

Horseshit and Cobblestones

Victor Kanners

To Mike

Comrades of the battlefield Perhaps it is because everything in battles the ground, the weather, the enemy is so against him that the soldier develops a deep affection for those that are working with and for him in an atmosphere of common danger, exertion, uncertainty and chance. It has ever been the way of men to band together to withstand misfortune and outwit fate, and war binds men more tightly together than almost any other branch of human activity. To share your last crumb of bread with another, to warm your enfeebled body against another in the bleak and barren mystery of the night, to undergo shame, fear, and death with, scores of others of your age and mental coloring who, indeed, would trade these comrades of the battlefield for friends made in time of peace ?

Duncan - Chapman - Paris - Heidt

Lyons - Varella - Enochs - Doyle

McClure - Johnson

The writer wishes to express his thanks to these Kriegies for making the following story possible. Although many incidents are left out, it is my hope that the ensuing pages will help to recall the most cherished ones. You will find the story for the most part centered around Mike and myself, much as I have tried to incorporate all of us. In spite of this I think you will find it most interesting and worthwhile in years to come. On behalf of all of us, a second thanks to Big Glenn Chapman who actually recorded the data, only to lose his record at Hammelburg. Fortunately a copy was made prior to this time and the pages that follow are the result.

“Come on, you Ruskies !“

This was the most familiar phrase for days at Schubin, Poland where 1400 American Ground Force Officers were being held prisoner by

the Germans (or Goons as we lovingly called them). Our secret radio, termed THE BIRD for security purposes, gave up-to-the-minute news of the rapidly advancing Russian Army, and excitement ran high in anticipation of our liberation. For some time we had expected orders moving us away from the battle zone, but by January 19th, 1945 it was clearly evident that the German High Command had delayed too long and the Russians would be upon us at any minute.

January 20th the order came that we would walk five miles the next day to Exin where trains would move us farther West, IF the Russians were not here by then. The entire day was spent preparing for our departure. For newcomers to Schubin like Mike and myself, it was only a matter of minutes to pack, for we had not been there long enough to accumulate anything. But the old Kriegies (short for kreigs-gefangenan or prisoner of war) who had received parcels from home had books, letters, pictures, extra clothing, and even musical instruments. I went to another barracks and watched a friend of mine, Carlos Burrows, pack his belongings.

Carl was an old Kriegie with over a year and a half at [Oflag 64](#), the camp's proper name. He was down on the floor with everything he owned in a heap. A wooden suitcase, a gift of the YMCA, was being stuffed with the articles he valued most. At the same time he was sorting pants and shirts onto piles before ripping them into the desired shape to be used as a makeshift pack. Up and down the room everyone was engaged in the same mad scramble of disposing of excess articles and preparing what they wanted for their departure. The excitement of these old Kriegies disturbed me because I didn't share their enthusiasm and I wondered why.

I had just arrived at Schubin three weeks before, after eight days of living in one third of a boxcar with 23 others. We had been bombed by the RAP and 60 fellow officers in other cars had been killed. I, for one, was not eager for any train rides.

I questioned Carl as to why he was so excited. He looked up from the floor, and I saw what I hadn't noticed before. His eyes were full, and his whole body was quivering. "I don't know about you, but I'm getting out of this place," and he went back to his task. I understood now how these men felt, and I couldn't blame them. A

year and a half as a prisoner of war in the same place gets pretty monotonous.

You get sick of looking out the window, or watching the guards. You get sick of just plain thinking or letting your mind wander. You get sick of the same faces, the same talk, the same thoughts..... food..... food..... food. All of these men had been in this same enclosure over a year, and now they were leaving. What the outside held for them was of little concern --- they were leaving. Many had studied Russian and Polish day after day, this might be the chance they had prepared for they were leaving. I left them and returned to my barracks where activity was normal.

Some men were perched on their bunks reading, sleeping, or just staring in meditation. Some were crowded around the oil-barrel stove beating a crust of bread saved from the night before. A few were playing cards or just talking. Nowhere was there any evidence of the bedlam that was occurring elsewhere. In a few minutes Mike came in and I suggested that we go for a walk.

Just inside the barbed wire enclosure was a path which every man was to walk daily for one hour by order of Colonel Goode, the S.A.O. (Senior American Officer). In the event that the Goons marched us out of Oflag 64, he wanted no one to fall by the wayside for lack of being in condition. There was no such thing as being in condition with the diet we were on, but at least the exercise would keep our muscles from going stale. The path took about eight to nine minutes for one complete turn. It was a good order and for our own benefit.

The day was clear and brisk as we started to do a turn on the snow covered path.

“Them Ruskies better get the lead out of their ass or we’ll all be gone.”

“At the rate they’re going, they could be here today. 60 miles away yesterday, heard 42 this morning. Boy, 42 miles, oh.”

We walked on in silence along the portion of the path that was near the main road. For three days the road had been lined with an endless crawling caravan of refugees (all German this time) perched

on their horse drawn carts. Wagons of every construction loaded with the most valuable of household equipment such as pots, pans, mattresses, a chair or two, a bicycle, moved slowly down the road. Most were covered with canvas or large rags thrown over a ridge pole as a tent top, and the rest were without overhead protection. The people, all very young or very old, remained huddled together for warmth while the horses plodded on snorting steam under their heavy loads. We had watched this procession begin almost a week before with only a few carts, but for the past three days it had multiplied into a double file which creaked onward day and night.

“We’re really seeing something. Remember the newsreels of refugees in France cluttering up the roads ? I certainly never thought that I’d ever see it, but there it is.”

We followed the path around a turn away from the main road and continued on. I began to think about Carlos and the old Kriegies wanting to leave, and how Mike and I would be content to stay, even if the Russians weren’t so close. The Of lag to us meant regular Red Cross parcels, the most important item in a prisoner’s life. At Limburg, a transit camp before Schubin, Red Cross parcels were scarce and each man received an equivalent of 1 / 5 of a parcel a week. At Limburg I lost 35 pounds. Here each man received a full parcel per week, and the stock was high enough to last for six weeks. I hadn’t lost any weight here yet. We were both thinking --- the war will be over in six weeks anyway. And it’s safe here too. No barrages to sweat out, no fields to cross in night attacks, and wonder if the next mine is for you. Remember the German machine gunner that played tag with you in that open field for two hours one day ? How you laid there alone in that shell hole and wondered if he was still watching you. And when you sprang up and dove for the next hole, how he marked your path by spitting up dirt behind you and then ahead of you. Down in the new hole breathing twice as hard you thought ‘If I ever get out of this one’. Well, here you are, you’re out of it. No one is shooting at you now. You had your neck up f or a target long, enough, and they missed. That’s their tough luck.

Let someone else be the target for awhile. You’ve got a place to sleep, and you get something to eat. You’re content to stay here till it’s over. And that won’t be very long. These old Kriegies have

forgotten the war and all that's in it. That's why they're eager to leave.

We passed a guard tower and noticed the soldier on duty watching a fellow guard who was posted along the fence. We watched him too. He took three or four steps, stopped, clasped his hands behind his back, and peered over the snow horizon to the East. He repeated this routine several times. Then Mike called to the guard in the tower, "Ruskie comming - ya !" The guard laughed, pointed to his worried comrade, struck a pose of sighting off into the distance and laughed again.

We walked on.

Will it be over in six weeks ? Damn it, sure it will. There's nothing holding us up now. If the Germans could see the supply dumps and piles of equipment behind our lines, and compare it to the meager few little ones they' have. And their horse drawn artillery pieces. Practically a laugh. All we have to do is break thru their thin line of defense and then run wild. Yeah, but how about that Chapple fellow from Texas and what he said ? The kid captured in Africa that I talked to the first night here. Said he saw those same thin weak lines when they got him. And that was a year and a half ago. Damn, they sure as hell had something holding us up. Alright, maybe it will be two months, maybe even three. That still isn't so long. I'd like to stay right here and sweat it out.

During the afternoon Red Cross parcels were passed out --- one per man with instructions to save the D-bar (a concentrated chocolate bar used as an emergency field ration) because we didn't know when we would get the next one.

Contents of a #10 Red Cross Parcel

1 lb. can of powdered milk - most common brand was Klim. These cans were the largest in the parcel, and for this reason we fitted them with makeshift handles, and used them to receive our soup with. Hence, we referred to them as our Klim tims.

1 lb. can of. Oleomargarine (Standard or Miami brand)

1 lb. box Prunes or Raisins (3-47. moisture added)

1 can Spam, Preme, Bully Beef, or equivalent (12 oz.,)

1 can Salmon or Tuna (6 3 / 4 - 7 1 / 2) or 2 cans Sardines

1 can C-rations

1 small can Jam (Schimel) or Grapeade (Welch's)

½ lb. can Cheddar Cheese or package Sheffards

½ lb. Sugar - Dots or Cubes

1 ½ oz. can Soluble Coffee

1 small can Rose Mill Pate (Liver or Special Chicken) or small can Peanut Butter

1 box of 12 Biscuits (J. B. Carr) or box Preme Cereal

2 D—bars, or 1 can Cocoa, or 1 D-bar and 1 pack M & M's

12 Vitamin tablets

2 bars Swan Soap

3 to 5 packs of Cigarettes --- depending on the other variables in the box.

Immediately after this issue, Mike and I like the rest, busied ourselves

packing and repacking our loads that we intended to carry. The day before we had

received the week's regular issue of a Red Cross parcel so now we had the equivalent of 3 ½ boxes between us. Since arriving at the Of lag we had pooled our food together and shared every crumb (and the crumbs were important, too). So now we put all open or partly used tins into a "working box". Together with coffee, sugar and

powdered milk we expected to use this parcel first. The remaining unopened tins were fitted into a single box which wouldn't have to be opened for several days

or until needed. As the working box became lighter we would alternate the loads. After tying all sorts of improvised rag packs to my back, Mike spotted some-one Whose idea we both agreed upon immediately. A long sleeved winter undershirt tied in a knot at the waist section. The main body of the shirt was placed against the flat of your back. By passing one sleeve over a shoulder and the other sleeve under the opposite armpit, they could be knotted in front at about chest height.

The neck of the shirt was the opening and just big enough to permit a parcel at a time. It could hold two parcels, and because of the give in the material, excess items could be stuffed in on the sides. The boxes in the pack laid flat against the back and the sleeves could be tied alternately on different shoulders. At the time we thought it was the best conceivable pack, and to date, I still think so.

What the temperature was that week I don't recall. Cold would only begin the description. And cold was how we felt most of the time at Schubin. That evening we assembled a wardrobe from the excess clothing that the old Kriegies had discarded. The items of clothing that I wore were as follows:

1 suit long underwear (top and bottom)

2 pair O.D. wool pants (one on top of the other)

1 O.D. wool shirt

1 sleeveless sweater

1 high neck sweater with sleeves

1 field jacket

1 short wool jacket with high collar

1 wool knit hat

1 pair socks

1 pair leggings

1 pair shoes

In addition to this I carried a towel to use as a muffler, 2 pair of socks to use as gloves, and one extra cotton undershirt. Mike's apparel was similar except for a CI blouse and a long Belgian overcoat. Instead of leggings, he had combat boots. Excitement was at a peak that night. The anxiety of the Russians anticipated arrival was like awaiting the end of a dozen 4 star movie thrillers rolled into one. This might be the climax we had waited for --- 24 hours each day. This could be it.... liberation.... food.... the trip home.... Oh God, HOME.

To add to these thoughts was the amount of food that each man had. Almost two full parcels. That much food was like waking up during a dream and finding it true. The food alone was enough to make everyone's blood run high. All these thoughts of food and liberation raced back and forth in our minds until the pace left us tired, and off to sleep we went.

