

Photo Album of
Ben H. Phelper

1946

Photographic Images of Stalag 17
Kaisersteinbruch, Germany

KRIEGIE
MEMORIES

by



BEN H. PHELPER

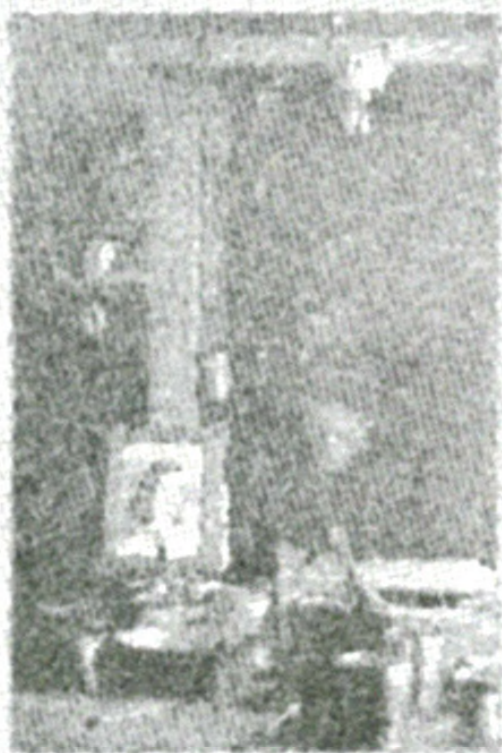
LESTER KNUDSON
SANBORN, MINNESOTA

By

BEN H. PHELPER
2133 So. HARVARD BLVD

Les:
May you always
be full and happy.
Good luck,
Ben

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I dedicate these pictures to all our buddies killed in action, by civilians or in the prison camps.

Many of my pictures did not come out good due to sea water, length of time before developing and poor wrapping. In fact—those taken inside the barracks did not come out at all. I have drawn a few illustrations of the bunks so you can show your friends what they were like.

The above picture is of myself and my private nook in barrack 57A, Stalag 17B where I ate, slept, spent my time drawing and carried on as prisoner or should I say "Luftgangster No. 113204."

In the event that each picture does not strike a familiar scene in your mind I have written a little about each and tried to bring back memories that

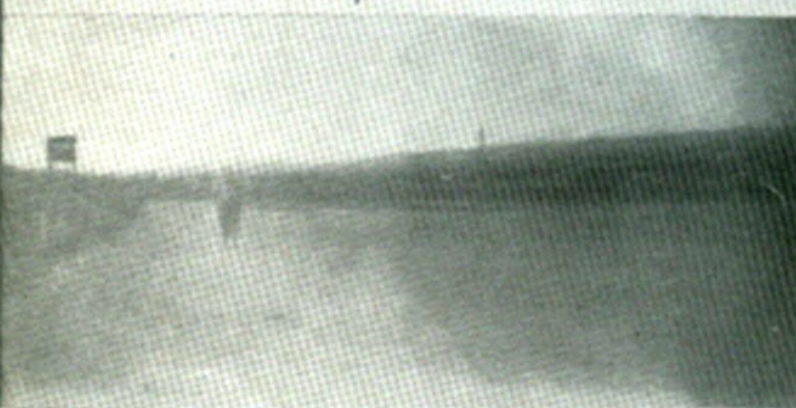


will help you explain to your friends what each is about.

The picture above is looking east from just a few feet above the latrine in the upper compound. Note the edge of the garden trees.

Picture above is still looking east, but in lower compound No. 9.

Remember the warning sign? If I remember right it read "Do not touch the warning wire or pass into the warning area or you will be fired upon"



immediately without warning. And they were not fooling.

Next one is looking north from compound 9. To our left looking west toward the foreign compounds. The day must have been quite cold. Only one walker and he

half frozen. The lower picture is in the same compound looking toward Vienna or should it be Wien?



Looking from compound 9 into 8 you can see the material stacked for the new theatre building that we all knew would never be completed. Remember how the Jerrys guarded



that wood to keep the boys from stealing it for firewood?

The new structure was erected on the spot where two of our comrades got shot up "a little" one cold night while trying to escape... December 3rd, 1943. "Comrade, please don't shoot!" More shots and then horrible



silence broken only by the hoarse breathing of men hugging the barrack floor. One lad in 35B caught one too. Kriegie Memories!



All of you probably recognize the officers' quarters with the Russian barrack just behind?

Wonder what the boys are looking for in their palisades? Fleas! Oh no! Not fleas in Stalag XVIIIB!

There used to be a building on the spot where these boys are. Jerrys tore it down because too many tunnels were being dug from beneath it.

Picture above looks north from one of the lower compounds. Right



was taken from the upper compound by the gate facing the foreign compounds.

Remember the Russian killed for trying to get a pack of butts? One pack meant two pounds of beans to him.

