

Pro Deo et Patria

PRO DEO ET PATRIA **(For God and Country)**

**The Personal Narrative of An
American Catholic Chaplain as a
Prisoner of War in Germany**

Fr. Paul W. Cavanaugh, S. J.



Edited by
Robert E. Skopek

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Preface letter provided by John Kline

Gesu church
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Dear John (Gallagher cub editor 57/59)

Here is my manuscript.

At last, I hear you say.

Just received the recent cub and read about Toyland (toland?) & his proposed book on the GI's. I do not have a copyright, but will be willing to make a deal with him, if he should have to use some of it. Please feel free yourself to use anything in the cub.

Sincerely

Paul W. Cavanaugh, S.J.

Letter provided by John Kline, M company, 423rd infantry regiment, 106th division--

Editor the cub magazine, 106th division association

Preface

Copy of letter

Dated September 17, 1984

Mr. Sherod Collins
625 Channing Drive N.W.
Atlanta, Ga 30318

Dear Mr. Collins:

I am enclosing a copy of a book written by Father Paul Cavanaugh a former Chaplain of the 422 infantry regiment. Father Cavanaugh has been dead for about 5 years.

After he returned from overseas he was running an obstacle course at the university of Detroit high school and fell and broke his leg. He should not have been doing the same as he was no spring chicken at the time.

During the time he was hospitalized with his broken leg he wrote the enclosed book. He attempted to get it published without any success. Apparently prisoner of war books were a drug on the market at the time.

This copy is one that I have re-produced a number of years ago. He had several copies of the book typed and then lent them out to people to read and all but one copy disappeared.

I had several copies made for him and kept this copy which I am surrendering to you as division historian.

Father Cavanaugh was a Jesuit priest. As I re-call it he came out of the Cleveland Ohio area and did have family connections there. He had a nephew who lived in the Detroit area for a time but I do not re-call his name nor do I know how to reach him.

I believe a copy of this book should be made a part of our division records.

Very truly yours,

Robert E. Rutt

Forward

Father Paul W. Cavanaugh, a Chaplain in the European theater during world war ii, represents those Chaplains who dedicated themselves to their faith and tried to share that faith with the prisoners of war in the various camps throughout Germany and Poland.

There were perhaps upwards of 275,000 * allied soldiers who were POWs and were marched from their camps in the early months of 1945. It is not known why the German government instituted these marches other than allied armies were approaching from the west and east. Perhaps Germany hoped to use them as hostages in the event of the German defeat; however, there does not seem to be any specific evidence to corroborate that assumption.*

The indignities and suffering endured by these prisoner groups is unimaginable and in many cases equivalent to the holocaust.

Father Cavanaugh, Father Hurley, Father Madden, Chaplains Moore, Kospamp, Neel, Stonesifer and others mentioned in this book exemplify the dedication of these men to supply spiritual guidance and comfort to their men.

Robert E. Skopek

* "The Last Escape", John Nichol and Tony Rennell

The untold story of allied prisoners of war in Europe

1944-45 (page 466 and appendix 12)

* Winston Churchill archives

March 22,1945

"the object of this maneuver might be either to avoid unconditional surrender or to save the lives of the more important Nazi gangsters and war criminals, using this threat as a bargaining counter, or to cause dissention

Among the allies in the final stages of the war."

*prisoner of war camps in Germany

internet web site: [http://www.fleetairarmarchive.net/roll of honor/pow/camp_list.htm](http://www.fleetairarmarchive.net/roll%20of%20honor/pow/camp_list.htm)

**Photograph of
Father
Paul W. Cavanaugh
(Chaplain)**



To
The officers and men of the 422nd infantry regiment with whom I campaigned and the
prisoners of war with whom I suffered

Paul W. Cavanaugh, S.J.
Manresas Jesuit retreat house

Woodward Ave. Quarton Rd.
Bloomfield Hills, Michigan

American priest in a Nazi prison

The personal narrative of an American catholic Chaplain as a prisoner of war in Germany

By Paul W. Cavanaugh, S.J., Chaplain, Army of the United States

(property of 106 division association)

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Introduction

"we better not go to sleep tonight, Paul." I said to corporal Dalton, my assistant.

We were bumping along in our jeep over a well-packed frozen road between the second and first battalion command posts. In a quiet, wooded spot a few hundred yards back from the front lines I had just said mass. A group of about thirty men from b company with rifles slung from their shoulders had knelt in a snow to receive holy communion. Though not yet five o'clock in the afternoon, dusk was fading into darkness along the snow covered ridge under the thick growth of tall evergreen trees. It was the 15th of December, 1944, and our intelligence section was aware that a German offensive approached the hour of its mounting.

Paul Dalton and I obtained some supper at the first battalion headquarters' mess where we learned the password and picked up some more information about the anticipated battle. We returned to the Chaplain's headquarters, a small log cabin built over a dugout by some

soldiers of the second infantry division. About twenty yards away loomed the Siegfried line bunker which housed the command post of the first battalion of the 422 regiment.

With night came fog. Several men from battalion headquarters company crowded into our cabin to make coffee and toast and to discuss the situation. Somehow we had a strange foreboding of catastrophe.

The military situation, as we knew it, was this. Our 106th infantry division (golden lion shoulder patch) had moved over to the continent from England early in the month. We had been assigned to viii corps, first army. December 9th to 11th the 106th replaced the second infantry division, unit for unit, along a twenty-seven mile front in the Schnee Eifel. The Eifel forest is on German soil just across the Belgian frontier east of the Ardennes. For about ten weeks of autumn this had been a quiet sector of the front. As our division was yet untried by enemy fire we were assigned to this locality that might be mercifully seasoned to what our regimental commander, colonel George E. Descheneaux, Jr. Had told us at Stow-on-Wold (England) was the filthy, dirty, bloody, disgusting business of modern war. For four days Paul Dalton and I had been traveling by jeep along the snow covered roads through forests of spruce trees to companies on the static front. There I had said mass in comparative security near the company command posts and unalarmed visited the foxholes and dugouts along the line of outposts.

Our regiment - 422nd - was the farthest north in our division sector. To the south of us in order were the 423rd and 424th, the other two combat teams of the 106th division. The Belgian town of St. Vith was situated about ten miles to our rear. This town was the center of communication and supply to our combat positions.

Being a Chaplain and untutored in the science of military strategy and tactics, it is not my purpose here or throughout this book to discuss the military side of the war. I merely recount what I saw and heard. Undoubtedly the doughboys I was with knew and understood, even at that time far better than I did the reasons for the events that led to our capture by the enemy, the strategy employed by the high commanders on either side and the successes and reverses in the lower echelons. It is for this reason that I pass over hurriedly the first three days of the battle of the bulge.

The overall picture (unknown to us at the time) but common knowledge now) was briefly this. Early in the morning of 16th of December, 1944, the German offensive started. A heavy artillery barrage was directed against the 14th cavalry group which joined our regimental sector on the north. The barrage moved slowly southward. The 589th field artillery battalion, which was part of our 422nd combat team, was severely shelled and crippled.

Successive German attacks during the daylight hours forced a wedge between the 14th cavalry and the 422 regiment; then another opening was made between the 423rd and 424 regiments.

Through these corridors columns of panzers - three German armies, it was been said - began a fan-shaped blitzkrieg movement toward St. Vith, Bastogne, and the Meuse river.

Their objective was to seize the bridges across the Meuse, then in quick succession to overrun the allied supply depots at liege and Antwerp, simultaneously cutting off the British and American concentrations of troops along the northern flank of the western

front. The 422nd and 423 regiments were surrounded. To the supreme allied headquarters we were lost regiments.

There were no supplies coming through, no food, no ammunition, and no replacement. As individuals we were "missing in action". Many would later be discovered to have been "killed in action", many more of us went down into the limbo of Nazi prisons.^{1,2}

Chapter one

Captured in the bulge

Field Marshall von Rundstedt's last major offensive, which months later we were to learn was called the "battle of the bulge", started on the morning of the 16th of December, 1944.

Corporal Paul Dalton and I had kept a prayerful vigil during the preceding night so that we would be ready to move out or to administer to the wounded if needed. In the morning fog which enveloped the entire area we made our way to the battalion aid station in a bunker three hundred yards from the command post. All day long medical aid men were evacuating casualties from the area of the line companies. Ambulances were busy shuttling back and forth to the regimental evacuation point. By evening the 422nd regiment had been cut off; no casualties could be removed thereafter to hospitals in the rear.

A little later the hilly road to the regimental command post was in direct line of fire. The second battalion swung back from our left flank and formed a perimeter defense to the rear of our position. The Germans ceased for a time to assail our area. Our forward lines had held their ground.

B company, in whose area I had said my last mass, had sustained the heaviest assault. Lt. William b. Brice, a good friend of mine, had been killed during that fight. The platoon he commanded was holding what was perhaps the farthest eastern point in the sector that was called, "the bulge".

The fog lifted on December 17th, the second day of the battle. Our regiment had become a pocket of resistance that was bypassed by the enemy. From our position on a height we saw long columns of vehicles moving westward through the gap the Germans had made to the north. Our cooks were relieved from their combat posts and put to work in the kitchens. They issued quick but meager meals from the food stores on hand. Toward evening the Jerries shelled us again. The artillery sounds began to land in the area of our battalion command post. A runner arrived out of breath at the aid station.

"come quickly! The colonel has been hit."

"where is he?"

"in the CP!"

Lt. Diamon, our battalion surgeon, and I jumped into a jeep and hurried to the bunker. The interior upper section of the concrete structure was in turmoil. The battalion staff had been holding a meeting when the barrage opened up.

"keep cool!" Said Lt. Col. Thomas Kent, our battalion commander, as the first shell landed close by. While the officers were making their way into the lower and more fortified section of the bunker, a direct hit on the command post upset tables and chairs, and started fires inside the pill box. Col. Kent's head slumped on the table at which he was sitting. A pool of blood poured out on the maps over which he was working.

The doctor and I found the colonel unconscious. After having him carried to the lower section, doctor Diamon worked over him for an hour. Meanwhile artillery fire continued to fall in the area.

Early the next morning, the 18th, Lt. Col. Joseph c. Matthews, Jr., the executive officer of the 422nd regiment, took over command of our battalion. His orders were to disengage the battalion from its defenses as part of a tactical regimental maneuver. The vehicles, loaded with equipment, were to retire into concealment and await further orders. The foot troops were to proceed on a direct line to the southwest. Advancing through the fog with the aid of compasses they would have to be prepared to fight in case they encountered opposition.

My duty was clear in this dangerous situation. "i must go with the fighting units and I better not be burdened with equipment."

Col. Kent, still alive but unconscious, was placed in an ambulance with several other seriously wounded men. The driver of the ambulance was a catholic boy name Hadden, I put my mass-kit alongside col. Kent and said to the diver, "here, take good care of this. If you get to the American lines, give it to any Chaplain. If the Jerries get you, insist that it be given to a catholic priest."

My own jeep had been shot up. Col. Kent's driver had been wounded. Our battalion motor-officer, Lt. Turner, assigned the colonel's jeep to me. Paul Dalton and I loaded the jeep and trailer to overflowing with our own and others' property.

"so long, Paul. God bless you!"

I moved off with the line companies into the fog.

The regiment executed the strategic withdrawal from its positions in the Siegfried line to the outskirts of Schoenberg. We completed roughly three-quarters of the distance before the fog dispersed in the later part of the afternoon. Under cover of darkness we finished the maneuver and passed the night in perfect silence in a wood. Orders by radio were that we attack the town and hold the Schoenberg-St. Vith road.

The attack was executed by the 422nd and 423rd infantry regiments of the 106th division at nine o'clock on the 19th. As they advanced by battalions out of the cover of scattered patches of tall Norway spruce trees, cut off from supply lines, lacking ammunition and food and artillery support, the regiments encountered intense artillery and anti-aircraft fire and

overwhelming opposition from German tanks. The fighting units of our battalion engaged in action with enemy tanks, were cut off and captured.

Lt. (doctor) Richard C. Diamon, captain Julius Hene, and Lt. Clifford F. Blacke, the officer compliment of our battalion medics, had set up the aid station in a narrow strip of woods and were caring for the handful of wounded men brought back from the forward lines. Among them was Lt. Raymond F. Hawtin of Chicago, his arm in a sling.

The Germans had failed to discover our isolated group under the trees. We were debating whether to give ourselves up to them or wait further developments. When ten to fifteen armed scouts approached out of the mist to our rear. Thinking they were enemy troops encircling us, I snatched a white towel and ran toward them waving it.

"my god, Father, what are you doing here?" Asked the American sergeant of the scouts.

"our battalion has been captured and all we have left is the aid station and the wounded." I said. "what are you up to?"

"we got a convoy and about 200 troops back here in this defilade - we are trying to get out."

"well, don't bring the vehicles over this hill." I counseled. "the Jerries have a bunch of tanks less than a thousand yards from here on that next hill."

By noon the ragged remnants of our battalion, the convoy. A few anti-tank guns, and the foot groups had assembled in the patch of woods where we had spent the previous night. To this day no one probably has an accurate count of our number, for we had no time to organize. We had just begun to dig in when an artillery barrage forced us all to hug the ground in the woods. Fortunately, the enemy did not continue throwing heavy shells at us for long, and more satisfying to us, no further casualties were suffered.

"who has a map o this area?" This was the questioning uppermost in the minds of all. The vehicles were searched in the hope that some overlay might be found to give us our bearings and to plan a retreat.

"how much ammunition have we?" Those who carried small arms had just a few cartridges in their clips and for the heavy anti-tank guns there were no shells to be had.

