

LEST WE FORGET
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[Gerlostien, Stalag IV-B, VIII-A, Stalag XI-B](#)

"Bear in mind while reading this story/diary. that this is only the action occurring during the days November 10, 1944 until May 30, 1945. The incidents proceeding and concerning the German break through on 16 December 1944 is; (from the writers viewpoint) noted on the last page.

From 16 December 1944 until liberated on April 20, 1945, (officially) all notes were documents on scrap paper, money, pictures and in a small notebook.

Even though some things may not be in chronological order it did happen ! Many events occurred, which are not included, because of not knowing what, how, where and when. I am sure that a lot of the events will return to my mind when jogged by interviews and just conversation.

The item which keeps me wondering and makes me frustrated even at this late date is. What happened to my fellowmen of Company "A" and specifically — the 3rd Platoon????? Hopefully, someday in the near future I shall find out.

LEST WE FORGET this is the story.

Nov. 10, 1944 -- Friday

Today we are sailing from Boston for our unknown destination, but we assume it is England. I believe the ships name is USS Wakefield. No other ships are sailing with us. This ship outruns subs with speed and outmaneuvering in zigzag courses. The weather is balmy and the sea is calm. The ship glides easily through the water.

Nov. 11, 12. 13. 14 and 15. — Sat., Sun., Mon., Tues., Wed. Rumor of the ship outrunning a sub, otherwise, nothing real interesting happened. The sea became rougher and rougher. Many of our men are seasick -- real seasick~ Not many meals are~. eaten. We eat twice a day and my job is to see that each berth or deck gets across the sea swept deck to the mess hall. Waves wash much higher than the bow. Our Battalion is on K? duty. Went to the canteen; cigarettes are 500 per carton and 60~ for a box of candy bars. You can feel the ship change course every once in awhile. Bunks (hammocks) are hanging and swaying every which way. No wonder everyone is seasick. I have made it through pretty good so far. The 11th was a very poor Armistice day as hardly anyone noticed it.

Nov. 16, -- Thursday

The sea has been rough almost the whole trip. 90% or more of the men were seasick. We can see what is said to be Wales, Ships are all around and its a real treat. However, some have not been so lucky, as noted by the number of wrecked ships.

Nov. 17, — Friday

Arrived in Liverpool and were met by the doughnut girls --The American Red Cross. Everyone enjoyed the treatment. We boarded a queer looking contraption they call a train... four wheels per car and very small. Not like the ones we know. Six men were assigned to each room and we ate "t~" rations and played cards.

Nov. 18, -- Saturday

Arrived at Morton—on—the-Marsh. All of us are still swaying from the ship and trains movements. We are met by GI trucks and traveled to a small town of Blockley at 5^out 90 miles north of London. It is raining and cold.

Nov. 19, -- Sunday

My Platoon were assigned barracks which are steel Quonset huts. Some of the men in other Platoons are sleeping in tents with a four (4) foot wall and seemingly are very warm. We are about 3/4 mile from the mess hall located near the center of the town.

Nov. 20, 21, and 22 ——— Mon., Tues., Wed.

The town is funny looking. Its all crammed together with very narrow streets. We try out the "PUBS" but none of us can take the bitters (warm Beer/ale) or the cider (extremely sour). No dancing or singing in their Pubs. I did not see a woman in any of the Pubs, I like the USA style. We hike every morning, then we clean equipment, clean our barracks, etc. The equipment is packed with Cosmoline (Grease) and very hard to remove. Raining most of the time.

Nov. 21 -- Thursday - Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving day - Everyone agrees that we should be thankful we are Americans after a feast like we just had. Turkey, Mashed Potatoes, peas, carrots, coffee, bread, butter, sugar, cream, pumpkin pie and candy. My best dessert was a letter from home. My new son was born 6 Oct and due to the intercession of Lt. Rutledge I received a 3 day pass. When I returned, my barracks bag was outside in formation with the rest of the platoon as we were loading out for Miles Standish in Boston.

NOV. 24. 25. 26. — Fri., Sat., and Sunday

Busy cleaning equipment around the clock. Rumor has it that we will be shipping out soon. Trucks and mobile equipment is all new and everything seems to be smoothing out. The men's spirit is exceedingly high. A great bunch to be with.3

Nov. 27, -- Monday

Today we left for a shipping out port. Spirits are high and much banter is going back and forth. I guess my driving the men has paid off in-as-much we are combat ready with equipment, gear and men At 0300 this AM, myself and 2 of the men were putting a trailer together. Now everything is complete and we are on our way. May the good Lord go with and protect us.

Nov,28 and 29. -- Tuesday and Wednesday. Still traveling by convoy through England countryside. We are sleeping in our PUP tents in bivouac areas. Many little kids along the road begging -- Any Gum, Chum? Wonder who taught them this? We are close to the port of Weymouth or Portsmouth.

Nov. 30, -- Thursday

We have boarded a LST in preparation of crossing the channel. Everyone loaded up with "C" rations from big vats that were warming the rations. According to the pilot of this LST, it was in the invasion and used in (4) four major battles. The trip across has now started. I am sleeping between the bows on the roof of the truck. My Platoon is all sacked out and Edwards the company cook came by with some goodies for most of us.

Dec. 1, -- Friday

Arrived at Le Havre, France this morning and just lying in the harbor -- all day. Expect to start up the Seine river soon.

Dec. 2, 3, and 4. -- Sat., Sun., Mon.

Now going up the River. The country is very picturesque. We can see that the ravages of war has taken its toll. The river is full of derelicts -- sunken ships everywhere. Al], the towns are practically demolished. Just a few weeks ~ago our army came through here. Even though the cities and towns are practically destroyed; the people are starting to rebuild. They cheer us on -- waving and yelling. They are once again FREE.

Dec. 5 and 6. -- Tues., Wed.

Today we landed at Rouen and traveled about (20) twenty miles to our bivouac area. Its raining and cold. My tent leaked and I ended up with a wet blanket. Its rained two days.

Dec. 7 and 8. -- Thurs., Fri.

Thursday was Pearl Harbor day. A few of us talk about it, but that's about all. It seems so distance and so long ago. I went to the Rouen Supply depot for some wood for fires.(30) Thirty feet high and as far as you can see ---- everything from soup to nuts in equipment requirements Trucks coming and going -- bumper to bumper Cpl. Withee wanted to trade his jeep in on a new one. We slept in the truck for these two (2) days so our blankets could dry and because it was continually raining. Miserable sleeping but dry. Left Friday in convoy traveling across Belgium. Nearly all the towns ~re destroyed but we were welcomed by everyone we met.

Dec. 9 -- Sat. Arrived outside of St. Vith -- On the border of Germany and Belgium -- Remaining here for the night A Buzz bomb flew over at about 100 feet. It was our first

glimpse of one of these and no-one knew where it would land. At 2000 a German plane flew over but we could not see it. Snow is about a foot deep.

Dec. 10, — Sunday

Lt. Woerner (my Platoon Leader), 1st Sgt. Marks, S/Sgt. Calvert and myself left as an advance party to Auw. The 106th Inf. Div., is replacing the 2nd Inf. Div. Our unit — 81st Engr. Bn. -- is replacing the 2nd Division Engrs. at Auw. Their Lt. showed us around4~ found where to place our Platoons and equipment. We understand that our Division is to cover a front line of approximately 25 miles. We will be very thin. We were made welcome by the enemy with a couple of rounds from their 88"s. (We assume)

Dec. 11, -- Monday

We started our work week clearing, repairing and building roads for the 422nd Regiment — we are attached to "K" Company for this work. Lt. Woerner and myself trade off from day to day and the one remaining in the Company area sees to it that our equipment and gear is being cleaned, etc. Usually (3) three men remain behind for this work. The snow is fairly deep in places and the ground is frozen, making digging extremely difficult. The 2nd Division is moving out and banter is going back and forth between the troops. The front is very quiet -- Schnee Eiffel (?) is a ridge or maybe the whole hillside; the infantry troops are deployed just below this ridge and we are just below the troops. It is also known as the Ardennes Forest. In any other movie it would be a beautiful place.

The platoons are housed in different areas in different houses. Squad by Squad. in our case we have a school house where we have quarters. Lt. Woerner; Smitty, the jeep driver; Stanley the tool keeper and myself stay with a German family of (8) eight~ Four (4) girls — ages 18, 20, 22 and 28 ——— a small lad of 12 ——— a little girl of 6 their Uncle and Mother. One tot was killed a few weeks previously by shelling. They seem aloof but that could be because of the language. They know some—but very little English.. Sometimes we bring a little sugar, flour, etc., and they make us some goodies.

Dec. 11 - - Tuesday

These Germans are very religious -- everyday they attend church which makes me wonder if they are or are they gathering to swap stories about us or whatever?

Our cook shack said they needed a stove so ~ took some of my men and went to a town between the lines — This town (Bleialf ?) had signs posted that we were under enemy observation, but we were sneaky and made out OK. They had a beautiful church which we visited. Finally, our own infantry ran us out ——— and we did not get a stove. Today we inspected Pill Boxes about 400 yards from the front. They are really something — Walls are about 5 feet thick (more or less) and the embrasures look wicked. Some have been torn apart. Back at the Company area I was approached by Pvt Skaggs who wanted to know if he could shoot a deer if it was close when they were traveling on the road.....Needless to say I said i suppose so but only if it was sighted near the road.

Dec. 12 and 14 -- Wed, and Thurs.

Still working on the road. The morale is very high and the men are having fun -- so it seems. Its hard to get the men to carry their Ammo belts while working. One fellow --- Pvt Suckow --- wants to carry 5 rounds for shooting deer;~ this brings up another item.....Pvt Skaggs stated he mistook a cow for a deer and shot it....He wanted to know if it could be used. It was against our policy to use other peoples stock for beef or shoot one. However, it had been done but Skaggs knows what a deer looks like as he hunts for them in Missouri where he hails from. How could one mistake a black and white Holstein cow for a deer? Wonder if we ate the cow?

Dec. 15 -- Friday

Auw is a small town of about 600 (Prewar) people. It is almost on a hill with a valley between it and the front, which is about ~3) miles. Once in awhile we can hear rifle ,fire at night. The weather is sloppy, cold and snow about one foot deep or more, depending where you are located. At night the Lt. and myself sleep between sheets --- compliments of the German family. The cook shack and CP are at one end of the town and our School house is at the other end on the road to Schoenberg, Heuem and St. Vith. Our Battalion Command Post is located at Heuem. (Bn. CP)

Dec. 16 -- Saturday

At o530 we were literally blown out of our beds by artillery shells landing in and around our company area. We dressed quickly and went down stairs to find the German family crouched in a rear room fully dressed. It looked like they knew it was coming. We crouched with them until we could collect our wits and the shelling slacked off but not very much. As for our wits --- it didn't seem possible we would be able to collect them. We now know what it feels like to be under fire and we were SCARED -- Really scared~ But maybe a better word would be "FRUSTRATED"....If someone is shooting at you, you can retaliate but this shelling is for the birds. At about 0600 we left for the Mess Hall to find most of the company in line for chow. When a shell would come in, everyone hit the ground and immediately afterwards back in linen After stand-up chow -- with several interruptions -- we went to the Company CP nearby and. found Captain Harmon (our company commander), Lt. Rutledge and Lt. Coughlin in conference.