Left looking at more tin cans from the porch window of 19B. More cans to rattle at night when men are trying to cut their way thru a barb wire fence.

Above and taken from the new compounds back fence. Wonder where the guard was when this picture was snapped? Don't worry! He was there!!

Left. You all recognize the big gate between the American compound and the foreigners' lager.

A favorite spot for trading. Those last two

days were really something to recall. Remember when the Jerry officers were trading for us and the gates burst open? Russians were hugging and kissing every American they could get their hands on. What a day!

Right we look between the fences. "Hey, you guys! Jerrys taking clothes off the fence! Better get 'em if any of yours is out there!"

The chapel building can be seen to the right of the picture. It is surprising that the Germans let the building be finished before we





disappeared as did others all over camp. Usually the whole fence was gone, but the stumps of this particular one looked as if a saw had been used, but saws were a forbidden article.



At least they left the wire
Now aren't these barracks fine, so solid looking, large and roomy? Equipped to



house three hundred men! Sure, remember how the draft came in between the boards and lathes? The ceiling looked like a city dump. Tin cans and drains hanging



from every drip. Those on the lower bunks had it lucky for once.

Barrack 32A! Home of the "Vigilantes." Wonder if



were evacuated, but Jerry always had a definite reason for everything he did for us and it was not out of the good of his heart.

Another shot between the fences. You can see barrack 32 on the left and a few Jerry blankets to the right. Never will forget our three day picnic.



Lost all my blankets including one from home. Good thing I had lots of friends or it would have been pretty cold without the loan of their blankets.

Barrack 18 needed brew material, but some one did not stop at tearing off the tarpaper and boards. They tore out the bricks to make a door so one did not have to walk around and thru the barrack to the wash room. Good idea, but was Jerry ever angry!

The bricks give a person who does not know the impression that the whole shack was built the same. That was not true. The

bricks were only around a washroom.

Left a troop hut in back of camp.

Picture above was taken to show "where there had" been a fence, but one night in 1945 the posts strangely





they have disbanded yet! Under the light of guard tower #9 they staged one of their battles in which some of

the members did not fair so well.

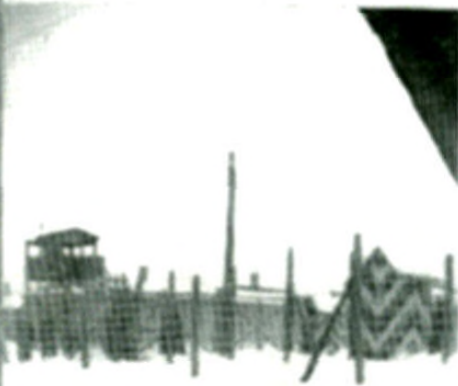
Barracks 17 and 18 made a slight change in porches. 18 must have had more brew drinkers!

Brir! Looks plenty cold and you can bet it was! Make a brew and



ten minutes later run out to the latrine. Half hour later you're cold again so you make another brew to get warm. That went on all winter. This snow scene if you haven't recognized it yet was taken from the Red Cross building.

All of you must realize the street. Don't you wish you had it all to go thru again? Thank the Lord it is all in the past and only memories now.





Jerry looks like a superman in this snap. Sometimes they wore as many as two and three overcoats. Looks as if the boys were unloading rutabaga for soup again.



bribed or would trade with, but some had plenty of



"Honey Wagon" cleans out the new compound's latrine. Whenever I was over to their latrine it was overflowing. Phew! Out to the fields the wagon will go and dump its contents on the potato patch.

A German guard is helping this G.I. load the trash wagon. Must have given him a cigarette. Some Jerrys could be



pride. Turk was one German with plenty of loyalty to his country, but I believe that Sergi, the Russian pilot can thank Turk for his life, because he was wise to him.

Horses were unusual in Deutschland. The majority of wagons and farm



equipment were pulled by oxen or cows. Have even seen a cow and a horse teamed up.

Do you recognize the back porches of 31, 30 and 29?

No one should fail to recognize 36A's porch. It finally ended up completely dismantled. Remember when we moved into the "new air force camp" in November 1943 and the boys



who grabbed barrack 36 were so angry because the lice and fleas were much worse in that barrack than anywhere else?

We too had our basketball! Of course the upper compound had the best court, but look at all the work those boys did.

Good shot of "Shorty" and the blanket hung fence with barracks 35 and 34 on the other side. Wonder what became of the fence on this side?

Lad on the left was working up a sweat on that trash heap, but I





Off at 1:00 p.m. and on again at 5:00 p.m. As a rule it was left on until 9:30 or 10:00. Jerry used water as something to hold over our heads and sometimes did not turn it on at all.



the barbs usually tore them to shreds.

