actually seen a German Swastika up close.

Sgt. Sutphin had kept his parachute and was allowed to bring it on board the launch where it lay at our feet. His shoes were tied to the harness. The soldier was watching us like a hawk. We could see the hate in his face. He had a luger on his belt and we had no intention of crossing him. The boatman started back toward the dock in the little town. He and the Officer seemed to be continuing a conversation.

Sgt. Sutphin wanted to get his shoes off the parachute harness and onto his feet. There was no telling how far we might have to walk once we were ashore. He motioned down to his shoes and then reached down to pick them up. The German Soldier, a Feltwebel, or Sgt., seemed to understand. Sutphin started trying to untie the knot with his fingers. Since the laces were soaked and the knot had become very tight, he was unable to get it started.

### FEAR + ANGER = BEATING

He brought the knot up to his face and started to try to loosen the knot with his teeth. Suddenly, the Feltwebel took exception to this action and knocked the shoes out of Sutphin's hands and struck him in the face with the back of his hand. I stiffened and involuntarily started to move to defend my Tail Gunner and was kicked in the stomach, by the angry German, for my action. As I bent over from the kick to the stomach, he lifted my head with a blow to my face. He shouted, "Luftgangsters!" and "Swinehund!" as he punished me. I bobbed back and forth with the alternating kicks and blows two or three times and Sgt. Sutphin started to move to come to my aid. He received a quick kick and blow to the face and I said, "Hold it!" The Feltwebel had drawn his Luger and might have killed us both on the spot. We both stood very still and the punishment ended with a command from the German Officer who, at that moment, seemed to become aware of the commotion at the stern of the boat.

### ON GERMAN SOIL

We were soon at the dock and ordered to move out ahead of the Germans. Sgt. Sutphin was able to carry his parachute in his stocking feet as we walked out across the courtyard in the center of the town. Fortunately, I had my regulation, high top (6 inch) Army shoes and was fully clothed.

We were taken into what seemed to be the Police Station and told to take off all our clothing. They could not speak English and neither of us could speak German, but we were made to understand by gestures and shouted commands. They examined our clothes and searched us, then allowed us to put our clothes back on. Sgt. Sutphin was able to get his shoes and put them on. They took everything we had in our pockets.

## OUR FIRST CELL

We were led out a back door and through a small open space to a gate fastened with a chain and padlock. Beyond that gate was a small courtyard with some rabbit hutches along the wall. To the right was an open door to a small room about three meters wide and four meters long. We moved into the room and the door was shut and locked behind us. We could hear them as they went out the gate and locked it with the chain and padlock. Then it was very quiet! We stood listening to their departing footsteps and then started talking in whispers to each other. We wondered what had happened to the other men in the crew. Had they all gotten out OK? Sutphin said he had been the last man out the back hatch and they had all gotten out with no problems. I knew all the men up front had gotten out. How long before we would know about them? How long before our loved ones at home would learn that we had been shot down, were missing and Prisoners? How soon would they know we were not hurt?

We started examining our quarters. Along the back or south wall, opposite the door, was a kind of wooden bench. It had a slanted board at each end. This was a kind of wooden bed and the slanted boards were the pillows. In the west wall was a tiny window up near the ceiling. It was too high to see out, except by standing on the bed, and there was nothing we could see anyway except another wall. It was the only source of light in the room except for a crack around the door.

## WAITING

We were both exhausted and lay down on the wooden benches. After I had a short conversation with the Lord, asking that he would be with my loved ones and that the men on my crew continue in his care, I dropped off to sleep.

We had gotten up at four that morning and after our take-off at about eight thirty, we had spent a rather tense five hours flying into enemy territory. Then, we had experienced an unforgettable trauma of being shot down, escaping by parachute and were then taken prisoner. We had not eaten for about eight hours. We were exhausted, physically and emotionally.

## MORE OF THE CREW

We were awakened a short time later when we heard the chain on the outer gate rattle as the lock was being opened. We could hear footsteps approaching and a key in the lock of the cell door. As the door swung open the light was bright in our eyes, but it didn't keep us from seeing that it was men from the crew! Lt. Joe Merlo and Sgt. Maffetone were carrying Sgt. Detweiler who had broken his foot when he landed. Lt. James Daniels, Sgt. Natt and another Lt. followed them into the cell.

We greeted each other quietly, but with great emotion. I inquired about Detweiler and we 'counted noses.' Lt. Larry Kleinman, who had been the first man out the front hatch, and Sgt. Sulick, Radio Operator, were missing. We hoped they would be brought in soon, or that they might evade capture. We learned that the Lt. was a fighter pilot who had been shot down in the area.

We talked in whispers and learned what we could about how each of us had gotten out of the plane, where and how we landed and been taken prisoner. We tried to make Detweiler as comfortable as possible on one of the wooden benches and we sat or stood and talked. It was getting well into the evening when we heard the chain and a soldier came and opened the cell door. He set a pail on the floor, closed and locked the door and was gone. The pail had a gallon or so of small, new potatoes. They had been boiled and were still warm. They had not been washed and the bottom of the pail was covered with a layer of sand. On top of the potatoes was some salt in a folded piece of paper. This was our first meal.

#### YO-YO POTATOES

As we started to help ourselves to the tiny potatoes, I suggested that, since we had not eaten for some sixteen hours, that we eat slowly and not too much, too fast. We took the skins off because the potatoes had not been washed, touched them to the salt and enjoyed these tasty tidbits. Although I had cautioned the others to eat slowly and only a little bit at a time, thinking this might help us from having upset stomachs, guess who, after eating only a half dozen marble-sized potatoes, lost them back into the empty bucket a short time later!

#### AS NIGHT CAME

It soon started to get quite dark and we were all very tired. Joe slept with Detweiler on one of the 'beds.' He tried to keep him warm and as comfortable as possible. They had one blanket to wrap around them. Jim and the Fighter Pilot took the other bed and shared a blanket. Since Sutphin and I still had damp clothes from our swim, we were given the privilege of sleeping in the middle. We spread one blanket on the floor to lie on and covered ourselves with the other. Maffetone slept on the outside next to me and Natt was on the other end. We did get some rest, even with four in the "bed." We got up when it started to get light the next morning.

#### A TRAINING BASE

We waited to see what was going to happen to us. It was after noon when we finally heard the chain on the outside gate rattle and finally our door was opened. They took us back through the Police Station and some young soldiers took us out to a truck. They were given the package that held all our personal items. We got in the truck and drove out across the countryside. I was impressed with how clean and orderly the farmsteads seemed to be.

Jim was 'dying' for a smoke. He asked one of the guards for a cigarette. He said he didn't have one. Jim told him there were some among his things in the package of our belongings. The guard opened the package and found the cigarettes and let Jim have one. Jim offered one to each of the guards and they accepted them with much pleasure and put the pack back in the bundle.

After a while we noticed that we were approaching some kind of military facility. There was an airplane flying toward us and as it turned, the guard pointed to it and said, "AT-6." Sure enough, it was an American AT-6, a single engine, low-wing mono-plane with retractable gear that was used as an ~~Advanced Trainer~~ for single engine "Fighter" pilots.



We entered the front gate of this training base and were taken to the office of the Base Commander. We were lined up in front of him and he started asking questions in German. We were unable to understand the words, but we could understand the gestures to some degree. He asked who the "Führer" was and I said I was. From then on he directed his questions to me. He said that we would get our things back later. We were to be there one night. That was about all I was able to understand.

#### THIS WAS BETTER

We were taken to the Guardhouse and placed in rooms or cells. Since I was the "Führer," I was given a room by myself. The other men were doubled up. There were blankets and sheets on the bed with springs and I had a window so I could look out on the grounds. After a short time a guard came in with a dish of food! There was a large piece of bread, about an eighth of a pound of margarine, a nice large piece of cheese and a piece of baloney. I was very hungry. I had only had those Yo-Yo potatoes since breakfast at five o'clock the day before.

I said, in my beginners German, "Wasche zimmer." (Wash room) He was surprised that I said something that sounded like German.

He said, "Sprechen Sie Deutsche?" ("Do you speak German?")