"hey, Father, you need some red crosses on your helmet." The voice came from sergeant winters, a medic who had an ambulance near-by. "we have to try to get out of here with our wounded, and the more we can display these red crosses the better chance we will have." So right there in the woods he did his best to make me look like the privileged character that I was. Out of the tool case of the truck he pulled a can of red paint. He took my steel helmet and with a twig of evergreen as a brush made four rough crosses on my headgear. It was a rather sorry substitute of the four white circles six inches wide with red crosses of perfectly executed lines an inch in breath painted on the helmets of non-combatants.

With the paint still wet I put back the helmet on my head and dashed off to continue digging my foxhole. The spot happened to be under a low hanging branch and every time I came up a shovelful of dirt; my helmet gently pushed the branch aside and smeared the

red paint over the helmet in mottled splotches. Stopping to take a rest I stood up straight and the branch swept across my shoulder streaking my coat with red stain. I absent-mindedly took off the helmet, held it in the cradle of my arm, and smeared red paint on the sleeve and front of my coat. My foxhold was not very deep and I did not have much enthusiasm for expending precious energy on it because I felt it would never be used anyway. In the midst of my sluggish efforts at digging and while trying to decide that I could spend my time more profitably at, something else, sergeant Bernard Vogle, of Pittsburgh, Penna., happened along.

"here, Father, have a piece of candy."

"no thanks, Bernie, you keep that for yourself. I have a couple of bars in my pocket."

We sat down on the bumper of a jeep to talk over the situation and to eat the chocolate. We bolted the last square when someone shouted from twenty yards away, "come on; we're moving."

A sergeant had appeared in the woods with the word that we were to assemble and follow him out of the trees. He said he had orders to lead us around the town of Schoenberg and back to the rear. We were to start immediately, not waiting for the cover of darkness. It was anybody's guess in what direction we were moving. Up started the motors and what personnel could find space on the vehicles did so. So rapid was the take-off that a hundred of us formed a column of bunches and started on after the vehicles out of the forest. It was a sorry looking convoy that emerged into the open, rolling field in which the previous summer crop of grain had grown.

To our left was the head of the valley that dropped down in a curve to Schoenberg. To the right, rolling hills and forests. Ahead there was a slight rise with more treetops appearing beyond. Nowhere was there any dwelling house visible.

Once out into the open we could see the full extent of our equipment. Six or eight jeeps, a half-dozen weapons carriers, a couple of anti-tank guns on their carts, one ambulance, and a three-quarter ton truck with the side flaps bearing the large white circle with the red cross; about 200 men in combat uniform,. With us went one prisoner, a German captain, in his somber gray uniform. His long coat and high black hat made him very conspicuous in our group, dressed, as were all Americans, in olive drab jackets and steel helmets.

The afternoon was cloudy; heavy dark clouds rolled rapidly and low; the ground was covered with patches of snow. The open space into which we emerged was a large field with furrows much like the ridges in what had been a plot of corn. There was for the moment none of the sounds of battle which we had been hearing almost constantly for several days. To the left over the hill gusty clouds of black smoke rose from the burning buildings of Schoenberg where the Battle between 106th division units and German tanks had occurred early in the morning. We had hopes of circling that town and taking the road that led back to St. Vith.

Plodding along at the rear of the column I prayed for the men of the 422nd regiment who had died since we came up to the front line, and I earnestly hope that we had left none behind still suffering from wounds; perhaps lying in the snow or in some woods waiting for

medical aid men to come to get them should I go back and look? What assistance could I get? How could I again make contact with the American

Lines? It was a sinking, cowardly feeling. Conflicting thoughts violently came upon me. Should I carry out the obligation every priest has to risk his life even to the point of heroic action to save one soul, or should I follow the light of human prudence and make the best of saving my own life for another day of battle.

My personal scruples were solved definitely and abruptly when a rifle sharply barked a few yards ahead. There was a commotion in the column. The vehicles stopped quickly; men were jumping out and throwing themselves to the ground. Rapid fire from machine guns started. In a quick glance as I dropped into a furrow I saw coming over the rise in the terrain four German tanks all firing at us.

"this is it." A thousand times the expression had been used, from the day we were alerted in the states, through the preparation for overseas' movement, the staging area, the port of embarkation, the gang-plank at new York, the last preparations for front line duty that were made in England and France, the convoys through France and Belgium, the pillboxes of the Siegfried line. "this is it," we said when the exchange of artillery fire occurred for the first time on the front. "this is it," we said when the watch pointed to h-hour for attacking Schoenberg. "this is it," I said to myself when an enemy tank opened fire in my direction from a little more than a hundred yards. The furrow into which I fell was no foxhole to shield me from enemy fire. I tried to make myself as flat and as small as possible. Never before had my head and feet seemed so big. All around me I could hear the slugs hitting the turf. Any second one would surely pierce my arms or legs or a still more vulnerable spot. Yet it never occurred to me that I might be merely wounded. All I could think was that the next second might be the end and the beginning for me, the end of time and the beginning of eternity. Combining the act of contrition and perfect love and all the other sentiments of the hour of death into one short prayer, I repeated aloud several times: "heart of Jesus, say unto us: I am your salvation." "Mary, my mother, help me." "Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, I give you my heart and my soul."

Strangest of all, the thought struck me, "i am not afraid to die."

How long the barrage from the tanks lasted I do not know. Time stands still in periods of suspense and minutes may seem like hours. Eventually, there was a curtailment of the firing and a cry of "Kamerad." Slowly and carefully, I turned my head and raised one eye high enough to get a worm's eye view. A medic near the ambulance was waving a white cloth from his prone position. Between me and one of the tanks stood the German captain, our prisoner no longer.

A few more rounds of machine gunfire and then silence. For us the fighting was over. We had been led into a trap and the ruse worked. The enemy had captured another 200 men.

With tears of shame and frustration in our eyes we raised our hands over our heads and advanced slowly toward the tanks. The combat troops were despoiled of their weapons and were being lined up quickly and superficially searched. Our medics were already at work on the wounded. All the litters we had available were used to carry the dozen men who were hit in the action.

Awakening from a daze of shame, I ran as fast as I could with arms aloft to a group of German soldiers who were already rifling our jeeps for the spoils of conquest.

"i am a priest!" I shouted. I pointed to the cross on my collar. "let me go to take care of the wounded."

They looked in wonder at the smears of red paint on my helmet and coat and at the Geneva brassard on my sleeve.

"ya, ya," answered one of them, "Priester, Catholicher"

"ya, ya" I answered. "let me go to the wounded in the field."

I tried to convey the idea with wild gestures and took from my pocket the oil stocks containing the Oleum Infirmorum (oil for the sick). One of them started to take it from me, for it did look like a bullet of some sort.

"no, no, Oleum sanctum chrisma - holy oil" (one of three holy oils) I said as I made the sign of the cross in his direction with my thumb.

With a wave of his hand he bid me go. I took one look at Lt. Diamon, our battalion surgeon, and asked him if any of the wounded he was caring for were in a critical condition.

"no. They're all right, Father." So I retraced the field in search of dead and unconscious men. Inside a hole ten feet in diameter and three feet deep - the scar left on the earth by an artillery shell of a previous engagement - I found a soldier with a bullet through his head. The shot had penetrated his skull just between the eyes. He was unconscious and breathing his last. I anointed him quickly; then pulling out his dog-tag I saw his name and religion; Harold Greenspan, Hebrew. His breathing stopped, his head slumped, and he lay lifeless in my arms.

Fortunately, there were no other dead on the field. It was evident that the Germans were more intent upon capturing our vehicles intact than they were in killing or wounding Americans. All over the area German boys were having a field day driving our jeeps around in circles, starting and stopping them, tinkering with the mechanism and otherwise enjoying those toys of war. Others had taken equipment from the vehicles and were rummaging for souvenirs and cigarettes. One of the pieces on the ground was a foot-locker of Capt. Spadola. A Nazi took a wrench and forced the lock. Over the grass he strewn dress uniforms, shoes, coats, summer outfits and sundry small articles. The equipment was all scattering to the winds as the boy walked off with a tube of toothpaste in his hands - his precious souvenir.

In a column of five the captured were now led off down a country road. The captors were in a great hurry to get us out of sight. In a corner of the field our ambulance, the truck with the red cross, the medics, plus the wounded were grouped together. Diamon, Blacke and Hene, the only medical officers with us were administering first aid. None of the wounded were in a critical condition. A few bandages and splints saved the situation temporarily and injections of morphine relieved the pain. The Germans, while respecting the need for care of the wounded, were insisting that we move off quickly.

I slipped away from the group to take another look at the field. As I did, a German boy came up with six cartons of American cigarettes in his arm.

"here, you are a good priest," he said in English as he gave me with a full carton.

"danke, mein herr," I said as I took them. Knowing that it would not be long before someone would be hankering for them.

The wounded were loaded onto the ambulance and truck; those able to walk were joined to the tail of the column of prisoners. A German took the wheel of the ambulance and fell in at the rear of the line. After "doc" Diamon saw that all the wounded were loaded, there was still a little space left in the truck.

"come on, Father, come with us. There is no need of your walking."

Lt. Diamon and I were the last to hop on the rear of the truck. I sat with my feet dangling over the ail-gate.

"well, we're PW's, Father. You can start to tighten your belt now."

As we moved off, the doctor saw that the wounded were made as comfortable as possible under the circumstances. Then there was silence. Bewilderment and dejection came over us. All had tried hard and fought courageously and from the field of honor we were led away captive to an unknown destination.

A feeling of complete frustration is the consequence of falling into the hands of the enemy. War is a united effort and each man is part of the team. Courage is inspired by the thought that the very lives of others are dependent upon the action of each soldier. To protect the lives and safety of others at the risk, even at the loss, of one's own life is a noble thing. Fear is vanquished in the contest that demands the staking of everything on the outcome of battle. With the swelling tide of victory morale is high. But to be caught by the enemy, trapped, despoiled of the protection of arms, herded in ranks by those who represent what the soldier has learned to hate, engenders a complex of emotions that is akin to despair. For the newly captured prisoner of war his battle is lost. He has failed in his mission. He has proved himself a failure and his efforts have come to naught. His soul is crushed with the weight of ignominy and from his manly eyes flow tears of humiliation and defeat.

No wonder then those strong men wept. Small wonder that there was silence.

For us of the 106th division this depression was universal. But recently committed to action, we crumbled before the first enemy attack. As a team we had failed and every individual shared in that disgrace. The golden lion which was intended to portray courage and unconquerable spirit would henceforth be a mark of scorn, blighted symbol. Such were our thoughts on the day of capture. Later on, however, when each little story of resistance and courage was pieced together with the overall picture of the battle and compared with the magnitude of the German counter-offensive, spirits rose out of the depths of desolation. Men saw differently; units took a new estimate of their value and the virtue of their efforts. When commendations from high places came down through the ranks, with them came new light on the heroism of defeat. What at one time appeared a shameful

overthrow in reality was a gallant resistance. The golden lion shoulder patch could be worn with honor, for now it symbolized a "glorious collapse".

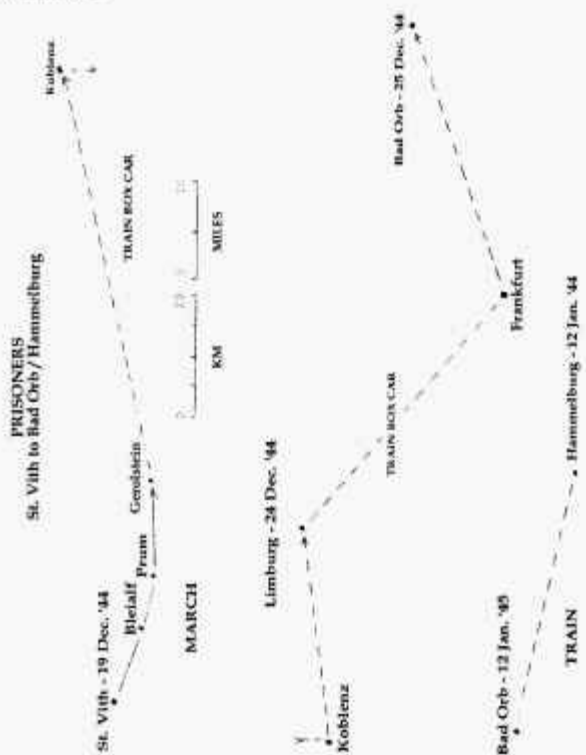
Insert

St. Vith to bad orb Germany
Bad orb to Hammelburg
From the manuscript
By Fr. Paul W. Cavanaugh

Battle of the bulge - Meuse river - Antwerp Belgium
Bastogne
Eifel (Schnee Eifel) German soil across the border from the Belgian frontier, east of the Ardennes.
St. Vith - hdqts. 106th division (Dec 16 1945)
Schoenberg area capture Dec. 19/20, 1944
Rommersheim Germany - Fr. Cavanaugh traveled to this point by Red Cross truck
Roth departed Dec. 20th
Prum passed through
Gerolstein (rail yards) entrain via 40/8 box cars
40 hommes - 8 chevaus (40men, 8 horses)
Koblenz (on the Rhine river)
Limburg (rail yards) Christmas eve (Dec. 24, 1944)
(Limburg prison camp) 65 American officers killed by bombing
Bad Orb, Germany Stalag IX-B (east of Frankfurt)
Christmas day
Ziegenheim (stalag IX-B) non-coms moved there April 2nd.
January 11, 1945 departed bad orb
Thursday January 12 arrived Hammelburg Germany
(village of the lamb)

Thursday January 12 arrived Hammelburg Germany (Village of the Lamb)

Oflag XIII B



Oflag XIII-B

diagram map - path of 'St. Vith to Bad Orb Germany'



Chapter two

Prisoners of war

Slowly the truck moved along behind the column of marching men, bumping over the ruts and ridges on the narrow frozen road. The rough spots jarred the wounded. A half-hour later we were passing through a small clump of houses which may have borne the name of a village. Here the infantry troops ahead of us encountered a convoy of German vehicles moving up to support the battle of the bulge. There was a delay due to the congestion of the two columns trying to pass where there was room only for one. The troops therefore were shunted off on a trail through a wooded area where vehicles could scarcely travel. Hence our two motors were sidetracked to allow the convoy to pass. It was moving slowly as all convoys do over bumpy roads. As we sat on the roadside we saw the master camouflage of the enemy. Every piece of motorized equipment was decked with large and small Christmas trees or covered with large white canvases to make them look like snow-covered knolls from the air. Their equipment consisted of artillery pieces, long range guns, half tracks, weapons and ammunition carriers, and a few ambulances. To us the most amazing sight was the kitchens that were scattered through the train-two-wheeled horse-drawn carts with a wood burning stove built under barrel-like vats.