Latrine! Boy on right looks ill. I'll never forget a boy who dashed in, sat down and had a sick, perplexed look on his

never realized we had so much left over. Thought we ate all the trash.

Maybe you know some of the boys pictured here! Water was turned on at 7:00 a.m. and off at 8:00. On again at 11:30 a.m. or maybe 12:00.



Washing was one of our worst problems. Hardly any facilities at all and what few there were Jerry played havoc with. They ordered us not to hang our clothes or blankets on the fence. In spite of them we did and





and began vomiting.
Our chapel was not the best in Austria, but real heartfelt labor went into the decorating of it and the management. The boys did a fine job under the supervision of Father Kane.



Our kitchen's front porch was the scene of much activity.

Ah! that good de Jerry black bread. It was the closest thing to wood we will ever eat. Sometimes the boys were certain that it was. It was baked months before it ever came to XVIIIB.



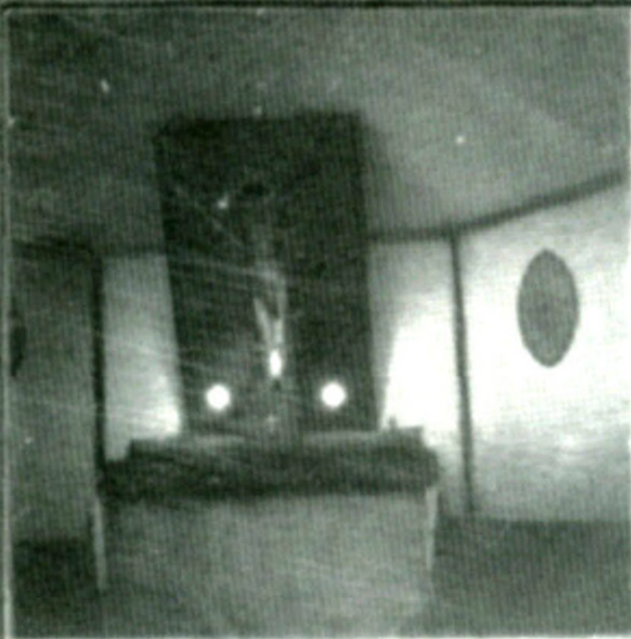
Wonder what the Jerry on the wagon would have done if he had turned his head and noticed his picture being taken? If it had been the guard in the lower left picture who seen a camera that gun might have been used.

Below is the garbage hut where refuse from the kitchen was thrown



and the hungry hunted for anything edible. If a lad was lucky he might find a small, but whole potato. One's pride went into a pocket when hunger got a good grip on the stomach. Recall the Jerry jam





The picture of Christ on the cross was painted by a French artist and paid for with cigarettes and chocolate bars. "D-bar"
Our wash room was of the



turned upside down we had a shower. If the water was on.

The theatre was called the "CAROBORO PLAYHOUSE." It was nearly all made of cardboard cartons that the Red Cross food parcels came in. Upper picture is a glamour shot of

and now everyone used it until the story of what the Russians had been doing to it? Seems that they thought that the jam was eaten by the German guards.

Chapel altar, constructed by the boys was a masterpiece.



design with cold running water. The new compound had late model spigots, but the others were very old. By punching holes in a tin can and fastening it to a faucet that had been



Directors: Donato Serrano
 Mandy Madsen... Ursula Gribby
 Frau Madsen... Anneliese Weiss
 Erik Sommer... Alvin Skoda

one of our boy actors in a fetching. Some of the lads sure did look good when they made up as a girl. One had to look again to be sure they were in the right place.



We had everything, actors, writers, singers, dancers, artists, musicians and even comedians! Ah yes, even comedians! Good ones too.



Those who could not entertain worked as stage hands and did the carpenter work, electrical labor and painting of stages or scenery.



About November of 1944 the Jerrys let us have loud speaker system that had come from Switzerland. The boys after much nasty haggling were allowed to put it up and for



a few hours each day some barracks with good hooks ups listened to good old American recordings. On New Year's Eve and Xmas Eve we listened to programs put on by the boys that the folks at home would have enjoyed.

In January, 1945 Jerry let us see a couple old American films and a few French and German movies. The outstanding





had a lot of sex in it and the female body was exposed more than ours. Or maybe we were so starved for sight of girls that we were more aware of them. I don't think the photography was as good as the American.

Upper left a few of the boys who worked in the



kitchen.... remember them?

Upper right. The window that received buckets and tubs.

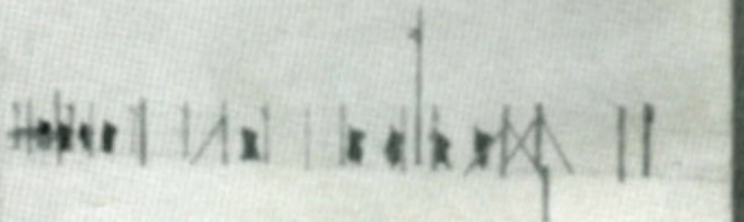
Know these boys? The Irish!