Up with the dawn on the 21st, and disappointed that we hadn't been aroused during the night with the word we were waiting for --- the Russians. Mike started the oil-barrel stove with paper and cardboard, and we had a breakfast that was what we called a real bash... a can of Preme sliced up and fried, 5 or 6 potatoes hash brown, and 3 / 4 of a Klim tin of chocolate prune pudding that I had made the night before. This was rapidly becoming my specialty.

Formation at 1000 ready to move. This information we were sure of, but the rumor was what we thought about. The Ruskies are only 23 miles away. 23 miles. Any minute they could be here. Wonder if they know we're here ? Hope they don't blow this building to bits before they find out. 23 miles. People were still trying their packs on and making adjustments when the call came to fall out --- everyone --- ready to move. We hoisted our packs and blanket rolls and left the barracks. It was clear and cold with about 2 inches of fresh snow. We were bundled up plenty warm, but after about half an hour of

waiting around, the cold had begun to penetrate and we were ready to move or do something. The formation was by platoons of which there were 27 (50 men per platoon). All of the medical men were distributed throughout the platoons and we agreed to take turns carrying the small box that the medic with our platoon had. A group of men were being left behind in the hospital with one German soldier, and these people were waving out the windows that they'd see us in a few days again when we moved back in. No one felt that it would be more than 2 days before the Russians overtook us. Ted Palowski, a friend of Mike's from West Wyoming, Pa. (and a 2 year man) had told us that Captain Menter, one of the German officers in charge, had sold out to us.

He wanted to stay with the Americans when the last minute came and the rest of the Germans took off. He himself had said that it couldn't possibly be more than 2 days.

Now he was making his routine count and at least ten men were not in ranks. Ted had also told us that some men-were going to hid in a tunnel they had dug under the floor of the White House, our main building. The guards went around looking for them, and we stood in formation getting colder and colder, but happy for the delay.

This same secret tunnel holds many security items such as flags, flashlights, German uniforms, and compasses which had been smuggled in. The compasses were passed out last night, and Mike had one in his pocket. But why the hell hasn't Col. Goode and the rest of his staff devised an escape plan ? They could use some of these things. They've laid here long enough to think of a plan, and a good one. Boy, if the Russians don't free us I'll never forgive our staff. Here we are, 1300 of us, and about 100 Goon guards. Rifles, or no rifles, we could overpower them if a plan had been coordinated. Goode told us that escape would be up to each man. Maybe he feels responsible and doesn't want anyone getting killed now, 'but we all took chances 'on our life or we wouldn't be here, and I'll bet the majority would be all for a mass escape plan. We could stay right here in camp and hold the Goons with us.

Damn, we could do something.

Oberst (Colonel) Schneider, through his interpreter. The gist of it

was like officers. I guess. he wanted us about getting us transportation, and ours if the Russians overtook us.

1030, the missing men were not found, and so we are to leave without them.

Damn, why didn't I hide somewhere ? There were places. Yes, but then I'd be alone. Maybe Mike's right --- stick with the mob, they won't kill all of us.

Colonel Goode led the column out of the enclosure, and an able leader he was.

Bagpipes in hand and his staff close by, he strode out of the gate and down the road with the platoons following in numerical order. Platoon 22 was formed near the gate and while waiting our turn in line, we watched the men file out in a column of fours. Sleds, wagons, boxes dragging on the snow, two men carrying a long pole with their belongings tied to the center, every imaginable pack was here. Most sleds were nothing more than a box with one or two wooden slat runners tacked on and pulled with a cord. Platoon 22 at the last minute spied the remains of an old horse-drawn wagon inside the enclosure and took possession of it. The Goon guards didn't seem to care, so from that moment on this hugh 750 lb. wagon was part and parcel of Platoon 22. Most all the men in the platoon piled their packs on the wagon and began taking turns, either pushing or pulling. Major Cassidy (CO of Platoon 22) had by far the biggest pack I saw that day. It was a blue and white checkered mattress cover. Half of his stuff was in one end and the other half in the opposite end. The middle was draped over his shoulder, and he literally sagged to the ground under the weight. Without the wagon that day Major Cassidy would never have gotten to the camp gate.

Mike and I elected to carry our own and not be burdened with pushing the wagon which got to be quite a task. We had only our undershirt packs tied on one shoulder, and a horseshoe blanket roll on the other. We had two blankets apiece, and our loads rode very well. Nothing was excess, and nothing would be thrown away.

Out on the road it was impossible to maintain the column of fours.

The road was icy and rutted, and the caravan of refugees took the two center files. For awhile the horses and wagons would be stopped, and we would move on around them. A few minutes later something would be holding us up. Some men were walking on the paths at the middle of the side of the road with the guards. If it was too slippery there, then the guards walked with us in the middle of the road. Here and there someone stopped to adjust a pack, and before long sleds were toppling over in front of you or waving back and forth as they followed a rut in the road. People without sleds were cursing those with sleds, and the people with sleds were advising the others to “blow it”.

Before long the column was no longer a unit marching by platoons. It became a 3 to 4 mile long line of men strung out here and bunched up there.

At the side of the road a pair would stop to discard items that made their load too heavy. An extra pair of shoes, a wad of letters, china cups from the Oflag, all of the non—essentials. Food and blankets, these were the only essentials.

Each time a discard was made, someone else was ready to pick it up because it looked good to him. We spied a sled that had broken down due to its heavy load of books. The owners were sorting their young library and preparing to relieve them-selves of many volumes.

“That’s just what we need Vic, a sled.”

“Just the thing. Don’t know how we’re getting along without one.”

“A sled... to carry all our good shit in.”

During the day we managed to catch up with Ted and Steve. Ted could speak Polish and Slavish, and Steve could speak Russian and Ukrainian. We wanted to stay close to them. In the event of escape making yourself understood becomes of para-mount interest. For awhile we walked along with them munching on prunes from my side pocket. While we were walking Ted pulled out a loaf of dark goon brod (similar to ur wheat breads), cut it iii half, and stuffed one of the pieces in Mike’s pack. He said they had enough and he knew we didn’t have any. He was right about us, but dead wrong

about himself because nobody with half a loaf of bread had enough when they didn't know where or when the next piece would come.

Their giving us that brod is something that I will never forget. Food was just something that was not given away. There wasn't enough of it, and here they gave us half a loaf.

Mike and I were in good shape and moved along at a regular pace trying not to step on sleds. Each time a sled got in our way we concurred again that a sled was just the thing that we needed. Some men stopped and took ten to fifteen minute breaks by the side of the road. The column was easily long enough to take an hour break from the front to the rear. The guards were having a rough time on their own and were not interested in making everyone keep closed up tight. They had full field equipment to carry in addition to their blankets and ration of brod. And most of them were 40 to 50 years old.

We came to Exin, a small town, and passed thru with all the Polish townspeople standing in doorways and at windows waving to us. We called "Poiski" to them, and when they answered "Ya" we called back "Americanski". It was like liberating a town, only it wasn't. As we passed close to open doorways and high fences my eyes were constantly searching for a place where I could duck out of sight. There were oppor-tunities, and lots of them, and many fellows took them. But I couldn't get Mike to agree to it, and we had promised to stick together.

Beyond the town was a long stretch of flat open country, and we marched on to an isolated group of barns by dark. Twenty two kilometers or about fifteen miles. As we stood in the dark waiting for our platoon to be assigned to a barn, we realized that we were plenty tired. While walking it's not hard to keep picking them up and laying them down, but when you stop you feel it, and we felt it. Finally Cassidy call-ed out "over here" and we scrambled into a huge barn filled with cattle. The barn was divided into about five partitions. We picked out one that wasn't too crowded, and down we went on the straw. We had plenty of room on a manger between Paris and Heidt, and Dunc and Chappie. I took tins outside to get some water and found a spigot in another barn with only four or five men waiting in line. I filled our two tins and as I stepped outside I

heard someone ask the goon guard if the water was okay to drink. At Schubin all water had to be boiled before using. The guard said no, but that they would boil some for us as soon as the wagons got there.

Those wagons will get here tomorrow, and I'm thirsty as hell. So back I went to our barn with the water and Mike made a thick creamy cocoa drink with plenty of powdered milk. What one drink can do for a person. We bashed the bread that Ted and Steve had given us and fell right to sleep. I woke up about 1 A.M. with sweat on my forehead, and removed both sweaters that I had on. We hadn't undone our blanket rolls, but instead used them as pillows. The straw was so soft and comfortable that I almost felt good. There were enough animals in the barn to keep us very warm, and I lay for a while still debating whether to try and escape or not, and cursing the staff for not having an organized escape plan.

The next morning I stepped outside and saw one of the most beautiful winter scenes that I can recall. The ground was covered with fresh snow, and the freezing weather had formed a layer of crust that glistened and sparkled in the sunlight.

The trees and bushes seemed made of ice for everything was coated with this thin white cover of frost.

What a picture. This would be truly beautiful if a long line of white-starred tanks would come rolling down the road. What a shame that we can't fully appreciate this scene.

The word was passed around that anyone who was sick or couldn't march should come to the main barn and see the Medics. The goons had said that a few men from each platoon could be left if need be. At Mike's insistence we both went to see the Medic. We waited for the end of the line and then stepped up.

"What's wrong with you ?"

"Nothing, no one from our platoon is even over here, and someone might as well stay.

"Nothing doing. Col. Goode says only the people who absolutely

cannot march will stay... Everyone else goes."

I guess he was trying to do the fair and honest thing in hopes of receiving like treatment in return. So that was that.

We left at 0900 and the column was really jammed up. There was no system of breaks (rest periods) and so people were stopping and starting on their own volition all along the read. However, at noon the column halted and we moved off the road. Mike and I bashed a can of Preme by cutting it in half and putting the chunk between two slices of brod. I carried a small can opener (from an American 10 and 1 pkg.) and had to stop and warm my hands twice while trying to open the one can. To eat one hand held the food while the other was being kept warm in a pocket. Alternating hands while biting off pieces of Preme and thinking it was delicious. That was without a doubt the coldest meal I have ever eaten.

Later in the day we caught up with Ted and Steve. Steve had a wad of cotton stuffed in one nostril which had obviously been bleeding. He explained that while trying to go over a wall last night a guard saw him and swung with the butt of his rifle. However, Steve didn't seem too perturbed over his thwarted escape. Ted told us that Col. Millett, the American Executive Officer at Oflag 64, had taken off during the night with about 100 others, and they were headed back to the Oflag to await the Russians. As we finished off the prunes in my pocket I thought about the people that had remained in the barn we were in last night. They just hid in the straw and planned to stay there. But they could speak Polish and that made a lot of difference. After quite a discussion about the problems of escaping such as food, shelter and recognition by the Russians, I persuaded Mike to agree to escape at the next opportunity that looked promising. Also we concurred on trying to stick close to Ted and Steve with their linguistic abilities. The column halted in Wirsitz to wait for the strag-glers to catch up.

The goon guards were much more tired than we were, and they decided to do some-thing about it. We watched them commandeer several civilian horses and wagons, and then load their equipment on to ease their burden. This helped them considerably, and without it many of them would not have been able to carry on. Every time we stopped we had to continue moving our feet or lose the circulation in

them. Usually it was steady kicking of one foot against the other, and then change over to kicking the other foot. Up and down the column everyone was unconsciously involved in this method of keeping their feet warm. Here and there someone would be lying on the ground with upraised feet, kicking hell out of both of them.