We in the red cross truck were like a circus side-show to the Germans moving on foot with the convoy. Many of them paused to look at us, a few tried to converse about the war, one or two taunted us with the great German victory that was all but accomplished.

"we have captured General Eisenhower." Said one in English.

An Unteroffizier, perhaps more practical-minded than the rest, with grunts and gestures signified that he wanted my wrist watch.

"no, no," I told him, emphasizing my refusal by pointing to the red cross on the brassard I wore on my left arm. He respected it and walked away. Another group gathered as the convoy halted again. A soldier who could speak a little English talked about the war and interpreted for the others.

"on Christmas day we will see the German victory. On January 1st Hitler will be in London."

"Heil Hitler!", the rest of them chorused as though touched by some electric button and giving an immediate response.

The crowd increased until there were a couple of dozen men talking and laughing with us. An officer came up, burst into a tirade at his subordinates, and ordered them off. He himself, with a scowl on his face, then stood guard while more long range guns and trucks with ammunition passed.

Darkness was coming on and snow was starting to fall. We moved a few yards and waited again. Then another short movement and another halt. And all the time we studied the enemy personnel and equipment and listened to them shouting out orders. In the dusk we moved along approximately another mile. On either side of the road lay several dead, some of them left where they fell, others wrapped in canvas or blankets and placed back from the road. Scattered along the side of road were also burned out vehicles and disabled tanks painted with the mottled green, brown, and gray camouflage of the Germans. Where the road crossed a shallow gully an enemy ambulance painted entirely white lay on its side in the ditch. It was evident that we were traveling hallowed ground, ground lost but recently to the American forces in the forward lunge of Nazi concentrated power.

Just as the twilight faded we turned off into a side road and began climbing a hill. Within a few hundred yards we overtook a column of marching troops, all American prisoners, taken that day in the action around Schonberg. All of them were in combat dress, few had overcoats, and none carried a weapon. A sad, dejected lot of men, worn, tired, plodding along in a neat column five abreast. A few from our regiment recognized me.

"hey! There's Father Cavanaugh", shouted one. "and Lt. Diamon", smiled another, glad to know that we were not injured in the action.

The German guards shouted to them to be quiet and ordered our two vehicles to pass on quickly. In the murky darkness we left them, bewildered, silent, filled up with thoughts of what might have been. "if only we had..." but the fact was they were captured, prisoners of war, a reality to which each infantryman struggled inwardly to resign and reconcile himself.

Driving blackout for another hour over an uneven road which caused the wounded men no little pain, we turned into a private road and stepped in front of what looked like a barn in the inky night. It was a large shed with several rooms in it. Into one of these rooms, empty of any furniture or supplies, we were ordered to bring the boys on the litters. The less seriously wounded were taken into a tent outside the barn. Across a narrow corridor another room shot out streaks of bright light as the door continually opened and closed.

This was a German field hospital. I ventured into the lighted room and found seven or eight doctors performing operations and administering medical aid. Most of the patients were Germans. But the one on the operating table was an American lieutenant who had been hit in the stomach that day and brought into the hospital unconscious. Three or four doctors were working on him.

"ich bin priester Katholicher." My German was picking up.

"ya. Ich bin Katholicher", said a soldier near by. I had found a helper in the work I was there to do.

"is that man dying?" I said pointing to the man on the operating table.

"nicht verstehe", came the answer which I had learned meant incomprehension.

I led the boy by the arm over to the operating table.

"tell these doctors that I am a priest", I somehow conveyed to him. The doctors looked up annoyed and simply continued their work. I tried to remonstrate, but someone took me by the arm and escorted me out of the room.

In the darkened corridor a German soldier tugged my coat sleeve and said, "come." He took me out of the building, then along a zig-zag of boards placed over puddles of mud. At the end of the board walk was a low tent into which he conducted me. A tiny little stove in the center threw out considerable heat. On an upturned wooden crate two wax candles were burning. Along both sides of the tent with their feet to the middle fifteen or more American wounded lay on straw lightly strewn upon the ground. One of them recognized me.

"Father, where did you come from?"

"oh, I got myself captured today. I came here just a few minutes ago with a truck load of wounded. "then I sat down beside him and was orientated on the situation.

There were three of these tents filled with wounded Americans who had been treated or were waiting for treatment in the hospital. The men had been there since early afternoon, and the more serious were being treated first. Some had been into the operating room and had bits of shrapnel removed from their limbs. Nearly all of them were from the 106th division and had been prisoners less than twenty-four hours. It was a great consolation to me to see the light in their faces and the happiness they expressed that a Chaplain and a priest was with them. Going from one to the next and the next, I shook hands and encouraged them. Fortunately only a few were in severe pain, and even those bore up under it nobly and manfully.

I slipped out of one tent and went into the next. Here was the identical situation, except that at the table where the candles were burning there sat two German soldiers writing in a large ledger. They were trying to register the wounded, doing their best to get the name, rank, and serial number of the men and approximate estimate of their wounds. Again I went from man to man, comforting and consoling and doing what I could to help them bear the pain.

In the third tent I repeated the process. An American boy then entered the tent.

"Father, there is a German priest out here. He wants to see you."

I stepped outside and from the man in a uniform of a common soldier came the words, "esne sucerdos?" (are you a priest?).

yes, yes." I answered in latin; and from there we carried on perfectly understanding each other. He was one of the two Germans who had been recording the names of the wounded in the second tent.

"you can help me," he said. Then from English, through the medium of Latin, we soon had the name, rank, serial number of the patients, and nature of their wounds all in splendid order in the German ledger.

When we had finished the rounds of the three tents and recorded another ambulance load which had arrived, we had time to speak together. I asked him, "Father, do you have the blessed sacrament near here in a chapel?"

"you wish to receive holy communion?" He asked.

I had not thought of myself, but I answered, "yes, and the catholic men in these tents."

He reached into his lapel pocket and withdrew a white cloth which wrapped a small gold pyx (small pouch to carry the eucharist to the sick). Reverently I knelt in the straw and received the precious parcel from his hands. Then I went the rounds of the tents again, and gave the bread of life to the catholic boys. Great was their awe and gratitude for such an unexpected gift. When I had finished, I knelt down and tried to pray to the Christ I hold in my hands. The thought recurred to me that I too could use the privilege of combat zones to receive holy communion at that hour of the night. I returned to the German priest. After giving him the pyx, I went to confession and received holy communion.

In the few minutes I tried to spend in thanksgiving, I could only think of the goodness of god and the mystery of the sins and indifference of men. Here we were prisoners of the enemy and yet all barriers of race and ideology were broken and crossed in the supranational love and charity among the members of the catholic clergy and church.

There was still work to be done in getting our boys comfortable and provided for as best we could. Some of them wanted a drink of water, others were cold and needed coverings, still others just wanted consolation and clarification of hazy ideas.

"Father, was it our fault that we lost the battle?"

"how did the rest of our division get along in the fight?"

"do you think the Germans will win the war by Christmas?"

"how soon will my folks find out that I am missing in action?"

"do you think they will get word on Christmas day, which is only a few days off?"

"do you think we will be able to write home or get any mail here?"

To all such questions I could not give a satisfactory answer. It was however consoling work to be able to help in a spiritual and even in a material way those comrades in arms who had had the misfortune of suffering the effects of enemy marksmanship.

The German priest called me out of the tent to show me a V-1, which the British called a buzz-bomb, passing over. We had been hearing them all evening. If you forget for a moment that they are destructive weapons (which you can never do until they have passed over; you can never joke about them, for they fly so low they always appear to be about to give their last chug and drop) they remind you of a Walt Disney animated cartoon. At night there is a comet-like tail of exploding gasses and a red glow to the nose.

"ad londinium," (London), said the German priest. In my heart I prayed that this one at least would never get there.

In the darkness I noticed a church spire a block away.

"is that the church where you say mass?" I asked him.

Yes, it was, but not every day did he have the time to withdraw from his other work to offer the holy sacrifice. He promised that he would arrange for me to say mass there the next day. But when daylight came I was to be far away. I have no idea what this field hospital looked like in the daylight. We talked in the darkness a little while about the war, but did not get far because neither of us was willing to confide in the other any military secrets we may have possessed.

"is Hitler dead?" I asked him. "there is a rumor that he is."

"it doesn't make any difference," the priest replied. "Himmler is the chief Nazi now."

We finally got to the matter of food. It was four days at least since I had had anything like a full meal. Here and there we had picked up a K ration, a jelly sandwich or a chocolate bar, but there had been no warm food because of scarcity of supplies and facilities for cooking. I told this to the priest and asked him about the possibility of getting something then and there. He left me and returned in a few minutes with two pockets full of apples. These I divided among the sick men in the tents. In return I gave the priest the carton of cigarettes I had.

"here, take these before some other German gets them."

In April, 1943, long after my imprisonment was over, I received a letter from this priest. His name is Hubert Perlitius, and his rank equivalent to that of private, samitats soldat. In March, 1945, he himself fell a prisoner to the invading American forces and month later was assigned as Catholic Chaplain of a group of German prisoners in allied hands. His home is in eastern Germany, in the section now occupied by the Poles. If he were to return, he would be taken prisoner again by the Russians.

Speaking of his predicament he writes, "it is difficult for me, but when I see the lot of others, then it is not so hard." Among the afflicted we can always find those agonies are more acute than our own. We derive some consolation from the thought that our own misfortune could be worse. In the same letter he mentioned that the name of the place where we met was Rommersheim.

When I looked at my watch for the first time in hours, it was shortly after two in the morning. Sleep had caught up with most of the men in the tents and I thought it well that I get some also. Another guard was kind enough to allow me to lie down on the straw. Then I discovered that my field coat was missing. I looked in all the tents and on the sick men if perchance one of them had taken it to use as a blanket. No where was it to be seen; I had visions of freezing to death in the cold that was coming on. One of the guards finally showed me around the back of the tent and there on the ground I found the coat that was to keep me warm for many days to come. I was happy to have recovered it even without the several packages of cigarettes and a few chocolate bars, plus a pair of gloves, I had had in it.

I had just settled down to what I hoped would be some rest when an ugly guard came in and kicked me.

"kommen sie schnell!" He ordered me out of the tent to an ambulance which stood by the barn. I was told to get in and soon found myself packed tight with seventeen American enlisted medics who had somehow found their way to this field hospital. Some of them were drivers, others stretcher-bearers; all non-combatants like myself. I missed the three medical officers who were captured with me. The last time I saw them they were helping with the surgical care of the wounded. Only after I was liberated did I learn that all three were killed in a bombing at Limburg three days later.

A German soldier took the wheel of our ambulance and drove out onto the road. There we saw a convoy of German ambulances moving toward the front. We took the opposite direction and soon were moving up a long hill - black-out driving. Snow was falling and the road was poorly visible. To the left there seemed to be a sharp drop and any minute we expected to be toppling over it. To add to our worries, the Jerry was driving with the emergency brake partly on. No amount of expostulation or urging could get him to listen to our suggestion to release the brake. Beside him sat another guard with a rifle pointed in our direction and he manifested plainly that no prisoner was to put even his hand beyond the front seat.

At four o'clock in the morning the ambulance stopped. There was much discussion and shouting between the drivers and the soldiers they met on the road. Eventually matters were settled and we were ordered out of the ambulance to a house on the side of the road; then upstairs to a small kitchen, really not much bigger than the ambulance. We were all put into the little room, the door closed and locked behind us. A few shouldering embers in the stove supplied heat and a bit of light. We found the remnants of a recent meal; a piece of a loaf of bread, a half-pot of coffee (ersatz) and a small piece of butter. Where we were was a mystery; so we decided the best thing to do was to get some sleep. By a shift of table and chairs all found a fairly comfortable position, though only three or four managed to stretch out to full length on the floor. The medics were respectful in giving me a kitchen chair to sit on. Their courtesy however had its reward, for the wooden

floor was much more comfortable than a chair. I put my head and arms on the kitchen table and fell asleep.

At that time of the year the days are short, so it was eight o'clock or after when the first light aroused us. From the window we could see that we were in a small village. Up and down the street we saw members of an enemy unit moving about. From their nonchalant attitude we knew that we were not very near the front lines. In the house next door to us they were setting up a mess. Sacks of potatoes, a side of beef, and some vegetables were being carried in. We turned to the half-loaf of bread in the cupboard and decided to eat. Each of the eighteen of us got about two mouthfuls. A few still had water in their canteens, so we each had a sip of that.

The door to the room was unbolted by a guard who posted himself at the head of the stairway. He said we might go outside to the latrine one at a time. Then we learned that in the only other room on the second floor of the house were twenty prisoners of war who had been locked for two days. After an hour or so we were all taken downstairs and lined up two abreast. We were marched to a kitchen a couple of doors away where each one of us received a small piece of boiled beef, a helmet full of boiled potatoes and a handful of salt. It was necessary to go back to the crowded kitchen to eat. Later a pot of ersatz tea was brought, which we drank for the sake of the liquid and the heat. Hungry as we had been, none of us could eat all of his potatoes.