It was decided that the shelling was temporary and harassment and we should go ahead and work. Lt. Woerner had me to get the 3rd Platoon on the trucks. He was going to go with them and I would follow with equipment. They were returning to the 422nd Regiment, "K" Company. I drove the jeep to the school house --- I had (3) men but other than PFC. Jones I do not recall who' they were. I am not even sure they were in the 3rd Platoon. We started loading the equipment we needed and was almost finished when Cpl. Withee came for me to report to the CF with all available men. Upon reaching the CP, we were yelled at and frantically waved to hit the ground. We ran behind the building and found about (20) twenty or (30). thirty men as confused as I was. They consisted of cooks, motor pool personnel, supply and other personnel. I was told that we were under enemy observation but I did not see any. We set up a hasty defense in and around the house but I had yet to see the enemy or did we draw any fire. Shelling had increased and Captain Harmon decided to send Lt. Coughlin and myself to contact the Platoons and have them to return to the area. Lt. Coughlin and I scurried across the road like scared rabbits to a jeep and took off. The first one we contacted was the 2nd Platoon under Lt,

Purcell, who was working in the company area. Next, we contacted the 1st Platoon who I believe was under Lt. Rutledge.

We then headed to the 422nd Regiment to round up my 3rd Platoon. As we neared a guard shack about 800 yards behind the lines, Lt. Coughlin very nonchalantly said. "Sergeant, turn around real easy and lets get the hell out of here'." I swung the Jeep around and' slowly retraced our way back. It was then that we seen the white clad enemy in a field about 800 yards to our left. At this point we were about 75 yards from the guard shack and I really poured the juice to the Jeep. We heard some rifle fire but with my sliding on the snow and the Lt. yelling "Faster7 we made it without any hits —if they were shooting at us. The Lt. stated that a guard on the shack had on white boots and that his rifle did not look like ours, Him being an ex—ordinance man, he noticed this! We were going so fast that I almost went through Auw, Cpl. Withee would have been proud of me - -it was his jeep. Arriving at the CP, we were met by Captain Harmon and he gave me orders to load my equipment and men on trucks and get ready to move out towards Heuem.

I raced to the school house in a jeep (not sure whose). We started throwing things into the trucks. Later, I found out the 2nd Platoon were having a fire fight with the enemy. Then the 1st Platoon under Lt. Coughlin gave them support and the enemy was eliminated from a nearby barn. Captain Harmon was trying unsuccessfully to reach my Plat. but gave up in a very short distance from our area. He returned to our area and gave orders for us to head out towards Heuem. Everything was loaded that we could get into the trucks including (12) or (15) men. Jones and I led with the jeep. Shells were raining down upon us all the way down the road and we were very fortunate to get away without injuries. Captain Harmon, I believe. was 'behind us with a weapons carrier with our records, etc. Before this, I understand Lt. Coughlin had set up a defense in a building. (4) Four Tiger tanks came down the road with Infantry riding and walking behind. The men opened fire arid evidently did some damage. The tanks then blew the houses apart.

Everyone scattered and Lt. Coughlin gathered everyone he could find and withdrew to Heuem. (was told this later.) Things are in such a state of confusion that its difficult to understand what, where, how or when things happen. And I am sure what I am taking notes on will probably not be in order of the way it happened but it did happen~ I do know that my Platoon is more than likely catching hell if this drive extends to their area. Man for man, squad for squad and platoon for platoon I would put my money on them to perform as well as any I love them all and right now I wished I was with my platoon. Time -- about 1330 and a very busy morning~ On our arrival at Heuem we were met by Lt. Col. Riggs, (our Bn. Commander), Major Marshall and Major Evans. LTC Riggs left for the Division CP located in St.; Vith about 10 miles. I believe Major Evans went with him as I did not recall ever seeing him again. We took inventory and we had 37 men (all tired and hungry), 2 Jeeps -1 Weapons Carrier — 4 trucks— some pioneer tools, (picks, shovels, etc.) 1 W/C 30 Cal. Machine gun — 1 Air cooled 30 Cal. Machine gun without tripod.

Captain Harmon found us some food and as soon as we were fed, Captain Harmon started with us back to Auw to try and aid the ones still there or the 422nd. The shelling was too intense and we had to return to Heuem. Heuem and Schoenberg were both under heavy shelling.

Lt. Coughlin showed up with a few men from Auw. It seems he had a real battle in Auw before getting out by the skin of his teeth. Some of his men were still trying to return to the rear. Someone gave us a order to go down the road 2KM and stay in the 740th Field Artillery area. So we started down the road and arrived without any mishaps. Lt. Coughlin stayed with the men and I returned to the CP to try and get a pair of combat boots. (I was caught with hip boots on and they are not very good in this weather). I was told in no uncertain terms to return to the trucks and remain there until we were told to move. No boots this time ——— back to the 740th (????). Major Marshall and another officer I did not know were the only ones there.

Talk about CONFUSION --- All the rumors that are going around cannot all be false,...422nd and 423rd surrounded and cut off and nothing about the whereabouts of the 424th.. This means my platoon is in the thick of it. Auw is lost—— Heuem, Schoenberg and St. Vith under heavy fire and then to say that it is not a "Big PUSH - BS (what I was just told). So I return to my trucks and lay in one with the other men and tried to get some sleep.

About 2000 Lt. Coughlin woke me and said he was going to the C? as the Field Artillery had started out to St. Vith. In a short time he was back and said he could not find anyone there and it looked like it was evacuated. We then roused everyone awake and caught up with the FA and traveled, to St. Vith with them. On arrival the Lt. went off to find the Division C? and the rest of us Sacked out in the~ trucks. Even though shells were coming in, it was not anyway as severe as previously experienced. We slept like babes.

Dec. 17, --- Sunday

I was up and around by 0530 and started to look for the Lt. or CF. I asked a Captain Mosely and he tried to give me directions which were confusing. However, he did steer me to 3 Engrs. lying on the steps of a building. (Court House ??) Cpl. Pender was one of the men and he told me that the 1st Platoon was hit hard at the 2 houses and everyone scattered and did not follow Lt. Coughlin as he had ordered. He stated the last thing he seen was the houses being shelled with 88's and he thought Sgt. Sandberg had re-entered the house to stay and hold out with the others. (2 or 3) They had walked nearly all the way through snow until they hit the road between St. Vith and Schoenberg ——— so he thinks. I escorted the men to the trucks and gave them some rations. On the way-- -LO and BEHOLD! I found a supply vehicle where I obtained a pair of Combat boots. They fit and feel good. We ate and waited for the Lt. He arrived and stated that LTC. Riggs had gone to the C? at Heuem and we were going to follow. More Confusion?? You bet.

I am not sure where we ended up but I think we met Captain Harmon and a few more men. They stated the enemy was fast approaching Heuem and Schoenberg with tanks and infantry. Time about 0800. The roads were in Chaos with everyone headed for St. Vith. A real mess We moved on towards St. Vith.

From nowhere or out of the sky appeared LTC Riggs and stopped us or joined us about 1—1/2 ~mi1e east or south (?) of St. Vith. He organized us into a defensive unit along a fire break on top of a wooded hill. This fire Break ---~ separated. the two wooded areas `by about 15 feet. The Schoenberg—St. Vith road extended from the top on our left flank to the bottom and on across a bridge to St. Vith on our right flank. See map .

Two houses were on the road and one was used for the C?, The other one on the curve had a window or door opening out on the hillside. LTC deployed us along the hillside and we dug in --- the dirt flew.

I believe they were about 50 men started across the wooded area.. The only officers I seen here were LTC. Riggs, (everywhere) Lt. Coughlin, It. Rutledge and Captain Harmon. That is not to say there were not many more but not seen by me A plane is in the area and I hope it is ours, but the weather doesn't look good for the flyboys.

After being on the line I requested to go to the CF (ours) and see if I could obtain some rations or coffee. Request granted and while there the enemy tried to penetrate our lines and was succeeding when LTC. Riggs grabbed me and Co yelled into my ear --- "Remember the Ranger training we had???---then let's go.. I did not say YES or NO or even have time to do so. I immediately grabbed 4 or 5 men and we took off following the LTC. The men on the line had pretty near repelled the attack and I think when they seen the LTC going up that hill like a tank --they backed off. Ranger training was given in Ft. Jackson, S. C. when I first joined the division. 4 Pfc's volunteered for the training from the Battalion. LTC Himes was the ~ CO at that time. LTC Riggs was a Major. He aided each one of us in our training. Without his Physical help I am sure I would have been written off...especially on those long forced marches. I was one of the Pfc's. LTC Riggs is a large man made of muscle and bone - no fat. Maybe 6' 3"and probably 280 lbs. A real fighting machine.

We stayed in our positions for the whole night and every so often the LTC would walk up and down in front of us. I also did my part in keeping the men awake but I doubt that any slept much. We were a bunch of frustrated scared kids. Without exception everyone of us relied on the LTC to bring us through this situation. It is hard to describe an attack with details, however, you can bet they are going to attack when the shelling is intense and then stops. They will charge yelling, screaming and firing or throwing grenades or all the above.

Tanks were in the area but were stopped with chain mines and in one case our own tanks. Their tanks are much larger and they have the fire power advantage in their 88's. Our tanks are no match. We had no blankets and the cold penetrates us and we shake from the cold and the shelling. Some units seem to fade away when the going gets tough. I guess we have not the guts or brains to leave. T don't seem to be doing much but at least I sin remaining with the others and following orders. On one of the dead Jerries I found a 32 Cal Machine Gun or maybe it was a 45 -- but it is much larger than ours and the clip holds about 40 rounds.

I hid it in the closet in the house located on the curve.

Dec. 18, --- Monday

I am not sure how many times the enemy tried to over run us but each time they were decimated. Yesterday I placed the Air cooled MG with a volunteer (Cpl. La Belle) and placed him on the right flank in a fox hole to cover th Fire break. He would place the rear of the gun against the bank and had the barrel wrapped so he could hold it. He was our clock --- when he yelled or fired we came alive. Once I went to his hole but NOT when they were trying to get through.

The 168th Engrs. were on our right flank covering the open area and I am sure the Jerries did not try to cross the open field. At one time a German walked out of the woods with his hands up and I do believe at least 50 rifles shot from the 168th and the poor guy was wounded in the leg. They carried him out on a stretcher to St. Vith. I hope they shoot better than that in the tight shoot-outs.

We are still holding our positions and weathering the cold, intense shelling and. probing attacks."

I haven't seen any officers but Lt. Coughlin, our LTC and I was told that Lt. Rutledge was in the area acting as Company CO. Wonder what happened to Captain Harmon??? This evening some of the fellow~ exchanged fox holes--(no particular reason), My feet are about frozen but nothing you can do about it.

Dec. 19, --- Tuesday

They started early today all along the line; they had us keeping our heads down but as soon as the shelling stopped, up they came. Then they attacked where we were and they were supported by a or more tanks. Some way or another the tank was knocked out. Things subsided into a calm that I and others did not like. The lull before the storm. At about 1630 another unit attacked us and between us and the 168th men a hole appeared. Seems like in just a very few minutes LTC Riggs and several men came up the hill and drove back the attackers, Several Jerries were killed.