After about a two hour wait, the column started off again. The goons must have commandeered a large stock of margarine for each four men received a one quarter lb. block as we moved out of the town. We began climbing a slow winding road, and my heart sank as we neared the top of the first of a series of small hills. The long column of refugees with their horses and wagons was having a hard time on the hill. Platoon 22 with its hugh wagon was also having a hard time, and rotation became very frequent for those pushing or pulling. But my hard time was caused by the sight of about a company of Jerries digging in along the rise of hills. Zig Zag trenches hidden in the snow and a long snaking line of barbed wire. This is what I had watched before but knew that I would hate to see. I had known that we were between the Russians and the main body of Jerries. As long as we remained in that relative position our chances of seeing Tovarich were good. But Jerry was contemplating a new defense line, and no one knew where he would choose to stand. Well, here it was. The first indica-tion of that line. Beyond would be more and more defense lines, as the Germans were masters at preparing this type of depth defense. If we continued marching we would be swallowed up inside Germany once more, and our chances of escape would be that much more difficult.

About two hours later we heard that old familiar rattle of machine gun fire. It was behind us and must have been a Russian patrol making contact with the Jerries we left on the hillside. What a helpless feeling that was to know that only 3 to 4 miles away was the end of all this damn business. And yet, on we marched, our long column inching forward in the snow. Across a bridge, the Bomberg Canal, guarded by a Jerry patrol, deeper and deeper inside his lines we moved. We turned off the main road and finally reached a very small town, Eichfelds. 26 kilos, 17 to 18 miles this day.

We were divided into groups and housed in small barns throughout the town. It was dark already, pitch black in the barn as we crowded our way inside and wedged into a spot in the straw. The first thing

we did was make the “sack” so we could get in and warm our feet against each others bodies. The one GI blanket that I had was folded in two and sewed around the bottom and up half one side. A perfect sack when augmented with other blankets. Our blankets were laid in the following order : Mike’s heavy small grey one, his big torn black and grey one, my CI, my brown hair one and then the coats. Mike’s coat wrapped around the bottom portion and then my short coat was thrown on top. It really felt good. Next came the evening bash. We had no brod and could not build fires to heat anything on, so we spooned (i.e. ate alone with no side dishes) a can of strawberry jam. Sounds nauseating and it was, but we hit the sack and fell right to sleep.

Next morning we were awakened with the news that the guards had taken off. We couldn’t believe it at first.

Free. It’s here at last. They’ve really gone. Hot shit. Come on, get up. Boy, wonder when the Ruskies will be here ? I didn’t hear a thing last night. Oh God, this is it. It doesn’t seem possible.

In a few minutes we got the word that we were to hold tight in town and we would wait for the Russians. Someone made a large vat of bean soup from the farmer’s stock, good and hot, and we all partook of it. I was rolling our blankets up when Mike came in with a hushed “follow me”. He led me around an adjoining barn and into the back door of a Polish house. He had just left the house a minute before and so he intro-duced me to the old woman there with the words “Comrade - Americanish”. We jabbered back and forth in the few words that we knew such as Polski, dubja, soldat, Schubin and kreigsgefangenan. We each washed up and tasted some of her delicious cake. What it was I don’t know, but it was good and certainly tasted like cake. I went out and brought back Ted and Steve. The rest of the household was now present, the old daughter and her husband, and their little girl of ten. Ted with his fluent Polish was greeted like a lost son. Tears in the old woman’s eyes made me feel that she thought a miracle had taken place. She knew the Americans were helping them, but here was an American and he could speak Polish. Now she felt sure that the Americans were helping them. They were happy that the Germans were being driven out, but just as fearful of the approaching Russians. Civilians in a war area are treated pretty rough by soldiers of both sides. These

people had gone thru this before and knew what to expect. Thoughts of this scared the daylights out of them. The old woman made us some potato soup that was thick and creamy. We all had seconds in addition to brod and sorghum. In turn we gave them coffee, cigarettes and chocolate.

About noon several Jerries came thru the town and said that our column was to begin marching at 3 P.M.

What the hell goes on ? What are we letting those boys run around for ? Why don't we pick them up ? If this bunch ever leaves town I sure as hell won't go with them. Where is the staff now ? Sit tight, shit. Why don't we grab those guards and their rifles, and take off toward the East ? Or just hold this town till the Russians come ?

By this time many Kriegies were thinking the same thing, only they began taking off to the East across the open fields. That seemed silly to me because a lone man could die of exposure in a short while in that weather. The thing to do was to hide in town there until the column left, and then try to be sheltered by one of the Polish families. This shelter business was damn important. More guards came into town and began organizing the column to move. Ted asked the old lady if we could hide in her basement. She pounded her heart with a clenched fist and explained how frightened she was for her life. We all realized that these people in five years of Nazi domination had had the fear of a soldier put into them too strongly, and we could not trust them not to tell on us. In spite of this I persuaded Mike, Ted and Steve that we should let the damn column go, and hide in one of the barns. When the soldiers are gone someone in town would shelter us. We crouched low behind two large haystacks as the column marched down the road out of the town.

At last we're free of the column. Whatever the hell happens I'll at least be satisfied that we tried to escape. In about an hour we can hit one of these houses and I'll bet they'll fix us up in a basement and feed us. It would be suicide to strike out across the open fields. Just how do those clowns expect to make the Russians understand that they are Americans before they get shot ? We always shot first and then asked the questions. Well, it's their hides, not ours.

After the column had gone neither Mike or Ted or Steve looked too happy with the decision to stay. Ted said that we would have a better chance of staying alive if we were liberated with the long column than if we were found in a town by ourselves.

He told us that someone on the staff had a large American flag ready to unfurl at the first sign of the Russians. Ted, Steve and Mike looked at one another and in unison said "Let's go". I went over my points again, but to no avail ---three to one, and off we went to catch the tail of the column. We all still believed that a day or two and we would be under Russian control. Seven kilometers to Charlottenburg and into hugh barns. I made the sack while Mike fixed a small bash -- one cold Preme sandwich, and that was the 23rd of January.

The morning of the 24th was bitter cold outside. Mike stayed in the sack while I sweated out a line 150 yards long to get half tin of pea soup for us. This was the first food that the goons gave us with the exception of the piece of oleo. During the night someone stole a Red Cross parcel from another man. Several announcements concerning it and much mumbling by everyone. Pretty damn low trick, but it made Mike and I glad that we had eaten most of our food. We knew that it can't be stolen when you carry it in your stomach. We left at 0900 and arrived at Lobsen that afternoon.

Word came that we would take a short break in town. In about five minutes everyone had learned that it was' a Polish town and very sympathetic toward Americans. The waiting column literally dissolved into the alleys, doorways and stairways. The townspeople gave us most all that they had in the way of a fast bite to eat, and everyone enjoyed a brief interlude of genuine hospitality. Mike picked up a full loaf of brod and I got four sorghum sandwiches. An abundance of cheese was passed around but we missed out on that. We just weren't at the right place at the right time. Finally everyone was routed out and we were on our way again. We arrived in a barn area, and there was Col. Schneider and our old guard company, the ones who had taken off a couple of nights before. We were formed into a compact group and the Col. talked to us. He said that we hadn't been acting like officers, and that he had requested SS troops be assigned to guard us. Immediately after his talk we were put into barns for the night.

Mike arid I got a good spot on the main floor of the barn. Next to us was Capt. Austin (of “suffering the torture of the damned” fame) and his buddy, an Englishman. The contortions and discussion that they had before finally getting settled gave us a good laugh. Before hitting the sack we warmed ourselves around small fires which were permitted for the first time.

Up the next morning and around the fires to wait for the chow line to get smaller. Feeding 1,000 men poses quite a problem especially for the men when they knew as we did that there wasn't enough food to go around. To get in the first half of the line you had to start running before they finished announcing where the line would be. To be in the last half meant being at the mercy of the man serving who continually kept cutting the size of the portions to make the food last. And then if you took the chance of being at the tail end they might have a little left and really fill up the last few men. And then again, they might run out. As they would say in the Russian army - tough shitski. Finally we took up a place in line and began sweating it out while trying to keep our feet warm. We received about half a tin of oatmeal to which we added sugar and it was pretty good. After much commotion we formed into our platoons at about 0830 and were issued a loaf of brod for each five men, some margarine and a finger of cheese. The guards fired into the straw where we had slept to see if anyone was planning on staying behind as so many had done the night before, only to be rounded up later. By 0900 we began another day's march.

Throughout the day we heard continuous artillery fire. The wide open snow covered plains made it difficult to estimate the range, but to hear it kept our hopes of liberation alive. We passed thru Flatow which was a fair sized town where civilians were being issued Army equipment for the defense of the town. Some time during the day we learned that Ted and Steve had remained in Lobsen.

Why the hell couldn't we be with them ?

Cold, it was plenty cold. Mike stopped to relieve himself during a ten minute break, and his hands were too cold to button his pants in one operation. So he stood there as the column moved on holding his pants up and warming his hands in his pockets at the same time. A few minutes later he caught up to us again, and returned to me our

one roll of toilet paper which I always kept handy in my big side pocket.

We made 23 kilometers before stopping in a large barnyard. This barnyard was about 5erage for size. It had 4 or 5 large barns in addition to 2 or 3 buildings which

were used as living quarters. The whole area was well stocked with slave labor,

and each farm area had about 20 to 30 people. The goons usually took over the living quarters where it was warm. Our staff would pick a small shed where they would have plenty of room and maybe a light. The rest of us (about 1,000) would be crowded into the barn lofts. The main floor of each barn was occupied by the animals, usually horses, cows and pigs. On these main floors there were always a few cubby holes where a dozen or so fast actors could find room and enjoy the warmth of the animals. They would also evade the long line on the single ladder leading to the loft. This part-icular night, Mike arid I, by leaving the line at the right minute got ourselves estab-lished in the corner of a goose pen on the ground floor. We found some slats for the wet floor and others to make ourselves exclusive from the geese. Dunc and Chappie were right behind us, and the four of us had a right handy spot. We made the sack up and got right in. At 10 PM barley soup and back to the sack. First thing in the morning everyone would roll their blankets, adjust their packs and be all set to go. But Mike and I too thoroughly craved the warmth of the sack to get up more than five minutes prior to departure time. This morning, the 27th, we laid there watching others prepare to move when word came that it would be a day of rest. Well alright ! So we stayed in the sack all day and rested. We both believed in conserving all possible energy. If blankets would keep us warm then our bodies would not have to produce that heat, and we could get along on less food. We were figuring it just that close.

About three in the afternoon they started to feed, and after a freezing two hour wait we got ours - - soup. The staff was still not able to convince all of our people that we could be fed the goon rations in an orderly fashion with only a few men at a time having to wait in the cold. We were all too fearful of not getting any, and so it was each man for himself. And EVERYONE stood in the cold.

During the day Col. Schneider announced to us that Russia had recalled her ambassadors from the U.S. and from England. What it meant we didn't know, and I guess he thought that he was scaring us. Speculation ran wild on the subject, but most of us were concerned with a far more important subject - - how to make food go farther. The owner of these barns was a Swiss, and we had quite a chat with him in our broken Polish and German. He said that the war would be over in five days. It was - - - for him.

That evening one of our medics tried to help a Russian PW who had fallen out of his column that had passed thru the day before us. The goons wouldn't allow us to help him and made the starving Ruskie stay outside in the cold by himself. By morning he had frozen to death, and the guards had thrown him in the "shizzan area". Shizzan area means latrine and is quite a site after 1,000 men have used the same manure pile as a backlog. In this particular barn area the shizzan area was a large chicken pen formed in part by two adjoining barns. The two barns touched at one corner making two sides of the pen walled in. The wind would come whipping into the corner formed by the buildings and then sweep upward in a whirl taking vast quantities of used toilet paper with it. By morning the shizzan area beckoned only the brave men and the one fallen Ruskie.