I said, "Nicht sehr gute!" (Not very good.) We continued to try to communicate in German. He took me to the bathroom and let me wash my hands and face. This was the first time I had washed since I left England, except in the Baltic. When I finished, he took me back to my room.

I said, "Ich habe kein messer." (I have no knife.) Without hesitation he handed me his bayonet! I used it to cut the bread, slice some cheese and cut a few slices of baloney. I spread some of the "butter" on some slices of bread and handed the knife back to him. He wiped it on his pant leg and put it back in the scabbard.

He sat and visited with me while I ate this delicious food. He asked how I had learned to speak German and I told him I had only taken a course in college for a couple of months. He seemed quite impressed and I think, under different circumstances we might have been friends. I didn't eat but about half of the food because I didn't know when my next meal might come. This was a pattern I followed most of the time I was in Germany.

I slept well that night. I knew there was nothing I could do at this point, but wait and do as I was told. I knew my family would be notified and I expected to get home sometime.

#### OFF AGAIN

The next morning I was awakened by the cadence count of a troop of soldiers passing the Guardhouse. I looked out and watched them and continued to look out the window until I heard the door being unlocked. I was told to get all my things, which was not difficult, and come with him. The other men were already in the front office and an Officer spoke to us.

Detweiler became quite agitated because he thought the Officer had said we were going to be taken out and shot! I said, "No, we are going to be taken to a train station in the truck outside. If we tried to escape we would be shot."

The German Officer nodded his head and said, "Ya, Ya." and we were lead out to the truck.

After another rather short ride of less than an hour, we came to a small village and stopped at the train station. After a short time the train arrived and we were put aboard. It was interesting to see the German countryside. After a while we started to see less farm land and more houses. We were soon in the huge train station in Berlin. I hoped there wouldn't be an air raid while we were there! It was evident that this had been the target of many air raids. However, it seemed that the trains were moving in and out pretty regularly.

We were moved into a kind of corner area and the two guards stood in front of us. They didn't seem very concerned that we were going to try to escape and we gave them no reason to worry. With all the armed soldiers that were moving around in the area we were not about to bring attention to ourselves.

#### AN UNCOMFORTABLE SITUATION

At one point, some civilians stopped and looked at us and a couple of them shouted at us, but the guards quickly moved them away. One of the men said he needed to go to the bathroom and I told the guard. One of them took three of the men to the men's room while the other stayed with the rest of us. After a few hours, a train moved onto the track in front of us. A German Officer with a very attractive, well dressed, woman, evidently wanted to go on that train, but was told there was no room because this group of Prisoners had to be taken on that train. He walked over and started to talk to one of our Guards. It became evident that he was suggesting that one or more of us should be allowed to try to escape and he would shoot us so he would have room to ride on the train!

Our guards took a protective stance in front of us and refused to participate in this scheme. I stepped over behind the guards in front of my men and Joe moved up to my side ready to support the Guards. The officer offered a rather nasty comment and walked away. There was a special unspoken understanding as the guard's eyes met mine.

#### ALL NIGHT TRAIN RIDE

Not long after this incident, we were moved onto the train. All eight of us were squeezed into a space usually designed for no more than six. It wasn't long before the train started to move and we were on our way to some unknown destination. It was getting dark as we moved out of the station and we traveled all night. Early the next morning we pulled into a small station and were taken off the train. This town was Wetzler. We marched some distance to a group of buildings where we were moved into separate cells. That was the last time I was to see our enlisted men until after our liberation. We were given no indication as to what was to happen and there were no "Good-byes."

## DULAG

My cell was about two meters by three meters with a cot with metal springs along one wall. On it was a pad filled with straw and every variety of tick, bedbug and louse known to man! There was a barred window looking out on a small, empty courtyard. This was to be my quarters for the next three or four days.

We had three meals a day. For breakfast we had a piece of hard, dry bread and a cup of luke warm water that had a peculiar taste. It was supposed to be tea. At noon we had a cup of watery soup. We really didn't want to know what was in it. In the evening we had another slice of bread with a hint of jam on it. The entre' was a cup of stew made with potatoes and some unknown vegetable.

## BEGIN THE BEGUINE

Joe had a favorite song that was popular before we left the States, "Begin the Beguine." While we were separated in solitary confinement at Wetzler, each time I was allowed out of my cell, I would whistle that tune. I hoped Joe would hear and let me know where he was. I never got any response and later Joe told me he hadn't heard me whistle.

## INTERROGATION

I was allowed out of my cell twice during the next day to go to the bathroom. In the morning of the second day I was taken to an office for interrogation. Behind a large desk was a rather small man who casually asked me to sit down. He asked my name, rank and serial number. Then he started to ask questions about our raid. What was the target? What Group was I assigned to? Who was my commanding officer? What position did I fly? Etc. I answered with my name, or "I don't know." I can't remember." "They didn't tell me."

After a little bit, he smiled and started telling me what my target was, where I was captured, the position I flew in the formation and said that I had gone to Norich the day before we were scheduled for the mission! He knew more about me than I knew. He told me the name of my commander, which I didn't know.

Then, he said, "You are from Idaho. Do you know where Bear County Idaho is?"

When I said, "Yes, I know where it is," he told me that he had herded sheep in Bear County for three years before the war. He had come back to Germany and taught school for a few years before he became an interrogator. A plump, young woman came into the room with some papers. When she left, he said something about how she didn't look like she was starving!

## SPECIAL TREATMENT?

Soon after that I was taken back to my cell. After noon, I was taken out to a small closet-like space with a sink. I was given some soap and a razor that seemed to have been used by every prisoner since the war started. I used plain soap to try to soften my beard and then scraped it off the best I could. I'm not sure it was better than having the five days of stubble. After I had finished, the guard took me back to my cell and there was a book lying on my cot. It was some kind of "Western" novel. It did help me pass some time.

## RED CROSS

Late the next afternoon I was taken out into a fenced-in area and Joe came over to meet me. He had gotten there earlier in the day. That evening we walked about a mile to another enclosure. There were a couple of buildings and a shed that looked something like a hay shed with no wall on the south side.

An American Officer called us together and told us we were in a retention camp where we would be held until there were enough prisoners to fill the Prison train that would take us to our Prison. He answered many of our questions and gave us some information about what was going on with the war. He told us that our folks would be informed of our whereabouts shortly and re-assured us considerably about our future. We had a pretty good evening meal which made us feel better.

The most important thing was the gift we received from the International Red Cross. Each of us was given a small suitcase type box similar to the one my brother sent his laundry home in while he was in college. It was made of a high density material about an eighth of an inch thick molded into a separate top and bottom about twenty one inches long and twelve inches wide and six inches deep. There were two, half-inch, woven fabric straps with buckles fastened to the bottom part of the box to hold it closed and a fabric handle.

The contents of the box were also very important for us. It contained, a toothbrush and tube of paste, a comb, a bar of soap, a wash cloth and a towel. There was a safety razor with blades and a heavy brown knit sweater. A note pinned on the inside of the neck of the sweater gave the name and address of the lady in New Jersey who had knit and sent it. Unfortunately, I lost this note during the next several months and was never able to express my appreciation to her. That sweater helped to keep me more comfortable during the cold winter to come. The box itself was very important to me at a later time.

That night we slept on the clean straw in the shed wrapped in an army blanket. The next morning we were marched to the train station and put aboard the "Prison Train." It had old passenger-type cars with bars on the windows. We were quite comfortable and spent the next several hours on that train traveling eastward. Finally, we stopped at a small train station and were herded off the train and marched to Stalag Luft III, a Prisoner-of-War camp near Sagan. We were to spend the next several months confined here.

## STALAG LUFT III

Stalag Luft III was a complex of six Compounds and a Vorlager and guard's quarters. We were taken into the Vorlager to a building where we were given showers and some of the men were given clothes as required. We guarded our Red Cross suit cases very carefully! One group of us was taken to the gate of one of the compounds. We learned that it was called "Center" compound. As we "marched" up to the gate, we could see several of the men inside gathering to greet us. They shouted such things as, "Anyone from \_\_\_\_\_." This could be filled in with Chicago, Texas, California or any of a number of cities or states.

We were taken past the first Barracks (we learned to call them "Blocks") and across in front of it to where a large tent had been set up between Block 40 and 42. We were told that we would be spending the next few days in this tent until things could be arranged to accommodate us.