I understand Lt. Rutledge was killed during one of these battles. I do not know the details or where it happened. We also lost Pvt. Bills in the first attack. Lt. Rutledge will be sorely missed. He was an excellent officer in all situations. I didn't know Pvt. Bills but I am sure his fellowmen and family will miss him. I am sure that many more are wounded --- especially in the 168th Engrs as I heard they lost many men. I cannot say why we did not lose, very many but they could have wiped us out a couple of times if they had a few more troops.

Lt. Coughlin told me the 7th Armored Division was on its way to relieve us. I had heard this 3 days ago.

Things are slightly confused right now ---either today or yesterday one man in the 168th (I think) shot one of their own and to make matters worse, this guy went berserk. PFC Kilgallen ran to my fox hole during a barrage and stated he wanted me to put him in for the purple heart, as he was wounded in the wrist. (a slight wound) Then he scurried back to his hole like a ground squirrel. We had to pull our Air cooled MG out as it went haywire and we pulled a few of the men away from the very edge of the Fire Break --- Sgt. Hammer was one of these and he came back and said he had shot some Jerries in the last few minutes.

Dec. 20 -- Wednesday

I had heard that LTC Riggs was to be relieved but if this is so then I could not tell it as the LTC still controlled us at all times, I am sure that no-one could do as good as our LTC. I am not sure how the command works here on the line but I believe LTC Riggs is in command of the whole defense, ~ according to the Lt.) I have been in contact with a Major on my left and he seems to know his business. He was the only officer I seen

other than Lt. Coughlin and LTC Riggs. Major Marshall came up once but left rather quickly. He must be our liaison between us and the Div. CF.

Either Lt. Coughlin or LTC Riggs came up the hill and told me to go down the hill and get some rations for the men. This I did and while there I had a good meal. I sent the rations back uphill and laid down and slept under the steps until about 1430. I went back on line with my hands full of rabbit and bread. Where did the rabbit come from???? Beats me Maybe it was rabbit???? But we owe our thanks to the two officers who has been with us through this whole ordeal. Riggs and Coughlin. If Lt. Rutledge had remained alive he would have stayed with us, too. If there were other officers from our Bn., I sure didn't see them. Lt. Coughlin and I are both feeling `that our nerves are failing. Like he says--- 'Everyone else is as bad if not worse". Lam afraid that I would not have made good officer material. The responsibility is too great. I heard that 63 Jerries were killed in the attacks yesterday.

Dec 21, -- Thursday

This morning there was some activity on the left flank and a little later on the right flank. I understand they seem to be looking for a weak spot. Guess they are not wanting anymore of the 81st Engrs. However, I went down to ,the OP to try and get some coffee for all of us and did succeed in obtaining about 4 gallon in a 5 gallon can. Either Cpl or PFC Fisher or PFC Fitzgerald helped me and as we were going uphill we ran into a barrage and dived for...cover after setting the coffee gingerly on the ground. After the let up, we found the can all shot to hell and our coffee (and my carbine) gone, I became as frustrated, shaky and mad ---scared too, as an old hen protecting her baby chicks from a hawk.

I went into the house right below us and retrieved the Machine Gun I had previously hid. I loaded and cocked it and went out the door cursing like a sailor and ran into LTC Riggs who said not a word and he looked at me and then I threw the gun back into the door and went in and sat on the steps for the next 10 minutes or so. I did a lot of mumbling and cursing. I am not sure what I accomplished but I sure felt better and relieved after the blowup. I hope the LTC did not think I was going to shoot him. I went back to my fox hole feeling pretty foolish but good. (I guess — resigned). In the afternoon the barrage really started. If you think the others were bad --- then you were wrong ~hey threw Screaming' Meemies — Mortars — 88's ---big stuff and little stuff. Previous shelling was only a drizzle compared to this down pour, Smoke was thick and what limbs and leaves were left on the pine and fir trees are now gone.

I am not sure when it finally slowed down but must have been about 1800 or later. I was hit in the hand -- almost the same place as the other scratch. LTC Riggs came by and told us to hold the ridge and cover the road. We tried to do this but we were too thin and split up to be effective. Penetration was completed and we had no—one left on the ridge except a very few 81st Engr. men. At about 2100 they had more or less over ran us. Any fire power we had was ineffective. Their tanks (many-many) came down the road-- flares were continuously lighting up the area like daylight -- infantry were riding and walking in droves behind the tanks. We~ split up in 3 or 4 groups and was told to try and reach our rear lines. Every man is on his own A few of us tried to get down thee road in a jeep. I believe they were Pvt Altice, Pvt Saxton, myself and one other but after about 50 yards we left thø jeep and took off alone.

I reached the house on the curve and made my way out the window/door onto the side of the hill. In so doing this I ran into Sgt. Hoblock who also was trying to get away. I laid on the side of the hill on my stomach and while in this position I lost contact with myself - just nothing. When I finally came around I was beside a chimney and had manure all over me --- like I was dragged through it. I had also sprained my ankle and unlaced my boot as it felt swollen. I had another wound on my leg but it was not serious.

I crept on hands and knees up the hill to the first line of fox holes but they were empty. The firing had almost stopped where I was but in the distance to St. Vith and beyond the flares and firing was working overtime.

I made my way into the old company CF house and into the basement where I found many others hiding. On trying to retrace my steps and get into the open I ran smack into a German who motioned me back into the basement. Now we had a guard and another German with a red cross on his helmet told us -- in English -- that we were now prisoners. I had heard about their atrocities and about the 130 or so of our troops slaughtered at Malmedy so when they were called outside I was very dubious and held back trying to hide but they came with lights and found a few of us behind and in water jugs. So, out we went and there must have been a 100 or more. Where did they all come from???? I guess we had more troops than I had thought? Many of our tanks were burning or had burned in the valley.

Devastation was everywhere The two houses were still standing, however, the one on the curve had been hit pretty hard. The bridge to St. Vith -- even though the bridge had been wired with explosives ---- it was still there and in use. St. Vith had fallen. We had been the only troops holding them back and we had done it with a handful of men for 5 full days.

The Germans formed us into columns and started us marching back towards Schoenberg. The weather was very cold and misty. I was dressed fairly good with long John underwear, wool shirt and pants and a field jacket. No gloves but I had my wool cap with liner and helmet. But I and everyone else were cold. By pleading and begging, two of us went to the bombed house and found a few blankets and some rations which we gave away. I kept one of those 10 lb. can of bacon and one blanket, We marched all day and finally reached Auw from where I had started on the 16th. Now it looked empty and bleak. At Schoenberg or Heuem we seen several dead GI's moving along the road and in ditches. We continued onto Belialf (I think).

We had a chance to inspect the German Army. It STINKS- Mules and wagons -- trucks pulling trucks and trucks with steam boilers built in the rear with wood and coal. Soldiers in our uniforms (partially) and some of our vehicles being used. I had heard that they attacked us with some of our own vehicles and now I can believe it. Remained overnight sleeping outside huddled together to keep warm., My feet are shot past being cold.

Dec. 23, -- Saturday

Arrived at interrogating place. They asked a lot of questions but did not receive any info except; name...rank...and Serial number. They did search us and they took my watch and wedding ring and would have been by force if you refused. They took overshoes or

anything they desired. One fellow refused to give up his overshoes and I understand they shot him. We arrived at a barn and stayed all night....no food or prospects of any.

Dec. 24 --- Sunday

I wonder many,, many times what happened to my Platoon. Hopefully, they made it out. Passed through Prum while our planes -----which were now out in force --- were bombing it (fighter planes). We have been accumulating more prisoners. We must have about 900 or more. I am in the rear of the column and cannot get to the front where I had seen LTC Riggs. He had a blanket draped around his shoulders. Some dog fighting going on in the air and we are all rooting for our planes. My feet are wet and extremely cold. No food yet.

Dec. 25 -- Monday (Christmas)

Arrived at [Gerlostien](#) last night and we received one slice of bread. First food since 21 Dec. When we were being interrogated, I had left my can of bacon with a Lt. who I did not know. I ,was afraid they would take it when they questioned me. Never trust a hungry G1 That was the last I seen of my bacon. I was told they made him go with the officers to the front of the column so maybe it could not be helped.

Dec. 25th ---- Christmas day

Monday

Hope my family are having a fine Christmas. They probably have not heard the news yet. I seen some Jerries eating our rations -- both "K" and "Cr Hope they choke.

The more I see of the German Army I wonder what keeps it going. Happy Christmas 3rd Platoon, wherever you might be.

Dec. 26 ---- Tuesday

Freezing and Marching. No food except what we can beg or trade f or.. I traded a small silver ring that my wife's friend had given to me for a type of good luck charm. I had it in my pocket and received 3 small loaves of bread for it. I cheated the individual doing the trading by trading twice and saying the first time that I had not received any. A real lifesaver.

I have run into more men. Sgt. Rammer, Cpl. Meisner and was told SSgt Wilss and Calvert were in the column somewhere but I could not find them. I did find Sgt. Brooks while looking for the others. Lt. Coughlin is also in the column. Hope we all make it OK.

Dec. 27 and 28, Wednesday and Thursday

Still marching-----nothing to eat but snow. I am lucky, I still have some bread left. I will probably be sorry but I gave one loaf away. Hammer and Meisner have dysentery. So has many others. That's bad~ They also say their feet are frozen and I can relate to that. Thank God for the blanket All of us think of home and our loved ones. When I get home I am going to have that Christmas dinner that I am postponing.

I have a new son at home so I have to make it so I can teach him to appreciate all those things we take for granted in America. God willing—I shall return.

Dec. 29, -30, — 31, and Jan, 1st Fri., Sat., Sun. and Mon. Arrived at some small place that I do not know the name. We have been given some soup --- hard to say what kind it is --thin but tasty. . (3 times). . Bread --- a slice about 3 times during the above time. We also received a very small amount of cheese. A hellava way to spend New Years. We are in some kind of factory and we are told that they are waiting for trains to move us. This is more of a huge warehouse than anything else. I did find out that we are at Limburg. We marched and marched with time meaning nothing and I am not sure of my dates - days or whatever I am making notes on. We arrived here today. It is getting colder and colder. I have a slight case of dysentery but Meisner has it real bad and there is nothing we can do about it. It is snowing pretty hard. I do remember that we came through Koblenz as we stayed there but that's about all. We received some incendiary bombs through the roof today, They do not have this place marked as a POW camp. We crowd together even in the daytime to keep warm. Other than the soup we received, liquids are derived from the snow. We have no fires. We wash with snow (when we wash)

Jan. 2, -- Tuesday

The reason they cannot move us is due to the lack of boxcars. They say they need another dozen. A few more miserable nights like last night and there will not need the boxcars. Some of the men are selling what cigarettes they have left for 1000 francs per cig. (\$22.40). They might use it someday but it might be longer than expected. Some say the war will be over by March, but I guess I am a pessimist. I do not believe it will be over by my birthday --- June 13 .(Ed. note. He spent June 13th happily at home).