Thin soup in the morning and on our way again at 0800 on 4 inches of freshly 5 lien snow. Sleds were still prevalent and Platoon 22 plodded on with their enormous

wagon. In Jastrow we by-passed a resting column of British, French and Russian PWs. We slipped them cigarettes as we passed and learned that some of them had been in the bag for six years.

Six years is a long time, but they seem to be going it OK. They certainly will be glad when it's over. The cigarettes that we gave them were the one item that we had in abundance. Before leaving Schubin the entire store of personal cigars and cigarettes from private parcels was distributed among everyone. Mike and I started with about 30 packs and with me not smoking we still had plenty. The weather was too cold to smoke on the march, and in the barns it was verboten. In spite of this, butts were never thrown away. Our

men had seen a time when tobacco was scarce, and now they were reluctant to throw any away. On the ride from Limberg to Schubin 23 of us were caged in one-third of a 40 by 8 boxcar. Butts were saved and rerolled into nww cigarettes over and over until one butt may have been thru 4 different cigarettes. Eight days like that and I was certainly glad that I didn't have the nicotine habit.

These poor Ruskies really look like they've caught hell. Giving them a few :cigarettes is OK because they're hurting worse that we are, but to throw tobacco away - --never.

We arrived in a barn area but had to wait two hours before getting inside. The platoons were assigned barn space in a numerical order and we were near the end. Add to this a little quibbling here and there about who is going where and how much room they'll have, and Platoon 22 was the last one in. While standing and waiting, my shoes, socks and feet became soaking wet. While walking the activity and heat from my feet would keep them dry, but two hours of standing on ice and they were really miserable. It actually hurt when you had to take a step after they were in that condition. That night our only consolation was getting into the sack. We finally made it inside and took the last available spot on top of the highest level of straw against the ceiling.

Mike's feet were in pretty bad shape, so I sweated out the chow line with two tins. After 45 minutes of waiting in soaking wet feet, I finally got two tins of soup and started back to the barn. Inside, I set one tin on a rafter so I could crawl over another, and cautioned the man next to me to "watch the tin here". I turned back just in time to see someone else accidentally knock the tin over. "Son of a bitch, I just said watch the tin here". Back I went with my wet feet to wait in the line again. Maybe there would be a little left over.

January 28th - Up in the morning and into wet shoes and socks. To start right out walking wouldn't be bad as the shoes would slowly dry out from the activity, Uur our column took about an hour to get organized. Everyone out of the barns, platoons lined up, all equipment shouldered and ready to go - - at least one hour. an during that hour we stand and hit one foot against the other to keep the circulation going. This morning in particular we had an exceptionally long delay as 120 men were allowed to remain behind -

- - sick and unable to walk any further.

The heavy snow loomed as too big an obstacle for the tremendous wagon of Platoon 22. One mad scramble and everyone was carrying his own equipment leaving the cherished piece for someone else. We made 18 km. thru a severe blizzard dreaming all the way of that ONE and ONLY consolation - - - the sack. We all had towels up around our heads and over our faces leaving just a slit for our eyes. It was flat country and the wind literally “swept across the barren plains of Poland”.

The drippings from my nose froze there until Mike would knock them off. Anyone ever mentions Poland to me - Ugh

We made it to the shelter of a small town called Zeppenow and paced back and forth in the street for 1 ½ hours till they found places to house all of us. The Oberst, a man of at least 60, had been outranked out of his car a few days back and was making it on foot too. There was no prior planning or coordination for this trip, and if there had been, the swift changing situation would have thrown it out of balance anyhow. As a result we were being housed on a catch as catch can basis, and fed the same way. This day we got nothing to eat. One large group was bedded down in a church with Mike and I in the main aisle. We got straw from a large barn a few blocks away, and at least we were out of the wind. Earlier in the day Jim Henderson was about to discard a canteen. It was full of water, frozen and as a result, heavy. He asked if anyone wanted it, and I quickly inherited one GI canteen. That night in the church we had hot cocoa, heated by dropping canteen and all down in a stove. We decided not to eat our last can of tuna or the last spoonful of cocoa in the can. These would be kept for a “liberation feast”.

Next morning we got a tin of thin soup each and were soon back in the street getting lined up. Mike disappeared for a few minutes and came back with a bulge in his coat that betrayed a loaf of bread.

“How’d you get it ?“

“See the alley there ?“ “Yeah.”

“Around the corner of the big house. A couple of old women. They

both had bags with bread in them. I said ‘Haben ze brod ?’ with a real pitiful look on my face. They said something back and forth and then one gave me this.”

“Let me see it again.”

“It’s a full one. Not one of the dinky small ones.”
It’s solid too.”

5 “Boy.

As we started walking again I looked at Mike and studied him.

‘A real pitiful look on my face’ he said. If Margaret could only see him now. Nine days beard, shabby coat collar up around his neck, hair hanging all over, knit hat pulled down over his ears. He sure looks the part of a bum - - but, boy that loaf of bread.

It was another blizzard we were in and my feet ~ere soaking wet. While walking I could stand it, but each time we stopped the wet penetrated all up thru my body. Only 4 km., but miserable ones, and we arrived at an abandoned camp named 2 D. The camp was a newly furnished enclosure for French PW’s and they let us roam the entire compound. There was plenty of room for all, and we grabbed one of the rooms that had 16 bunks in it. We found brand new stoves piled up in the snow, and immediately dragged a complete unit back to our room. In another room we found a tremendous pile of brickettes. We made several trips carrying as many of the brickettes as we could. Not that we could use that much coal in a week, but being so cold so long and those brickettes represented heat and lots of it. Exemplifying the same idea was the Kriegie who first uttered one of the classic remarks of the trip. He had found a basement full of potatoes, and was frantically looking for something to carry the entire basement in when a second Kriegie happened on the cache and endangered his take. Falling to his knees with his arms stretched as wide as he could he cried “From here to here is mine”.

In a few minutes a roaring fire was going, coffee was put on to boil, and wet socks were hanging over the stove. We sat and rotated out bodies to absorb the heat. We toasted slices of brod one after the other and prayed that tomorrow would be a day of rest. The men needed it, and Col. Goode said that he would try to get it for us.

Boy, a spot like this to have a day of rest. Wow !

Here we met Jim Doyle and Eddie Varella. But too many things were happening to pay much attention to other people. Brod to be toasted. A warm fire, and then later there was a watery cabbage and potato soup, but lots of it. To bed on straw ticks with a blazing fire in the stove. Mike thinks he has lice.

Next morning up early to enjoy the hot fire. More toast and then on to the potatoes which we had stored up the day before. We washed and shaved for the first time since leaving Schubin. Still hoping to stay for a day of rest. Rumor put the Russians in Jastrow about 14 km. away. At 1100 more soup. Mike snooped around and brought back some pickles. Pretty classy we are — pickles. At noon word came that we are to leave at 1300. All sick people report to medics. After much dickering about 100 men who were too sick to go on stayed at the camp as the rest of us left.

I wrapped my feet in burlap sacks that were stuffed with excelsior hoping to keep them dry. It lasted about an hour when the water finally penetrated through, and away went the burlap. In the evening it got so cold that the soles of my shoes froze solid while I was marching. The dampness within the sole had frozen and the warmth of my feet was not enough to keep the leather pliable. We kept thinking of that nice warm building that we had left, and if and when we would ever get to another one.

Well, even if we didn't get a building we still had the sack to look forward to. Night came on and we were still marching. The Goons got lost in the dark and we took a wrong turn. When it was discovered we had to backtrack about a mile. Made 15 km. thru Rederjtz to Machin. Waited for two miserable hours with cold wet feet for the housing situation to be solved. Finally in groups of 50 we were led away to various barns. Mike and I were near the end of the line, but happy to get even the loft next to Dunc and Chappie, until we realized that it was dripping and our sack was directly below the biggest and heaviest drips. The hell with it. In the sack for me. Mike threw some straw down thru a loft opening to Paris and Heidt who were on the ground floor with the cattle. Capt. Gleason started bitching because a few strands were falling on him, but quickly shut

up when Mike told him off. Mike was pretty bitter at this point. After this Mike went down and with the barn owner's permission, heated some water in his kitchen for milk. I stayed in the sack and drank the milk which was wonderful, but still went to sleep swearing about my wet feet.

Jan. 31st. Mike up early and down to the kitchen again. I rolled the blankets and joined him. The owner was pretty good to us, letting us heat water and we all stayed in the warm kitchen until time to leave. While waiting we had a pickle sandwich with memories of the day before. On the way out of town we were issued a full loaf of brod per man. A miracle, but we took it without any questions. And there is such a nice comfortable weight to the burden of a loaf of brod. During the day we made 18 km. into Templeburg. We are now over the German border, and dreams of escape or liberation are becoming fewer and farther between. For the night we are divided into 100 man groups, and housed over about a three mile area. Our 100 man group had one small set of farm buildings where Mike and I acted fast in getting settled. No loft tonight. Paris, Heidt, Belleau, and the two of us in an exclusive little feed room adjoining the barn. Plenty of straw and I am getting to be an expert with the sack. Making it just big enough to get into and still not big enough to allow any air pockets to be present. Late at night soup was to be about 200 yards away. I tramped down thru the snow and brought back two tin-fuls as Mike wasn't feeling very good. We were 5 lulled to sleep by the vocal ramblings of the one and only Rambler, G. Frank Heidt. This night's episode was about the comparative merits of a paratrooper as against an Infantryman.

Next morning a real find - an inside one-seater alongside the back of the shed. We all took turns just to loll in the luxury of an honest-to-goodness one-seater.

Off again at 0900. Only 6 km. to Heinrichsdorf and into hugh barns. In the sack by 1130 and out only once for the next 24 hours - for soup that night. Our platoon was first for chow and we were right up front. We were waiting in the dark for soup to be brought out when a large truck loaded with brod pulled up to the doorway where we were standing. The fates were with us - the one gas lantern the Goons were using, and the only light, went out for 30 seconds. In that 30 seconds I had 3 loaves of brod - one to Mike, one to Paris,

and one in my jacket. We'd have been shot if caught, but brod is the staff of life. Just a case of being at the right place at the right time. It was a fairly thick soup and 80 our visit to the chow line was well worth while. We munched brod and margarine in the pitch black barn, and got crumbs in the sack. Plenty of rest in spite of the fact that our sack was at a bend in the aisle and Mike took a few stray feet in the back during the night.

5 Feb. 2nd. - A second miracle, another loaf of brod per man. Just before this issue Paris tells us that the Goons are searching for the stolen brod (at least 25 loaves must have disappeared when the light went out, and they can tell which are the stolen loaves by the date mark which is impressed on each loaf. We cut slices which included the date lines from our loaves and consumed them immediately. This eased our minds but we wound up pretty stuffed. However nothing ever came of it. We didn't leave until noon, and received soup again just prior to our departure. The column had stayed there from noon till noon and Mike and I had spent 23 hours in the sack. We felt rested as we left for Zulshagen 18 km. away.

Thru Falkenburg and Mike's left foot became painful as hell. We're never told how far each day's march is to be, so we exist on rumors. Three more kilos to go, we hears And after we knock that off and find ourselves still marching, we hear that it's just three more kilos to go. Fortunately I felt good and carried Mike's blankets

he limped along on his increasingly painful foot. He said that it felt like his toes were all cramped up. It was dark when we turned into our new barn area, and I was worried by thoughts of Mike having to stay behind because of his foot. It meant a hell of a lot to have someone looking out for you when you didn't feel good, and know that the support was mutual.

We groped our way into a barn and up the loft ladder. Mike gently removed his shoe and found that the cardboard insole had come loose and worked it's way forward so that it was all bunched up under his toes. Well, he had said his toes felt cramped, and I guess they were. We lost no time in throwing the sack together and diving in for our only consolation. Mike is bothered by lice.