We had scarcely finished eating when we were ordered downstairs again. Unaccustomed to the life of prisoners of war in Nazi hands, we innocently thought that this was to be another dole of food. Instead we were lined up and marched about four blocks down a muddy street, then round a corner to be joined up with literally thousands of prisoners of war. Some of them had been captured forty-eight hours and had been marching constantly ever since. They were haggard looking, but glad to see us. Here I found many of the men of the 422nd infantry regiment. It was a joy to learn that so many had passed through the action at Schonberg unhurt. My greatest delight was to find my assistant, Corporal Paul. B. Dalton of Madison, Wisconsin, unhurt, weary, but still smiling. His big brown eyes sparkled as he told me how he had been driving my jeep in a convoy which they were trying to get out of the pocket when the first vehicle hit a land mine and stalled the entire train long enough for the Germans to overtake them and capture the men and equipment.

Roth was the name of the town we were in. This crowd of two to three thousand was famished for food and water. Some of the medics and I tried to go back to the house where we had left our potatoes, but were quickly stopped by the guards. In the center of the village was one well where drinking water was obtainable, but because of the large number of prisoners all could not get a drink. Many of the men were so weary they had not the energy - thirsty as they were - to get up off the cold stones on which they were lying to go to the well. We tried to get some pails to carry water, but none would be given us.

About one o'clock in the afternoon we got word that the column was to march again. But before moving all those who had overshoes were to put them in places designated. Not many were anxious to give up their warm footwear, especially since they knew it was going to front line German troops. When we saw there was no chance of getting away with them, we took them off and instead of piling them up neatly, the pairs were mis-mated, two rights were tied together and two lefts, a size thirteen with a size seven. Knives were used to slash the insteps and soles. When at last there was quite a heap and the scattered groups were inspected to see that no American had overshoes, the march was on. For the medics and myself who had just arrived this was our first experience of walking under

guard. A long disconsolate column slowly wound out of Roth that afternoon of December 20th into rolling country on a well-paved two-lane highway. Hills were particularly difficult to the foot weary soldiers, and the pace at first was rather brisk.

After an hour and a half we rested on the side of the road. Water was obtained by eating snow that still lay in little depressions on the hillsides. After a break just long enough to chill and stiffen sore muscles and joints, we were off again. At four o'clock we passed through the town of Prum. In the recent campaign this town had been taken by the allies and recaptured by the Germans. Broken windows were everywhere, buildings were gutted by artillery fire, the railroad ripped by bombings. In stark reality this was a deserted village. No civilians were in evidence from one end of the city to the other; only a few soldiers lounged lazily around the entrance to an hotel where they likely had a headquarters.

Rumors started that this was the end of the march and that we would be put up in this town. But the head of the column continued on down the main streets, passed hotels and banks, a couple of churches, some warehouses, to the railroad station at the bottom of the hill. "we are going to get a train ride out of here," was another rumor that faded when we saw the railroad yard completely bombed out. Not a single track but had its rails split apart or twisted by a bomb.

The column kept moving; out of the town we went, across a small stream and then up along a winding hill. The highway was prepared for defense. At approximately hundred yard intervals were tank blocks ready to be pushed onto the road; gun emplacements were dug in the side of the hill; foxholes for machine gunners on the road level. Some prisoners were suffering severely from the climb. Their legs were sore and stiff from the cold and marching; every step was a torture. Slowly the column kept moving. Darkness and wind came together. Soon it started to drizzle and in our misery we even stopped counting the kilometers which marked the distance along the highway.

About six o'clock we had another break to allow a convoy to pass. In the blackness we saw the outlines of heavy and medium tanks, armored cars, truckloads of ammunition, weapons carriers and ambulances, and more of those two-wheeled kitchens.

Some prisoners had picked up sugar-beets along the side of the road and were peeling them and cutting them up. Many of us were hungry but declined to eat them on the score that our misery might be made worse with raw beets in our stomachs. However, I heard of no one who suffered any after-effects and I learned from later experience that they were just as good to eat as raw carrots.

"five more kilometers," the rumors from the guards said. After another hour's march, "five kilometers" was still the answer to our question, "how much longer?" All were silent now. It was an endurance test for everybody. My heart went out to those who had been plodding thus for the better part of two days. The pace was slowing and the feeling of numbness came over us. Plop, plop, plop. We can always do one more kilometer, I thought; and so it was. Near midnight it was still rumored, "five kilometers more", but this time the rumor exaggerated, for in a few minutes we stopped between a row of houses on the road. No lights were visible except the faint glow of a few German flashlights which were operated by turning a key much like the winding of a spring on a child's toy. "they are going to feed us," was the word passed down the column; hopes and spirits revived at the prospect of something warm to eat. We tolerated the long delay in the rain and wind. Some fellows

stretched out on the pavement in sheer exhaustion. Five or six would huddle together for mutual support and protection from the wet. Another hour dragged on and word came that there was not enough food for so many; hence none would be served until morning. But we were going to be housed in a large building up ahead. "no more marching anyway," we sighed in relief. The column moved off the pavement onto a side road that was a mass of mud. Up on an incline appeared what looked like high prison walls. At least we could get in out of the cold, we thought. However, we soon were disillusioned when word came that the place was already overcrowded with PW's and we would have to stand out in the mud for the rest of the night. There was nothing to do but make the best of the situation and try to find comfort in dire misery. Many lay down in the mud, huddled together and fell asleep. As the hours of the night wore on, more and more took to the muck or the ditches and went to sleep. The drizzle turned to rain. The night seemed interminable; really it would not have been longer, for it was the winter solstice and the longest night of the year.

The first streaks of light found me still standing or walking among the prostrate forms. What kept me on my feet was the thought that pneumonia or worse would be the result of going to sleep on the wet ground, and I must do my best to keep well for the sake of all those who would need a priest. The ominous forms that looked like prison walls in the darkness turned out to be turrets of a warehouse and a few adjacent buildings. Within a sort of enclosure or courtyard several hundred prisoners were stretched out on the flagstones. A smaller column than ours had arrived here before dark the night before. Even all these were not given space to sleep on the floor of the warehouses, some had to stay outside. We were near the top of a hill that looked down on the town of Gerolstein. About five thousand prisoners of war were milling around the area when the daylight finally came. Whether this is an under or an over-statement, I have no means of knowing. Some effort was made to feed the multitude, but as always happens in disorganized crowds, some got much and some got none. It was evident that we were all unexpected, and for the civilian population, unwanted "guests".

Spirits picked up with the prospect of something to eat and the necessity of going in search of it gave new life to hungry men. My old friend, sergeant Joseph Kersky of Memphis, Tenn, supply sergeant of our battalion, came to my aid as he had so often done in the past. He took me around several corners and into a small enclosure where there was a kitchen. He got me a couple of pieces of bread and a cup of ersatz coffee. Good old Joe, I'll not forget the day on the lines when the ground was covered with snow and a supply of overshoes arrived for the battalion. I told him it he never contributed to the support of the church for the rest of his life he would be excused from sin if he could find a pair of overshoes that would fit this pastor of souls. Joe did.

Standing out in the rain could not be a permanent arrangement; by noon we learned that the long marches were over and that we would be transported by rail farther back from the front. The Germans started collecting us in groups of sixty and marching us away toward Gerolstein to board the trains. As each group moved out, the men were given rations for three days - a pound of cheese (in a can) and two bags of crackers for every three men. Because I was moving from one group to another and listening to a story here and a story there, I got ahead of the point where the rations were being issued; a guard supposing that I had already been counted and issued rations, refused to let me go back; but there were enough prisoners who did not like cheese and there seemed to be plenty of crackers, so I fared well. The small ration for three days became a laughing matter and within twenty-four hours there was no more cheese and crackers in evidence.

The food and drink (little as it was) revived us. The cessation from marching was a rest in itself. The shock, disappointment and apparent disgrace of being captured wore off. The resiliency of American boys showed itself in the laughter, the horse-play, and the banter with German civilians and guards. This day marked the beginning of our bartering. For a few cigarettes or a chocolate bar we could buy a loaf of bread or a ring of wurst; at one house along the road some compassionate frau had made a big pot of ersatz coffee and for on cigarettes was selling a canteen cup of the beverage. Coffee enough for thousands of men is not made in any household utensil. This is why so many were disappointed.

A few yards' movement and then a halt; standing in the middle of the road and then off to the side to allow a vehicle to pass. This process kept up for hours, and all the while civilians passed singly or in groups with whom we tried to connive in obtaining food. Many women and old men frowned on us; others looked sympathetically and expressed a willingness to help were it not for the guards.

Eventually that part of the column where I found myself moved steadily. Through the business district, over a bridge in the center of the town, then down an incline to the railroad station. Along the platform we were again divided into groups of sixty, this time ten abreast. The guards became particularly exasperated as pals and buddies who had been separated in different groups jockeyed for position or just mischievously got out of line.

I became the focal point of attention as a grand crowd of fellows tried to get me in their group of sixty. Somewhere up ahead of us there had been a miscount which necessitated a new grouping. And the split this time came right in the middle of our party. I found myself separated from the fellows who were most anxious to be with the padre. The guards became more indignant as the jockeying and shifting of the men started all over again. A German officer gave a loud and moving speech, which we respectfully listened to, though we understood no word of it. We knew we were thoroughly "eaten out" about something, most probably for making a game of farmer in the dell out of a very serious situation. I was still not with the sixty who most wanted me with them. During a commotion and another tear-jerking speech down the line, I exchanged places with a GI in the next group. Alas, I was spotted. An officer came running up to me and started a German tirade that almost moved me to tears. I did not answer his questions, not so much because they were utterly incomprehensible as that I thought they were rhetorical. A civilian bystander who knew some English spoke to me.

"he wants to know: are you there or here?"

"i am here," I answered innocently.

"are you there," he demanded.

"no, I am here."

"are you going from there to here?"

"i am not going anywhere," I replied still pleading innocence.

There was another talking down in German during which some more shifted their positions. Then another count began. By this time everybody seemed satisfied to be where he was; a final and definite count took place as we boarded the train.

A few blocks up the tracks two small engines were switching back and forth. They formed their trains and pulled into the banhof on parallel tracks. The components were all freight cars, little more than half the size of American boxcars, and at the end of the train a small caboose. On the side of some of the cars were the famous French marking, "40 hommes - 8 chevaux" (40 men - 8 horses), known from world war I as the "forty and eight's".

Loading began at the car immediately behind the engine, exactly sixty men to a car; and only one car was loaded at a time, three or four guards checking the number of prisoners. In due course the car next to us on the track was reached. The sliding door was pushed aside and sixty of us loaded. When all were aboard, the door was rolled back and padlocked.

Chapter three

Christmas in a boxcar

We now had a new situation to meet. Sixty men in an area designated for forty and that in a country which claimed that living space was overcrowded to begin with. In addition the car had recently been used for its alternate purpose of carry horses - most likely twelve instead of eight - and had not been cleaned. The manure had been pushed to either end of the car in no esthetic heaps. A small amount of straw that had not been soiled the horses was left in the middle. On either side of the car near the ends were small windows, not quite large enough for a man to poke his head through, operated on the same principle as the sliding door. In our car wooden slats now filled the space where glass panes had one been. When the windows were shut, the inside of the car was very dark; when open, the chill winter blasts rushed in.

At first we all sat down, or rather tried to do. Obviously no one wanted to sit at or near the ends of the car. In due time, however, we were all somehow seated on the floor. It was a relief to sit down and a greater blessing still to be huddled together away from the cold wind. In a few minutes men dropped off to sleep. Tired as they were, their sleep was sound and deep. The deeper they sank in slumber, the larger the space relaxing limbs occupied on the floor. No sooner did a restless soul stand up than the unoccupied space was filled with slumping bodies. One who wished to sit-down would yell, "open the window so I can see what i'm doing." When the window was opened, another would cry, "close the window, its cold!" Then we heard orders such as these, "move over, give me some room." "keep your knees off my back." Somehow, someway, we all must have found a position to sleep in. I for one did not hear the train pull out of Gerolstein.

We did not know it at the time, but ours were the last two trains to leave that station. That very night and during the next day Gerolstein was bombed, the railroad yards made a shambles, and some American prisoners killed. Those who lived through the ordeal walked from Gerolstein to Koblenz on the Rhine river. The distance is about one hundred

kilometers and it took them the better part of a week, including Christmas day. During the march many PW's were unwittingly killed in strafing by American and British planes.

At some wee hour of the morning I awoke. There was darkness and deep silence; all was still save the heavy breathing of deep sleepers. The train was not moving. I was cold, cramped, stiff, and aching in legs and back. Half lying, half sitting, my head and arms were on somebody's hips; three pairs of legs were tangled up with mine and a head rested against my side. Were I to move very much, I would surely waken the others. Were I to stand, there would be no place to sit down again. Yet I was so uncomfortable I had to do something. I tried to shift my position without losing floor-space. Drawing up my foot, two heavy shoes moved into the space where it had been. I turned a bit forward the head on my side slipped onto my lap. I stretched out an arm and poked it into a face.

"hey! What's the idea?" Came a voice.

"sorry, son." I whispered.

I leaned back and felt the frozen side of the boxcar on my back. I lifted the head from my lap, pulled up the other foot and put the head where it had been, raised my knees up to my chin, rolled over sideways and tried to go back to sleep. Slowly sleep came while I prayed that this car of humans packed like sardines might soon be opened and further misery averted. Twice again I awoke during the night. One or two cigarettes glowed in the darkness, but no one spoke. Just deep silence, piercing cold, and the sweet repose of sleep.