Jan. 3, --- Wednesday

We were loaded into 40' X 8' boxcars (40 to 60 men per car). I am assuming these are the type of boxcars one reads about in the first World War. Not room for us to lie down; we sit with our backs to the wall with someone's back to our knees or they sit back to back or just flop. We have a waste can that fills up fast and the guards will not open the door for us to empty it. Two of us broke open a boarded window located high up in a corner. We tied belts together and then tied a helmet to the line and used this to scoop up snow for drinking. Yet, we must move or all the snow below the hole will be gone. The men curse one minute and say I'm sorry" the next. Everyone's nerves are on edge; they loaded us on here and here we set --- not going anywhere. Before we were placed here we were issued 1/2 loaf of bread, and 1 Red Cross food parcel between 10 men. For 10 men this is equivalent in food value to two thin slices of bread. We just threw it all together --- stirred --- and divided and ate it without cooking what needed to be cooked. The cigarettes were taken out before we received the package. I still have a few cigs left and I am hoarding these for future use. It is readily apparent that cigarettes is the most important commodity for us and the Germans. Wish we would move. Cpl Meisner and Sgt Hammer are both in this car `and they are very sick but nothing can be done. I feed Meisner snow --- I know we should not use the snow but its either that or die of dehydration and thirst.

Jan 4, --- Thursday

I remained in these cars all night and nearly froze. I am happy to have my blanket. I think it was stupid to load us, on here yesterday. The train has started to move. Just before it started to move, they opened the door and took out the waste (overflowing). I should say some of our men removed it. Also, they gave us some type of barley watered down soup (Scilly). They called it coffee. I gave Neisner part of mine. It perked him up. No one knows our destination and we do not much care.

Jan 5 --- Friday

One man died

Jan. 6, -- Saturday

Another man died during the night. He is still lying there as no-one will open up. They removed the first body at a whistle stop. We were strafed by our fighter planes (No markings on the train). We can't do anything but pray and we are all doing plenty of that.

The guards do not seem to care. The train can't be going too far --- Germany isn't that large. I hope.

Jan. 7, --- Sunday

We arrived at [Stalag IV-B](#) which we are told is at Muhlberg, and I also found out that the one at Limberg was [Stalag XII-A](#). We arrived cold, hungry and sick. We remained in barns (barracks) until we were deloused and bathed. Sure felt good and you feel that things are looking up. I lost contact with Sgt. Hammer and Cpl. Meisner. I was told that one of them was shot in the leg during the strafing. I sure hope it is only a rumor. I also met LTC Riggs, Lt, Coughlin and one other and all looked as dejected as I felt. They are separating the Officers -- the Non-coms and EMs into separate units or for preparation of moving. They took all our money and would only give receipts for Francs. At noon we had Sauerkraut and potatoes.... not much but tasted very good. Wonder what I would weigh at this time?

Jan. 8, ---Monday

The barracks we are in are crummy and very unsanitary. About 250 of us sleep on the floor of a 60 x 30 foot building. no light, crowded, very little heat as fuel is rationed. They told us we were now officially registered with Geneva, so we are now POW's. I understand this camp was officially an English and Russian camp before we came. The British don't have it too bad (but its not home). Most have been POW's for quite a long time. The Russians are treated like dogs, they go around scrapping cans and forging for scraps of food. There is no difference between a general or one of their privates. They are all treated the same. One is so busy trying to keep warm and stay alive that you lose contact with each other, . I have looked for Meisner but so far to no avail. Neither do I know the whereabouts of Hammer.

This is our menu. in this camp.

Seven men to a 12 inch loaf of bread---a little oleo---a spoonful of sugar --- one cup of soup called "scilly"----- good for shaving or washing your face ---- and their coffee

(hot water). Everything comes at noon except the coffee and it is given at 0530 and 1500. Also, we receive a few potatoes at noon if available. About 3 times weekly we have a can of bully-beef (or horse meat????) for 6 men. (No 2 Can.)

Jan. 9,, -- Tuesday

Ran into about a dozen of "B" company's men and according to these men they are about all that's left. They held out at Bliaffe and then Schoenberg until the 18th and then were taken. Good men and I met Sgt. Vernon Hunt who was to become a very good friend and ally. Also, T/4 Elmer George of the same company and Gal Keneshea of the 422nd or 423rd. We all started out helping each other and sharing whatever we had. Some of the men received Red Cross parcels but they say they are now out, and the British say they are a thing of the past. We all are awaiting shipment to another Stalag. Sgt. Hunt can speak fluent German (many dialects) some polish and Italian. This works to our advantage because three of us go out and drum up business of trading merchandise for food and cigs. Sgt. Hunt then finishes the deal in the required language and collects a small percent for our trouble. Works very good for the men who can get food and for us. Prices are set up such as follows.

cigs	40 to 50
Coffee --- Nescafe, Sm. can about 3" high Sm. No.1 can	20 to 30
Sugar, 1/2lb	15 to 20
Bread, large loaf	70 to 80
Cheese, American, can	25 to 30
Condensed milk	25 to 30
Cigarette papers, pkg.	1 to 2
"C" rations — meats in can - small	20 to 30
"C" ration crackers	15 to 20
Tea	10 to 20
Bread - small loaf	50 to 60
Sweaters	25 to 30
Jackets	40 to 60
Overcoats and Blankets	80 to 140
Watches ---17 Jewel-- depending on case	250 to 650
Rings ----gold only	60 to 80
Bracelets, Gold only	75 to 150

These prices raise up and down, depending how many cigs are in camp.

Jan. 10, —Wednesday

I have seen the following articles sell for as low as.

Watches — the best	1 loaf of bread
Rings — Diamond	same or less
Gold pen/pencil sets	10 cigs
Bracelets - gold	5 to 10
Sweaters	4
Dollar bills	1
New GI British shoes	40
Wedding bands—gold	10
Overshoes	15

I suppose if I had been able to keep my ring and watch I would have sold them by now. Most of the food comes from parcels which have been sent by the Red, Cross. They are now only given to those who work. NonComs do not work — at least we don't..

The Germans are the biggest traders as they steal from clothing parcels and the Red Cross parcels. The way we are doing it may not be down right ethical but it keeps us alive plus many more who benefit from the trades. Everybody is trying to stay alive. Either doing nothing and dying or, something and hang in there. Our thing happens to help a lot of people so let the Jerries have the material things. They are replaceable. Life isn't.

Jan. 11, Thursday

Tomorrow we are supposed to leave here. Some of "B" company left today. They and others (EMs) are known as "commandos". This is what they call POW'S who go out on work details. This work consists of repairing houses, railroads, filling craters, clearing bomb wrecked cities, and etc. Privates are forced to work. According to the Germans the Non-corns may volunteer. We are discouraged to perform any work—so we don't work.

The weather has been cold and snowing.

Jan. 12, ---- Friday

Haven't moved yet, but we are again told it will be tomorrow. Our food is monotonous but we find ways to make it tasty. We four make very little on the trading as there are a lot of them doing it, and we do not trade for clothes unless we are getting it from the Germans.

We cooked our spuds more ways than Duncan Hines can imagine. ~'or instance we save our bread for one day and the next day we crumble it up and make gravy to pour over the slice we receive that day. That takes some will power but when you are working as a unit it is more easily accomplished. Our beds are harder than hard. Our bones are closer to the floor.

Jan. 13, -- -- Saturday

They got us up at 0400 and had another shower and delousing and right back in boxcars. This time we were lucky as we have a car with a stove, I bought coal from the guard who got it from the train. So we had heat and I am warm the first time since 16 Dec. We traveled all day and night. It was still cold riding but as long as the coal lasted we were fairly warm.

Jan. 14, ---- Sunday

Arrived at [Stalag VIII-A -- Gorlitz, Germany](#) - Almost on the border of Czech and Poland. Other Americans had arrived a day or two ago and were having Sunday services. On arrival we were given tea by the South Africans and the British and it was real tea and very welcomed. At noon the Serbs (Yugoslavians) gave us rice. The 3,667 Americans who came here are all non—commissioned officers. Ninety percent are men and the rest are??????. I sat with our little' group and watched in disgust as this 10% in our barracks actually attacked and fought over food when seconds were announced. I understand starving people will do most anything for food but some things are almost unbelievable. Our Barracks NCO was MSgt. Ray Davis (17 yrs. of service) and he was one swell GI and seen to it that everyone received their fair share. A good man on any job.

Our beds are 4 tiers high and we slept 7 men on the 2nd level. Nothing but boards spaced about 2 inches apart and each level was about 6 X 10 feet. Our backs was like corrugated paper when we arose. We had about 250 men in each barracks --(our barracks was one end of the building -- II A and II B.) The floor was cobblestone and was filthy from tracking in from the latrine located across the street. Underneath the latrine was a full basement that caught the sewage.

When this was about full they would send the Russians to empty it out and in so doing the sewage got all over the floor and never was cleaned up. The people with dysentery didn't help very much as they often didn't make it. This latrine was across a narrow road and after a certain time ---- I believe it was 1900 --- our doors would be locked until 0500 or 0600. This added fuel to everyone's frustration. Nothing anyone could do about it and it could not be helped. I believe M/Sgt. Davis did get some medicine for the bad cases of dysentery. I know that he also tried to quote the Geneva Convention rules pertaining to POW's and they ignored him completely. They cared less about the Geneva rules of conduct. But we did understand that if you stuck your head outside after 1900 and until 0500 there was a good possibility that you could be shot. They were quite emphatic about this..

Jan. 15 ---- Monday ---- My wedding Anniversary.

A lot of our Nom-coms appointed themselves to positions that were supposed to have been voted on by the men. Such as.

American Red Cross Ldr; Barracks Commanders; American man of Confidence; etc, etc. Sgt. Hunt and myself tried to get some interested to vote but to no avail. No one seems to care.

Jan. 16---- Tuesday

We have no fires of any kind --- big or little. The food is much worse here than a. IVB. We get 1 loaf of bread for 7 men ---a small amount of Oleo and our scilly (about 1 pint) and of course the coffee which we use for washing or shaving.

Jan. 17, 18, ---- Wednesday --- Thursday

Snowing like hell and 6 ft. deep . The French are working to clear the road for the Germans but need more help. They came to our barracks for men but no one would go or if they wanted to go MSgt. Davis said NO They threatened to cut off our scilly --- but I am sure it would not be missed.

The French are the only ones getting Red Cross parcels as they work. Neither does the English or Russians. The English says to watch for the French as they collaborate with the Germans, however, its hard to believe, We are all in the same boat. By them getting parcels we have a place to trade items for food. Not all bad. I was appointed Librarian today ---- about 80 books for about 2000 men. I' cannot find the books so my job is easy.

Jan. 19. 20 --- Fri. and Sat.

We moved to another Barracks. Us four went over before we moved and helped clean the joint. What a mess. The Serbs were doing the cleaning so when we finished they fed us some rice. A total of twenty men were helping. I ate so much that I was actually sick. Previously, they had told us that our barracks was under quarantine but never for what. But if it made any difference we could not tell it.

The Russian front is getting closer and the Germans say that they might move us. The word is out and has been out that if we should escape, that we would be dead men if we went to the Russian front. So I hope we sit still. COME ON JOE.

(our nickname for Russia) Oh yes~ The barracks are infested with lice and fleas. All of us are infested with body lice. The big fat ones with about 8 feet. They stay in all tight places of the clothing. You cannot get rid of them so you try to educate them by ignoring them. Used to be called Cooties. They make your skin scaly and dry. My weight must be down to about 110 lbs now. I was 150. I have been fortunate in-as- much I have not had dysentery except for one light case.

Jan. 21st through the 25th

Sunday thru Thurs.