Feb. 3rd - And a day of rest. The sun is out strong but the cold air

kept me in the sack. Soup at 1400. Our men are trading with SS troops who are stationed nearby. We all have cigarettes and coffee which are the most valuable items of exchange. For these we would receive brod, meat of any kind or cheese. During the day a woman from a nearby house told a Goon officer that 3 of her chickens were missing, and later showed him the head and feet from 2 of them. Oberst Schneider yelled about 10 minutes over this and we all stood and listened. Had we been Russians they would have shot 3 of us. Later that night we heard that they found a Russian, accused him of the act, and did shoot him. In the evening Mike picked sow beans from the hay in our loft and boiled up a big "sow bean bash". Not bad. More lice for Mike.

Left at 0830 the next morning. It was windy, cold and frozen over, but turned out to be the nicest day yet. We made 17km. to Genow with Mike and I discussing food over the entire 17 km. What meals we liked (we liked them all), and how we liked them fixed. Breakfast menus, dinner menus and raiding a bakery shop. In our new barns Jim Lockett (our new platoon leader - platoons 22 and 23 having been merged) assigns each man the spot where he sleeps and no one beds down until everyone has a space. Only one ladder for 150 men in a loft, but we do have room. Major Hazlett with two Goons had gone ahead of the column and divided all the barn areas equally among the platoons. As we marched into the area we were told exactly where to go and 5 everyone had to stay in line. So now we have a billeting officer, and thus ended our scrambles for the choice spots. That night we got a-thin soup and each man had to be in line with his platoon. At last we had acquired some organization. We were allowed fires for an hour and just before dozing off that night Lockett passes on what he remembers of the BIRD from the platoon leaders meeting. BIRD is our term for the BBC News. Our little radio as big as a match box is back in operation and it was a flock of eager ears that heard something beside rumors that night.

Feb. 5th and a change in the menu. Ersatz (or synthetic) coffee and about three boiled spuds for breakfast. Something new has been added. The ersatz we've had before, at Limburg, and it was just as bad. But it was hot and that made it good. We left at 0900 on slushy roads and passed thru Wangerin which was being-evacuated. Road blocks were being erected in the streets and everywhere the people were hurriedly loading wagons. For a change it was nice to see store

windows in spite of the empty carton displays. Up to now everything had been barren farms or wasteland and I began to look forward to what could be seen as we passed thru the towns. Here was something to break the monotony of staring at open fields while plodding along. Cobblestone streets and road signs. The only shops open for business were the "Fine Bakieris" and we looked longingly at these. Somewhere about this time the Oberst acquired an auto by use of his rank. His guard had also managed to increase the size of their wagon train. By now they had 4 or 5 wagons to carry their equipment and a few of our very sick people. We finished 20 km. to Zeitlitz and I thought that we would never stop.

I made the last hour in a semi-conscious state, and as we entered the barn I woke up to all that was around me. We hit the sack immediately. Later there was a chow line, cabbage, noodles arid meat soup with spuds and ersatz. Sounds like a lot, but for every piece of meat the size of a small radish there was a gallon of water. Two or three boiled spuds didn't last long, but it was better than we had been getting.

That night they announced that about 100 men could be taken by train and I contemplated going. I felt sick and yet I wanted no part of a train ride. I recalled the eight days from Limberg to Schubin in a boxcar. The first three days we didn't move because the track had been bombed out. And where were we when the track was being bombed ? On the train listening to the rising crescendo of the falling bombs. Many were hurt and 60 American officers were killed by a direct hit on the one-room building that we had been quartered in for three weeks. And only 2½ hours after we had left the building. No sir, no train rides. I'll keep walking.

That night 180 men left to board trains.

Next morning I felt much better and stood in line for thin oatmeal and a few spuds. We left at 0900 and paced off another 20 km. to a slave labor camp at Regenwalde. Our days have been pretty well regulated lately. We take ten minute breaks every hour while marching, and thirty minutes at noon. Our pace is about 2 to 2½ miles an hour. The deep snow is past us although it is still wet and plenty damp. We still look forward daily to our ONE consolation - the sack. That they can't take away from us.

No matter how miserable the day, no matter how thin the soup - our sack, that we have in all its glory.

On this day something new was added. During the noon break an old two-wheeled boiler with a belching smoke stack comes rolling up behind a pair of skinny steeds --the Goon, mess truck. Lo and behold, we are served ersatz on the move, ½ tin per man. Here in began the era of “Ersatz Charlie”. With a grin like Scurvy’s and a coat that swirled arid swayed to the ground he was a welcome sight at noon each day bringing hot coffee. Ersatz or not, it was coffee. Well, at least it was hot.

We were plenty tired by the end of the day from all the sloshing around, and glad to finally grab a bunk in one room of these one-story slave barracks. Jim Doyle stole some wood from the camp supply which was off limits, and had the canteen inside a blazing stove in nothing flat. There were about ten of us in the room and we dried our socks and feet, had toast and a hot milk drink. Inside four walls —prima ! Found the latrine building and had to hang from and between the booth partitions to stay high enough to clear an overfilled bowl. And this was the cleanest stall. The Germans were leaving nothing but decay for the Russians. Ya.

Had soup and 1 / 6 of a loaf of brod issued in the morning, and then after standing around until 1000 so our feet got thoroughly soaked we took off. Thru Plathe

20 km. more to Lubбини. Day after day, kilo after kilo, and there is no end in sight. Today - 20 km. - soup - sleep in a barn and dream of food. Tomorrow - 20 km. - soup - sleep in a barn and dream of food. When will all this end ? It can’t go on forever. Wonder where Ted and Steve are? Bet they’re on a plane headed to the States. Why the hell didn’t we take off that night the Goons were gone ? Why didn’t the staff have an escape plan? Why couldn’t the Russians have gone North from Staggard? We were headed there and they took the town while we were still 50 kilo east. So we turned north and got around them. The Germans sincerely believed that they were saving us.

We were housed in a newly constructed barn this night. Mike and I try to kid about how wonderful it is to sleep in a barn. I relate to him

my Dad's desire to recall boyhood days by sleeping in a barn; and how he would always say "nothing like sleeping in a barn". We agreed. There is NOTHING like sleeping in a barn.

We had bad soup in the morning, so there was none that night.

February 8th - same pattern as the days before - a few boiled spuds and ersatz for breakfast. We left at 0900 and made 20 km. to Stuckow. Getting damn tired of boiled spuds and watery soup, but we are so hungry that it always tastes good. Also getting, tired of Jim Lockett and his lack of push. He is so tired himself that it takes him an hour to get us all spread out or rather jammed in for the night. He moves us back and forth trying to see which way will allow the most room. As a result, our platoon, the Lockett's Rockets, is always the last one bedded down. Seems like every night we get assigned to a loft and Jim never bitches about it. Other platoon leaders are always sticking up for their men to get them the best, but Lockett is just too pooped out. When it comes to passing around the BIRD each night Lockett forgets half of it and then wind up by telling us "no change" or "about the same as last night". Waited till after dark in a long line for carrot soup and cartofels (spuds). Mike's lice are worse.

Next morning Dunc and Chappie tell us about how they were at the right place at the right time last night. They happened into a doorway looking for a trade and got invited in for dinner with one of the Polish slave labor families living there. They were feted with pancakes, syrup and baked beans - all they could eat. A kreigy's delight - the right place at the right time. How we drooled as they told their tale. Talk like this passed the time of day and I always welcomed it.

With Mike I discussed food, families and past experiences. For sports, Tom Paris was the man to stroll along side of. Whether it was baseball, football, bowling, boxing, racing or what have you - Tom knew the past, present and future stars. Frank Heidt -- Frank was in a class by himself. Regardless of subject, Frank was willing. No one else was quite like Frank. On cold days he walked with a towel wrapped around his head shielding his eyes like blinders. He walked with Tom and often he would call out "Tom, Tom Paris ? " without looking around. Tom was right along side of him and would

answer “here I am, Frank”. “Oh” was Frank’s reply.

He was always watching out for all of us. Racing to get a good spot in a barn for Dunc and Chappie or Mike and I. Or running to get us when a wagonload of milk was found and about to be passed out (to the first comers) as occurred on this afternoon. We had just finished 14 km. in a drizzly rain and entered a barn area.

Frank was off like a flash to look around as was his custom. He believed that if he got around to a lot of places he would be at some of them at the right time. And this was one of those times. He found a wagon loaded with 25 large milk cans that the old watchman didn’t care if we took. Now that was a dangerous place to be with the stampede of about 600 men that was ready to take place as soon as the word spread. But Frank was back for us with a hushed ‘follow me’, and we all got about 4 or 5 tins of skimmed milk. We left the wagon and the still growing mob bloated with milk and carrying one full canteen. Yes, there was no one quite like Frank Heidt. Boiled cartofels and gravy from the Goons that night and into the sack. Nothing like sleeping in a barn.

Rumor had it that we would arrive at an Of lag on an island in the mouth of the Oder River by nightfall. It was also rumored that we would get Red Cross parcels. This one undoubtedly arose straight from the shizzan area and we knew it, but still it plagued us. The thought of parcels and we killed time debating the possibility of receiving them. We walked thru Stresow to Dievenrow from where we could see the Baltic Sea. Wild escape ideas filled my brain. Hiding on a boat and going to Norway. Anything that led to home was worth thinking about, and we had nothing else to do but think as we marched along. Many seaplanes were overhead as we passed thru a very modest looking resort community. Across a large wooden bridge and into a Luftwaffe camp. Our platoon got wooden barracks and we grabbed a room with Doyle, Enochs and six others. It had an electric light that worked and a stove which we immediately fired up. An electric light bulb is truly a wonderful thing. For the past three weeks we were accustomed to groping our way in the pitch blackness of barns.

We had learned from experience to cooperate when choosing a spot to sleep so as to leave aisles leading outside. In the beginning it was

each man grab a spot for himself near the door and the hell with the others who will have to sleep back in the corners. But those few near the doors found themselves stepped on all night long and usually with pretty heavy boots. Not intentional, but when a man has to get out-side fast he cannot stop to grope for aisles that aren't there. Those first hard days produced some of the classic remarks of the trip. Late in the night and out of a coal-black barn came the pathetic wail "I don't mind you stepping on my face, but DON'T STAND THERE ". By now we had all learned to take our shoes off at night. If the shizzan area beckoned, we crawled along on our hands and knees feeling our way in the narrow aisles. so as to not disturb the sleep of others. We were bitter enough under the circumstances without fighting among ourselves.

Inside the barracks we each had straw ticks to sleep on and the forthcoming -night loomed as a pleasant one compared to our consolation in cold dark barns. We stood in line for soup and watched the Nazi Junior birdmen marching and singing on the parade grounds. Soup was the best yet with boiled cartofels, gravy and a few real chunks of meat. I sweated out seconds. Later we were issued a loaf of brod per n. Even in Deutschland the Air Corps had a better setup than the Infantry. We sat up until midnight toasting brod and baking cartofels, but mostly reveling in the luxury of being inside, having an electric light and dreaming of the rumored Red Cross parcels. During the night a very unexpected discovery was made - I, too, have lice.

Next morning we shaved, again the first time in ten days. Toasted more brad and listened attentively to a fellow Timberwolf relate his war stories. We marched out at noon feeling very revived and thankful f or the dry weather. Our route was along a double lane cement highway which was used as an emergency runway for the airfield. Camouflaged planes were dispersed in the edge of the woods along the road. Jerry infantrymen were conducting problems in the area and we watched squad after squad marching back toward the camp. The area was a great deal like Camp Blanding, Florida. It was flat, half marshy and had many tall trees. I recalled some of my' training days there.