Roll call! Every time I hear a whistle, I shudder. Roll calls took from one hour to three and we had two, three and sometimes four a day. Man that use to be rough! Mud,

rain, snow, sleet and sunshine saw us slouching our protesting way to roll call.

Even the Jerry guards stood roll call and dog tag check. Right-the guard is changed outside the fence.

At the last of our stay in Stalag XVIIIB the guards





careless and undisciplined to our delight.

"Pay Day." The day that Red Cross parcels are issued. When the cry "Red Cross parcels" was you should have seen the mad scramble to get there first.

At Stalag VIIA any day was "Pay Day" if parcels came in. XVII B the issue was usually on Friday, regardless of when the parcels came.

Jerry had a cute little trick of puncturing all canned goods

with his bayonet. Even the butter and powdered milk did not escape the sword.

Every week or so they had searches and any cans found unpunctured were confiscated.

All empty cans were turned in and any man who did not throw more than two or three cans in the bin had to go back and get more or the guard would not let him



get into the parcel line.

Lower right. A few of 37B "flieger gangsters."





Upper left is a good picture of a boy stirring up the wood straw in his paliasse. Two nights sleep and it needed another up it got so hard. Below the ceiling





and chimney of 32A, the best white washed and decorated barrack in camp XVIIIB. After the Jerrys saw how nice it looked every barrack had to do the same.

The only American boy

to die of natural causes was given a military gun salute when buried, but those who died while they attempted to escape as a good American should have received none.



Pictures from top to bottom show the funeral procession going to and from the graveyard. The cemetery



was surrounded by a heavy belt of trees and tangled bushes. The section where they buried the Russians was densely populated. On the whole the graveyard was not bad. Boys who still revered the dead or



had known the lad dressed in their best and saluted ranks as the flag draped coffin passed. Americans and French had the best funerals, but the Russians and Italians were wrapped in heavy paper out on a stretcher





and two comrades even in their weakened condition were able to carry him about three quarters of a mile. Every morning winter summer and spring they trudged by with the grisly load. Sometimes there were more than three, but very

very seldom less. One or two German guards accompanied them, but when a group of Americans were outside the fence plenty of Jerrys escorted them. See lower right hand picture. All German guards bringing up the rear of the procession. To your right the casket made of wood and a heavy four by four stand that made eight big lads grunt when they hoisted it to their shoulders.

The three happy looking prisoners are Australians who came into the camp on a dark night to impersonate three Americans who had the desire to work on commando and watch for a chance to escape. The joke was on the Americans for these wise lads were to be sent to another



camp to be punished for refusing to work. The Germans never did get wise to them and they made the forced march with us. I have heard that the three Americans are safe back here in the good ole U.S. Notice the boys on the roof. They were working on the public address system. These Aussies had been captured in the African campaign in 1941 and the stories those



so tickled when they discovered that we had no food. Were not happy when we started evacuating either because they had seen what the German civilians did to the American airmen if they could get their hands on us.

Left is a snap of myself just three days before the U.S. troops liberated us. Below as I am now.

Lower left is a picture which has a story behind it. On October 12, 1943 all A.A.F. sergeants were moved to the "new luftwaffe camp at Krems, Austria" from Stalag

VIIA, Mooseberg, Germany. With them went three Russian prisoners aided by Albert Schlosser, (one of the finest Americans I have ever known)

some of his personal friends and myself. At that time I had never met Schlosser, who was helping the two Russians, Nicholi and Alex. My boy's name was Sergi. Below from left to right front row:— Schlosser, Nicholi. Back row:— Alex, Sergi and myself.

A boy named Harold Miller had escaped so Sergi learned my name and number and with an unusual amount of luck we both arrived in XVIIIB without the Axis wise to our deception. The story





of how each Russian was nearly caught by the Germans will take a great many pages so I will only say that December 2, 1943 the last one was nearly caught up with and from

that time on they began hiding under barracks and in wash rooms or latrines. During the three famous "Picnic" days they hid with two Americans while the Germans searched high and low for one of the Americans who they knew was hiding in the camp. It is fortunate that the five were not found that time.

They had some close calls and before all three were hiding Jerry did not know exactly just how many men were in camp. As an example: When the boy whom Nicoli was impersonating was captured and brought back. The Germans assigned him to barrack 36. After a few weeks Jerry discovered two different barracks had the same man with the same name and number. They had a roll call and dog tag check. Schlosser had been suspicious of the reason for the check and had Nick hide in a hole under the floor of 35B which had been prepared for an emergency, the need was there.