The rumor has it that Uncle Joe is pouring on the coals in forging ahead on the front. Some of the fellows are nearly starved but do nothing to help themselves. I'll eat as long as the Germans do. May not be much but I think I can hold out. Sgt. Hunt, T,/4 George, Cpl. Keneshea and myself are of one unit; we steal from the Jerries by having diversions and cheating on trades. We even make more for the ones who have the item to trade.

But rest assured; we trust each other explicitly, however, if it were not for Sgt. Hunt and his knowledge of the languages, our business would be KAP00T.

Jan. 21st through the 25 ---- Sunday thru Thurs.

The commission we receive is very fair and we are known to be fair and honest in our dealings. Not too many businesses can say they have had all satisfied customers.

Jan. 26, 27 and 28.

Friday - Saturday ---Sunday

Everything is in a dither. The Germans are scared of the oncoming Russians. We have no fuel and rely only on body heat to keep us warm. We spend most of our time huddled up together on our slats. We volunteered to cut wood for us but NIX on that. I believe it is below Zero outside. Maybe I better write a few words on the events happening around here. At 0530 every morning we receive the hot (water) coffee. Its hot and we keep our hands warm and then wash our face or give it to someone. At 0730 everyone turns out for a roll call body check. We stand outside until everyone is accounted for, and sometimes I do not think they can count. Back we go inside and M/Sgt.. Davis gets us to clean up the best we can. Everyone wears what they have and the remainder is carried in the pockets. There is no water so we cannot do much except scrape. Anywhere from 1100 to 1300 we are given Scilly — Most of the time, bad, but once in awhile they screw up and make it good. Then the four of us make our rounds and see if we can drum up any business. Sgt. Hunt checks the Serbs and any German guards available. About 1500 (sometimes) we receive our Bread and Oleo.

We stew it, fry it, toast it but it remains bread Sometimes we trade our ration off for some item that we try to trade later, I traded my blanket and one loaf of bread with a few spuds for an overcoat. This was a personal deal and cost me 6 days of bread rationing. I borrowed the bread from our kitty.

I would venture to say that we probably trade enough to give each one of us another 1/2 or 2/3 cup of food daily —not much but it helps. Nearly every night we have services and one can tell that everyone is praying and trusting God to get us out of this mess. And I am no different -- I do too. I pray also for my family, asking God to take care of them but most of all I pray for my fellowmen.

Jan. 31, ---Wednesday--SKIPPING 29 and 30.

Last day in this month and our secret radio says Uncle Joe is getting closer. COME ON, UNCLE JOE Worst thing is the dysentery and next the lice. I am only bothered with the lice. Of course everyone is about to starve (IS STARVING) and it's tough -- and I mean tough.

Feb. 3, ---Saturday --- SKIPPING Feb. 1 and 2.

It is colder than blue blazes. I am having some trouble with my feet. My ankles are swollen and of course my feet are frozen. So is everyone else. I have pains in my head and back every since the night of Dec. 21st. Not bad, but just enough from time to time to let me know its there.

Feb. 10, ----Saturday --- SKIPPING Feb. 3 thru 9

The reason I am skipping days is because it's the same old thing --- day in and day out.

We are told that we will be evacuating this camp tomorrow. The damn fools don't know when they are well off but I guess if I had of treated the Russians like they did I would want' to put some distance between me and the Russians, too The Russians are reported as being about 35 KM from here. People are evacuating the towns and they say the roads are clogged. It is reported many women are riding boxcars into Gorlitz and arrive dead. Also, and babies are frozen, These are the Germans in front of the oncoming Russians.

Feb. 13, ----- Tuesday --- SKIPPING 11 and 12.

We are still here but they say for us to be ready to move out at 0430. 1,647 Americans and about 450 British. Looks like the count of the Americans went down since arriving but I really expected it to be a lot more than 20 difference.

Feb. 14, --- Wednesday Valentine's day

They say we will be marching 4 days and this is the end of the first day. Many of the men cannot walk and a wagon at the rear picks them up. Wonder what happens to them????

Feb. 14, ---- Continued --- Wednesday

We spent the first night in a barn. The hay was much nicer than our barracks. We only received a slice of bread and some Oleo for our rations today. We are all soooo tired.

Feb 17, ---- Saturday --- SKIPPING 15 and 16.

OUR LAST DAY ????? LIKE HELL

They now say we have 4 more days What a bunch of liars~ We are getting less to eat and men are dropping out. Some are left laying along the road and I hope the wagon picks them up. Of course, we do not know what happens to them. I think there were three wagons----one for their food -- one for ours and one to haul men. We have seen the one that hauls men empty more than once. We hope they are placed in the towns we go through and that is what they told Hunt. We stayed in some kind of Factory last night.

Feb. 25, --- Sunday -- SKIPPED 18 THRU 24, Not sure where we are but we have marched a long way since.

14 February. Our bunch stayed in a barn last night and the barn and all the houses and barns are interconnected (built together). This is throughout Germany. I crawled up in the rafters and through attics looking for something to steal. I found the ration wagons and no one was guarding them. I stole a large stick of German sausage, a box of Oleo, 3 loaves of bread and a can of beef. I thought by not taking so much that it would not be missed. I had the food in a burlap bag and returned to the barn. It was dark so no one could see us. I whispered to Sgt. Hunt and George what I had and where I got it. We were so hungry we ate a loaf of bread and part of the Sausage and Oleo. Everyone started making comments about the smell and the rumble got louder. I raised my voice

and told them to lay off and we would give them some food, (about 50 of us in this barn) we were afraid the guards would get wise. We took our sack and returned to the wagon. While on the way we found some tobacco hanging in one attic and we filled the sack with the leaf tobacco. Then we proceeded to find another sack and he filled it with some bread and sausage. We are doing most of this in the dark.

I have my lighter which is almost run out but Hunt has matches and by keeping the light hid we finally accomplished our errand. Back we went and we had one helluva time trying to keep from getting mobbed but finally all the food was gone but we did not know if everyone got food. We ate some more of own food and went to sleep. About 0400 we were awakened by "roust — Roust" meaning out — out. We left our food in the straw but I held on to the `tobacco. They searched everyone and found lots of food. They just felt my sack and pushed me on. Hunt found out from the Germans that nearly all the food was gone. The men could not be satisfied with what we brought back but had to go and find it themselves during the night. So now there was to be no rations for us. We had also lost what we had in our kitty but we felt the meal was worth it. However, the tobacco proved to be like gold. This day we traded the guards for bread and oleo. And we still have a sack full.

Feb. 28, --- Wednesday --- SKIPPING 26 AND 27

Last day of February. They have kept their word about no rations but today they relented and gave us our bread and oleo. On the 26th we tried to steal some sugar beets stored in hills along the road. Our system was for two of us to run one direction for diversion and then two would run and dig open the hill and get some beets. When the diversion started the guards would sic their dogs on you and they would attack, however, we learned (Sgt, Hunt found this out by talking to the guards) that if you laid down the dogs would stand over you until the guard got there and give you a couple of swift kicks and you returned to the ranks. Most of the time we succeeded but on the 26th the guard clobbered me in the back with his rifle and I hardly could walk. The other three took turns helping me but it was all I could do to stand --- let alone walk. And the condition of my feet was not good either. I spoke about getting in the wagon but they would have none of this. Hunt got a stick from a guard and I have been using that. It is getting somewhat better but I still need help.

They massaged my legs and feet, carried me and try to make me walk whether I want to or not. I think they also gave me more food than was my share. When I asked them about this, T/4 Elmer George stated he would kill me first before, placing me in the wagon. A real good bunch to be with. We were strafed and bombed but no casualties that we know of. One of the barracks was strafed and the men ran out and made a POW sign or some way made it known and he ceased firing. We had two fighters --- each on separate occasions come right down our column wagging their wings. Scares the hell out of a person. I haven't been writing too much about the weather but it seems to be getting a little warmer but it is still cold. We are past Kena. We came through Bantzen, Meissen, Jena, Wiemar, Gotha and back to Erfurt. Stayed at a place called Olenadorf (?) for one day. This was on the 8th or 9th of March. A German woman gave Sgt. Hunt a large sack of spuds. Told him she had a sister in Chicago. This guy could get most anything as he is fluent in more than just Germans.

Mar 10, ----- Saturday ---- SKIPPED 1st thru 9th (included above)

I volunteered to carry one of the guards rucksack and as I was not getting along very fast he let me carry it. I was going to steal it by getting lost in the column. When I found out it had sandwiches in it I scraped the center out and I did this for several days so we could have the ingredients on our bread, I am not sure the old man did not know I was doing this but let me do it anyway until he was relieved. These old men were our guards and they were part of the "Home Guard" or "Volkstrum." Later we had younger guards.

Mar. 20, 21, 22, and 23. --- Tues. thru Fri. --- SKIPPED 11 thru 19.

We have seen many bombers fly over leaving vapor trails and know that its a matter of time. We arrived at a Brick factory at Duderstadt and were issued 1 loaf of bread for four men, some oleo and heavens forbid - A can of bully beef. Not much but more than we had been receiving. We had stolen some soy beans from a planter along the road

Mar, 20, 21, 22 and 23 --- Con't ----Tues,' thru Fri.

and the ovens which were used to make brick were all fired up and going full blast. I sat the beans in a can within the door and they were still hard after cooking one hour... so we ate them like that. We did see some Jewish prisoners or at least that's what Hunt said. They were dressed in stripes and were skin and bones. I sure hope we do not get like that. This is not the first time I have seen these type of prisoners. We really do not know what to make of this but after hearing 'the stories of mistreatment of prisoners and ourselves being on the short end, then it isn't hard to believe anything about their actions towards prisoners. I wonder how many we have lost on this march?? The rumor has it that some of the people riding in the wagon were placed in locked barns and left there. It's rumors like this that gives you strength to keep going. They tried to get us to clean up some rubble but we refused and were separated from those who would and the guards started us walking north through the edge of Duderstadt and the people spat towards us but not on us. You could feel

the hate. This was the first time this had happened but they were younger people and mostly women. Previous towns usually had persons who helped us or at least just stood idly by --- sometimes nodding their heads. My walking has improved but all the locomotion is not back as I cannot do anything real strenuous and do use the cane at times. The weather has been balmy and nice but could be warmer.

Mar. 4 --- Saturday

We are at a small filthy camp alongside of the railroads. On the map it is called Brunswick but the sign said Braunschweig --- where ever ???-- who cares??

We hear that we are about 100 KM from the northern front which is good news but would be better if next door.

We are told that we must work on the railroad but several of us stated emphatically -- "No WAY" and stated that the Geneva Rules for POW's stated Nom-coms did not work. They said in a very nice manner ---"to hell with the rules work or starve" Sgt Hunt was our interpreter and he said something that pissed them off as they started shoving with their rifles and we scattered back to the filthy pigsty we were in. We did try to clean it up but it was not much use. The four of us were on the bottom tier instead of 6 or 8. We were in a small room. The yard outside is very small. We are not sure what is going to

happen but we are not going to work. Our whole room has decided against it. We still have a little tobacco but it is mostly the stems ground up but smokeable with cigarette papers. All of us smoke but we have curtailed it very much as we would rather eat.

Mar. 25 thru 30 --- Sun. through Friday

Still shoveling out our barracks. They haven't said anymore about us going to work but we have not had much rations. They say it is on account of the bombers which we are seeing go over so thick the vapor is blocking out the sun. Thousands of them We can hear some bombing in the distance.