The rest of the afternoon Mike and I discussed food and finally agreed upon a MODEL BREAKFAST at Park Central Hotel - New York

City.

Sliced bananas and cream

Oatmeal or yellow cornmeal

Two eggs with a ham steak and French fries

Two pancakes with sausages and two French toast

Hot chocolate and two jelly doughnuts

At first, two of each thing seemed hardly enough, but we finally decided that it would be better not to fill up on any one item. We took turns thinking up the most appetizing words to describe this meal with. Our minds ran wild in bakery shops recalling all the pastries on display, and what we would do to them “some day”. Not much satisfaction now, but still we repeated “some day”.

We arrived at our next stop - Neuerdorf - where there were only two barns. By this time each of us was an evacuation expert being able to judge with a quick glance

just how many Kriegies could fit into a barn — and this one looked impossible. But up the ladder and into the loft the line started. The first ones in leveled off all the straw and the line kept moving up and in. Three hundred and sixty men in one loft and this was not an exceptionally large barn. Hauptman Menter told Col. Goode that there would be no chow tonight. Col. Goode reprimanded Menter for moving us that day without previously making any arrangements for feeding. He said that he would report this to the Red Cross, but never-the-less we went to bed with no chow.

Mike and I were on the end of a row wedged between the loft floor and the slanted roof. I couldn't move without the three men next to me sitting up first.

Throughout the march many people were afflicted with dysentery, diarrhea shizzans or just plain shits caused by a combination of a watery diet, eating from Klim tins seldom washed, and by our continuous proximity to these shizzan areas. It was a common sight to see someone rush from the moving column to the edge of the road and drop their pants just in time. Weeks ago in the extremely cold weather the classic phrase was coined “A man has to have a grudge against his ass” when some poor guy was forced to bear his

while walking across a windswept plain.

They never had to go while we waited in the shelter of some barns, but always when the snow was swirling in the wide open spaces. Since those days many people left pants undone for fear the urge would beckon a second too late to allow fumbling with buttons.

Frank Heidt had coined a well-worded phrase when he first said, "I gotta GO -- and I don't mean in three minutes". Fortunately for a diminishing roll of shizzan paper Mike and I had been spared from prolonged periods of this most torturing of afflictions. But this particular night, probably due to our being wedged in a back corner, I awoke with a full realization of what Heidt had meant.

There were no aisles because of our cramped quarters, and so I started to crawl over rows of legs to the far left shutter where a ladder lead down to the ground. Realizing that I would never make it that far, I turned toward a closer shutter. Even this seemed unobtainable due to my hands and knees position which wasn't helping to prolong anything. To stand up meant stepping on someone and probably falling down again, which was something that I couldn't afford at this point. Sheer determination combined with a strong teeth-clenching act helped me reach the open shutter in two minutes and fifty nine seconds. Crawling back to the sack I again stepped on someone who was lying in wait for my return trip and a chance to curse me out. Luckily it turned out to be Glenn Chapman.

The next morning we had a small portion of gruel for breakfast. It was prepared like all of the soups which are boiled in a large circular vat. The Goons dumped in one pail-full of barley, or whatever was available, and kept adding water until all 600 of us are fed. A man winds up with two kernels of barley and considers himself fortunate because the next fellow only got one. We built fires while waiting this morning and Mike fixed a tin of strong, potent black coffee. Tasted delicious, and with one tinfull I was sold on having the same thing each morning before leaving.

Besides being hot it stayed that feeling of hunger for a little while

longer, in the first town that we passed thru a small boy came running out of his house and very playfully began marching with our column. When his mother spied him she swooped out and snatched him up kicking and crying fiercely. But Mother was not to be deterred.

The coffee we had acted as a wonderful stimulant and we didn't get that gnawing hungry feeling until 1100 (instead of the usual 1000). Many people collapsed this day 5 from the grueling 25 km. (17-18 miles) we made. Undernourishment is rearing its ugly head and taking a toll among the older men who don't revive after a nights sleep the way the younger ones do.

Obviously we are using more energy daily than the amount that we are replacing. What we are living on is that reserve developed from a childhood in America. America, will we ever see it again ? If we ever do..... These people over here just don't know what that means. They're hungry, but they've been that way since they were born. They don't know what it's like any other way so it doesn't bother them so much. But us, oh ! Sunday dinners. These people would go crazy if they ever sat down to an average Sunday dinner in America. Here, one piece of meat is boiled in a kettle of water ---- soup for five, and that's their dinner. A little kid in America would eat the same bite of meat and start to yell for his dinner. The average Tuesday morning breakfast in America would look like a Thanksgiving dinner here. Thanksgiving..... someone had the right idea when they made a day of Thanksgiving in America.

At this point my mind searched for a prayer of Thanksgiving, and I finally satisfied myself --

"We give thanks today for the greatest gift that man can know. To be an American, and live in America. " If I ever get home I'll repeat that prayer every Thanksgiving as long as I live.

After dark we arrived at Swinemude with its' Marine base. A German Marine officer wanted to take charge and feed us before seeing that we all got bedded down. But one of our Goon Hauptmans would have none of this. He knew what he was doing and said no food until morning. AFTER ALL, WE DID HAVE GRUEL 12 HOURS BEFORE.

About ten of us on the end of our platoon line are shunted back and forth from a wonderfully warm bowling alley in the basement of a

modern officer's recreation building to a 16 man room in a cold barracks. We were too weak to complain that there was enough room in the bowling alley for us, and we were happy to finally be inside. Half a slice of brod each for Mike and I and into the bunks.

A fair soup is served in the morning inside a real mess hall and we make seconds on it. A little later we all wait inside while a Goon medic examines 39 of our sick-men. Col. Goode explains that we have traveled 235 miles by foot in 23 days. We've received 4 ½ loaves of brod per man, a little oleo, and never more than one cup of thin soup a day. These 39 men are deathly sick and the rest of us will soon be the same way unless we are given more food and more rest. Hauptman Menter says that no one can stay. His orders, from Oberst Schneider who has gone ahead, are that everyone must stay with the column. Col. Goode gets hot as hell and continued to bitch. At last he's learned that it won't help to play square. That first day out when he wouldn't let anyone stay behind. He thought that by being fair with them they would be fair with us. He's come a long way, but it's a little late now. Menter is a two-faced bastard, and I'd like to bust his head and that smirking smile. The outcome was that four men were left as hospital cases and the rest will have their packs carried on the Goon wagons. Mike and I were in am good condition as anyone else, but it hurts to see our boys in such an exhausted state.

At 1030 we moved out into a snow flurry and were on our way once more. At the center of town we are ferried across the Oder River. This is one of the three branches that lead in from the Baltic. Nine km to Garz where we are split into groups of sixty to sleep in small barns in town. Big Jim Lockett is in command, and with the aid of about ten others enough items of food are collected among the 60 of us (bullion cubes, cartofels, some carrots, salt, oleo, etc.) to make a good soup with seconds all the way around. Jim is so excited about this terrific undertaking that he forgets to send a man down to pick up our platoons ration of oleo and we miss it. Mike and I sleep in the loft under a dripping spot in the roof.

Lice running wild on both of us. NOTHING LIKE SLEEPING IN A BARN.

In the morning, three boiled cartofels per man and we are now out

of danger of the Russians. Oberst Schneider announces that he is proud of the way that we have conducted ourselves.

THAT SON OF A BITCH. WHAT DOPES WE WERE FOR NOT TAKING OFF WHEN THE OTHERS DID. TWO OR THREE DAYS --- TWENTY FOUR NOW AND STILL NO END IN SIGHT. WHEN WILL THIS DAMN THING END ? - We finished 15 km. to Stolpe and Schneider makes another announcement --a day of rest, but we should be good boys and no stealing this time.

This is our fourth week and the third day of rest. Our barns are in the midst of a barren spot in sight of the Oder. NOT A CHANCE TO TRADE LET ALONE STEAL. We are all so starved that cartofels are as welcome as brod. Our morale is low as hell, but we are glad for the day- of rest. The lice missed the Oberst's announcement and were very active throughout the night.-

February 15th - our day of rest. Mike and I took turns staying in the sack. One of us would look for the lice in our clothes while the other baked the few cartofels around the fire. Dunc and Chappie kept the fire going all day as they were making an all day stew. The stew was ready early in the day, but it was a comforting feeling to continually stir the stew and know that you were going to eat it. The actual amount they were making was not that much and so they felt that more good would be derived from prolonged contemplation than had it been eaten when ready.,

The lice would stay in the seams of our clothing to keep warm while we marched. But when we hit the sack where it was extremely warm they would come out for a little stroll. They caused no infection or disease, but managed to irritate the hell out of you. "Don't scratch them Mike, it will only make it worse." And then five minutes later it was "Don't scratch them Vic, it will only make it worse." Try as we would, -we couldn't keep from rubbing and scratching continually. But by taking off a shirt or a sweater we could find and kill them between our fingernails. This was our main occupation on Feb. 15th. One soup before dark and back to the sack for another night. BIRD -- no change. Dreamed of Red Cross parcels.

Next morning 100 of our sickest men remained behind to wait for trains as the rest of us began the trek again. It was a fairly nice day

considering the weather we had been through. It was at least dry and the sun was out.

At noon we crossed the third branch of the Oder and took our break just clear of the bridge. Mike and I had our lunch --- one small onion and one cold boiled cartofel each. And of course, Ersatz Charlie was on hand.

SOME DAY WHEN I WRITE MEMOIRS OF THIS DAMN TRIP I'LL RECALL TODAY AND THE MEAL WE'RE HAVING. AND I'LL WRITE, "ON THIS DAY MORALE WAS LOW".

On our feet again, a forward ho from Col. Waters, and on our way. He was in the habit of calling out this forward ho every time we finished a break and were to begin marching. His call could be heard the length of the column. We made 23 km. arriving at barnyards just short of Anklam. From force of habit Big Jim climbed subconsciously up the ladder into the loft with Platoon 22 - 23 following him. The area for our platoon was just not big enough, -and Lockett had a hell of a time. The 50 of us were standing with our equipment as he surveyed the small area with its' many beams and rafters.

"You 10 men lay down against that side.....push up against the edge here - one more you squeeze in with them now - you 11 men on this side - you three right here - leave an aisle over there - 3more right here Cass, you and I'll sleep on this high spot in the corner here how many more don't have a spot ?..... you two right in there.

"That's the aisle there" everyone chimed in. "Alright, but sit down for now.....now, how many are left more.....ah, Grisset, see if you can find Hasslett and tell him we can't all get in here. Let's see.....anyone that doesn't have a spot stand over here in the aisle..... that's it.....3..4..5 what are you two doing there, that's the aisle ?" "You put us here sir." "Oh I did ?..... um.

About half an hour later Mike and I went down the ladder and found our own spot to sleep. And on the ground floor too. Later we learned that Frank had found three Russians buried in the straw of that loft. They had been there for two days without moving, having dropped out of their marching column. Frank, true to his Allies, left them

hidden without disclosing their presence. Cabbage soup, cartofels and knack brod at night. Not bad for a change. We munched the knack brod in the sack, dropping crumbs which made us squirm all night. Of course the lice had nothing to do with our squirming. Because we were bedded down with another platoon we got to hear the BIRD. The Russians were still advancing having taken about 100 more towns. ie Western Front was beginning to move which was good news from a long range view.

At the time we could hardly appreciate the long range view.

After a miserable night with my friends, the lice, I decided to do something about them. Using a razor blade I removed most of the hair from my armpits and crotch. These were their nesting places and were literally filled with tiny eggs. So on this day, Feb. 17th, I made a present of these little fellows to the local shizzan area.