Joe and I went in and staked our claim to a couple of spaces on the East side of the tent. Since we had our blankets and there was straw on the ground, we expected to be comfortable. It was about the first of September and I can remember that I had a bit of nostalgia about school starting at this time of year. The weather was very mild and we were comfortable.

During the next few days we learned a great deal about the camp. We met men who "visited" with us and asked us a lot of questions. This interrogation was designed to identify anyone who might be placed in the compound to learn any secrets and then report them to the Germans. I met a man who was from Payette and he asked me enough questions about the area around home that he was convinced that I was who I said I was. We talked about the competition between Payette and Weiser High Schools. I told him I had taken French Horn lessons from Mr. Stoner who was the band director in Payette. We talked about the bridge on the way to Weiser and a lot of things that only someone who lived in the area would know.

#### WALKING THE PERIMETER

About twenty feet inside the tall, barbed wire fence, was a wire on stakes about a foot high. The space between the fence and the wire was 'no-man's-land.' Anyone entering that area might be shot without hesitation by the guards in the towers around the compound. Just inside that trip-wire was a well worn path. This was the path around the perimeter. Walking the perimeter was one of our best forms of exercise. It also had some special significance as will be explained later. I have a pencil sketch that I drew during the first few days, of Block 40 and the tent next to it. We found the Theater/Church, the library and the classroom area. We learned a bit about what the routine of camp life was to be. We watched the end of the Softball Season as teams from different Blocks played for the Compound Championship.

#### ROOM 6

Joe and I were "claimed" by a man from Block 40 who took us into his room. They were in the process of changing the double decker bunks to Triple deckers so they could bring in more men. There were nine men in our room. I got a top bunk on the wall next to the hall door. As you entered the Block from the south end, the Block Commander's room was first on the right and the "Kitchen" was on the left. Our room was the third one down the hall on the right or East side of the building. The room was about five meters square (16' X 16"). As you came into the room, a round wood or coal burning heater sat in the corner to the right or on the south wall. One Triple-deck bunk was to the left of the door. Two more triple deck bunks filled the north wall. There were two small windows on the east wall and between them was a set of cupboards, our kitchen. On the south wall was a tiny drawing board where Zaveshaw spent hours making pen and ink drawings and watercolor pictures. In the center of the room was a large table, like a picnic table with benches on either side.

#### MY ROOM MATES

This room seemed to be a concentration of artists. Zaveshaw was the most prolific artist of the group. Lloyd Duke and Sullivan were very capable artists, but they really didn't spend a great deal of time drawing. Lloyd Duke was from Chicago and his father evidently was a big-time, wheeler-dealer. Sullivan worked for the American Can company in their advertising section.

Leslie Breidenthal was a very good artist, but he also had an exceptional Baritone Voice. He had ambitions to sing in opera. (Note: As I wrote this in February of 1993. I had just contacted Leslie Breidenthal who now lives in Eugene, Oregon. I am hoping we will be able to see each other before too long.)

Phill Caroselli was a lawyer and served in "Intelligence." He had a great deal of difficulty with his imprisonment. Parker was a real nice fellow. He gave me a tiny Bible which I still have. Fields was from Avon Park, Florida. He seemed very immature and we didn't have a great deal in common.

#### KRIEGIE HOME

One of the first things we did when we came into the room, was to be helped to make a tin cup and plate. For the cup we used a tin can that would hold about a pint of liquid. We salvaged tiny drops of solder from the tops of condensed milk cans. We were shown how to make a kind of handle by fixing strips of metal together and fastening this, using the solder, to the top and bottom on the side of the can. This can served as our cup for coffee, tea, soup, and any other liquid-type food during our entire imprisonment. We also made a kind of flat, square plate that would serve us for the duration.

Each day started with a German guard walking though the Block shouting "Rouse!" This was the call for us to go out to the "Parade" ground for "Appel." Each Block would form into four ranks so that a German Feltwebel could count us. As he approached our formation, we would come to attention as he walked along in front, counting each row of four. Then we could stand at ease until he had finished counting all the men from all the Blocks in the Compound. He would then receive reports from other guards who had gone through and checked the quarters, reporting anyone who was too sick to come out for Appel. He would calculate all this and then report to the Stalag Luft Commander. All this was done with sharp, German, military crispness and precision.

After Appel, we usually hurried back into our room. We would get out a slice of bread and toast it on the side of the heating stove. This bread was made from sawdust and some pea flower. When it was fresh, it had a faint odor of pitch. A loaf the size of a one pound loaf of our white bread would probably weigh five or six pounds. It was a dark brown and provided some nourishment. To take away the taste of pitch, we toasted it by pressing it against the side of the coal-stove heater. It would stick to the side of the stove until it had dried out pretty well and would begin to brown on the stove-side. It would start to peel off and, if you were alert, you could catch it before it fell on the floor. With some butter and a little jam or jelly, it was quite palatable. With a cup of hot coffee with cream and sugar, we had breakfast.

From then until the afternoon appel, we were pretty much free to do as we pleased within the restrictions of the camp. I usually made at least one trip around the perimeter. I sometimes stopped at the library and generally checked the "News" on the Bulletin Board. During the Fall I participated in the Football program. I attended a couple of "German Language Classes" and did a lot of reading. I also learned to play Bridge, did some drawing, Bible Study and a quite a bit of visiting. Camp life was different for each of us. I figured, the best thing to do was to adjust the best I could. Accept things I couldn't change and expect things to get better eventually.

## FOOD

As you might expect, a great deal of our time was spent waiting for, preparing, eating, thinking about or talking about FOOD. We had two sources of food. From the Germans we received bread, potatoes, Kohlrabi, kraut or cabbage, cheese and some meat. This was usually sausage, but occasionally we got some fresh meat--horse?

They also provided us with some prepared food occasionally. This was usually a kind of soup or stew. They also made hot water available to us at times. They provided us with enough food to give us seven or eight hundred calories per day.

We also received Red Cross Parcels. We received parcels through the International Red Cross and they were designated for U.S. soldiers, British, Canadian or Indian. Each parcel was different, with things especially for the designated soldiers. We received a British Christmas Parcel on March 19. It included: cans of Spam, Roast Pork, Stewed Steak and Sardines. There was a tin of Pure Butter, some sugar, tea and a bar of semi-sweet chocolate. There were tins of Custard, Yorkshire Pudding, Plum Pudding and cake. There was a can of dried milk, some baked beans and some honey. A pack or two of cigarettes or some smoking tobacco. This parcel was designed to last one soldier one week. We received two parcels per week for nine men.

An American Parcel might include something like this: Meat & Veg. Stew, Corned beef, Sardines and a Patte'. There would be Jam, a can of Marge, some cheese, sugar, chocolate or cocoa powder and salt and pepper. There would be a tin of Dried Milk (KLIM), some fruit and a package of crackers, like Hard Tack. There would also be some cigarettes. Again, this was designed to be rations for one man for one week.

We sometimes would get a can of salmon, a meat roll, powdered eggs, rolled oats cereal, and there were usually two "D-Bars" in each American Parcel. This was a very precious thing and we would get one about every two weeks. We usually saved them for times when we might not get our regular food ration.

When Joe and I moved in, we were each teamed up with one of the other men to take our turn at cooking. I was teamed with Breidenthal and every fifth week we would do the cooking. I did most of the "helping" and Les decided what to fix and did the mixing and final preparations. Another team of men were assigned to prepare the food and another two did the clean-up.

After Christmas, Zavashaw announced that he would do all the cooking with me as his helper. It would be up to the others to take their turns at food preparation, peeling vegetables, grinding crackers for flour, etc. and clean-up. This continued until we moved out of Stalag Luft III.

Because we had a below normal caloric intake, it seemed that everyone lost some weight. Especially those who were more active. Later, when we were at Stalag VII-A, we looked back on our time at Stalag Luft III and recalled how much better it was. I suspect that I lost something like ten pounds while at III, but I think I must have lost another ten or fifteen at VII. I made up for it when food became available and I weighed about fifteen pounds more when I got home than when I went into the service. I swore I would never be hungry again. I think that accounts, to some degree, for the fact that I am very much over weight now.