Daylight found all awake. Rested by the long hours of darkness and sleep, we now stared moving around the boxcar. Except for our feet we felt warm. Most cases of cold feet were cured by removing the shoes and massaging the feet briskly. Dry socks, which most of us carried in our pockets, helped also. The roof and metal joints of the car were frosted like the inside of a Frigidaire. A look out the little windows revealed that the train was standing on a single track in the midst of a forest. The ground and trees were covered with snow. Whether we were on a main line or a siding no one could tell. A few guards paced up and down outside the train, their faces knotted with the cold. Crackers and cheese were all any of us had for breakfast

The train gave lurch and we were off again. We passed through some villages and after a few delays were in Koblenz on the Rhine. For several blocks from the river front the city had been repeatedly bombed. We saw what had once been beautiful buildings, now gutted, burned, and leveled; stark specters of the tragedy of war. The train stopped in the railroad yard for an hour, Russian slave labor had billets in derailed cars in the yard and were working under guard a repairing tracks and filling tin bomb crater. We moved up to the river. "looks like the Ohio at Pittsburgh. Except for the color," someone remarked. Spanning the river were seven bridges, two or three of them apparently still useable. One high, concrete structure had two sections completely knocked out. A railroad bridge had been hit while a train was on it, and two of the cars were dangling over the edge of the broken span.

Our train moved very slowly up to the river; then almost with the caution of a rope-walker smoothly made the crossing. Once over the Rhine we moved with less precision. Stop and go like the heavy traffic on a congested thoroughfare, but all around us no other trains moved. Tenement house and middle class residence sections of the city were bombed out.

Yet wherever a flat or a few rooms were left with a rood, there was evidence of occupancy. More stop and go and the day wore on. Twice the city was alerted by the sound of air-raid sirens.

The Germans had three signals in connection with air-raids. Three long blasts of fifteen to twenty seconds each meant that allied planes were within a three hundred mile radius; this was the caution signal. Twelve short blasts of four seconds each signified that planes were in the neighborhood and signaled all people to take cover. A long steady blast of sixty seconds was the all-clear sign.

This day the sky was clear and overhead we could see the vapor trails of squadrons on their mission to southern Germany. We did not know at the time, but some of those prisoners whom we left behind at Gerolstein were being killed by bombings that took place this afternoon.

Whenever the train stopped we had men on the lookout for civilians willing to barter for food. We failed in the attempt, for none would risk the anger of the guard to come close to the train. Late in the afternoon water was provided us in a marshaling yard. Six men were taken from each car - but only tow cars at a time - to a pump at the head of the train and allowed to bring back as many steel helmets full of water as they could carry. By the time the thirst of the human cargo was slaked it was dusk again and we were bolted in for the night. Crackers and cheese were gone now, so we settled down to think about food. Good fellowship and need for cooperation induced us to make adjustments in the sleeping situation. The car was not wide enough for two men to lie comfortable feet to feet across its width. By tight squeezing all but two or three could sit abreast down the two sides of the car. No one wanted to sit near the ends, for there the windows let in the cold and the floor was strewn with manure. By some wizardry of housing, we all found a snug position for a time; heads were along the outer walls and feet, legs, steel helmet, and shoes scrambled together in the center.

When one stood up to go the end of the car, he gingerly picked his way to his destination. On his return his place would invariable be swallowed up by the stretching out of limbs. This went on interminably.

Buddies talked of the incidents of their capture, the progress of the war, the conduct of officers and men, and the myriad things that make up the though-complexes and speech of so many of the armed forces.

During the day several had asked, "Father, will you conduct a service for us?" "surely," I said, "any time you think it convenient." When evening came and the train stopped and all were relaxed for the time at least, I gave a short talk on the providence of god, said an impromptu prayer for protection, food, and the safety of our comrades everywhere, not forgetting the dear ones at home. Then we sang "god bless America" and "silent night".

The service was ended, but the singing of songs continued with "old King Cole", "I've been working on the railroad", "the artillery song", "the air corps song", "the marine song"; then "the sidewalks of new York", "carry me back to old Virginia", "my old Kentucky home", "back home again in Indiana", "beautiful Ohio", "Missouri waltz", "deep in the heart of Texas", "springtime in the Rockies", "California, here I come", and so on and on. We forgot that we were hungry, old, and weakening; somehow the singing warmed us; the thoughts

of home and the prayer and the music prepared weary bodies and restless minds and nervous souls for the peacefulness of sleep.

The second night on the train passed without incident.

Dawn of December 23rd revealed that the frost on the metal parts of the car had grown during the night. All that day there was the same watching for civilians to barter with, the same lack of food, the same dole of water as on the preceding day. One incident changed the routing. One car at a time was opened and the men allowed out on the roadbed to stretch their legs. There was no air-raid alarm during the daylight hours.

By evening the train had moved as far as Limburg. Here there was a large marshaling yards for supplies and equipment destined to be railroaded to the western front. Within a mile of the center of the area was a barbed wire enclosure for prisoners of war. This prison camp was the base from which prisoners went out to work as section gangs on the railroad and as packers in food depots. The original plan was that our two trains of captives were to be housed in this compound at Limburg. However, before we were removed from the trains, the camp authorities expressed their unwillingness to take any more prisoners, for the compound was already over congested. Our two trains were pulled onto sidings four tracks apart with the main lines running between them. It was not up to the okw (oberkommand wehrmacht) in Berlin to say what disposition would be made of us. All this we learned from the train guards who became very downhearted when they saw that their guard duty in the cold was prolonged and probably would extend over the next few days including Christmas.

Three blasts from the siren marked the first alert we had heard that day. The warning signal sounded about six o'clock, more than an hour after dark. We had a prayer service some few minutes later, sang some more hymns and songs. The strict alert of short blasts rang out shrill in the midst of our singing. Yet we continued the songs, little knowing the danger that was approaching on wings of steel. Soon we heard planes overhead and an anti-aircraft battery opened up. There was shouting outside the train and our car was in great commotion. A dive bomber zoomed low to drop the flares which marked the target. Through the little windows we could see that the entire area around the railroad tracks was lit with a red glow.

"we're right on the target!"

Fear and helplessness gripped us all.

Above the din of planes and the excited talking in the car I yelled at the top of my voice, "at ease! At ease!"

There was a respectful silence.

"now everybody repeat after me these words: 'o my god - I am most sorry for having sinned against you - because you are so good.'" then the words of absolution quickly, as a bomb exploded: "ego vos absolvo ab omnibus censuris et peccatis in nomine patris at filii et spiritus sancti." And I too hit the floor.

Zoo-o-o-om! Whoomp! Zoo-o-o-om! Whoomp!

Plane after plane came down; the ominous crescendo of the whine of the dive always terminating in the crash and explosion of a bomb. There was no doubt the bombs were hitting very close to us, for with each explosion the car bounced on the track like parts of a toy train in a child's nursery. We clung to one another as we lay on the floor of the car with faces buried in our arms or whatever we could find to shield them.

"Father, say some more prayers!" Somebody screamed.

"o god, have mercy on us! Mary, help us! St. Joseph, pray for us!"

Outside the car were loud voices calling in English, "O'Flaherty! Sullivan! Drusbbicki! Trivisono! Jones! Smitty! Bill, where are you?" Prisoners from some of the other cars had broken down the doors and abandoned the train. Buddies were being separated one from another and they were trying to reach safety.

A panic-stricken boy near me yelled, "let's get out of here. Come on, break down the door!"

Perhaps it was good judgment, perhaps it was just a wild guess, but I prefer to look on it as an inspiration that was an answer to our prayers. I shouted: "at ease! At ease! Stay where you are. We have protection here from all but a direct hit. Lie low and keep our heads covered."

The booming and crashing began again. Another wave of bombers was on us.

"Father, say some more prayers."

"let's say the rosary," I said. "answer as loud as you can, but keep your faces covered. I on the name of the Father and of the son and of the holy ghost. Amen"

By shouting loud we could hear one another above the din of the bombing. I cannot help remembering the response to the hail Mary's.

"hail Mary, full of grace" Zoom!

"holy Mary, mother of god, pray for us sinners" Whoomp!

We finished the first decade.

The explosions and the shouting outside the car continued.

The second decade passed and then there was a lull.

"it's over!" Came a shout.

"shut up! Be still" I interrupted somewhere in the third decade. "glory be to the Father ... " Zoom! It started again.

We bounced through the fourth mystery and into the fifth.

Plop! Plop! Lumps of something were landing on the roof of our car. Fragments of debris hurled into the air by the explosions.

The outside noises ceased and voices dropped in volume as we came to the end of the last decade. The rosary finished, we waited to the next wave to come in. Holding our breath in fear that it would be our turn to be hit, we waited. The interval was lengthening. Perhaps the raid is over. We all hoped that it was. Minutes passed and we breathed with greater ease and regularity. Some one stood up to the window.

"look! The whole town is burning." They opened the four little windows and the flickers from the great fires lit up our faces. Bewilderment, fear, relief, hope, all expressed themselves at once.

"click, click, click," barked the anti-aircraft batteries again. "shut the windows! Get down!"

"click, click, click, click, click." We held our breath in expectation of another dive and explosion of a bomb. But no more planes swooped in and no more bombs fell. The raid was over. The batteries ceased firing. The glow from the fires brightened and we could see columns of smoke and flame rising together ever higher and higher. There was little talking. We sat on the floor in silence, each man with his own thought.

"thank god, we were not hit, Father." Came a whisper.

"yes, Joe, and thank our blessed mother too."

We sat or stood dazed from the raid. It's hard to say how long.

Then someone said, "who wants some cheese and crackers?"

That broke the spell. We laughed, and joked, and related to one another the emotions experienced in the bombing.

A squad of guards came down either side of the train examining the locks on the cars. Some one shouted a derisive oath at them, "get out of here, you goons!"

"hey! They'll shoot you for that. Remember our allies did this bombing and we are at the mercy of these people," was the rebuke we gave him. Then I spoke to my fellow prisoners urging them to be careful how they treated the guards. "just put yourself in their places. How would you treat a bunch of arrogant Germans if you had them prisoner in your home town after it was bombed and burning like this? Don't think I am soft-hearted. This is just common sense."

The night wore on; we recovered from the nerve-racking experience of the evening; hunger made itself felt again. Some men lay on the floor exhausted. The raging fires were tapering down; around midnight the all-clear signal blew. We went through the process of arranging sleeping accommodations; eventually all dropped off to sleep.

The dawn of Christmas eve was bright and cold. We were feeling the cold all the more because of lack of food. The train had not moved during the night, nor could we move in daylight for lack of tracks. The bombing of the previous night had gutted the road-bed

ahead of us. In the course of the morning we learned that several of our men had been killed during the raid and others injured. All were men who had broken out of the cars and tried to flee the target. One car suffered a few minor casualties when a large boulder landed on the road and then crashed through to the floor.

After our liberation we saw the list of sixty-five American officers who were killed that night by a direct hit on one of the barracks in the Limburg prison camp. Among them the three officers of my battalion medical staff, doctor Diamon, Capt. Hene and Lt. Blacke. How they were transported from the German field hospital where I last saw them, i'll never know. We had had many pleasant and some harrowing experiences together. All three were splendid men and filled their posts with exceptional devotion.

At noon we were to get some food. Before anything was done about it, however, the sirens announced that planes were over the country. There was great fear of another raid on Limburg. Some of the senior officers who knew there were Chaplains on the trains asked if we might say a few words to the men locked in the cars. Chaplain mark Moore started the search for us and then assigned each one a number of cars to visit. A guard unlocked the door and let me out.

In order to be heard within a car it was necessary to climb up the iron ladder on the outside of the car until the face was level with the little windows. While almost chinning myself, I gave an exhortation to patience, courage, and prayer-.....

Two announcements we had to make: we would be given food when the present alert was over, and we would move on to another prison camp as soon as the tracks were repaired. As I was climbing the sides of the boxcars I could see something that was not visible to the men and which gave the lie to everything I was telling them. Civilians by the hundreds were slowly moving into a large air-raid shelter which was dug into the side of a hill. They carried blankets and baskets of food. It was clear to me that they expected another raid before the day was done. After visiting about twelve cars and answering many questions about the situation and the people I had seen in my travels up and down the train, I had to give up. The job of supporting me and talking at the same time began to tell on me and I felt weak. The sun was sinking low when I returned to my car hoping and praying there would be no raid this night.

Excerpts from: "prisoner of the Germans", by Chaplain mark r. Moore

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"on December 24 (Christmas eve) we convinced the guards that it would be to their advantage if they would let the Chaplains talk to the men. So Chaplains Neal, Paul W. Cavanaugh and I went to the eighty box cars and spoke to the men."

In the gathering twilight some women came beside the train with bread. They were conducting what practically amounted to an auction. Moving from car to car they asked what they could have in exchange for a loaf of bread. Then, without concluding a bargain they would move on to the next car. Where the offerings were greatest they traded their wares.

After much haggling and collecting the boys with me obtained four loaves of bread in exchange for several bill-folds, some fountain pens, and a few packages of cigarettes. Four loaves of bread for sixty men, "what are these among so many?" They brought the loaves to me, perhaps in the hope that I might perform a miracle of multiplication. I appreciated the courtesy, but suggested that we get a mess sergeant to do the dividing.

We had a dandy fellow with us in the car, t/4 John Barbeau, cook from anti-tank company of the 422nd regiment, whose home is in Dayton, Ohio. Under the light of a few matches and the beam from a flashlight with a very weak battery Johnny divided the bread into sixty equal parts and all were satisfied - not so much with the quantity as with the fairness of division. With the twelfth of a loaf of bread in us for the day's supply of calories, we felt warmer and happier.