For breakfast we had tea (if you could drink it), a couple of cartofels, 1/6 of a loaf of brod and another box of knack brod. These boxes of knack brod were like a dark crisp cracker and came 12 crackers to the box. As we left the barn area a rumor came down that Cal. Goode had gone ahead with Schneider to get the Red Cross parcels. It was only a rumor, but one to set the mind afloat in a maze of dreams about food. The entire marching day was spent dreaming of what we would eat first from the package and how we would fix each thing. And then it came, after 20 km, the goon Sgt. who used to be a boxer announced in his broken English "Gentlemen your partials have arrived". Six more grueling kms., through Gorzkow to the new barn area. And then the announcement that they would be issued to us in the "MORGAN" when it was light. We were plenty pooped as we waited in line to go up the ladder -- Lockett's platoon in the loft again.

Later we stood in line for the thickest soup yet. It was boiled barley, carrots and turnips with very little water. Mike snooped around and overheard one of the staff say something about a day of rest tomorrow. So while everyone else waited for seconds on the good soup, Mike and I were doing a round robin with 20 others on the cartofels. They were one damn heavy load to march with, but we gambled on the next day being one of rest and passed up the seconds on the soup. The man passing out cartofels was holding a

small candle and couldn't see more than 10 feet away because the light was so near his eyes. He thought that he was passing out seconds to a long line, but there were only 20 of us and we kept circling back into the line until each of had gone thru seven times. The load we had couldn't possibly be carried, but on the tip about the day of rest we knew that we could eat that many and therefore not have to dig so deep into our coming Red Cross parcels. And it paid off for the announcement so came just as Mike had heard it. Lockett told us what he remembered of the BIRD and concluded with his standby "not much change". Mike and I crawled into our sack knowing that our friends, the lice, would be waiting for us.

Feb. 18th -- the big day. Up at 0730 for the parcel issue. One sealed # 10 Red Cross parcel for each man. We started a fire and a new clan was formed. Duncan and Chapman, Heidt and Paris, Lyons and Varella, Doyle and Enochs, and Mike and myself. We were all cheerful and felt great -- these were good times. For breakfast we had fried spam and a BIG pan full of fried cartofels. Mike turned out to be a big operator and traded a few cigarettes for some onions (sweeba), a hunk of bacon (fleish) and a half loaf of brod. We sat by the fire all day and bashed. We fried cartofels, baked cartofels, boiled cartofels and really filled ourselves up. Chappie had one of 5 rarest and most precious of items -- a frying pan which he had carried from away back. And now we were all taking turns with it. During the day I washed and shaved in the cow barn where I bummed some milk from the Polish slave laborer. Mike and I got some blue ointment from the medics for our lice. Truly an eventful day.

Up early the following day for the fire and breakfast. Delicious premixed cereal with powdered whole milk. Preeema ! We left at 1100 and marched 11 km. A little cheese and pate for lunch amidst a mob of Kriegies with the GI's. The rich food gave almost everyone the runs and people made fun of them exclaiming loudly as to the quantity and texture of these deposits. Most people had exhausted their initial supply of toilet paper, and a day such as this caused many a trying moment. In spite of how much Mike and I accused each other of using too much paper or using it too often we still had an ample supply.

This night's stand was in a barnyard next to a bombed and then

burned out house. 5 Lockett's platoon stood still for one hour as other platoons moved in, and then we moved in and bedded down. It seemed like downright discrimination. Mike and I scrawled up and over some un-threshed wheat for a spot near the ceiling. It was prohibited territory but nothing ever came of it. We had our fire in the rubble of the burned out building and bashed before the Goons issued cabbage soup. The cabbage was water logged and for the first time I turned something down. The last time that we had cabbage soup it had made me sick so I passed it up. Cabbage or no cabbage I still had to get up twice during the night for trips to the shizzan area, and then the long crawl back up to the sack. During the night one man fell out of the loft but fortunately received only a minor sprain.

Up early in the morning to bash before leaving at 0800. We made 20 km. through Dein where we heard that we were to get another parcel. THAT'S HARD TO BELIEVE, BUT THE STORY IS THAT THE TOWN IS A RED CROSS DEPOT AND BEING EVACUATED. MY GOD ANOTHER PARCEL - WOW ! HOW'LL WE CARRY IT ? HA ! WE'LL CARRY IT OK. THAT'S SUCH A COMFORTABLE LOAD. The town was fairly modern with many brod shops, but Mike and I are looking at them and laughing this time because we know that we have more on our backs than they have in the shops. Outside of town to a large farmyard where Mike and I get a ground floor spot in the barn next to Jim and Cass. Parcels were issued one per man with each pair of men getting one Canadian parcel and one # 10 American. Our Canadian biscuits were moldy and we threw them away rather than take a chance on getting sick. We bashed around the fire for awhile and then munched chocolate in the sack. This was the height of anything known to a Kriegie -- munching chocolate in the sack. A day of rest was announced and we laid awake planning the following day's menu. This also was the evening that Frank had his nasty word tussle with Palmer, a Lt. Col. And Frank had the last word. And the nastiest one too.

Feb. 21st - Up early to bash which we did all day. Mike made salmon patties for lunch and even washed his hands before preparing the dish. We were really beginning to go first class now. It only costs a little more. In the afternoon

it warmed up and so I washed and shaved. One soup from the

Goons and 1 / 6 loaf of brod. For supper we had hash-brown C-ration and whipped - no lumps, no bumps, not mashed, but WHIPPED - Cotter style cartofels with melted cheese sauce. Lockett too was feeling better because this particular night be remembered part of the BIRD, or maybe I recall it because for once we were close enough to hear his exhausted mumbling --- " Today the Russians liberated 7,000 British PWs, 12,000 Serbs, 1,000 Americans and everyone else but us God damn fools." Our bellies were full and so Lockett wins a chuckle. A man can appreciate a lot more with a full stomach.

His remark was well understood by all, as by now everyone was disgusted with them-selves f or not having taken off back about the second or third day out of Schubin. Applied more ointment and for a change we both slept fairly well.

The next morning at 0830 after a quick bash we left the barnyard and a very, very full shizzan area. Our loads were heavy but something about the weight of food made it comfortable. After 16 km., a visit from Ersatz Charlie, and much menu planning, we were quartered in barns in Neukalen. Mike and I lag back in line and get a spot on the ground floor --- again near Jim (You hold our spot, Cass, while I put the men in) and Cassidy. Soup was issued at the other end of town and we had a nice 5 stroll for three tiny cartofels and a good soup. Spirits are good as a result of the parcels. That night about four or five different people asked Lockett if he had any announcements to make. This was their way of asking for the BIRD. He hadn't gone to the staff meeting and so he didn't have anything to tell us. Finally the Chief Rocket became disgusted by all the requests and made an announcement to quiet the clamor -- "There are no announcements tonight -- no change."

For breakfast on the 23rd we bashed like mad. While we had fond we were going first class. We realized that the best place to carry food was in one's stomach. It weighs less there and does a man more good. Mike makes a good trade to one of the women in town -- one loaf of brod f or a small can of Canadian coffee. He also traded for two sandwiches and some cookies from a French slave laborer. At 1000 we left the barns and began marching in the rain. It was 19 km. to Basedow where Oberst Schneider announces that we will get transportation soon. Meanwhile we will continue to march. THAT'S

A SILLY DAMN ANNOUNCEMENT. WE'VE BEEN GOING TO GET TRANSPORTATION SINCE WE LEFT SCHIJBIN. OH WELL, THE OLD GEESER LIKES TO MAKE ANNOUNCEMENTS. HOPE TO HELL WE DON'T GET TRAINS ANYHOW. I DON'T WANT ANY TRAIN RIDES NOW. Our barns were near a school for a junior youth movement. English must have been one of the subjects taught at the school because several of the students were down showing off their fluent English and boasting in true Hitler fashion of the Nazi powers.

As our platoon entered our assigned barn they had to call Big Jim down off the loft ladder to tell him that Lockett's Rockets were supposed to sleep on the main floor. In addition to this the Rockets were first for cabbage soup and the few carto-fels that were issued. Received 1 / 3 loaf of brod and into the sack.

At 0930 the next morning we are all lined up ready to leave. However, the Goon Regimental Train (now expanded to 10 wagons each complete with two steeds) is stalled until 20 of the guards put their shoulders to the rumps and get the horses moving.

Over hills and thru pine forests, very rolling country, plenty of wild deer and much lumbering. We made 22km. to Cannon which is just like all the Other towns we have one through streets of cobblestones with one lone horse pulling a wagonload of fertilizer or just plain horseshit. Always we saw this one. It seemed to be the only trade left in Deutschland. No clothing stores, no plumbing trucks, no furniture wagons, no nothing save for one lone wagonload of horseshit. And each town had its' one load regardless of how big or small the town was. And it always clattered along on large, rough cobblestones.

We were all pooped but eager to bash as the Rockets moved into a loft for the night. Cotter and Kanners were a smooth working team these days. It was always the same as we moved into an area. Mike would break for the fire area to start a blaze while I'd carry the blanket rolls loftward and make the sack. Our fire this night was in a big hollow and we had a C-ration special; hash brown C-ration and whipped cartofels with melted cheese sauce. The Goons issued soup and a few car-tofels which we ate while sitting in the moonlight. It was a beautiful night, but sat dejectedly thinking of the BIRD which remained as always -- no change.

AND February 24th WAS THE DAY I PICKED FOR THE WAR TO END.

Next morning I made good my promise to give Mike breakfast in bed on his birthday. It was not a particularly happy occasion though as Mike felt rotten and could hardly get out of the sack. 0930 we began the days march on side roads and trails through woods in a high wind and rain. Mike was weak as hell during the day and almost passed out at noon. The only possible cause we could think of was the home-made spread on the sandwiches we got from the French. At Plauerhagon we moved into barns after dark with Mike and I in the loft. But something was different this time - - we had all the room we needed. No fires were allowed so into the sack Mike went. Chappie and I eluded the guards and managed to put in our appearance at several back doors with the hope of a trade, but to no avail. Happy birthday.

Feb. 26th was a day of rest which is exactly what we did all day. It was extremely windy and the Goons would not allow any fires for fear of the barns. We stole some carrots, bummed some milk from the Polish help, and later cleaned ourselves up a little. Some work on the lice and into the sack again -- our major consolation.

Next morning we took a fast shave before dining on a soup made from minimum contributions by each man of three platoons. It turned out very good and we made seconds which meant that it was twice as good. At 1000 we were on our way through Lubz to Lutheran. More horseshit and more cobblestones. During the afternoon Capt. Kunkel cinched the title of the "Biggest Operator" by his attempted trade with a woman kneeling at a roadside shrine. He was known for never missing an opportunity, but when he kneeled alongside this woman he surpassed anything we had seen before. We moved into barns with Mike and I next to Jim and Cass again. No fires this night and "no change".

Mike is up early the following morning and again brings home the brod -- two loaves this time and some onions. We received a partial parcel issue, one box for every two men. As usual Mike and I pick the lowest cards in the drawing held for the items in an extra parcel. It was a nice day and we felt good with our added loads. We marched part of the 15 km. to Siggelkow where it is announced that

we will wait for transportation to arrive at Parchim only 7 km. away. We're going to a camp at Hammelburg. Mike and I managed a ground floor spot in the new barn and we are first in line when the medics announce that they have GI louse powder. The knowledge that our marching days are over combined with the louse powder made our consolation this night supreme.