First Jerry counted and the number was correct. Then they called the boys from 36 and 35 with the same numbers, but

the one from 35 never existed was the barracks chefs answer to questions. So Jerry had a recount and found one man short. They knew he could not have got back to the barrack without being seen and gave the mystery up for the moment.

The three pictures are of dog tag checks. The Jerry at the top we nicknamed "Coo Coo" The one sitting to the





left we called "Porky?"

In March, 1945 the Jerrys surrounded 16 after "lights out" where the Russians were living and after much trouble which lasted until 3:00 a.m. they discovered their hide out and took them off to the "boob" and solitary confinement. If



they had been caught in 1943 or 1944 they would probably have been executed.



All of the pictures on this page are of roll calls. (The German unter officer top left was a sparring partner of Max Schmeling at one time so we called him "Maxie.") We had two and three roll calls a day and they lasted some-

times several hours. Brrrr!
Was it ever cold!





One of the ways we used to fool the Jerrys was to have a small boy stand on the feet of a big tall boy inside his overcoat. Jerry never did catch on to this, but he sure blew his top when the number kept changing each time we were counted.

To the left is the "chow tub." 156 men had to divide one tub of soup up equally.

Remember the worms and bugs in that greasy soup? Sometimes, if a man was lucky, you found a piece of meat, but men have been known to find every thing from teeth to eye-balls. You might not want

your soup then, but if you didn't someone did.

Right is a good shot of a barrack window with the ever present cardboard panes. Note the "Klim" can. The can that we used for a



cup, soup bowl, water glass, wash bowl, shaving cup and so on.

Below are three of our "sanitators" or to you — medics. We

owe a lot to them and to the sergeant Harry Vozic who took over the 1,300 boys when we first came to XVIIIB and doctored us until our officer doctors arrived in December, 1943. We always wondered who he really was altho his English was perfect so was his French for he was a French general!

Every country has its good and bad. Of the good in this world he was of the best.

Red Cross boxes and wooden too! Ah! Brew material!

For myself and the boys, we thank the Red Cross and Y.M.C.A. and any other organization that sent us food and clothing that we need so badly.



A group of boys working together built a platform of earth. From Jerry the camp bought posts and heavy ropes to make a ring. Those who wanted to box put on some very good fights. You can see that they were good entertainment.

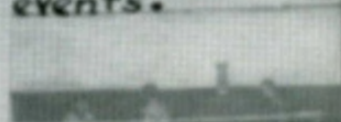
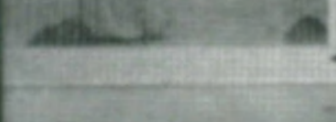
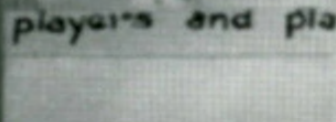
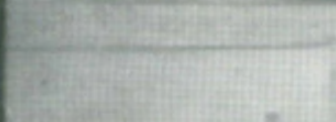
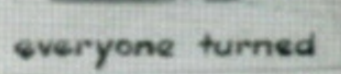
We had some humorous "grunt and groan" boys.

In July, 1944 Captain Polletti let us put on a real Fourth of July celebration and nearly everyone turned out for it. Even the "Sack Kings".

The morning began with one roll which was the only one that day by order of Poletti. A musical program by the "Day Dreamers" followed and something was going on the rest of the day.

Boys from northern and southern states made up base ball teams of the camp's best players and played. The Yankees won the game in the last half of the tenth inning. One man was out, one walked when a Yank put it in the cesspool. The Yanks went wild. Later the south beat north.

Our camp leader gave a stirring, patriotic speech during a program which ended the days events. I don't think we will ever





forget that day. It stands out as one of the proudest hours of my life. "Americans in enemy country showing their pride as an American."

The next three pages are all air raid snaps. Air raids were always a good excuse to look around the trenches.

The RAF gave us our first

show and put on several spectacular raids that were beautiful.

One night the RAF came over and marked off the camp. We thought they were marking the boundaries of our camp with orange flares so the planes would not make a mistake and bomb



us. At this time we were not allowed out of the barracks during an air raid. We jammed the windows craning our necks to see.



There were many speculations as to where they were going to bomb. We could hear the droning of planes passing back and forth over us, but nothing happened and after an hour or more all was quiet and the "all clear" sounded. We went back to sleep much disappointed.

Three nights later the air field east of camp was bombed. This time Jerry let us go to the trenches. The exploding bombs, flak guns flashing, the shells exploding and the flares lighting up the sky like a huge Christmas tree was good to us after those dreary uneventful months. We saw several planes go down and once one came down near us. We watched, listened and waited for a long time after the last red flare





airmen shot down that night were in his barrack. They told him that three nights before they hit the airdrome they came close to wiping us out. The "Pathfinders" had laid out our camp and at the last moment realized the mistake and signaled the approaching bombers to go home. Whee! After that we sweated out

trailed across the sky and when the glow of the burning airdrome died away we crept into our flea infested sacks.