"Father, just think, this is Christmas eve. You will have to say a good prayer with us tonight. And let's sing all the Christmas songs we know." I must confess that remarks like this made me very happy. It was really worth the price of suffering to be with this gang of grand American boys, thousands of miles from home, prisoners in the hands of the enemy, brave, courageous souls who had done their part and noble part to preserve the spirit of Christmas for America and the world.

When all were seated and sleeping arrangements were finished to the satisfaction of all, and the friendly arguments and joking quieted down, I began our Christmas eve devotions thus:

"at ease."

"fellows, we are in a tough spot on a night like this when our thoughts cannot but cling to our homes, our dear ones, and the joys that should be ours at Christmas. You have been very thoughtful in asking me to pray with you the past few nights, and I appreciate your respect and reverence for the things I stand for. I will try my best to formulate in words that you all would like to say to god tonight. Try to follow me thoughtfully and reverently in the prayer that I say.

"in the name of the Father and of the son and of the holy ghost."

"eternal Father, we really and truly believe that you are here present and can see into our hearts. We ask you to help us to pray in the manner worthy of your infinite majesty.

"we are your sons, and we know that you love us, for this very night more than nineteen centuries ago another son of yours was born in a stable in Bethlehem. He was your eternal son, and you sent him into this world to be born in poverty, to live in suffering, and to die a painful death in order that he might teach us how to live and how to put up with our sufferings.

"tonight the world is commemorating the birth of your son, Jesus Christ. We wish to go in spirit to that cave in Bethlehem and unite ourselves with the angels, with Mary, the child's mother, and Joseph, his foster-Father, with the shepherds who came to see him. We adore him. We united our adoration with all those who acknowledge that Jesus Christ is god. Eternal Father, he who was with you from all eternity has become a brother to us this Christmas night. We are deeply grateful to you that you have given us this gift. This child is the first Christmas gift to the world; he is the greatest and most precious gift. So first of all we thank you from the bottom of our hearts for this sign of your great love of us.

"lord, there are so many things too that we want to thank you for. We thank you that we are still alive after the dangers and narrow escapee we have been through during the past few days. We thank you for the successes we have had in combat and the victories all over the world which our forces have gained. We think you for the courage of our men in the army and the navy, and for the materials of war that you have placed at our disposal to gain these victories. We thank you for our country and its citizens who are working together to make this world a better place to live in. We thank you for all the blessing s you have given to this whole world, to our country, to our forces, to our families, and to ourselves.

"to show our gratitude we promise that we will live better lives in the future. In the past we have not always done what we knew was right and what we ought to have done to make ourselves pleasing to you. You are so good in yourself and infinitely worthy to be served. Lord, we are sorry for the sins we have committed and we wish that we had not done the bad things that have grieved you and caused so much suffering to your son, Jesus Christ. It is because people whom you created have failed to serve you in the right way that there is so much suffering in the world today. This war which is the cause of our present suffering has come about because men and nations have failed in heir duty to you and to their fellow men. Lord, as a sign that we are really sorry for our misdeeds we accept the cold and hunger and the misery we now endure as a punishment that we really deserve. On the first Christmas night that other son of ours was lying on straw just as we are tonight. He suffered from the winter cold as we suffer now. He was forsaken.

"he was forsaken as we are forsaken tonight, lord somehow or other we feel close to that infant Christ, closer than we ever were before and that closeness to him brings happiness and joy to our hearts and comforts us in the misery we now endure.

"because we are so like to Christ tonight we know that you will hear our prayers. Lord, there are many things we have to ask form you. Our most pressing need at this time is food. For several days we have not had enough to eat. We ask you earnestly, therefore, to send us some food soon to strengthen us and warm us. We ask that you may soften the hearts of these people who can help us, especially at this time when all men's hearts should be moved to help those who are in distress.

"we ask you to continue to bless us and preserve us from harm. We are still in the danger zone of war and helpless to defend ourselves. We rely on your protection all the more.

"we pray also for all those who are in need of your help. First of all, lord, bless those who are near and dear to us; our homes, our mothers and Fathers, our brothers, and sisters, our wives and our children. Give them the strength they need to bear the grief that is soon to come on them when they learn that we, their loved ones, are missing in action. Give them the courage they will need to endure the agony of uncertainty with our separation

from the means of communication will cause them. Let them have a happy Christmas at home. While we are thinking of those homes, please bless every one of them and preserve them from the ruin we have seen in this country. Bless all those who are responsible for keeping them intact. Bless our president, our congress, and our federal and civil officials; bless our army and navy and those who are encrusted with the lives of so many millions of our countrymen during this terrible war.

"one last request we have to make and we make it with all our hearts. Lord, grant peace to the world. We have seen enough of the terrible things that war has brought to understand the great blessing of peace. Grant that we may soon gain a triumphant victory over our enemies and grant that the peace which Christ, who is called the prince of peace, came to bring us may be established all over the world. Amen.

"now let us sing."

We sang silent night, adeste fideles, little town of Bethlehem, the first noel, Gloria in Excelsis Deo.

Then someone suggested jingle bells, and from that we went on to the popular songs of the army and the hit parade and the favorites of long ago.

When the singing tapered off into humming and the intimate conversation in little groups, it was suggested that I tell a story. Now I was never successful at story-telling, hence I tried to beg off and urged that someone else do the honors. But all were insistent. I consented finally with these words: "the only story worth telling on Christmas eve is the story of Christmas, so if you are willing to listen I will relate the events of the birth of Christ."

So with an audience of fifty-nine GI's who were perhaps closer to me than any audience I had ever had and yet were invisible because of the total darkness in the boxcar, I began to relate the sweetest story ever told. It was a unique opportunity to explain the mystery of god's dealing with men. I started with the immaculate conception (which necessitated a flash-back to original sin), the espousals of Mary and Joseph, the annunciation and incarnation, the decree of Caesar Augustus, the journey to Bethlehem, culminating in the events of the virgin birth.

All this took perhaps an hour. The quiet of the car was gratifying. All seemed to be listening in rapture. I paused and waited for someone to speak, perhaps to ask a question or suggest some further development. No one spoke.

"well," I said. "we can continue the story." I related the mystery of the shepherds and the coming of the hill-people to the manger of the Christ child. Another pause and still no one spoke. So I went on with the account of the coming of the kings from the east. That finished, there still was silence. I waited a longer time for some one to stir or break the magic spell. There was no even the glow from a cigarette. I whispered to Paul Dalton who was stretched out somewhere near me, "Paul, are you asleep?" There was no answer. In a louder voice I asked. "is everybody satisfied?" No response. In a moderate tone I inquired, "is anybody awake?" Not even the echo of my voice. All was still and calm and peaceful. It was in truth -

Silent night, holy night,

All is calm...

I imagined the angels ever so softly singing,

Sleep in heavenly peace,

Sleep in heavenly peace.

And I was very happy. It was a Christmas i'll not soon forget.

Near midnight we were jolted with a knocking at the door of the car.

"Raus! Raus! Open up the door. Do you want to eat?"

Some American officers and German guards were bringing us food that had been promised hours before. "let us have four men, and bring some helmets."

In a short time the four men returned with twelve loaves of bread and two helmets full of something that might be called a hybrid of jelly, jam, marmalade and molasses. It was sweet, stringy, sticky and lumpy.

"o boy! Father, you sure did good with that prayer."

"what a feast! And so soon after we prayed for it." Were the comments.

And what a time we had with the food. First we selected food handlers, and here John Barbeau again come in for the job of chief mess sergeant. Then there was need for a solid base on which to spread the jam. My flashlight still gave the faintest beam of light. The spirits of all were lifted with the sight of food, and the joy of a little child's discovery of the Christmas tree faded in contrast with our joy of eating bread and jelly at midnight in a German boxcar. We laughed with delight as the sticky threads and drops of jam got all over our faces, our hands, and our clothes as we passed the precious morsels down the zigzag lines of dirty hands to the men at the ends of the car; then to those nearer the middle, and finally to the center. There followed the second round, and then a third until someone said, "enough; save the rest for tomorrow." But then to prevent any embarrassment or cause for complaint, the bread was divided equally among all, and the remains of the gooey liquid we left in the helmets only for want of containers to portion out each man his share. Cigarettes (we still had a supply of those) and chatter and wise-cracks and the spirit of Christmas helped us forget the cold, the cramped conditions, the hard wooden floor, and the fact that we were prisoners of war locked for the fourth night on the train. I think I was the first to drop off again to sleep.

When I awoke it was daylight, the sun shining, the ground covered with a fresh layer of snow, and the train was still standing in the railroad yard at Limburg. Church bells were ringing, the merry Christmas bells summoning the German folk to mass. Shrill and clear they sounded in the crisp, cold air and over the snow-covered city. How we would have liked to escape from the train and steal silently in to some neighborhood church. In medieval times on days like this warriors proclaimed the truce of god and mingled together

in prayer at the crib of the prince of peace. But there was no freedom for us. The cars remained locked and up and own the track paced the guards ready to fire at any prisoner who should attempt to escape.

Before noon the damage done by the bombs to the tracks ahead of us was repaired and the train started moving. We stopped at a station (i have forgotten the name) and were given water to drink. Attempts to barter with civilians along the tracks failed. We switched from the main track onto a spur and by two o'clock on Christmas afternoon were at the end of the line - bad orb.

(a copy of the original report on the bombing of Limburg

Railroad yards, provided by Donald B. Prell)

25 Dec. 1945

A.S.C. summary # 1495

Part 1 page 1

Air operations (home)

23/24 Dec night operations

157 aircraft dispatched

On following operations:

- Bitburg railway center Mosquitoes

- ` (22 miles east of Koblenz)

- Limburg railway center Mosquitoes

- (7 miles N.E. of Bonn).

- Bremen, Hannover, Snabruck Mosquito's and Munster.

37 bn bomber support 27 mosquito, 13 Sterlings, 9 Hallifaxes, 5 fortresses and 5 liberators

- weather reconnaissance Mosquito's results

Limburg railway centre

50 Mosquito's attacked, between 1805 and 1831 hours, dropping approximately 51 tons HE. (including 25 x 4,000 lb). And 24 x 250 lb. Marker bombs in conditions variously reported as from nil to 7/10ths thin low strato-cumulus or haze.

the marking throughout was good and practically all the main force aircraft were able to bomb in the markers, and bombing appeared to have been well concentrated.

Two good explosions and several fires were observed. Very slight heavy flak was encountered

Siegburg railway centre.

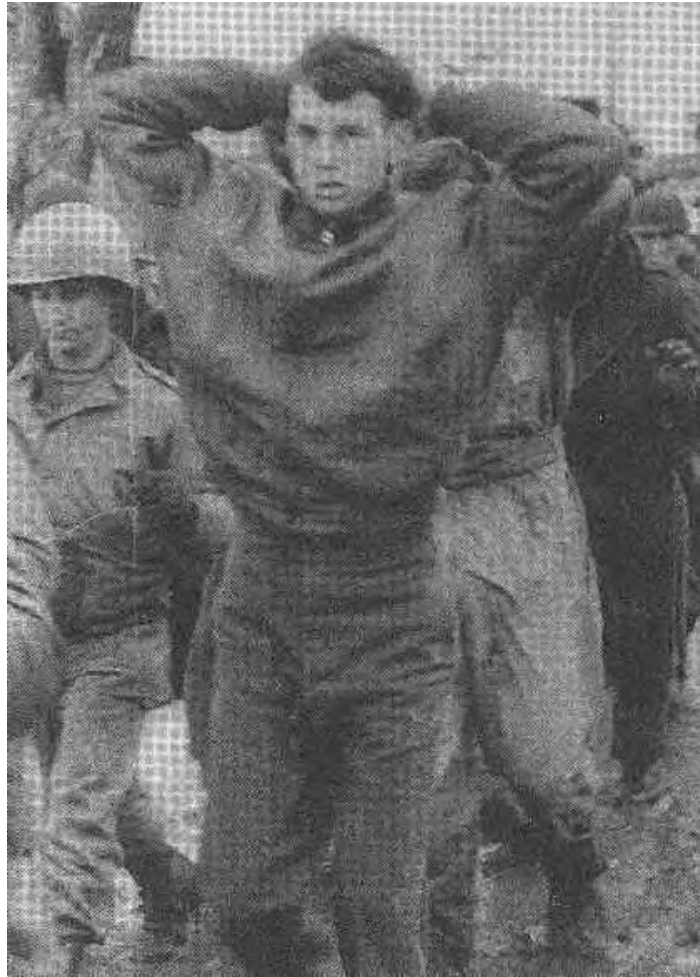
38 Mosquitos attacked, between 1728 and 1750 hours, dropping approximately 50 tons of h.e. bombs (including 19 x 4,000 lb) from between 23/27,000 feet

In cloudless condition but some ground haze.

the aircraft attacked either on their leaders or failing that, owing to approaching darkness, on Navigational aids or bomb flashes. No accurate assessment of bombing results can be made.

very slight heavy flak was encountered

one mosquito attacked cologne dropping 1 x 4000 lb HE. bomb at 1738 hours



Chapter four

Bad orb

It was a bright, sharp Christmas afternoon. We detrained at bad orb and line up five abreast near a quaint little railroad station which probably saw gay parties of tourists and health seekers coming and going in the days when the German people were free to enjoy the leisure of mineral waters and sulfur baths. We marched down a broad street line with

summer hotels whose names read like a litany of the saints and then into a narrow street with clean-looking, substantial, middle-class dwellings. Here we halted, as we later found out, to wait for the second section of the prison train to bring in the rest of the prisoners. Orders were given that no prisoner was to step out of line onto the sidewalk. It would be hard to say whether the civilians or the prisoners were more wide-eyed with astonishment as women, children, and old men walked up and down whispering to one another, "Amerikanische", and we looked at them dressed in their splendid clothes and said, "it doesn't look like these people are suffering from the war."