Mar. 31, --- Saturday

Today our bombers bombed hell out of things around here. They seem to be trying for the Railroad next to us. After the letup we seen some Jerries whipping some prisoners dressed in stripes --- and I mean whipping them.

We were standing beside the fence and yelled at the guards but they ignored us. Our compound (if you want to call it that) has a crater from previous bombings. It is right along the fence. The fence is double spaced about 4 feet apart. In one of the bombings the planes dropped leaflets stating they were going to bomb this place off the map. We four decided tat we could not take anymore of this and formed a plan to escape. Very simple---wait till dark and enter the crater to the fence and crawl through, digging if required.

Sometime guards were walking the path between the fences but we would take our chances. During the bombing the smoke was so thick you could not see a damn thing The guards all disappeared---must have a shelter nearby. We know full well we won't work on the railroad nor do we want to remain here and get killed by our own planes.

We are going to try and reach the American lines or any line. We are all pretty weak but feel that our best bet lies in an escape.

April 1, -- Sunday

Last night at about 2130 we made our break. Those with me were. Cpl. Thomas Keneshea, a lad of about 19 who was from Providence, R.I. --- a nice kid who could steal the Jerries blind, could speak Italian and some French.

T/4 Elmer George 36, from Lancaster, Missouri. Almost deaf in one ear from concussion. Could speak only English like myself but seemed not to know what fear was.

Sgt. Vernon Hunt 32, Benton Harbor - Michigan. Spoke 4 or 5 dialects of German. Some Polish and Italian and of course English. Arid then there was me English only, age 28 with the rank of S/Sgt. I had been a Flat. Sgt. before they broke through. Wonder how my Platoon fared???

I sent George down in the hole to the fence and followed with Hunt and Keneshea following me. George had a homemade knife and volunteered to enter the space between fences and wait for any guard if the need arose. There was no digging required. I sent

Hunt and Keneshea through both fences. The second one was barb wire and very loose. I followed with George following. We made it through some small brush and into the city streets where we separated as planned--- Sgt. Hunt and myself on one side of the street and the other two on the other side.

We had almost gotten through the town when we heard marching troops and we ducked into a doorway. They came down the street and all at once yelling started and a light flashed then a shot and a lot of talking that Hunt could not understand because of the distance. A German man came out of the door while we were in the doorway to see what the commotion was and he and Hunt had quiet a conversation. Hunt told him we were Kriegies (Commandos—working type) and we were going home. Nothing else— and he did not question our excuse. I kept my big mouth shut.

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April 1, --- Con't --- Sunday

After the noise died down and the man had went back inside we sneaked down the street and continued without any further interruptions through the city outskirts and in an area that we had agreed that we would meet if we became separated. We held up in a barn (attached to the kitchen) and remained there all day in the hay loft. At about midnight we started to leave but hunger was getting the best of us so Hunt milked the cow and I managed to throttle a large duck right near the kitchen door without any noise by using a blanket. We then left and as soon as we got away and started up the large hill just North of Brunswick I rang its neck and let it bleed. We had also agreed to meet atop of the hill if not at the first sight. So we climbed the hill and found no—one, but we took the blankets and built a shelter around a very small fire and tried to cook the duck. We final],y gave up and ate it half raw and it tasted good except once in awhile we would get feathers in our mouths. We had dry picked the duck and did not get all the feathers off. However, it was delicious. Ironically, we watched our—planes drop bombs on the town below us while we munched grain that we found in the barn. Wheat or oats--- A very good show but we hoped the camp was spared. Also, we were worried about T/3 George and Cpl. Keneshea. We had to assume they were recaptured and returned to the camp.

April 2, -- - Monday

We remained in the woods wrapped in blankets until this evening The blankets were Jerry type which we traded for one and stole the other. All four of us had a blankets. The damn duck made us have stomach cramps but they soon passed. The milk helped and we still had a few cooked spuds we brought from camp. At 0200 we decided we were lost (no stars) but kept walking -- North-we hope. We came to a Riechautobahn (German super highway). Some one -- we assumed a guard, was walking his beat. Their boots with steel heel caps gives them away every time. We saw a barn in the early morning light and

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April 2, ---- Con't ---- Monday

headed for it. Upon getting closer we noticed camouflaged Anti—aircraft guns and we stopped dead in our tracks..... We did not go far as it was getting lighter. So we went to a small shed in the field and went inside. It was an empty beet field shed. We have no idea why we were not seen; I guess the good Lord was watching over us. We wrapped up in our blankets and lay down and tried to sleep but curiosity got the better of us and we spied out the building (this shed was about 10 X 10 feet) doorway. We were amazed at the number of planes camouflaged and parked around the barn/Hangar. Even from the ground it was difficult to see.

April 3, ---- Tuesday

We wrapped our blankets around our tired bodies and lay down to sleep. According to Hunts watch it was about 0630. It was beginning to rain and was cold. Later we ate our potatoes and some more grain and again laid down. About noon, the door opened and a guy came in with a bundle of beet sacks or what I assumed was beet sacks and was followed by another young man. For an instance they were taken by surprise --- but only momentarily ——— then one spoke. "Comrade" — and something else and then Hunt replied In Italian. They were Italian Commandos working on this farm. They shook hands and hugged us like long lost brothers. Then they said they had to go but would be back later with some food. We went back to bed. Later, about 2000 one Italian returned with two buddies loaded with bread (2 loaves), 1/4 pound of oleo, some cheese and potatoes. They gave us the news and told us to be careful of civilian soldiers ——— Volkstrum ?? Then they left. Later, one of the first two returned with two more buddies and told us the Allies were practically at Hanover. Only 46 k)1 from here. They wanted to take us someplace safer but we said we would be on our way to Hanover. They also left us some bread and potatoes. We placed all this in a sack and bid our friends goodbye with much hugging and handshaking. It was about 2200 or later and we reached the autobahn and started walking down it towards Hanover. It begin to rain and

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April 3. ——— Con't ---- Tuesday

it rained and rained. Finally, it got so miserable that we left the highway and at the first village we picked out a barn and entered. I started looking for the stairs or ladder to the loft. Hunt was going to milk a cow. There were two in this barn and he found a stool and proceeded to milk a little from both. If they had of opened their kitchen door he would have been seen. But we got the milk in a can and went to the loft and ate so much bread it soured on our stomachs but nothing is better than Warm milk and bread with sawdust built in.

April 4 ---- Wednesday

Sgt. Hunt woke me and had his hand on my mouth. There was a girl about to 10 feet from us, pitch forking hay down over the edge. We were well hidden in the hay and she did not notice us. After she left we ate our bread, oleo and some spuds. I wrote in my daily diary (using scrap paper). The food was delicious But the warm milk and bread we had last night was by far the best,, Believe it or not Hunt and I said our prayers daily.

Again we had a good bed, however, as usual, the lice on our bodies gave us a good eating.

We left the barn at dark and got back on the Riechautobahn going towards Hanover. At one place we were halted by a soldier at a road block. The guard said "come further" in German and Hunt replied in German --- "Good Evening" and told the guard we were Kriegies on our way to our farm nearby. No lights were used so he did not see our coats or uniform. So, with a few words more we were on our way.

April 5, --- Thursday

Because of the road blocks and guards we left the highway and went through the woods until we came to a side road. As we walked down the road we ran into a guard on the road and Hunt gave him the spiel and he let us go past. We went about 300 yards more and came to a bridge and could see the outline of a town. We stopped at the end of the Bridge and conversed in English whether to cross the water below the bridge

April 5, -- Con't --- Thursday

or go over the bridge and finally deciding to go over the bridge. We had not taken more than two steps when "Halten. (about 5 feet in front of us was two guards) Also, they said in German --- Raise your hands! Stand still. Then a light hit us. Hunt did not give up but began his spiel about Kriegies --- the guard did not buy this but slammed a bullet into his rifle and shoved us across the bridge. The other guard followed suite. We were led to a place where the guard house was and where they all slept. No excuses would they accept that we were Commandos. The Commander in charge asked this guard why he did not put us in the canal like they did the airman. That was before they knew Hunt could speak any German and even then Hunt acted like he only knew a little. This was definitely the "Volkstrum" --- (Civilian guards-- all older men but mean and rugged).

They seated us against the wall and everyone returned to their posts except the 7 or 8 sleeping on the floor. Hunt and I stared awake by placing lice on our knees and flipping them on the sleeping guards. Our guard was playing solitary. When the next shift change was, made they put us in a small air raid shelter and locked the door. We rummaged around and found a small electric heater and an oil lamp. I re--read what I had written and destroyed some of it because it had some German military info like the airfield and some cruelties inflicted on individuals and the treatment we received. Hunt rigged the heater up so he could fry potatoes, What a guy. At 0730 they came and got us and took us to the town of Piene and we went before the Gestapo police. We told them that we had escaped from a POW column marching from Gorlitz but they knew nothing about this and did not believe us --- not that it made any difference. They separated us and put me in a jail cell with a German in for black marketing and put Hunt upstairs. The guy I was with complained to the jailer about my being dirty. We spoke some English but did not like the English or Americans. At 0400 they came and told me to be ready at 0430 to leave with Hunt and a guard to a POW camp.

April 6, - Friday

From 0400 until they came to get me, I amused myself by flipping lice on this jerk. A young soldier 19 years old came to pick up Hunt and myself and take us to Fallingbostel - Stalag XI-L We rode to Hanover in a truck and he and Hunt carried on a conversation the

whole way. His father was a German and his Mother was English. His father was forced in the war as he himself was. His father was killed on the Russian front and he did not like Nazis, the army and cared less if they lost or won. We made it to Hanover and proceeded to the train station. While there the Air raid sirens started to sound. With everyone else we scurried to a shelter; this shelter was built below and above ground and built with concrete. The walls were thick and I judge these to be at least 10 ft. thick. Above ground it was about 3 or 4 stories high. You entered on a ramp which spiraled to the top with rooms off to the side. Each room (I seen only one) had benches for the people. The bad part is that the people did not want us there and pretty soon some Gestapo dude told us we would leave pronto. Our guard put up an argument but did him no good. As, we left he was cursing everyone from his CO to the Fuerher. Luckily, the Air raid was real as our planes flew over. Hanover was pretty much destroyed and the station was a shambles. The guard gave Hunt' some ration chips and money and told him to go to the store about a block from the Station, (we had passed it previously) and to buy some bread and sausage. Hunt removed his overcoat and draped the Jerry blanket around his shoulders and took off. When he had not returned in about 40 minutes we went to look for him. We found him standing in line waiting for his turn so we waited until he bought his purchase of bread and sausage.

The guard gave us 1/2 of the bread and blood sausage. At 1330 we left Hanover on a train and after stopping a few time for air raid alerts we arrived in Fallingbostel. The kid guard wished us well (he could talk English fairly good) and gave us all the food he had. (Our other food was taken by the Gestapo when they put us in jail at Piene). We were taken to Stalag XI-B and there we were taken

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Apri 6, --- Con't --- Friday

to a small compound in the center of the huge (10,000 men) complex. This compound was enclosed with two fences topped with barb wire, In it were the bad or incorrigibles. Most were in for trying to escape and the others for stealing.