A few days later someone was talking to an Englishman in the British compound. He said that two of the Limey



the night raids and if a flare came anywhere near us you should have heard the stampede for the trenches!!

The upper left picture was taken the day the P38s swung low over camp to strafe the martialing yard at Krems.

Second right is the most



thrilling day of my life. Twenty-one groups of B24s made their run right over camp and we could see the bombs come down from directly above us and follow them right to the ground. You can see the boys watching the bombs and the smoke of previous loads rising from the ruins of Krems. Afterward we wondered what the





Jerrys were going to do to us in retaliation. They asked for cardboard to put in the windows of Krems houses, but otherwise told us that the bombs had landed in a field. Later we got the real story and it was not very nice.



Mud! Water! That camp had more mud than Ephrata, Washington! On a day when an overcast hid the sky we really sweated. We could hear the bombs coming down and splash would go the lads in a headfirst

dive into the water filled trenches. After all was quiet it was humorous to note a pair of wooden clogs stuck in the mud where some boy had lost them in his first wild leap for a soaking.



All days were not cloudy tho and the A.A.F. gave us some beautiful air shows.





On the page before this you saw an unter-officer. He was an Austrian in the German Luftwaffe and he took many of these pictures for me. He took these on the right and below of Krems being bombed. On the evacuation march to Germany he snapped

all of the pictures. I have heard that some of the boys killed him after we were liberated.

The hills of Austria were a beautiful landscape with vineyards everywhere. Across the river Danube on top of some hill stood an old castle where Richard the Lion Hearted was supposed to have been imprisoned. A small village just west of camp was said to be the birth place of Beethoven.



"Delouser." That name for us meant a shower to clean off a month or two of dirt, but it also meant hours of discomfort too. A shower was not too bad, but a delousing was an ordeal.

About every six weeks we got a shower. Whenever we had too many fleas and lice they would delouse us, but Harry Vozic



[See Harry Vozic POW Diary here](#)



was the man we thanked for that. In December, 1943 the fleas and lice were terrible. The Germans had deloused and shaved our heads in October and put us in those bug infested barracks with out fumigating. Harry used a very good angle on Major Igle. He explained that if the lice were not gotten rid of

there would be an epidemic in camp. Major Igle, he was then a captain, was sorry, but they would not be able to help us. "You know the scarcity of things.

Germany has been at war for five years." It looked as if we would have to endure the friendly little fellows, but then Vozic came across with his "Ace in the hole." He stated that he was sorry too, because if we did get typhus the German guards who came into the camp would contract it from the prisoners and they in turn would give it to the Austrian civilian population. That got him. Within the next few days a big change



began. Barrack 40 became a stop over place while your barrack was being fumigated. The day that it was thrown open to be aired out, you with all your clothes and blankets was marched under heavy guard out the big gate (shown on page 27, lower left) along the lane and down the hill into the delouser yard where you waited a half an hour or more. When they had room in the building the Jerrys began shoving as many men into a



shed with a dirt floor as possible. The boys held back as much as possible and it always ended with the Jerrys blowing their tops and resorting to bayonets and gun butts. Usually the door would not shut and five or six guards threw themselves against



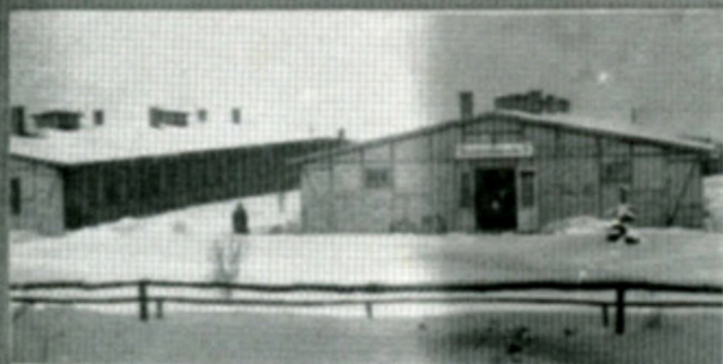
it and by sheer weight locked the door after it was shut.

Then we waited another half hour and finally got into the "undressing room" where we fixed all of our things to a hanger. Getting in line we gave them to some one who put them in

the delousing oven where they were gassed. Then our hair was shaved off. The boys did not like that at all. There was lots of trouble too you can bank on that. Then another long wait for the shower. Finally you and about thirty others were let into the shower room by a Frenchman. If you did not soap up and wash it off quickly the water going off was likely to catch you unprepared to leave, but "---- your luck" if you did not have all the soap off.

In a small room you waited your turn to be inspected for lice. If you had them Jerry made you rub a blue colored jelly in your hair that





got rid of them alright. In fact it nearly took all the skin and hair off.