I was standing in the middle of the cobblestone street directly in front of a French window six feet up from the ground level. Framed in the window was a typical German family - a middle aged lady, three children, and an old man. A GI asked the lady by signs to fill his canteen with water. The lady became frightened and closed the window as she signed back that she was afraid of the guards. Her tears were evident as she moved back into the interior of the room. Shortly after, another GI was so weakened by the exhaustion he suffered that he stepped over to the curb stone and sat down with his head in his hands. The saddened face of the frau appeared again in the window for a moment, then disappeared. Presently she returned, opened the window, looked to see if any guards were watching her, and handed down a small pitcher of warm milk for the sick boy. He drank it slowly, felt refreshed, and himself gratefully smuggled back the pitcher to the charitable lady.

When we were weary with standing and chilled through and through. The second section of the train arrive at bad orb. The prisoners detrained; another count was made of us. Forming a long column of about 1500 we were on the road again. It was a relief to be out of the boxcars, to stretch our legs, to take deep breaths of fresh, cold air. We had no idea how far we were going to walk and to what destination. Through a business district we moved, past some more hotels, then into a residence section, and finally out of the town. Here we found ourselves at the foot of a long beautiful valley with the hills on either side covered with Christmas trees. The entire landscape was snow-covered. On some of the open spaces little boys were skiing down the gentle slopes. Up the left side of the valley along road stretched ahead of us. We started the climb. Up, up we went and after an hour rested. Up we went again; the hill seemed interminable. Another rest and leg muscles stiffened; yet up we climbed.

The road led through a forest now. On either side tall pines shot skyward to form chasm which dwarfed us and seemed to swallow us up, as if to separate us from the world of war. Toward dusk in a small clearing to our right we passed a large two-story stone building, castle-like with turrets and gables - a German officers' club. Soft light and from the wide windows in the bays mingled with the softer light of the dying day to present a picture that might grace a season's greeting card; "a merry Christmas." Through the windows we could see men in uniform and ladies enjoying Christmas dinner. Were they eating wild boar roasted over the Yule logs on an open hearth? Or did they also experience the privations of war at their festival board? The picture was all a mockery to us who had tasted no food that day save the scraps of bread that were left overs of our midnight celebration.

The road turned again into the silent forest. At the top of the hill it broke out into an extensive, barren plateau that overlooked a broad horizon. On this hilltop sprawled the barbed wire fences, watch towers and one-story barracks of the prisoner of war encampment - stalag ix b, bad orb.

We did not enter by the main gate, but were led around to a side entrance to the enclosure. On the way around we saw the dog kennels where the police dogs were kept to track down any escapees and the double row of barbed wire fences and the wooden watch towers where guards were on duty and searchlights ready to be turned on at night. Stumbling over the frozen ground we arrived at a secondary gate. Here a group of ten German officers constituted a sort of reception committee for prisoners of war.

For the first time since our capture a distinction was made according to rank. We were separated into three groups: officers, non-commissioned officers, and privates. Officers were admitted first, and as we passed through the gate in single file several Germans counted us.

With a group of sixty-seven officers ranging in rank from second lieutenants to colonels I was assigned to the first building to the right - barrack 23. This barracks was a one-story frame structure about fifty feet long. From the outside it looked as cold and destitute as it was foreboding. The only entrance opened into a large room almost the full length of the building. Inside the door were two dirty kitchen tables and two broken chairs. In the center of the room stood a base-burner without any fire or materials for making one. Down the two sides of the room lay rows of double deck wooden shelves - the prison beds. An aisle six feet wide down the center contained one six foot wooden bench. These were the furnishings of the room. The wooden floor was grimy with sand and coal dust. The ten windows on each side were so dirty we could scarcely see through them, and where the glass had been broken, cardboard or pieces of discarded lumber patched the holes. Down the center of the ceiling hung four sockets, only two of which held low-powered electric light bulbs. At the far end of the barracks were two doors opening into smaller rooms; one of these contained a single toilet seat, another a kitchen sink. This was home for the time being.

Shortly a guard presented himself to say that we would each be issued one blanket and that a meal would be served in about an hour. Stacks of thin woolen coverlets were brought and some canvas strips to be put up on the windows as black-out curtains. Since there was not enough canvas--- the rest. A motley assortment of little pails and battered German mess-kits was brought in to be used as dinner service. No tableware was given us.

We waited eagerly for the arrival of our Christmas dinner. It came in two badly tarnished five-gallon milk cans and an old wooden washtub. The rusty looking cans contained oat soup and the tub, boiled potatoes. We each received as our portion a liter of weak soup, which was made of ground-up cabbage and rutabagas and from the tub of potatoes the individual serving, amounted to three or four small black spuds. This sumptuous Christmas dinner we ate out of our hands and drank from the tins while we talked of stuffed turkey with cranberry sauce, mashed potatoes and gravy, plum pudding and brandy, and all the trimmings that go to make up the dinners we had known in other years.

Christmas dinner over, we sat around the slim fire we had built in the stove, talked of the war, the proximity of victory and home. During the evening we were visited by a group of German officers who inspected the barracks, gave us the order of the day we were to follow and received our complaints. First of all, we bemoaned the fact that the wooden frames we were to use as beds had no mattresses and the blankets provided were insufficient in such cold weather. About this nothing could be done. Secondly, we did not have adequate fuel for the fire. This was deplored, but again nothing could be done as the entire country was lacking supplies of fuel and the amount on hand had to be conserved

for the long winter ahead. Thirdly, the food was terrible. "but you were unexpected, and we cannot get further supplies until after the Christmas holidays," was he answer to that. Lastly, there were no utensils to heat water for washing our mess-kits or for shaving. This complaint was deeded and soon we had seven or eight washpans delivered to the barracks. At eight o'clock more guards came, made a count of us, then on leaving locked the door of the barracks behind them. Now we were doubly secure behind barred doors and barbed wire, and the guards, we were told, had order to fire on anyone outside the barracks after dark.

The fire gradually died down; the barracks got very cold. One after another with all his clothes on curled up into the German blanket on a wooden shelf. A few officers lingered around the stove and talked in low tones. One of them, Lt. Col. Frederick W. Nagle, executive officer of the 423rd regiment, took from his pocket three bouillon powders, the little tin foil packages that came with K rations. He mixed them with water in a mess-can and patiently boiled the soup in the smoldering embers of the fire. The warm broth was then passed around to those who were still awake, a few sips for each man. The night wore on until only the two officers on guard (we took this precaution the first few nights in prison) huddled close to the stove in silence. The rest of us fell off to dreamless sleep.

The sun was up the morning of the day after Christmas before there was much stirring in the barracks or any activity outside. The fire which was started again furnished some heat to those who could crowd around it. The rest of the barracks not only looked but felt like a dilapidated barn. In the middle of the morning the doors were unbolted and we had breakfast, which consisted of a ration of bread and ersatz tea.

The bread issued to prisoners of war was a dark, coarse brown bread. It is said (and I easily believe it) that the principal ingredients were thirty percent potatoes, thirty percent whole grain, thirty percent acorns, and five percent sawdust. The ration was figured out beforehand so that each barracks received as many sixths, or eighths, or tenths, or twelfths of a loaf as it had prisoners. Whole loaves were delivered and it was up to the groups to divide them equitably. Our first morning the individual portion was one-eighth of a loaf, so for the sixty eight of us we received eight and a half loaves. The ersatz tea was portioned out a half-liter to a man (a liter is approximately a quart). It had one saving quality, it was hot. Whether there was any simulative or nutritive value is doubtful. It tasted nothing like what we were accustomed to call tea. This morning and each time thereafter that the drink was served there was tea left over, for no one took a fancy to it and the average man had all he could drink when he had downed the equivalent of a tea-cup.

Brooms were provided for sweeping the floor, that is ancient peasant brooms made of bundles of twigs and small branches of trees tied together with twine. They had no handles. After the mess-gear was washed and the floor swept, we waited for inspection. When the inspecting officer came we line up in two rows down the middle of the barracks facing the center. Again we were counted; again we complained of the lack of food and fuel. The only answer given was that we might leave the barracks and walk around the camp.

Stalag IX B consisted of five compounds or enclosures for prisoners of war. Each was separated from its neighbor by two barbed wire fences six feet apart, except where a prison street ran from one compound to another; at these points were wooden gates with

padlocks and a shelter for the armed guard stationed there. The five compounds at bad orb were occupied by Russian, French, Italian, polish, and American prisoners of war.

In the American compound we had a dozen barracks and a separate building for a kitchen. The barracks were not all alike in size or construction. The two largest were concrete structures with high roofs./ each of these buildings had two very large rooms with a section of three small rooms between them to be used as washrooms. The large rooms were filled with triple deck wooden beds provided with straw in lieu of mattresses. Three to four hundred officers occupied one of these compartments. The three other dormitories of the concrete building housed non-coms. Two of the smaller buildings were also made of concrete, and one of these was set aside as a dispensary to take care of the sick. Doctors who were prisoners were assigned quarters in this building. All the other buildings were built of wood much on the same plan as barrack 25, the one we sixty-eight officers used. Privates were assigned to these buildings. In the barracks next to ours 300 privates were quartered. Its furnishings comprised one small stove about eighteen inches high and two little tables; no other furnishings. The 300 had no place to sit or sleep except on the bare wooden floor. Their steel helmets served for soup bowl and drinking cup.

The entire American compound was built on a gentle slope in the middle of which the ground had been leveled off in an open space somewhat larger than a tennis court. This was the playground, the sportplatz, to be used for games when the weather was "fair and warmer".

The kitchen building, which assumed greater importance day by day, consisted of the kitchen proper and several small store rooms. The our stoves were masonry, built up from the earth with fire boxes under large vats. Flues connected all the stoves to a brick chimney in the center of the room. The kitchen in the American compound was operated by Russians for the first weeks of our imprisonment. Later our own GI's undertook the cooking.

On my second day at bad orb I was deloused. Not that I was lousy in the literal sense, ut this was standard operation procedure for all new arrivals at prisoner of war camps. I shiver now as I think of that cold day. We were taken in groups of fifty to a building in the Italian compound. In the first little room we took off all our clothes and stood on the cold concrete floor. Our wearing apparel was taken through a window into another room. When we were thoroughly chilled door opened and a guard admitted us to the shower room. From the ceiling hung ten nozzles. The tepid water was turned on from a control outside and the fifty of us told to hurry. After the water had run for a period of about two minutes we were well soaped, the flow stopped, but we scrubbed on until out hands and faces were clean and our feet, too. The water came on again for thirty seconds and we were supposedly cleansed of all lice and dirt.

In the next room the drying process took place. This meant standing around a stove with a weak fire in it until dry. No towels were furnished. In the last room our clothes came back to us through a window. They had been sprayed with a disinfectant that smelled strongly of sulfur. After all were dressed we marched back to our own compound and tried to find a warm place to recover from the chill.

While going to the delousing unit a wood pile was discovered in the Italian compound. Under a galvanized tin roof supported by poles were several logs, a saw-horse, and some axes. American ingenuity found a way of obtaining extra fuel. The Italians watched one

direction the Americans another, as small groups in long overcoats nonchalantly passed the guards at the gate. Some guards let us pass, others refused. Arriving at the wood-pile it was simple enough to hold two or three pieces of wood concealed under the overcoat with the hands through the pockets. Returning with the wood, we never had any difficulty getting past the guards, for we were going to our own prison, but there was always the possibility of meeting a German officer whom we were obliged to salute. This action would have been impossible without dropping the log from the right hand. Over a period of several days we obtained quite a bit of extra heat by this means, but the wood pile dwindled and the guards became more strict about allowing us to pass the gate.

Each afternoon a hand-drawn cart was brought into our compound loaded with briquettes of coal. These were divided equally into little piles, one pile for each stove in the compound. Each pile received fifteen to twenty bricks, approximately a pound apiece. By using them carefully we were able to keep the barracks warm at least part of the day and especially during the evening. With each day's supply of coal we also received a few twigs and bits of wood to be used in getting the fire started.

Almost daily we saw squads of Russian prisoners pass through our compound and tramp out into the forest to gather the dead branches from trees. These Russians, many of them mere youths, were thin, but healthy looking. Having been prisoners for two or more years, their clothes were in tatters, their shoes worn out. Many of them wore wooden shoes which they tied on with rags. Rags also took the place of stockings to protect their feet and legs from the snow and cold.

Each day more Americans taken in the bulge were arriving in the camp. Many those from our own units were known to us. Others from the 28th and 99 divisions had been on the flanks of the 106th in the Siegfried line. Before and after their capture all of them had been through dangers that try men's souls. On December 28th two more American priests arrived, Father Alan P. Madden, a capuchin from Pittsburgh, and Father Edward T. Hurley, of the diocese of Detroit.

Father Madden was Chaplain with the 112th regiment of the 28th keystone, or as the Germans called it, bucket of blood - division, and this was his second experience as a Nazi prisoner. He was captured the first time with his battalion aid station in the battle of Hurtgen forest.* there were over sixty seriously wounded Americans in the aid station at the time. The Germans at first refused permission to evacuate the wounded, but after several days of dickering allowed a hospital train to enter and remove the casualties within the American lines. The enemy continued to hold Father Madden, two medical officers, and another Chaplain, but two days later these men made their escape back to the American lines. For his action in this engagement Father Madden received the silver star.