We had 22 Americans, 35 French, 41 English and about 50 Russians. Our barracks was a building about 24 X 60 feet. The windows were covered with shutter doors ---no glass. The French had part of ours (or we had part of theirs) the English had their own as did the Russians. The food was about the same but more consistent. Our beds were more spacious but still had the slat mattress. My son is 6 months old.

April 7. --- Saturday

Today we received a Red Cross parcel between 4 individuals. The food was delicious. These are the things one dreams about. We should have escaped months ago. A black suited Officer (SS) interrogated us and wanted to know if our plans were escape back to our lines when we left the POW column. Our story was ---"Of course not. We were only trying to reach Hanover where Sgt. Hunt had an uncle. (Boy, can we lie !) He finally stated that we were going to be given a trial for espionage, stea1ing, and escaping. When

Hunt relayed what he said ---- I stated that under the Geneva Convention rules he could not do this, (I do not know if it is so or not). He stood up and told both of us in a very hart voice tone. "It is not necessary to have a trial -- we can shoot you or anything we desire. Return to your quarters". I wasn't going to argue with him....we went.

April 8, ---Sunday

The Allies are reported to be 25 KM away. Another nice day. My feet and back are still hurting but no problems. They are taking some men to other Stalags, but this is not going to do them much good. The Russians here are all mixed up---they have generals, Non-coms, EMS and officers all mixed and rank is not recognized by the Germans. They get no food but have to work for it. That is very little ---- whereas, the French are working and get Red Cross parcels and they receive our

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April 8, --- Con't --- Sunday

packages sent by American families. That part is OK under the circumstances but there is no way we can get a pair of socks or anything else unless we give our food. The Americans are fit to be tied. I was elected or appointed Barracks Leader. for our group. (ranking NCO) but there is not much to do. Clean our barracks, send for chow and deal with the others. The English have been great. They gave one of our men a pair of shoes and are always giving us tea. This compound is like a little world within a world. There are an' estimated 10,000 men around us in the big camp. We were supposed to get deloused but that's been called off. I have had 3 showers since 16 Dec. 1944. My Long johns are all rotted out in the rear. I am scaly and lousy. I must weigh about 100 lbs now. We received another RC parcel for 2 men today. The Germans are getting scared and we do not see the SS officer any longer. I guess they have more important things to do than put us on trial.(Like getting the hell away from here). Armies are 18 KM from here. We pray for a safe deliverance.

April 9 and 10, 11, and 12.---- Mon,. Tues., Wed and Thur.

Everyone is happy... They are not going -to vacate this camp. The armies are 10 to 15 KM from here. On Wed, we were unofficially liberated. All the guards left their posts and the gates were torn off their hinges. Some squabbling going on between the French and Americans but I and the English NCO believe we have it resolved. The French are joining their own in the other camp. We hear that the English are to free us, but we care less-- who -- but when. We are using our Oleo for candles.. Another 11th ---- This day will be long remembered. On Thursday we seen our planes strafing the road nearby. We can stand at our window and see across an open field and see the strafing. We have a shelter dug right outside of our barracks. A nice way to fight a war.... . They have some paint and painting POW on our building (as if It wasn't visible.) The food we are receiving is

now very rich and half the time we are sick. We eat and vomit --- eat more and vomit again and keep repeating --- our stomachs have shrunk.

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April 13, - Friday

Friday the 13th and we received a real shock. The Officer (English) in charge of the whole camp sent down a piece of paper written by the French and English and handed to me to read to our men. It stated that President Roosevelt had died and they and their men wanted to share in our grief. That he will sorely be missed by all nations and people especially the Americans. A great leader and a great man. He died at 1535 yesterday -- 12 April 1945.

April 14 and 15. ---- Saturday, and Sunday

Another Red Cross parcel today -- I must be gaining weight. We spend three fourths of the day in cooking and eating. The army is supposed to be 5 KM away. We hear plenty of small arms firing. We expect all hell to break loose here anytime. We have a few old German men around to give us back to our army. Be a good idea to sleep fully clothed and lightly. A real nice day and we have plenty to eat if we could keep it down.

April 16, Monday

Today is our day. We stood on the edge of our ditch and watched fighting going on in the open field outside of the camp. Just like a movie --- Then at 0900 or thereabouts --- we saw our first tank. It was the Irish army which came in and liberated us. We are now behind the allied lines! Unless you were here you could in no way imagine the feelings we had when they arrived. Men who have gone thru hell for the months and in some cases years, are like wild-men, Grown men crying and giving thanks to their God. Its a great feeling and a great day. A GREAT DAY FOR "YE OLDE IRISH". It is more than this pencil is able to write, words cannot express our thankfulness to God for our liberation. Today - this PM - the men went to different warehouses and came back with food and souvenirs of every description. One of the fellows brought back an Accordion which I asked for and received. I could not play but Sgt. Hunt could and we had music. Trying to sing "Keep a light

April 16. ~---_Con't ---- Monday

burning in your window --- your wandering boy is coming home." Also --- "I want a girl just like the girl who married dear old Dad." And many more. Thank God I have a girl, sweetheart and wife, like the girl that married dear old Dad.

April 17, ---- Tuesday

We are still celebrating. We are getting organized to evacuate the camp. My feet and back still hurt but I do not see me making sick call here. Tens of hundreds are much worse off than I am.

April 18, ---- Wednesday

Another day. Boy. I really had a dinner tonight. Five (5) of us had two ducks made into a stew. It was really delicious.

Now we receive white bread instead of the brown sawdust German bread. It tastes like cake. What a change. The men went out and returned with groceries and a few souvenirs. They call it looting but we call it "eating. Our stomachs are shrunk so much that after we eat we are still hungry. 1,000 men left today --- tomorrow six of ours leave. It looks like I will be leaving with the last bunch here in this small stockade. Possibly Friday or Saturday. Hope so But one more day can't mean so much under these circumstances. Wonder what my family will think of my return? I did send a POW postcard from Gorlitz on 24 January.

April 19, ---- Thursday

Today we were given 75 cigarettes. Six more men left from our group. Tomorrow is when the remainder of our group leaves.

I am packed --- not even a tooth brush.

April 20, ----- Friday

We arrived at a British tent camp at 1830 and were immediately fed. Later, we heard the British band and ate some more. Before we left we were deloused at our last Stalag (XI - B). There were soldiers running around with guns that had DDT and every time you moved from one spot to another they would make you stand and up the sleeves, down the pant front and down the

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April 20, ----- Con't ----- Friday

neck! I also ran into Sgt. Hammer for a few minutes but the DDT was getting to us and we were moving out so we did not get to say much. It really feels good to ride in a GI truck again. All along the road we were cheered by the British and in return we cheered them. It looked good to see equipment moving up to the front. A lot of towns all shot up. A few graves to be recovered at a later date...., and a lot of abandoned Jerry equipment.

April 21, ---- Saturday

Here I sit— about 2,000 or more feet in the air ——— on our way to England. It really feels good to be free and know that at last we are on our journey that will carry us back to the good old USA and to our families. We are riding in a C-47 (Dakota) -
- standing room only ——— crammed in like sardines.

But we love it. Sgt. Hunt played the accordion and we all sang.

It is raining and the country looks beautiful. We crossed the Rhine a few minutes ago and we can see craters everywhere. Now I can see the Airport of some city. Its practically destroyed , as is towns and bridges. The Allies believe in doing a thorough job, and thank God for that! The English has treated us royally, feeding us one meal a day--a continuous meal from the time we arise till we leave. Due to the weather our route may be changed but as far as we know now we will go to Brussels for refueling and then to Wing Airport in England. I understand it is close to Oxford and London. We should arrive in England about 2400. or after.

April 22 ---- Sunday

Arrived in England at 0145 and met by the RAP personnel and they deloused us and checked for sickness. I was designated as a malnutrition. case but so were many others. I weighed 101 lbs and this was after all that eating. 49 lb loss. A WAVE steered us thru the hangar to tables and they gave us cigarettes, cakes and tea. We then registered and was turned over to the U. S. Army. All the above happened in about 20 minutes.

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April 22~ ---- Con't ---- Sunday

We were placed in ambulances and driven to an Oxford hospital 40 or 50 miles away. Deloused again, given a bath and a bed with clean white sheets! With all this excitement there was not much sleeping except cat napping until about 0730. We went to breakfast and I ate 4 eggs --- oatmeal --- 3 slices of bread -- jam --- meat --and coffee with real

cream!!! Then back to bed, but not for long --- in came the Red Cross with all their goodies ----- chocolate --- cigs and etc. At 1430 we received three (3) shots for something or other???? I couldn't eat dinner or supper --- my stomach was giving me fits. Actually, I was placed on a soft diet but did not heed it and now I am suffering, along with some others. Back on the diet!

April 23 24, 25 ---- Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday.

We can't get enough showers. I take one about every three hours.

They have taken our old clothes and given us P3's. The nurse is checking us twice daily. We are in a ward with the (I'm one) malnutrition cases. The soft diet isn't too bad. On Monday I wrote to my wife and sent it via a fellow who was flying to the USA the same day.

EDITORS NOTE. Mrs. Collins received the letter before being notified by the military that he was free and coming home.) I had been using the stick for a cane and I finally got up nerve to throw it away. This is the one that Sgt. Hunt gave me months before and I was using from time to time.

We get plenty of juices and egg-nogs between meals and I can tell a difference already. Gained 4 lbs. They have German POW's working here and the American POW's grumble about it and the treatment they receive. Lucky people!! They told us in 10 days we could start home providing we would stay on our diet and gain weight. We have been reading and hearing the news about the Nazi cruelties. We seen some of this and wonder how the American people are reacting to this. Hunt and I go to the kitchen and have some diet snack at night, We want to leave ASAP.

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From this point on this diary will be REALLY condensed until I reach the USA and finish writing it.

April 26, -- Thurs. I take a vitamin shot and 2 vitamin pills daily. Received some new clothes which excites everyone. I can't remember everything to write but when someone asks me questions -- it all comes rushing to my brain.

We are rid of the body lice but still scaly and still marks from hard scratching. Our bodies are filling out. Scratching is still a habit. We think we may be gone from here by 4 May.

April 27, 28, 29 and 30 --- Fri., Sat., Sun., and Mon. Just lying around -- gaining weight. I hear by the grapevine that Braunschweig really got plastered with our own bombs, but it was not marked as a POW camp so that was to be expected. I also heard that they had an outbreak of diphtheria or Typhoid. Sure glad we escaped. The POW's

there had to work on the railroad. Plenty of snow around here even at this late date, and I do not care for their weather. Its cold and they are moving me in a ward.

May 1 through 7 --- Tuesday through Monday.

I have been ill with fever and I hope it gets better as I cannot leave with my detachment unless I am OK. More POW's coming in. One fellow gained 12 lbs in one week. I have had terrific headaches. Looks like the war is going to be over in a few days. Maybe when I get up and around I will feel much better. Rained on Saturday and the snow is going fast. I have gained 25 lbs. since I weighed 1 April. Feeling down and out on Saturday. We are going to Oxford (city) tomorrow.

May 8 "V-E day" - THE WAR IS OVER IN EUROPE ! Look out Japanese! The American GI's are not showing much emotion;

just standing around watching. First time in ages that I have witnessed so much laughing and people frantic with joy.

Today is Tuesday and will be remembered by me for a long time.

All I could do was stare. Got pretty tired and returned to the hospital.