From there into a fairly large cold room. The fumes from the boys clothes who

had already left was bad and it wasn't long before your head ached, felt sick or was dizzy. Some boys even passed out. One could even taste the horrible stuff. For hours we stood, first on one foot and then another. We talked to pass away the time about how long the war was going to last or listened politely to some new Kriegie tell about "how I got shot down!" Some stories!!

With everyone nude you could see that most of the boys had flak scars and bullet wounds. One could not tell an




infantile scar from a flak wound, but if they were an infantile scar you knew they were an old prisoner.

The upper picture was taken from the "dressing" room window while waiting for our clothes and when they ^{came} you dressed as quickly

as possible and if you had brought your clogs along to keep your feet from getting muddy from the mud and filth that was on the concrete floor you gave them to a buddy and got outside and breathed in some good fresh air.

While we waited for the guards to march us







back we watched the Russians who were throwing onions across the fence to us until the guard raised his gun. There were some daring men among them. Boys to the right are watching some take a chance on getting shot for a pack of cigarettes that they have thrown in payment.

Below and right you can see the guard with his gun slung on his shoulder watching for onion throwing

Russians. Once in a while the guard would be looking in the wrong direction and an object would hit him. Boy, would he be angry and would we laugh, but no one took a chance for a few minutes and then it would start all over again.



Below another group arrive with us yelling "You'll be sorry. The water is cold!" They usually answered with a "blow it out your barrack bag," but they were not sure that it was not true. The guards, when they had finished cramming that batch in started us off. If we were lucky we caught a glimpse of a girls face in the window of the troop lager office.



Below we are back to the big gate being counted "two by two" thru it

and soon we were in our own barrack lying on the sack hungry, tired, half sick from the fumes still coming from your things. And on top of that the last group is moving in until their barrack is completely aired out and





that meant
three men
in a bunk.
There was

just enough room
for two in a bunk.

Melting snow
made plenty mud
and wooden clogs
were fine until
they got stuck in
the mud and off
they came. Shack



in picture
to right is
the Jerry
guards'

place to stay at night when they
were not making the rounds. No
one was allowed outside at night.
If anyone was seen he was fired
upon without warning.

That meant that we had to use



the latrine at each end of our
barrack which was hardly ever
cleaned and was of the old "back
house" variety. The stench from
it was terrible especially in the
summer time.

To your right the big gate
that the boys from 37B stole
one dark night for fire wood.
Beyond it is barrack 37 where
I lived for nineteen months.





To the left is the wooden legged Jerry captain who was dubbed "Captain Brew-wood. To his right the old lieutenant who had lived in Milwaukee, Wisconsin for so long. Beside him, our arch enemy, unter-officer Bossie.

As the Allies pushed the Jerrys back the Germans made inspections of our camp and tried to make us believe it was to make things better for

us. We knew it was propaganda and



paid no attention to them. It did give us a chance to see high rank German officers like these shown above inspecting. I've seen two American generals and about twenty German generals.

On April 5, 1945 a new Jerry captain appeared in camp. Every one noticed him because he told a group of boys about the Rusky tanks shooting American P.O.W's. We found out the next morning when we got in from roll call what it was all about. He ordered us to be prepared to evacuate the next morning. Our camp leader ordered us to "be ready, but refuse to leave unless they threaten to kill." The whole camp was like a mad house. Bonfires raged all day and that night, trading was something





cold wind made it very bad for us. Fires were allowed, but at nine o'clock we had to put them out. Down in the Danube Valley we could see the lines by the flares and gun flashes. During the night planes were heard and east of us some place was bombed near our late camp. The next day a rumor came around that the

Russians were rumored to be thirty kilometres from Krems driving on St. Polten and we figured they would capture us in about three days. Still on the other hand they might not. At night we could see the big guns flashing and we knew they were close.

April 7th we woke early to hear rain beating on the roof and we did not move. The boys were still packing late that evening and the word was that we would be up at 6:00 a.m. and leave at 7:00.

April 8th dawned clear and cold. Later in the day it became nice and warm. By twelve o'clock everyone had left the camp except those not able to walk or had bribed the Jerry's to stay. I don't envy them. (They lived in the air raid trenches most of that April.)

We marched fifty minutes and rested ten—sometimes. We saw several medieval castles. The first night we camped just below the top of a hill, but a





Russians had bombed Krems.
Above is a few boys from the
"White House" barrack 15B. The
German on the right facing us
was a nasty little man. He liked



to show his authority and slap
a defenseless man. The Jerry in
the picture above was plenty
tough at first, but later his feet
went bad on him and he wasn't
so rough then. He would start
out at the head of the column



and within a few minutes would
be having a hard time keeping
up at the rear.