## FOOTBALL

Soon after we arrived in Center Compound it was football season. Through the Red Cross some recreational equipment had been delivered to the camp over the years.. This included boxing gloves, softball equipment, footballs, fencing equipment, etc. Each of the Blocks entered a team in the Touch or "Flag" Football league. I went out for the Block forty team and was a substitute right end. We had several men on our team who had played high school or college football and one man who had tried out for professional ball.

I got to do a lot of cheering and I got to play for a couple of minutes or so in most of the games. We had a good team and at the end of the season, Block forty was in the Championship Game. The other team was from Block 39. Although most of the people in Stalag Luft III were officers, there was, in each Compound, a cadre of enlisted men to "do the work." Officers were not supposed to have to work. Our enlisted men, all Sergeants, lived in Block 39.

### THE CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

The day came for the Championship game. It had been raining quite a bit. The sandy loam soil had soaked up most of the rain, that had not run off, but on the east side of the field, there was a low area that was covered with up to three or four inches of water. Most of the game, the play was directed away from the water and only occasionally did someone get his feet wet.

The field was only eighty yards long and was set up into four twenty yard zones. The ball must be moved from one zone to the next in four downs. There were seven men on each team: center, two linemen, two ends and two backs. One of the backs was the quarterback and on our team he was our Block Commander. He was a good player. The right end was a raw-boned six footer who had played in college. I got in when he got tired, or when there was little danger that we would lose the game.

Toward the end of regulation time, the game was a scoreless tie. We got the ball with only a few minutes to go and moved the ball from our goal zone to the next zone. The right end had been running patterns until he was winded. He called for me to come in so he could catch his breath. I told the quarterback to throw to me in the lake!

We broke the huddle and the Sgts. didn't worry about me much because I was not much of a threat. I ran down field right next to the edge of the water and faked to run toward the middle of the field. When my man moved to cover me, I turned and ran out into the puddle. I was all alone, the ball came to me and I caught it just as the defending player reached me. The ball now rested one zone closer to our goal. After two more plays, there was little progress and time was running out. Our Field-Goal Kicker lined up and with the regular right end back in the game, they kicked a field goal as time ran out to win the game 3-0.

That was my only experience playing on a "regular" football team. I played on "pick-up" teams and P.E. teams, and later coached a Junior High team, but my lack of athletic ability kept me from participating in sports.



## BOOKS READ AT STALAG LUFT III

I can't remember reading more than a half dozen books in my life, just for pleasure before I was in Prison. I read books for school book reports as required, but that was about all. I remember that I read two books when I was home with Chicken Pox or something when I was in about the third grade. They were Paddy the Beaver and Danny Meadow Mouse. I still have those books. Reading was very difficult for me. Since I had lots of time and no pressure, I read. This helped me to get pleasure from reading and did increase my reading speed, but I am still a very slow reader. These books were available in the Compound Library.

Ladi, A Dog	Turhune
Favorite Stories of Dogs and Horses	
The Sea and the Jungle	Tomlinson
The Robe	Lloyd Douglas
Over African Jungles	Martin Johnson
Here Come Joe Mungen	Chalmers Murray
A Tree Grows in Brooklyn	Betty Smith
Low Man on the Totem Pole	H. Allen Smith
Told Beneath the Northern Lights	R. J. Snell
Minerals, Metals and Gems	A. H. Terrill
Thunderhead	O'Hara
For Men Only	Various Authors
Get Thee Behind Me	
Moby Dick	
Chicken Every Sunday	
Magnificent Obsession	Lloyd Douglas
Hows Inky	
The Dragon Murder Case	Van Dine
My Ten Years in a Quandry	Benchley
Dr. Hudsons Secret Journal	Douglas
The Kennell Murder Case	Van Dine
General Zoology	
Suds in Your Eye	Lassell
Men Under the Sea	
Barefoot Boy With Cheek	Shulman
The Case of the Lucky Legs	
And Then There Were None	
The Timber Beast	
The Forest	White

## BRIDGE

I had never played Bridge before I was in Sagan. When some of the men in the room started playing, I sat and watched. I was invited to learn to play and some of the men, with great patience, helped me to learn something of the rules and something about how to play. After some time, I was playing, as partner, with Lloyd Duke, who was one of the better, if not the best player **in our combine**.

All went well for the first few hands as I was usually the "Dummy" while Lloyd played the hand. Finally, I took the Bid and had to play the hand. I did alright for a while, then I made a big mistake and we lost the game. Lloyd told me he would teach me to play bridge "or else." Well, for the next period of weeks, he worked with me. We would deal out the cards and then go through them step by step working on Bidding and playing with his special kind of bidding. He taught me some of the fine art of finesse and his own special way of bidding. After while he thought I was ready to start playing. We played with some of the men in the combine and then with a few others. We were quite successful, due mostly to the play of Lloyd and the fact that I didn't "foul up."

There was a Tournament to determine the Compound Champion. Lloyd entered it and we moved along with few problems. Before we knew it, Lloyd and I were playing for the Championship. Lloyd was able to play most of the hands and we moved along well. Finally, the last hand was dealt and the bidding started. I soon realized that Lloyd had a pretty good helping hand, but I had the playing hand. I was forced to bid higher and higher until I was at something like, "0000 No-Trump, doubled and re-doubled.!" I can't even remember the terms of the game now. I don't even know what that means any more. I think it meant that we would either win it all, or I would "go down in flames." Anyway, I needed to finesse one play. I was successful and was able to lay down my hand. We were Compound Champions. I have never played a hand of Bridge since then!

#### KRIEGIE VOCABULARY

Kriegie is a contraction of Kriegsgefangener which means Prisoner of War.

Bash	Anything extra to eat
Gash	An extra amount of something
Gash Bash	An extra amount of something to eat
Goons	Germans, especially the guards.
Block	Barracks
Combine	Men who form a unit to eat together like the men in our room
Compound	A separate section of a prison which might contain several Blocks.
Appel	Count or Roll Call
Bleed	Complain
Blower	Stove with a fan
Ferret	German who crawled around in the attic of a Block or underneath the floor to look for unauthorized activity such as tunnel digging.

There were many other special terms for things, but they were rather specialized such as terms for cooking and preparation of food. None of them come to mind at this time.

#### THANKSGIVING

When our Red Cross Parcels came into camp, all the cans were punctured by the Germans so the food would spoil if we tried to keep it. We had to use most of it right away, but we saved what we could in order to have a Gash Bash once in a while. One of those times was at THANKSGIVING! We did get a Special Red Cross Parcel and we really tried to make the room "feel" like home. **The men** preparing Dinner made an extra effort and we had a very special meal. We **all were** able to feel quite satisfied. We were not in a preferred situation, **but we still** had much to be thankful for!

## THE WORLD OUTSIDE

We were quite effectively cut off from the outside world. We were not only restricted in our movement to the confines of that Barbed Wire enclosure, but we had no effective means of communication with the outside world----as far as the Germans were concerned. A German radio broadcast was piped into the compound. Most of the time there was very good music, that is, Classical Music. There were also German News Broadcasts. Men in the compound who were fluent in German would listen to these broadcasts, which were given at dictation speed, transcribe them and tack them to the Bulletin Board.

It was always interesting to read their version of what was happening. Over the years before I was a guest of the German government, a radio that could monitor the British Radio Broadcasts was secured and a system was established to use it to provide information to all the men in Center Compound. This clandestine news was brought to each Block in the evening and we would all gather around to hear it read. Often, the German news would be two to three days behind in reporting events that were not particularly "good news" for the Germans. They would be quite prompt with reports of German successes.

When we first joined the merry men in Center Compound, there was an optimistic view that we would be home by Christmas. As the Allied progress on the Western Front, slowed in the late Fall, then the Germans attacked in the "Battle of the Bulge," we were quite discouraged. For a period of time, the only "good" news seemed to be from the Eastern Front where the Russians seemed to be moving steadily westward. Our news from that front was a bit more encouraging, except that as they drew closer, we were concerned about our fate. Would we be killed rather than be allowed to be repatriated? Would we be "abandoned" by the Germans and allowed to be liberated by the Russians? Would we be moved? If so, where? Needless to say, we kept a close eye on both fronts!