March 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th were all identical rest days spent bashing around our ten-man fire. The Goons fed us one soup daily with a few boiled cartofels. We received one parcel per four men, truly a partial. We stole wood daily to keep our fire going constantly. Fried crackers, cartofels, C-ration special and at long last, some fried "eire" (eggs). We certainly waited for those. Mike cultivates a Russian friend who bring in a "Cookin" (chicken) one night to show his loyalty. Would have been nice, but we recalled some of his dead comrades who were killed for the same act. We had coffee and milk drinks constantly, and I fixed my chocolate Prune pudding as a departure special. We managed to clean up and some people even got haircuts. Our whole crew looks as though we are ready for a Western picture with Ray Lyons leading the production. Mike and I had much relief from the lice. Jerry jet planes were overhead daily and were the smoothest and speediest ones we've ever seen.

But the fastest one of all was Jim Doyle's swap of a coffee can of sand to a Jerry for some brod. The Jerry complained to someone in our platoon who got the whole barn up in arms against anyone who would jeopardize our few privileges for his own lowly means. Most everyone contributed a tipful of coffee to repay the Jerry, including myself and Doyle's own partner, Enochs, who didn't know about the trade. Mike also scored with 21 loaves of brod during the five day stay. The last loaf was hugh (2000 grams) and came on the last day prior to our train trip on the 6th. I made a prune whip to go with it. The Goons issued a ½ loaf of brod and some margarine for the trip. "Haben ze, haben ze" is working good and Mike gets 2 lbs. of sugar to wind up the trading. On the morning of the 6th we were up at 0430 to have a meat broth made from three days meat ration and on to Parchim.

At Parchim our march is completed. This is the transportation they'd get for

us on January 21st.

We marched 580 km. or 362 ½

miles

5

We marched for 33 out of 39

days

-

1300 Kriegies started - 488 OLD

KREIGYS finished

OH, THE RUSKIES WILL OVERTAKE US IN A COUPLE OF DAYS

The old 40 by 8 cars are waiting for us and we load up 40 men per car, Lockett with us and Cassidy with the rest of the platoon in another car. The three day train trip was fairly uneventful, that is, no strafing or bombings. Karl, a Goon Pfc., taught us some German in return for the English we introduced to him. Frank Heidt, knowing that the train wouldn't stop in three minutes for him, outdid his own ingenuity by suspending his ass over a guard bar and proceeded with his shizzaning "no hands". His only remark with an expressionless face was "It's cold out there". During the trip we learned that Lockett was a squirrel, one who never eats a full slice of brod, but instead eats half and saves the other half, eventually driving himself crazy thinking about the remaining half.

At Hammelburg we were stretching ourselves after debarking when Old Jim greeted Cass (or what the Col. said to the Major) "Have lots of room, Cass ? " **KNOWING DAMN WELL THAT CASS WAS JUST AS CRAMPED, AS HE WAS FOR THE THREE DAYS.**

"Yah, plenty. Whole corner. "D' eat much, Cass ? " **KNOWING THAT CASS WASN'T THE SQUIRREL HE WAS.**

"Ate everything."

Here the corners of Jim's mouth turned up and the corners of his eyes turned down as he smiled broadly. He had Cass, and he knew it. "I still got a can of jam". This was the moment that a squirrel waited for, to have something left when the other fellows food was gone.

His third and final question was the payoff to the truly important things that bind one Kriegies life to that of his partner. "Still fartin' good, Cass ? "

S

We left the railroad siding and marched up the steep hill outside the town where the Oberst assembled us for his last talk. He told us that there was a General at the camp and that he himself might be sent somewhere else. He said he hoped the war would soon be over and that we might have a speedy return to our homeland. I believe he was sincere.

Once inside the camp we were deloused. The Rockets were last in line so our turn came at 0400 in the morning. Next on the Goon list was a searching. Not taking any chances of having food taken away from us Mike and I gulped the can of tuna and spooned the little cocoa mix that we had saved for our liberation feast. No one was going to take a bite of food from us. We had been Kriegies TOO LONG for that to happen. -

Into barracks finally and an 18 day rest. We washed clothes, attended lectures that were given by other Kriegies, played cards (Paris, Lyons and Varella keeping cribbage score on the wall until they got up into the hundreds), and vied for the best rumors. On sunny days Jim Doyle and I sparred evenly with the chess board while others read or just sunned themselves. The food was nauseating after what we had been used to from trading and stealing on the march. Thinnest, wateriest soups yet which we called Purple Passion and Green Hornet. I managed to get a haircut as a result of a lottery drawing and no one recognized me for my naked look. Our gang of ten had a brod pool which helped to pass the time that dragged endlessly on. At least on the march time had gone by quickly. Most everyone met several old buddies from camps in the States, and the rest did us good after the weeks of marching. One Kriegie was shot by a Goon guard during an overhead alert and the Serbs at the camp played the wailingest bugle I have ever heard for the funeral. The entire Serbian army was at the camp having been captured intact. They would march through our area to receive their American Red Cross parcels while we looked on enviously. When Col. Goode had suggested to the Serbian General that they share their supply~ with us until our supplies came through, he was told nothing doing. It wasn't their fault, but rather a typical European attitude.

No one race had any use for any other race.

March 27th a Sherman tank from the Fourth Armored Division appeared over the horizon and broke any doubt we had as to the proximity of the Americans. The camp was a scene of wild joy as all our dreams of liberation suddenly and dramatically came true. There was a fight for the camp and we laid on the floor anxious and impatient as tracers tore through the streets and overhead. It was a glorious feeling as we marched over the trampled down fence to the waiting tanks and half tracks. Mike fed chocolate to me and I fed cheese to him. Walnettoes and gum from K rations while we dreamed of pancakes "in the morgun". Everything that had gone before rushed crazily through our heads as this was the climax, the peak, the moment that we had hesitatingly dreamed of and prayed for through every waking minute of the march. And then we found out that our liberators were only two companies strong, one tank and one armored infantry. They had left the American lines that morning and spear-headed 60 miles to free our camp. Our hopes sank, but still we had a chance, and this time it was a fighting one. We made about ten miles on the tanks that night back toward the American lines. The way we had all piled on the vehicles it must have looked like a parade, but these boys had come to give us a ride and we were taking it. 5 We lost one tank in a small skirmish and then retraced our trail about a mile to the side of a hill where we bivouacked.

In the morning about 50 Kriegies took off to the woods when Col. Goode explained our position. It was hopeless, he said, but we could take our choice. Take off to the woods, stay with the tanks that were going to try to fight their way out, or we could go back to the camp with him. He felt responsible for all of us and wanted as many as possible to get back to the States alive. Fifty seven of us decided to stay with the tanks. We armed ourselves and prepared to act as replacements for the men who had been killed or wounded during the raid on the camp. We consolidated the remaining gasoline in 9 vehicles and destroyed 5 others. After an hour of exposure on the hilltop with these preparations it was a wonder that the Jerries, who had us surrounded, did not assault us. And then it happened, a few minutes before our leaving. He opened up on us with several cannons and sent everyone running. The older the Kriegie the faster he went over the hill into the woods. During the shelling a tanker and myself elected to get away in one of the vehicles that

had not been hit.

These people came to give me a ride and I was determined to accept their offer as long as it was still open. We jumped in the half track and got away... about 10 yards when a shell hit us and that was the end of the half track. -

At this point I too followed the line of fleeing Kriegies into the woods. By following the woods and remaining alert, four tankers and myself managed to move about 15 miles North where we slept outdoors overnight. I had studied maps of the. area while at camp and knew which way our best chances were. We crossed the bridge at Grafensdorf and were almost out of the town when we were met by a Jerry on a bicycle. He did not recognize us as any other than slave labor who were allowed quite a bit of freedom. He greeted us and I answered him satisfactorily. We would have eluded him but for the fatal motions of one of the tank men. The Jerry was past us as my compan-ion waved for him to keep on going. That was all --- we had had it. His reaction was a retake, and his whistle was loud enough to call out many comrades before we could get away. Several days later back at Hammelburg, Mike and Jim Dayle were waiting for me.

Trains to Nuremburg - a fleiger camp where we slept in hugh tents from April 1st to the 3rd. Again we found out that air force personnel had a better setup than the ground troops. At this camp we got bean soup with a worm in every bean, but that was better than no soup at all.

Noon of April 4th we marched out of the Luft camp and headed South. The next 16 days we made 90 miles to a prisoner-of-war camp at Mooseburg where Jim Doyle and Heidt had been before being transferred to Schubin. In fact, upon arriving, they both picked up mail which had been waiting there for several months. This march was a breeze. There was no dirth of Red Cross parcels and Mike. was an old hand at making fast trades by now. We watched 1000 plane raids over Nuremburg, marched all of one night, and saw two of our men get killed in a bombing. Generally we did very well in the one most important item -- food. We got to know the guards well, and even had Frans trying to shack us up one night inside a house, much to Doyle's disgust. Our consolation was plentiful as

each evening our bunch would latch onto some exclusive spot like private rooms in shanties. We even had an electric light one night in addition to all the room in the world. Spent several days resting during which I gave some haircuts. For some of the boys it was the first one in four months. We heard the rumor that Roosevelt had died, and we munched a French parcel in the Classic remarks of the trip were : “I think ‘45 will be one of the last years of the great war.” “If I told you the news you would be so depressed that you could not make the march today.” “We almost have you defeated.” “All kinds of good shit.”

Route: Nuremburg - Pfeiffehutte- Neumarkt - Berching - Sandersdorf - Neustadt - Hoszhausen - Oberrnunehen – Mooseburg.

By the end of this march we had had everything. We had slept outside, inside, and not slept at all. We had American, British, Canadian, French and Belgian Red Cross parcels. The weather was warm and so we were much more pleasantly disposed even when food was not to be had. We strictly went first class eating all we got as soon as we got it. Mike and I got a parcel one day and it was gone the next. So for two days we lived on cow beets which will keep one's organs going and that is about all. We tore down fences to build fires and when the owner complained, our Goon guards were sharp with their answer - “tough shit”. We really went first class.

Inside Mooseburg we waited for the Americans to come and they finally did, on April 29th. Contrary to our dreams of “it will be different when the Americans get here” life went on as before. Trucks broke down and the bread didn't get to camp. Lines were longer than before what with all kinds of good shit being given away like gum, bicycles, football equipment, newspapers, doughnuts, etc. We were to have been flown out within 48 hours, but ten days went by before we jumped on trucks to leave behind our Kriegie days.

Through several transit camps, showers, clothes, food, and on to Camp Lucky Strike in France. Five weeks of waiting were spent with more lines -- lines for food, lines for a show, lines for everything. During this time we all took AWOL excursions to La Havre, Paris, Cherbourg, and points east. You could leave for four days, come back and find that the line had hardly moved.

And at long last we boarded ships at La Havre to leave the land of horseshit and cobblestones.

Victor Kanners was the author of Cobblestones and _____. Vic died about 5 years ago, was very active attendant at our annual Oflag 64 Reunions, and his wife and Son still attend. Vic wrote this in October 45 while at Ft. Leonard Wood, I believe, waiting for his discharge. He was a First Lt. , from the 104th Inf. Div. and was captured in November 44.

I too was captured in Nov. 44, 84th Inf. Div., We became acquainted while on our march. He was most distinguishable because he had the only "short" coat among the 1300 marching Kriegies. He was sprightly and organized a team of 5 or 6 of the group to operate as a team. Upon arrival at the barnyard or church for the night , one of these 5 would immediately start collecting wood, another would scout and choose the very best (and warmest) location for the 5 to bed down, another would locate the best place to build the fire, (out of the wind, close to bivouac area and potential food sources) and the 5th would scout for food for trading or scrounging. Within 30 minutes of arrival they would have a fire going and food on the way. This team made it all the way to Hammelburg and eventually to Mooseburg.

After the war Vick operated a unique small plant that made the tips that are fitted on shoe laces. I believe he married shortly after return to the U.S. and he and his wife had a large family. One of his daughters still operates the plant. A Son is a dedicated mountain climber who has tackled just about everything but Everest.

William Warthen

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