Before starting the next
day we had roll call and thirty
men out of our group were
missing. There were eight
groups of five hundred men. We
marched with a few miles in
between, but sometimes the
group ahead had held back so
much that we would nearly catch them.





little level country as you can see by the lower snapshots of our twenty four stopping places.

That day two American P51's flew over having a good look at us. The American flag that group eight had with them.



appeared the Jerrys dropped flat, but stood and yelled at boys who had begun to run for them to stop. They did!

Fortunately April 10th was a fairly warm day be the dew soaked our blankets. On the road the civilians had been pretty good to the boys and traded or gave what they had

Russians had bombed XVIIIB! We learned later that a few bombs did hit in camp, but no American was injured.

The third day April 10th we had a twenty four hour rest. We had real need of it. Our feet were in bad shape. We had traveled very



was spread out quickly and we got a salute and off they went. A few moments later we heard them strafing down in the Danube Valley. When they first





the people. Some boys fed a few who were good to us, but an officer caught one eating with a group of Americans and we thought he was going to shoot



who really had hell in their eyes. Even our guards were afraid of them. We didn't hold back when they were around.

That night we slept between two creeks on sort of an island. The ground was wet because one creek was higher than the

which was not much. Some of the lads who had plenty of cigarettes and soap did a lot of trading. Some even had a guard who did his trading for him, but the lad with nothing to trade really suffered. Jerry had fed us once every second or third day and the guards had had nothing unless what they confiscated from



him and he did give the order that any German caught with food in his mouth would be shot.

April 11th we were on the march again and once we passed through a town full of S.S. troops





way through the ground down to the other. Other groups camped where there was no water at all so you see, Jerry did not have the slight idea where we were going to camp each night let alone a place with water or fire wood. We managed tho, if there was half a chance. In fact I did not see anyone without a fire.

On that fourth day the boys showed their physical condition by passing out along the way. In fact I wasn't up to snuff myself that day. A day or so later I ate or drank something that made me sick and did a fade out.

Several days we passed along beside the Danube River, but Jerry took us off across the mountains again because



we purposely held up traffic by jamming up the road. A couple of times automobiles with S.S. officers nearly hit a boy or two. Boy, did they leap for their lives!

Whenever a woman went



by us on a bicycle we would yell, "Milk wagon coming thru." Things like that always raised the morale and got the boys to laughing. Americans' sense of humor always came out when the going got roughest.





Notice boy with coat over pack.



Jerry private on left is Luftwaffe and one just behind him is a new Volkerstrum. The army captain with his cap off was in charge



of group seven. The unter-officer on his right was a mean son-of-a-gun. He had a girl traveling in back of our group, but one day he chased her away. Guess she had

become interested in a lower ranked guard and he used his authority and ordered her to leave. Saw her with another group later. The girl in the snan





Army bombers. We were nearing the industrial city of Linz. We saw many bomb craters, unexploded bombs, ratar choff (tin foil) and wings and parts of planes strewed everywhere.

Notice sick boy in picture above. Picture on right I think



Bad feet sometimes meant a ride.



was Dunkel's woman. He claimed that she was from St. Polten and was fleeing from the Russians. Heard a story that when the Soviets took that town her folks were beheaded.

The creek on page 39 was a boon to hot, tired, blistered feet. In it were many parts of U.S.



is where Polichek the one eyed Czech tried to smash in a boys face, but he only knocked in some teeth because lad had quit giving him "trading material to buy food." He was a lucky boy to have gotten away with his life. The Czech went crazy when he was angry. He liked to jab with his bayonet, too.





little food and had the fear of knowing they would be prisoners of us very soon. Above changing guard and night Jerry pecks wood for his fire.

"Kriegge" was derived from the German word *Kriegesgefangener*, meaning "war prisoner" and we shortened it. I wonder what the German prisoners shorten their prisoner of war down to?

Below the boys stand on the bluff above the river watching the American tanks and jeeps moving on the other side.

May 2nd at 6:30 p.m. an Army captain with a big forty-five strove into our camp and amid wildly cheering G.I. prisoners announced that we were no longer P.O.W.s, but American soldiers.

The next day four jeeps full of U.S. doughboys, lead by a tall colonel disarmed the Jerry guard around the camp and marched them off. We were truly free men!

Within a few hours the woods was a mad house. Horses, cows, pigs, chickens were everywhere. Boys had saddle ponys, automobiles, buses, bicycles and some were dressed in outlandish get-ups. They had the time of their lives.

A few days later we were flown to France and in a few more weeks had reached the United States and home.

For most of us I don't think that coming home was as good as we had expected, we had dreamed too long, but it's swell to just be in the good old U.S.A.

"GOD BLESS AMERICA"



Published thru the courtesy of Tracey Jackson.
Her Father was Harold E. Jackson who spent 19 months in Barracks 18-A.



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