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May 9 through 13 --- Wednesday through Sunday

Went back to the city to look around. They gave us \$10.00 to spend and I purchased some uniform insignias, etc. They even have American uniforms if you want them. Feeling very much better. Went to a show --- Margaret O'Brien in "Music for millions~ Very good --- a four star movie. I walk all I possibly can trying to regain my locomotion. Mother's day was Sunday --- Sorry Mom, that ! could not be home but I am writing you a long letter. Also, wrote home. Have orders to leave for London tomorrow (Monday). Received a Purple Heart for injury to hand and/or leg or maybe the beating I received. Was not expecting any medals, all I want to do is go home.

May 14 through 16 --- Monday through Wednesday

Arrived in London and went to a show. Have a terrific headache.

Rode in the Subways all day Tuesday....The reasongot lost!!

Several of us went sightseeing Wednesday ---- went to Piccadilly

Circus -- Hyde Park, James Park -- Westminster --- etc.

May 17 through 23 --- Thursday through Wednesday

Left London at 1400 for Southampton to board ship for home! Boarded ship at 1730~ On board the "John Ericsson", a Swedish ship taken from the Jerries, We are in a convoy of 14 ships. Danger still lurks In the ocean as some "U" boats commanders do not know the war is over and we are still at war with the Japs. No lights or unnecessary noise. No suntan this trip -- choppy sea and cold northerly winds. Sailed Saturday at 1800. NO seasickness, should have joined the navy. Went visiting to the engine room --- my first time ever to see such gigantic motor and that prop shaft! It was solid steel about 3 feet in diameter. and 60 feet long. (twin screws). Standing at the rail looking at the sea, your mind works overtime. What thoughts run through your mind, ??? Mine are of home and what coarse do I want to follow -- do I want to stay in service --- go back to my old job ~as 'city Fireman in Kansas City or just what do I want ??????????????

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May 24, ----Thursday

Very calm---wish I had a picture of the convoy. Sure is fascinating! I can sit for long periods of time and watch the white caps and the ships plowing through the sea. We are all looking forward to returning but there is not much talk of what we are going to do except EAT. I often wonder if the other GI's are undecided on what they want to do as I am?? Just think of a young man or a sergeant or officer being released. He goes back to his old job ---maybe! He may be so young that he has no job. Will he be content to go back where life is so tame -- back to an 8 to 4 job???? A life that is full of people who has not been disciplined like a soldier???? For he knows only two things soldiering and his old job (or school). Warfare --- being over leaves him a choice to adapt or be squeezed out. Or maybe he is contemplating re-enlisting again ??? It's really going to be interesting to see and know what happens to us. I have decided that I am going to "LIVE"! But war leaves its scars.

May 25 through 28 ---- Friday through Monday

Hear the song over the loud speakers -- "When Johnny comes Marching home!' Just about home now -- we have been sailing for 10 days and still have a few more to go. The sun is out and pretty hot --- we are taking advantage of it. Everyone is in very good spirits and they should be! They will really be in the spirits when they get home. We all have been issued a 60 day furlough before reporting for discharge or ????? Days are very

warm and we sit on deck most of the time. Monday, they lifted the "no lights" and the ships look beautiful all lit up. Plenty of Ice cream and we are trying to eat it all. I wonder how it will feel to see a whole city lit up??? Most of us are looking forward in seeing the "Lady". She is the woman who is important to all Americans. Long may she stand with her torch beckoning to all.

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May 29, ----Tuesday

Arrived in good old USA.....New York, about 1500. People yelled...blew whistlesthrew paper confetti out the windows... and in general, went wild. The Statue of Liberty looked just like I thought she wouldBEAUTIFUL !!! Large Ferries in the bay had bands and everyone seemed glad for us to be home .., I know I am!! The WAC's and the Red Cross were there in numbers. We crossed on ferries to New Jersey and loaded on the train and arrived at Camp Shanks about 1930. We were given a physical and restated that we were receiving the 60 day furlough. This made it official!!! Everyone went wild! Then we were led to a mess hall and again a feast for a king! We then went to our barracks and also to supply for articles of clothing we needed. We then received a partial pay. My part was \$90.00 as I had all my money going home except for a few bucks. We have just come from an "Intelligence meeting" Imagine that! Its now about 0430 on May 30th, so this is where I end my story. The rest of my life will be another story ---- I am back in the USA for at least 3 months so for now I am on my way to Jefferson Barracks and then home on the 60 day furlough. If I want Out immediately I have enough points but for 60 days I am going to forget or try to forget what comes afterward. We leave this afternoon so to all my buddies and to those who I know not their whereabouts I leave you with these simple words.

GOD BLESS YOU AND YOURS.

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Editors note.

Each returned veteran who was an employee of the city will be interviewed and photographed; his opinion will be asked on what he deems a proper Memorial to the heroes of World War II, because we feel that this decision should be made by the veterans themselves as a guide to city planners. This is Mr. Collins' reply.

Please reprint the following excerpt from the editorial of Dean Hudnut of Harvard University.

"I do not know what our soldiers have fought for if it is not to guard and to nourish the spiritual energies of the people among whom they were born and among whom they hope to live. THE FOUR FREEDOMS????? Freedoms are opportunities. When we have won the Four Freedoms, we have won only the freedom to build whatever theater for our lives we may wish, to build the stones of that theater honor those who defended its foundations. Build no monument, but a civilization fit for free men. Build something that is simple and considered, useful to the community, unaffected and full of a present happiness; some fine thing that we cannot afford yet will afford. Do not wait for the completed plan of a city; take now the first utilitarian steps. A park in a neighborhood which is now a waste of asphalt and brick; a playground where children have only the streets; a school house to replace that dreary box so long overtaken by the progress of the art and science of teaching; a music hall, a theater, a library, a church accessible to all faiths, and the role of these continues through the years; they are not static; they are not make-believe; they serve; and they are always beautiful."

J.P.C

The 106th Infantry Division shall always go forward as they are now doing. In January 1945, it was reported that the division was annihilated, but even with the loss of about 7,500 men, it was reorganized and appeared in the ETO in full swing!

The events leading to the temporary defeat of the division are numerous and no-one person can possibly know all the reasons. What you read here is only one GI's opinion based on his knowledge of the events and what actually transpired. When we were attacked at 0530 -- 16 December 1944, our Company Officers concluded that this was only a temporary shelling of our area due to the short time we had been there. Therefore, the town of Auw, where we lived and was the Base Camp for the Company ---- was deserted except for the cooks, Company supply personnel, clerical personnel, Mechanics, Tool keepers and a few more. A total of about 15/20 personnel All (3) platoons were sent to their respective work sites with the 2nd Platoon remaining close to Auw.

This was the first mistake we made and it almost proved a catastrophe --- as far as separating the platoons and companies it was a catastrophe!! Other reasons are.

The Division had only been on line one week and covered approximately 27 miles. A green division in troops and officers. Lots of GUTS but no battle experience!! The men averaged about 22 years of age and I understand that many men were from replacement centers without the type of training the rest of us obtained. We were our best right after maneuvers In January 1944. Nothing could beat us then and nothing can beat us now!!! The 106th fought until they ran out of ammunition. They suffered repeatedly barrages, tank fire, rifle fire and the cold miserable weather. It was not in vain because the German army was repulsed time after time and the delays broke their offensive. Heroes, whose names will never appear on more than a wooden cross died for their buddies and country.

The men living, who were captured will never forget the fallen bodies of their comrades. Neither will they forget the treatment they received as Prisoners—of—War. It is seared into the soldier's soul so that he cannot forget.

This diary is my own personal one of my life as a POW. Many men's lives as a POW are much worse and some were probably better, This Diary was written mostly day by day;

and some of it lies buried in an air raid shelter in Piene, Germany. Reason for this is due to the military information that Sgt. Vernon Hunt and myself had collected while a POW.

Notes were taken from the original on April 5, 1945, just before being brought before the Gestapo in Piene. They removed the notes and I presume read them but at my request they returned the notes. I later, while at Stalag XI—B, added the items I had deleted.

Sgt. Hunt and I correspond with one another from' time to time but we have yet to find out about T/4 George and Cpl. Keneshea and neither have I found out about my Company or Platoon!! Sgt. Hunt is a bar owner/operator in Benton Harbor, Michigan and I am contemplating re-enlistment. I feel that I can round out my education and be some help in the service. `

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"Reminders" which were left out of original story.

Wrote POW postcard to my wife in January from Gorlitz, Stalag VIII—A and she received it April 6, 1945.

Making up recipes for certain kinds of food dishes was the big pastime for everyone. Even swapped recipes.

How many ways to cook oats? Or Eggs? Or even ways to prepare potatoes (or anything else)???? General Mills would have been proud of us..

At Schoenberg our group were told to remove and bury some bodies that were in the barn. We refused and they pointed their rifles at us and was going to shoot, so we proceeded to do this. It was dead Jerries.

When Sgt. Hunt and myself were recaptured on the Bridge at Piene; Sgt. Hunt started yelling — "Kriegies — Schishum" ——"Kriegies — Schishum" — "Schishum — Schishum --- Kriegies" over and over until they threatened to shoot. I thought we had bought the farm, and later I found out that he was trying to tell the guards that he wanted to go shit --- not only in German, but in Italian, too .. Funny now --- but NOT THEN!! SCHISHUM may not be spelled correctly, but that's the way it sounds.

The meanest Dog I ran into was about an 80 lb. Airedale. The guard had a hard time controlling this one when he attacked T/4 George. He had Georges arm and was jerking it and the guard had to use his rifle to beat the dog off!

While on the train from Hanover to Fallingbostel, the young guard we had, hung his rifle on the door and someone pushed the door back so his rifle was hid and he thought someone had stolen it but cared less and stated he was not going to fire it — ever --- for the Nazis.

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When the train was stopped by strafing, everyone went to each side of the train except us. The guard said the plane would miss us and hit the people. And he was right!

When the SS Commander at Fallingbostel was interrogating us, Sgt. Hunt reached over on the desk and took this guys cig box; took out one cig; tore it in half; gave me half and then asked him for a light. AND GOT IT ! There were also two men in suits in the office; one spent his whole life in Detroit and the other — 18 years in L.A. Spoke English with no accent and we assumed they were spies.

While Barracks NCO at [Stalag XI-B](#), I forged papers and sent men out for extra rations and it was succeeding every day until someone in our compound snitched on us. Then I was in more trouble. The Russians said they would hide me if they came to get me. (We were giving the Russians the Scilly and keeping the bread.) It was too near the end and nothing came of it.

At the English camp where I met Sgt. Hammer, I was told that Cpl. Meisner had died from wounds caused by strafing. I believe it was Sgt Hammer who told me.

While marching through a town; a German was pushing a cart loaded with wine —— Needless to say —— we got his wine !

After hearing about the cremation of Jewish Prisoners, we wondered if they had used those two brick factories we stayed in to perform these atrocities. Not much brick work was noticed and the furnaces were going full blast!

No water was given to us at any time except the 3 times we bathed. We ate snow or begged from the Germans who sometimes poured it out on the streets rather than give it to us. THIS SHOULD GIVE YOU SOME IDEA WHAT THE AMERICAN AND OTHER POW's EXPERIENCED IN EUROPE --- BUT IN COMPARISON TO TO THE TREATMENT THE JAPS GAVE THE AMERICANS --- WE HAD IT MUCH BETTER.



Page last revised
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