We could often hear bombs thundering in the distance and could pretty well identify some of the targets. It was always exhilarating when we heard this sound of "Distant Thunder."

## "X" (ESCAPE) ACTIVITY

The ranking officer held prisoner by the Germans was General Vaneman (sp). He was held in Center Compound and was recognized as being in Command of the allied prisoners in Stalag Luft III. There was a committee set up to control all "X" activity. There were many efforts to escape through tunnels and a variety of other quite ingenious means. Anyone who wished to attempt an escape was given all the assistance possible. There were, however, some criteria for an escape attempt. It must not jeopardize other escape efforts, which might have been weeks or months in development. Long Tunnels sometimes required the effort of a number of workers as well as the support of a greater number of men by making special "contributions." For example, the slats in our bunks would be taken to use for shoring up the walls and ceiling in the tunnels. I started with a full number of slats in my bunk. Gradually, some were taken and those remaining were split to cover the gaps. Most of the men contributed in just walking the perimeter. Sand from the tunnel digging would be carried out in long sacks hanging down inside the trouser legs of the men who would take it from the diggers. They would walk out on the perimeter track and allow the sand to trickle out of these sacks as they walked when they loosened a draw string.

The sand from the tunnel was a slightly different color than the sand on the surface. To keep this different colored sand from being noticed by the German ferrets, other men would walk behind the sand carriers. They would "casually" scrape their feet, mixing the sand so the difference in color did not show.

Men who wished to attempt an escape by themselves needed to get approval from the central committee. They needed to be able to speak a "European" language for most escape efforts because they would soon be discovered if they spoke only English. There were "workers" from almost all European countries, so, with proper papers, they could "pose" as workers. They would also need papers that would indicate their permission to be traveling. Anyone might be stopped at any time by the various German authorities, questioned, searched and dealt with as they considered it necessary. We had some men who attempted escapes with great frequency, only to be caught, returned to the prison and kept in solitary for a period of time before being allowed to return to the compound.

Most of us were content to pursue a passive roll with regard to escape. We would help if we could, but without a second language, an actual escape attempt could be harmful to the efforts of others and even bring reprisals on all the other prisoners. I considered it more prudent to wait to be liberated.

SAGAN TO MOOSBERG

AN UNPLEASANT MARCH

THE AMAZING NATIVES

NOT THE "A" TRAIN

## CHRISTMAS

We saved food again for another Bash at Christmas time 1944. As the season approached, we had some feelings of deep depression. We had hoped that we might be home by Christmas. We tried to offset our depression by doing some special things. One day some men came to Block 40 with some Band Instruments. They asked for anyone who could play, to pick an instrument. Since there was no Alto Horn, I picked up the cornet. It took a little bit for me to get going, but I was able to play some of the melody and played softly enough so that I didn't cause too much disharmony.

We decorated our room with some candles in empty bottles and some red cloth torn into ribbons, tied on everything in sight. We had a good Christmas Dinner. Zav made a bread pudding that was a real hit.

I got a toothbrush, a wash cloth and an English Officer's Smoking Pipe for Christmas from the Red Cross Parcels. One of the men gave me a can of pipe tobacco and sometime later I started smoking to help control the hunger. We made Christmas as pleasant as possible under the circumstances.

## RUMORS

Rumors have a way of getting started anywhere, but there was a special tendency for rumors to start in Prison. It was a constant problem and we all had to be on the alert not to contribute to the spreading of rumors. We always tried to check out the sources of information before we told anyone else what we had heard. However, in addition to the regular news broadcasts from the German Radio that were piped into the compound and translated, transcribed and posted on the bulletin board, we had a secret source of information. Over a period of time, some of the "older" prisoners (in terms of the time they had been in prison) had been able to assemble a radio with which they could monitor the British Broadcasting Company news programs. These were then transcribed and brought to the Blocks in the evening where they were read aloud to us. This allowed us a more reliable source of news than the German Broadcasts which sometimes failed to report Allied victories for some time after they had happened.

Sometime after Christmas, Rumors started regarding our future. The Russians were driving the German Forces back from Russia, through Poland and toward Germany. What was to be done with several thousand trained officers and men being held in prisons in the line of this Russian advance? We were to be shot! We were to be abandoned and left in the line of battle! We were to be moved and kept as hostages to bargain for concessions at the end of the war! All these and more rumors were floating around the compound in the first weeks of the new year.

## PREPARE TO MARCH

Finally, around 2045, on January 27th, Joe came into the room and said we were to prepare to move out by 2315. We had been hearing the Russian Artillery as they shelled the retreating German Army, for the past few days. We had been thinking about what we would do if we were ordered to march and now we started to put those ideas into motion. I knew I wanted to take certain special things and that I didn't want to try to carry too much.

I started my preparation by laying out the clothes that I planned to wear. Then I took a pair of pants and tied the legs to the belt loops in front, with twine. This gave me the basis for my pack. I then laid out all the things I hoped to take in my back pack and wrapped them in a blanket. I put this bundle into the top of the "Backpack Trousers. I rolled my other blanket and put it on top of the pack. I took the suitcase I had received from the Red Cross and fastened it on the back of the pack. I fastened a rope on it so I could pull my pack like a sled on the packed snow on the road. About 2300 we started to move out with our packs, ready to begin our march.

#### FALSE ALARM

After a while we were told we would not leave for a few hours. We went back into our rooms and ate what food was still there. Some of the German Guards came in and we gave them some cigarettes and we talked. "Popeye" the Veltwebl who took the count at Each "Appel" in our Compound, came into our room. I sat beside him at the table and we started talking. I asked him about his family and where he lived. He drew a picture of his house and told us that he had lost a brother in the war, but his wife was alright at that time. According to my "Journal," we talked and "had a Big Time" until 0500 when we were called out.

#### NOW?

We moved out into the Vorlager and each of us was given a Red Cross Parcel. Of course we couldn't carry all of it, but we took the cigarettes, the "D" Bars, the sugar, dried fruit and some of the other things for high energy, or trading value. Some of the cans of fruit, boxes of crackers and other heavy or bulky items had to be left behind. It was dark, cold and we were surrounded by German Guards and German Shepherd Police Dogs.

#### ON THE ROAD AGAIN

After a few minutes to rearrange our packs, we were moved out onto the road. We could see a Barracks going up in flames in North Camp. There was over a foot of snow on the ground, but the roadway was packed down and slick. I started carrying my pack, but I soon put it down and pulled it like a sled.

Before long we started to see things lying along the sides of the road that had been discarded by the men who had gone before us. At each rest stop men would get into their packs and throw away some items they had thought they could carry.

#### THE BEST CROWD OF THE YEAR

At 1400 (2:00 PM) we arrived in a small town called HALBAU. We had walked 17 kilometers toward the south-southwest. We stood in the street for about two hours before we were moved into a church. This was quite appropriate since this was Sunday, January 28, 1945. It was cold and about 1400 men crowded into that church. Some slept on the benches and under them, in every room, on the platform next to the pulpit and in the aisle. Joe slept on the bench and I slept on the floor under the bench. I have a ceramic name plate that I took from that church among my mementos. We didn't sleep very well, but we did get some rest before we were called at 0500 to get ready to move out.

## ON THE ROAD AGAIN--TWO

After picking out a little bit of dried fruit for breakfast, we packed and prepared for another day on the road. It always took a long time to get that many men out in some sort of formation, counted and on the road. We finally left town about 0830. We walked about five kilometers to Friewaldau and then on another twelve kilometers where we were put up in a farmstead. Joe and I slept in the hay loft in a very large barn. It was extremely dark in the barn and of course we couldn't light a match for fear of setting the hay on fire. Dick, Joe and I slept close to each other. We were able to get some good sleep that night.

## A DAY AT THE FARM

Tuesday, 30 January, we were called out for a count and then we learned that we were not going to move on that day. Joe and I went back to where we had slept and went back to bed to keep warm. After we got up and had something to eat around noon, we spent some time in the Courtyard talking with some of the other men. We went into the large Farmhouse for a few minutes. We went into the living quarters of some Polish Farm workers. Four of them lived in a room about nine feet wide and twelve feet long. They had two double bunk beds side by side and at the other end of the room was an arrangement of cupboards etc. There was no place to sit except on the beds. We spent perhaps a half hour there where it was warm before we went back out and went to bed early when it got dark. We didn't sleep well that night.

## ON THE ROAD AGAIN--THREE

The next morning we were called at 0500. It was pitch dark and we had to pack our things by feel. We went outside at about 0600. After being counted, we started on the road again. The weather was somewhat warmer and the snow and ice was melting slightly from the branches of the trees and open places. The road way was not melting and the snowpack was slick as glass from the feet of the thousands of men who had walked ahead of us. We tried to keep our hands and feet from freezing and covered as much of our faces as we could and still see where we were going. We had walked several kilometers and were tired. Some men found it hard to keep from falling every step. It was not a pleasant walk.

At times we shared the road with refugees fleeing to the west from their homes in the path of the Russian Army. Some walked with huge packs on their backs. Some pulled wagons or carts, others pushed wheelbarrows and some even pushed baby carriages piled high with whatever they felt was or would be most valuable to them. A few rode in wagons pulled by one or two horses, or sometimes an oxen. It was a pitiful sight and we felt sorry for them even though we shared some of the hardship. We were surprised by the people who lived along our line of march. Some of them would bring tea kettles and pails of hot water out to the road and fill our cups. We would add some tea or coffee, powdered milk and sugar and have a stomach pleasing, nourishing bit of refreshment. We could barter for food also, a few cigarettes would buy some bread and part of a "D" Bar would get a whole loaf of good brown bread. The children were especially happy to get a tiny bit of chocolate. This was a strange episode in a strange land under very strange conditions.



## AN OLD SOLDIER

Walking beside us was an old soldier. His Uniform seemed too large, or he was too small and the rifle he carried was a very heavy burden for his years. He was just one of the Guards that were taking us from one Prisoner of War camp to another.

After nearly another hour of walking, we stopped to rest. The Old Soldier sat down on a tree stump beside the road and leaned his rifle against it. The Prisoners sat on the ground, on their packs, lay down or sat leaning against the trees that lined the side of the road. Some smoked, some talked, some swore at the Germans, Fate and anyone or anything they might happen to think about.

Down the line came the command to "Marche." We reluctantly resumed our slow, tedious journey on the slick road. As I started to move on, the Old Soldier moved along beside me and we walked a few steps before I asked him about his gun. He had left it leaning against the stump and had no intention of carrying it another step.

I went back and picked up the heavy weapon as he stood and watched. I walked back and held it out to him. He shook his head, turned and started walking. I walked beside him carrying his gun.

This continued for some time. I suspect we had covered almost a kilometer when the call came down the line that the "Feltwebel" was coming. The Old soldier turned to me and reached for his rifle. I handed it to him, the Feltwebel rode past, spoke to him and the Old Soldier looked at me, said "Danke" and trudged on.

## AFTER A LONG DAY

We covered 26 kilometers that day and moved into an empty Pottery FABRIK. Joe and I slept on the third floor. The floors were dusty and there was no heat. Some of the windows were broken out, but it was dry.

The next morning, 1 February, we got a ration of food and I bartered for a galvanized Iron Sled! We re-arranged our packing and rested. I wrote in my journal. We were not allowed to leave the Pottery Factory. Since Joe spoke Spanish and Italian, he was able to talk with some of the Italian Workers and he bartered for some pickled beets and some apple juice. That sure helped give a little variety to our diet! We got some German Potatoes and bread and part of a Red Cross Parcel.

On Saturday morning, February 3rd, we left the Pottery Factory in Muskaw and walked eighteen kilometers to Gransteich. There was a blizzard and many of the men suffered from frostbite. I was glad to have my sled and I was able to help some other men with their packs. About noon we heard a big Air Raid north of us and were sure they were bombing Berlin. That night Joe and I slept in a small barn on a small German Farm.

We were called at 0500 and after packing, eating and being counted, we were on the road again about 0800. This was a short walk of only eight kilometers to Spernberg. We each got a liter of Barley soup. It had some vegetable peelings in it along with the wormholes, complete with worms, and rotten spots. It was warm and tasted good in spite of the "Foreign" matter in it.

## "DER ZUG"

We were told that we were about to take another train trip. I filled my water bottle and we prepared to go aboard. We walked about three kilometers to the train. General Vanaman, Col. Spivey and some other high ranking men were ordered to Berlin. We learned later that they had helped to negotiate our release rather than being used as hostages in final negotiations at the end of the war.

We were put aboard the Famous 40 et 8 French Box Cars. Fifty prisoners and a guard to each car. There was not room to lie down. We got an issue of German Bread and the train pulled out. We had a bad night--no sleep.

## ANOTHER TRAIN RIDE

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 1945. We left Spermberg packed in that freight car with little more than standing room. Some men sat on their packs leaning against the wall, others tried to lie down, but took up too much space and were not allowed to rest. It was cold and soon became a pretty smelly place as some of the men lost their suppers and others ---well, it smelled awful and got worse during the night. In the morning (Feb. 5) the train stopped in a remote section of track and we were allowed off the train. Most of us took advantage of this opportunity to relieve ourselves. We fixed tiny "Kriegie" Stoves from a couple of empty cans and heated cups of water for coffee. We used plenty of cream (KLIM--dried milk) and sugar for the nutrition. Soon we were ordered back aboard and we got under way. Some of the men tried to rig hammocks across the car. This did relieve the crowding on the floor.

At one stop during the day we were given part of a Red Cross Parcel, some German Bread, Marge and a can of BLUTWURST. This looked and tasted like clotted blood. I think it was the one thing that I was unable to eat while in prison. I had learned to like cheeses of all kinds and I could eat vegetable soup with rotten spots and worms, but this---I could not eat. At Muckenbug we stopped and waited for some German Coffee. While we waited a "Worker" came up to the car and offered to barter a pocket knife. I offered him some cigarettes and got the knife.

When night came, Joe and I slept close together. Sully was in a hammock and fell out on me. We were able to sleep some, but it was the sleep of exhaustion, not particularly restful. The train stopped in a town, perhaps to take on water or to allow another train to pass and we heard the Air Raid Sirens begin to whine. There was a mad scramble as the Guards who had gotten off the train, ran to get aboard before the train left them behind. We "PULLED OUT FAST" according to my journal.

The next morning we stopped and were given some hot German Coffee at about 0600. Then we traveled continually until about 1130. When we stopped we heard a big flight of planes and some Bombs. We couldn't tell what was being hit, but we knew it was our "Boys." We travelled on until evening. Lots of men were getting sick.

That night I slept by the door. It was cold, but the Postern (German Guard) sat in the doorway on a wooden box and I was shielded by him. I was able to get some fresh air. There was a "Big Flap" about midnight and several men were sick. I got sick toward morning and had the G.I.s.

We passed through Nurnberg during the night and it was very cold in the morning. We reached Munich about 1000. I felt better and we got some Hot German Coffee. There had been a constant drizzle of rain for the past several hours. We rolled our packs in preparation for leaving the train. It was Wednesday, February 7, 1945. We Left Munich at 1245 and reached Moosburg at 1515. (Two and a half hours to travel about 20 miles.) We were taken off the train and moved to a large building about 30' X 140'. Six hundred men were crowded into that room. We got some German Tea. When we all tried to lie down to get some rest, we were so close together there was hardly any room to walk to go to the latrine or to get a drink of water.

STALAG VIIA

COLD WINTER

BAD NEWS-----GOOD NEWS

THE THUNDER OF GUNS

FREEDOM

## STALAG VIIA

(Note: This material is taken from the journal written almost every day as the time passed.)

We were being held in large warehouse type buildings outside Stalag VII A. This was a very large diversified Prisoner of War Camp with men from some twenty six nations, mostly Enlisted Soldiers. Since we were essentially the first and only large group of Officers, they were very concerned and were extremely 'trigger happy' as far as we were concerned.

On Thursday, 8 February 1945, Joe got up early and found his way out to the latrine and then picked up some Hot German Tea and some cold water which he shared with me. I really had no appetite and spent most of the day just resting. I was suffering from a cold and my hip was giving me some trouble. I did get to go out and wash my face and hands. Even though the water was cold, it felt good to wash my face and hands for the first time in five days.

We spent Friday in the same building. We had an Appel at 0745 in the morning and got some cold water. We were given some soup at noon made from the peelings of carrots and turnips. We had a little Kriegie stove that we could heat water on for coffee. I had a cup of hot 'Brew' (Coffee) but still felt pretty bad. Joe was sick in the night. We were still packed so tight together there was hardly room to step without disturbing someone.

Saturday some people from the Red Cross came in and heard our story (lack of food, space, etc.). We called them the "Powers." We got hot brew in the morning and kohlorabi soup at noon. I still felt pretty bad, but was able to keep the soup down. The Germans prepared to move us out.

Sunday morning we re-packed and prepared to move out. We got some Hot Brew and I still didn't feel well. At 1500 we were moved out, searched and taken into the main camp. We filled out forms, took showers and our clothes were deloused. We finally got into some barracks at 1945 that night. We got bunks close together. The bunks were built with two bunks wide and two long and three high. That meant that twelve men could be crowded into a space just about six and a half feet wide and thirteen feet long. There were 216 men in each end of the Barracks.

## A SPECIAL PURCHASE

Some men from another compound came to the fence between the barracks and one had a "Blower" for barter. Since there was no cook stove in the barracks and no fuel for communal cooking, each of us had to prepare his own food. The "Blower" was a highly efficient stove that produced an extremely hot fire with a minimum of fuel. It worked on the principal of a forge. I was able to buy the "Blower" and it turned out to be the best one I ever saw in the compound.

## ONE MORE MOVE

Monday, 12 February, we were moved once again to another barracks. We were able to cook our food with our new blower. We became quite uncomfortable because of the Bugs in our beds. There was one Air Raid near us during the week.

## SOME OF LIFE'S LITTLE PLEASURES

Monday, February 19th we had a Property Check. They confiscated things that they felt we shouldn't have. I was able to conceal my journals and some other things. On Tuesday we refused to go out to Appel until the "Abort" was cleaned. The Abort was the German name for the Latrine. Since there was no sewer system, the waste was held in a huge concrete tank. A farmer would bring a horse drawn "Honey Wagon" [A large Tank on a wagon] and pump the waste from the concrete tank onto the "Honey Wagon" and spread it on his fields as fertilizer.

With so many men in our compound using this one Abort, the tank filled quickly and it started to overflow into the ground in the "Parade" area, a small open space where we were assembled in formations to be counted. The Honey Wagon soon appeared and after it had taken a couple of loads, we assembled for Appel. This was Faith Nadine's First Birthday, 20 February 1945.

## STILL WINTER

It snowed on Wednesday and we got a cut in German rations. We were constantly hungry. I picked up cigarette butts, dried out the tobacco and smoked it in my pipe to help curb the hunger. On Thursday we were called out early for appel and then we were moved out into a tent area. There was a long Air Raid which we found out later was in connection with a new offensive in the west! We had gotten only sporadic news reports since we left Stalag Luft III at Sagan. This was after much disappointment during the "Battle of the Bulge." We were moved out to the "Snake Pit." (This was the Warehouse type building where we had stayed when we first arrived here.) I slept with Joe. Saturday, we got Hot Showers and went back to our barracks which had been deloused. It was announced that we would have no more Red Cross Parcels until further notice. With the reduced German rations and the depletion of the emergency rations we had been able to keep, things were going to be ROUGH! We are hungrier each day. I went to Church on Sunday and the Text was Hebrews 12:1

During the week of 26 February (BABE'S BIRTHDAY!) We heard Air Raids all week. We saw some Bombers and P-51s. The weather changed from bad to worse with hard winds and snow. Rumors about RX Parcels started and ended. The best information was that they would be off for at least three weeks. The last parcel was divided between twelve men. Food getting in very short supply. We are constantly hungry. We spend much time in our bunks to conserve energy and to keep warm.

The following is a direct transcription from my Journal.

"Conditions of life at the Beginning of March 1945. Snow on the ground and no fuel for heat. Our physical condition is very poor. Many men sick and all have colds. We are constantly Hungry and see no relief for these conditions. Everyone is depressed. Too cold to sit down or study (I had my Bible.). Always thinking of food because of the gnawing in our stomachs. We get little rest, being too cold to sleep. (We just lie in our bunks, fully clothed, and shiver.) The German menu consists of just enough to keep us from starving. All in all, things do not look bright. Cold & Hungry."

## TOUGH DUTY

Week of March 5. Off RX Parcels. Conditions Red.

## OUR LAST MOVE AS KRIEGIES

Wind and snow. Bad weather. Moved to new Block in another part of the compound. There is no fuel for heat. It is very cold inside the barracks. We all have cold, wet feet. We are unable to sleep well. German rations seem smaller. We don't take our clothes off for days or even weeks at a time. All talk is about food. Many men are very ill. All of us have colds. I heard that Al Mills is here. I had not seen him since Basic Flight Training in Merced. He had gone to Fighters. He was the Cadet who invited Babe and me to spend Christmas with them in 1942. I met Bowling, this was Harry F Bowling who had been in Cadets with me for a while.

Joe and I are getting along better than some. (Joe is able to barter for some food from some of the Italian workers who come into our compound. OKW (Our Clandestine News, from secret Radio.) is good. There are some good moves in the West! We got news of parcels and some arrive. I counted 90 sores from bug bites on my left hand and wrist. We had to shave for "Inspection!"---in cold water with a dull razor blade.

## THINGS ARE BEGINNING TO LOOK BETTER

We got 1/2 a Red Cross Parcel on Saturday. We had mashed potatoes & gravy, corned beef patties, Toast, Bread Pudding & cake for Dinner Sunday Evening. I went to Church on Sunday.

On Monday of the week of March 12th, we received a British Red Cross Parcel. The Sun came out on Tuesday, but it rained on Thursday and Friday. Some sun again on Saturday. It was amazing to see how we were all "Sun Worshippers" in this situation. The sun meant that we could get a bit warmer. There were a couple of Air Raids during the week. I wrote a form letter to Babe. We had a big bash on Sunday. I missed Church. We had a double decker bread pudding. They announced that we would have full parcels. Things were beginning to look brighter. My toes are still numb. Sores on my hands are getting better.

The week of March 19th there was an Air Raid on Monday. The weather was good all week and Air Raids continued. We got a parcel on Tuesday and Friday. German rations were cut. We got potatoes three times during the week. Got ten grams of sugar. Other things all cut but bread. RX trucks coming. I wrote a card to Babe, Good News. Sang in the Choir on Sunday.

## THIS IS SCARY

Week of March 25. Weather cooler and Cloudy. Monday was Fair. A GI Arbeiter was shot in the next compound. A work party had been brought in to repair the fence next to the Abort. One of the American G.I.s climbed up on the fence to fasten the wires back in place and a guard between the Barracks who evidently didn't know he was part of a work party, shot him without warning. I went with several other men to get the name of the guard. I understand that when we were liberated that guard "had an accident with his rifle."

The Germans set up machine gun nests in the corners of our compound. We thought they might try to keep us from being liberated. However, the guns pointed in---not out!

## EASTER

Tuesday we won a parcel on a bet, payable April 16. Wednesday the weather was bad with rain most of the day. Thursday was slightly better. We had a special Church service on Friday morning. I sang in the Choir and we had communion. Saturday the weather was better and we had an Air raid. We were able to see P-51s strafing some trains. Sunday was Easter. I WISH I WAS HOME. News has been good all week. Hands are still sore from cuts, burns and insect bites. Dutton and Murphy, who had been eating together, split up Saturday. Dutton came to eat with Joe and me. Easter Sunday was a rather nice day. I sang in the Choir for Church. Cooked a bread pudding in the afternoon. Had a good supper and thought about Home on Easter.

## CHANGING OF THE GUARD

The week of April 2, 1945. Weather was good during the first part of the week, but bad after Tuesday. The Luft Waffe took over the camp in mid week. Joe went for a wood walk, but got none. We had a big Pudding Sunday night. Tents were put up in the Parade ground on Sunday.

Week of April 9th the weather was good. The men from South Camp of Stalag Luft III were moved into the tents. I saw Al Mills. He was badly burned around the face but his eyes were OK, protected by his goggles. The compound looks like a Carnival ground with all the tents and between 3500 & 4000 men all trying to cook, sun themselves, washing clothes and building equipment, etc. We must line up for water and the Abort. I have had the G.I.s for over a week.

## I'M SICK AND TIRED OF BEING SICK AND TIRED

I have had a headache on Tuesday and Wednesday. There was a big Air Raid on Wednesday with Perfect conditions. I was sick on Thursday and couldn't eat. Better Friday and worse on Saturday. Weather unsettled. Sunday We heard Padre McDonald at Chapel. Good, I felt better.

Week of April 16. The weather was changeable all week. Rain on Saturday nite. Bad for men in the tents. Some men are preparing to move. Air raids almost constantly all week. Lots of Fighters. Joe was sick all week. I have felt pretty well since Tuesday. Didn't go to church on Sunday, windy and cold. News Fair. My toes still have no feeling. Athletic equipment came in, but can't be used because of crowded conditions. We could have used FOOD better. New S.A.O very military.

Week of April 25. Weather changeable first part of week. Some Fair. Started splitting parcels Tuesday. The camp started to open up between compounds and we had access to some open areas. Some ball games were started. Joe and I heard bagpipes playing and went over and watched some Scotsmen doing a Scottish Highland Dance. Similar to a square dance in some ways, but more graceful with lots of intricate footwork. We got a firsthand view of the bagpipes. I was scheduled for a "wood walk" on Friday, but it was called off. Lots of noise from artillery and fighters strafing, bombs and demolition. We are getting no more bread, but we do get some potatoes pretty regularly. Guards are getting ready to move out or turn us over. A storm came in on Friday and it rained on Saturday. I went to get a shower on Saturday. Appel was canceled and there was no inspection. Dutton got an American Parcel from home. Big news.



SUNDAY, APRIL 29, 1945

Reveille 0800. I wake up at 0700 to blue skies and everything was quiet. At about 0800 there was some air activity and soon gunfire was heard. At 0900 an American Major came in to see our SAO. I happened to be standing near the door to the quarters of the SAO (Senior American Officer) and was told to stand guard and not let anyone in. At about 1000 we were cooking breakfast when small arms fire broke out in the area west of us. We were called to quarters. A POW was hit across the street from us. There was mortar fire. Fighting in Moosberg. We could see machine gun fire from the church steeple. A tank pulled up in a field just north of camp and shot out the machine gun.

By 1200 the fighting had pretty well passed the camp. Things became quiet and we put some potatoes on to cook. We started to cook a chocolate Pie.

AT 1235 I WATCHED AN AMERICAN FLAG RAISED OVER MOOSBERG!

1300 --AN AMERICAN FLAG WENT UP IN CAMP! There was a din in camp with all the men yelling at the top of their voices. Men running around hugging each other with tears of joy running down their faces. Some stood silently, just watching, eyes glistening. Some dropped to their knees and shouted a prayer. It was a time of great jubilation. WE ARE NOW FREE!

I wrote in my journal, "I am reading "Leave her to Heaven" Page 85. I think I will leave it for a few days."

News (Rumor) says we should be home by the middle of May. About 1000, A 14th Armored Division Jeep and Tank roll up the street. There was a changing of the Guard around the Camp. This is General Patton's outfit and he is here. I am fixing a Bash. We had mashed potatoes, Spam with raisins, gravy, a cheese sandwich and coffee at about 1430. We went for a walk. Joe got a German hat. We saw the German Guards taken out as prisoners. Kriegies went to town to collect souvenirs. Joe and I went back to our combine area.

We were free, but we really had no place to go. The watchword was WAIT and be as patient as possible.

At 1500 there was artillery fire outside camp, very close. We fried spuds had a can of meat and beans and one of meat and vegetables with gravy. I was so full I could hardly handle it. Later, at about 2100, we ate our Chocolate Pie with a whip. I couldn't even scrape the bowl. We went to bed. I had eaten too much and my stomach was acting up. I had eaten more, richer food than I had for months. I was up in the night and got up at 0600 to stay up.

April 30 1945. At about 0700 I lost what remained in my stomach. I am feeling better. Very little happened today, but I have read some in my book and have eaten lightly. Three Red Cross Girls came into the compound this afternoon. They are from Philly, Cambridge and Detroit. Joe collected more souvenirs. American Artillery was firing from close to the camp all evening. Jeeps and trucks are running all over the camp. (I had a sip of wine in the evening.)

Col. Spivey came in last night and left for Paris this morning. 1 May 1945. No news of our evacuation. It is snowing this morning. I am feeling better. Joe has a cold and sore throat.

Dutton has a headache and a bad cough that hurts the shrapnel in his chest. I cooked at noon. GENERAL PATTON came into camp this afternoon. He complimented us on having "upheld our dignity as officers." Snow lasted all day at intervals and it was snowing at bed time. I didn't eat all my chocolate pudding tonight.

#### ANGEL FOOD CAKE

We received our first white bread tonight; 1/4 loaf per man. I thought it must have been Angel food cake, it was so white, soft and sweet tasting! I had a slice of bread for dinner and ate a little of the pudding.

Tuesday, May 2, 1945. Dutton was sick all night. I got up at 0300 and had to run to the abort. G.I.s Joe still has a sore throat. I spent most of the day doing nothing. I read a little. Joe made fudge this PM. Jack Peterson, who had worked in the dining room in Finney Hall at the College of Idaho in 1938-39, came to see me today. His right hand is injured some way. He was very self-conscious about it and I didn't mention it.

Rumors are the only things moving around here, yet. I hope we get to doing something pretty soon. Lights didn't come on last night. We had a little meeting of Idaho Boys. A S/Sgt from Caldwell, Chuck McGee of Caldwell, Jack Peterson of Jerome, Earl Price from Payette and Me. We went to bed early. I got a hat today.

May 3rd. We are all feeling a little better. Joe went on a wood walk. I stayed in camp. A couple of Major Generals and a couple of Congressmen came in to see us today. Van Fleet was one of the Congressmen. DAS IST ALLES.

May 4. Joe and I went out for a walk today. Down by the creek that ran near the Camp, we met a Sgt. Brown from New York. He had a Jeep and was trying to load a German generator into it to take it back to his headquarters. We helped him load the generator and then we got in the Jeep and went with him. He told us he would bring us back to the camp later. When we got to the area where his outfit was set up, he was ordered to take a message to a town some distance away. He invited us to go with him. On the way, we were following a narrow road through the trees and suddenly, a shot made us jump. The bullet hit the windshield in front of me. Brown hit the brakes and I was thrown forward. My hands suddenly were full of a rifle that was carried across below the windshield. I saw someone running between the trees. I lifted the gun and fired all in one motion. Brown hit the gas and I slammed back into my seat as we careened down the road.

When we got to Dorfin, he delivered his message and showed us where the Officers Mess was set up in a kind of Hotel. We went in and introduced ourselves. We were invited to come in and eat. We had a waiter, plates and everything. After we finished eating we were invited to take showers and we got some underclothes and new pairs of pants. We were really treated like American Officers. We saw wrecked German Equipment, Liberated POWs, dead German soldiers, wrecked towns and a beautiful countryside in the spring. I got some souvenirs and when we got back to the camp I wrote a V-mail letter to Babe.

May 5, 1945. Not feeling too spry! Stayed in camp until afternoon. Walked to town and saw Zav. He took us to "His" room. We listened to the radio and had some good coffee and relaxed in a very nice room. I got to feeling worse and we headed back to camp. I didn't eat that evening and went to sleep.

May 6, 1945. Sunday. I was still feeling pretty tough. I stayed in bed and read some until noon. We got donuts from the RX Girls, then went to the show. "The Thin Man Goes Home." Came back, ate. Dutton came back from a trip to Munich. His old outfit came into camp and found him. They were staying in Munich and he went with them. When he came back he was loaded with souvenirs. We all had a cup of Champagne. (My cup held about a pint.) He gave me a German Dress sword and a scabbard that didn't fit it. (I still treasure them today. I can see it from where I sit at my computer.) Joe chose a small knife, like a hunting knife.

It was announced that we were to LEAVE THE CAMP TOMORROW!!!!