Father Hurley was the catholic Chaplain with the 423rd regiment of the 106th division. He had been captured in the vicinity of Schoenberg. After many trials similar to those I have related, including the boxcar ride, except that the group he accompanied spent eight days instead of four on the railroad, he arrived at bad cold, hungry, but not at all dispirited. Father Hurley was one of the finest Chaplains with whom I was privileged to serve. His good spirits in the face of trouble and disappointments were always admired by his men. He became known to the officers and men of the regiment within a week of his arrival as their Chaplain. From then on he was popular, for crowds flocked to him for counsel and help and he was ever thinking up some plan for the spiritual betterment of the regiment. At bad cold in spite of his weakened condition he kept a cheerful countenance and was ever ready with

his jovial conversation to lift up the hearts of those who were worried or troubled or just disgusted with their prisoner-of-war condition.

Sometime during Christmas week we were all formally registered as prisoners of war. We were warned that this very important ceremony was coming, and that one of the details would be a thorough search and confiscation of articles that might be a detriment to the discipline of prison life. This included money.

Small groups of prisoners were taken to the administration building of the camp. In a large room was a semi-circle of tables at which sat soldiers of the German army. Each prisoner was assigned to a table and asked to give his name, rank, and army serial number.* we were instructed back in the states that these three items of information could be disclosed to friend or foe, but that further information might not be given until we made certain of the person's authority to ask and receive it. The enemy in any event was not to be given information of military nature because it might aid him in the prosecution of his part in the war. At that time in addition to name, rank, and serial number we were asked the name and address of our nearest relative, mother's maiden name, nationality, and date of capture. These questions therefore aroused grave doubts in our minds. We found ourselves in the dilemma of having to betray forbidden secrets or denying our dear ones at home the knowledge that we were still alive, to say nothing of the sufferings we might bring upon ourselves. Much discussion went on as to the advisability of either course. It was pointed out by a German officer that these forms were not registration blanks of the Wehrmacht, but had been designed by the international red cross and would be returned to them for purposes of communicating with relatives and handling mail between enemy countries.
(note)

*John Maloney in "let there be mercy (1941) on page 25 says: "as provided by treaty, belligerent powers submit the lists of prisoners they have taken as soon as humanly possible. The (international) red cross itself provides a blank card for prisoners to fill out; name and unit, date and place of birth and date of enlistment, and the address of their families. Master lists are made from these cards and sent to the red cross in Geneva. Immediately upon their arrival there the lists are photostated and sent on - frequently by diplomatic pouch - to the other country.

Out of all the argument and protest to the demands for this information, it was decided by the American officers that we could reasonably fill out the blank forms without prejudice to the military strategy or cowardice and disloyalty to the allied cause. The registration proceeded then in orderly fashion. We were asked if we had any ammunition or other property of our own government. This was to be handed over. Furthermore, any moneys we carried were to be surrendered and receipt would be given.

Having five pound-sterling notes I handed these over to the clerk and received my receipt, a small slip of paper three by four inches on which was written in pencil:

Receipt
From the prisoner of war 23629
5 pfd sterling
In words, five pounds sterling
Received Wegscheide 30.12.44
(and an illegible signature)

I was not asked to declare or show whatever else I had in my pockets.

This was our formal registration as kriegsgefangener (prisoners of war). Characteristically the long German word was abbreviated to Kriegie, the title by which we designated ourselves thereafter. Each Kriegie was given a serial number on metal "dog-tag" which he was to wear on a string around his neck together with his American identification tag.

For five days the registration of the several thousand men who were in the camp went on. Unfortunately the difficulty about the information asked of us caused much discussion and wrangling. One day a large group of enlisted men were kept standing out in the cold for three hours because they refused to give more than name, rank, and serial number. I do not know whether they had not been told they might give more or whether they insisted that further information was an act of disloyalty.

The bone of contention in the many arguments about this information eventually settled down to discussing the reason for giving the maiden name of our mothers. Rumors spread that the Germans were endeavoring to discover the Jews among the prisoners, even those who might be Jewish on maternal side only; rumors that those of German descent would be segregated and harshly treated for fighting against the land of their ancestors; rumors that Italians and half-Italians would be sent to northern Italy in order to hold the Lombard cities from revolting against the axis; rumors that Russian and Slav saboteurs were entering Germany from the west and could be detected in this way. Fantastic as some of these reports were, nothing was done which showed any distinction in treatment resulting from the disclosure of the mothers' maiden names.

Life at stalag ix b settled down to a routine of trying to keep warm and to monotonous waiting for the next meal. There was never any activity in the camp before daylight, which at this time of the year is about eight o'clock. Most of us tried to sleep or at least stayed in bed until the morning tea was served. Then the barracks were tidied up as neatly as possible, the floor swept with those backbreaking brooms, the blankets folded, the remaining supplies of wood and coal carefully hidden from view.

a German officer attended by three or four enlisted men then made the daily inspection. On their entrance into the barracks we stood at attention near our beds while the inspectors walked the length of the room and scowled at each one of us. We all had one thought in mind, 'would they find the fuel that was hidden away or discover that parts of the beds had been broken up and used in the fire?'

On one of these inspections the Hauptman looked at me and through his interpreter asked,

"how are you getting along?"

"we are not getting enough to eat," I said, "nor do we have enough fuel, and we need more blankets."

"too bad," was the answer I received. "the German people are also cold and hungry." When this was communicated through the English-speaking aide, another question was asked,

"how long do you think you will be here?"

"I have no idea. This I know: we do not wish to stay here long. We would like to return to our homes very soon."

"where is your home?"

"in the united states."

"you can go there after the German victory!"

These last words were dramatized with sparks from his eyes and a sweeping gesture. We didn't know, and I doubt that he did, that just about this time generals Eisenhower, Bradley, and Patton had stopped the advance of von Rundstedt toward the allied supply depots at Liege and Antwerp and were initiating the drive that was to end a few months later in the crushing German defeat.

After inspection we were free to leave the building and to walk around the compound or visit with friends in other barracks. Many gravitated toward the kitchen to find out what was on the menu for the next meal. Sometimes an opportunity arose to bribe the Russians with cigarettes for bread and potatoes or a bowl of soup. One day however an argument started in this little black market. One American was just about to "close a deal" with a Russian cook when another American offered a few more cigarettes for the same handout of food. This at last started a free-for-all between Russians and Americans.

To prevent international complications the German officers put the kitchen 'off limits' to Americans until the Russians were relieved of the job of cooking for us.

We met old friends and made new ones in this daily round of social calls. New rumors were picked up and old ones spread from barracks to barracks. It amounted to believing what you liked and rejecting what you did not like. Most acceptable were the reports that we would be issued food parcels from the international red cross. There was constant speculation as to the contents of the packages, the quantity of each item, and the frequency with which they would reach us.

Almost every day I was sure to pick up a good rumor when I visited the non-coms barracks where my assistant, Paul Dalton, lived.

Frequently I found him sitting on the top shelf of a triple-deck bed with his buddies, corporals Donald Regier of Lincoln, Nebraska, and Lester Sherman of Cumberland, Maryland. With wisps of straw bunched around their feet to keep warm they looked like birds in a nest. These three were the clerks and drivers of the Chaplains of the 422nd regiment, technically Chaplains' assistants; in their jargon they called themselves "deacons". As deacons they did fine work in conducting religious services for their fellow prisoners in the absence of Chaplains.

Constantly we Chaplains were asked if we had a prayer book or a rosary or a new testament to give away or loan. Time hung heavy on prisoners' hands, and here was some consolation for the ministers of god in the intimate conversations and words of encouragement we were able to give in the short days and long nights at bad odds.

Lieutenant colonel Joseph C. Matthews, Jr., of Raleigh, North Carolina, was executive officer of the 422nd regiment. He was captured on the day of our unsuccessful attempt to

recover Schoenberg. Through the sufferings of the march to Gerolstein and the ride on boxcars to bad orb he excised the functions of senior officer with the group he was with. He demanded food and comfort for the captives of the 422nd and 423 regiments. At bad orb his solicitude for the men of his former command was like that of a Chaplain. In fact, I often told him jokingly that he missed his branch of service by getting into the infantry instead of the Chaplains' corps. I use to meet him daily talking over the details of our part in the battle of the bulge with small groups of company grad officers and enlisted men. Many a man who was downcast and on the verge of breaking because of the seeming ignominy of defeat was lifted from his despondency by the enthusiasm of col. Matthews and the pride of unit he imparted for the heroic action of the two lost regiments of the 106th division.

Cigarettes were at a premium after the first few days and even the stubs were welcome. Seldom did a man smoke a whole cigarette alone. There were always others who wanted just a puff or what was left when the finger began to burn. I remember new year's day having three cigarettes. I believe I received them from col. Matthews. How new year's is also the titular feast of the society of Jesus, so I decided on an appropriate clerical celebration in keeping with the means at hand. I paid a visit to Fathers Hurley and Madden and told them we would celebrate this great jesuit feast together by each of us smoking a whole cigarette.

"oh, no!" They said. "we'll smoke one today, one tomorrow, and one the next day." We lit the one and passed it around among ourselves and several others who happened to be in the vicinity or who were drawn to the smoke like moths to a light. The second and third day of this tritium saw a repetition of this performance. After that we were lucky to get a puff from anyone who was lucky enough to have a cigarette.

Early each afternoon we were all in our proper barracks for the second and usually the last meal of the day. Food carriers (about one for every ten men) were appointed by each barracks' leader to go to the kitchen at the designated time and bring the food. They returned carrying the old milk cans and washtubs or buckets full of soup which was always an item on this bill of fare. The monotony of soup and the variety of kinds did not prevent us from rejoicing at this time of day. None of our mothers would care to acknowledge the recipes as their own. If we had potato soup with horse meat we had a feast. Other concoctions were carrots and rutabagas, rutabagas and beets, cabbage and water - mostly water. The all-time low in food occurred when we had what we called "green hornet". If a broth were made of dried and wormy dandelions, the result would probably be more appealing in aroma and taste, though not in looks, than this meal of boiled grass. On days when green hornet was served we thought of the substantial food that was being wasted in America or that we had ourselves wasted in the past and resolved that we would never complain of American food again and more particularly never waste it in our homes.

At soup time we lined up down the narrow aisle in the barracks with our battered mess tins in our hands. Each man received his first dole of soup and still keeping his place in line waited for the second round. This was a smaller portion but often thicker as the heavier portions sank to the bottom of the bucket. When no more soup remained in the big container, the line was broken. For the most part we drank the broth from the kits we had; a few men however found bits of wood which they whittled into spoons or forks for eating purposes.

Later in the afternoon ersatz tea, on rare occasions ersatz coffee was given us with the daily ration of bread. We received on three days a week a small portion of oleomargarine, or cheese, and on one or tow occasions during our stay at bad orb a slice of wurst.

Before dark we all had to be in our barracks. The blackout curtains were put up, the fire started anew, the doors bolted by the guards and the most pleasant time of the day began. In the dim light from the fire and the dull glow from the ceiling lamps stories were told, informal discussions carried on, arguments engaged i. Each evening a few minutes were devoted to a religious service, a hymn, a prayer, and a short sermon. Lt. Herbert Johnson of Macon, Georgia, would often entertain our barracks with stories of the south and of Alaska where he had spent two years with the army and Lt. James Morrissey of new York with songs that were popular in the past and present, songs that he himself had sung over the radio in his civilian days. Then when the fire died out and the barracks got cold we crawled into bed and went to sleep. Often on nights when the sky was clear we were aroused by the sound of air-raid sirens.

Squadrons of bombers roared over hear. The British on their night missions penetrated deeper in the enemy country than where we were. The target on the night of January 3rd, however, was not far from us. Some thought it was Frankfurt. From the peck-holes in the blackout curtains we saw the southern sky red with the fires lighted by the bombs and spangled with the bursts of anti-aircraft guns.

One morning in January as I was making a trip to the wood pile in the Italian compound, I met an American GI of Italian ancestry who spoke the language. He told me that an Italian priest was living in the barracks next to the wood pile. I got my American friend to ask the Italians to bring out their priest. In a few minutes he came and we were about to introduce ourselves when a signal came from our stooges that a German officer was approaching. Next day I watched from the wire of our enclosure until the priest was outside again. He also was on the lookout for me. This time we were able to get together for a few minutes.

Through the medium of Latin he told me he belonged o the diocese of Milan and had been a prisoner with his nationals since the capitulation of Italy in the summer of '46. I asked him about mass, and he told me that he was able to say mass only on Sundays, and in a chapel in the French compound, where also were tow French priests who had all the accessories for the celebration of mass. With great joy I told Fathers Madden and Hurley of the discovery and resolved to contact the French priests as soon as possible.

Through military channels I asked permission to visit the French priests for the purpose of getting supplies for mass. It took two or three days for the red tape to unravel; then early one morning before breakfast I was called by a German guard to the headquarters of the American compound. Here I was issued a pass and the guard conducted me to the French priests.

It was the sixth of January, the feast of the epiphany. In a small building they had erected a fine altar; there were crude wooden benches and a Christmas crib banked with several evergreen trees. In the sacristy the two French Fathers had a sort of office with a small library and a warm stove. Here, while the guard waited, they prepared a mass kit for me from the supplies which they had. The kit that I carried back with me consisted of a small altar stone, three small altar cloths, a corporal and purificator, a small mass book, two candles and candlesticks, a chalice, a small vial of wine and about a hundred small hosts.

Happy were all the American Catholics and especially grateful were we three priests that we possessed the minimum essentials for the celebration of mass.

Since the supply of wine and hosts was so slim, we decided we would say mass only on Sundays. Two days later was the Sunday within the octave of the epiphany and all three of us said mass. The Saturday before we advertised in all the barracks that we would have the three masses, their time and place. In order to accommodate all the men who wished to attend we urged each barracks to attend a certain mass.

In barracks 25 a rather small group of non-coms was housed and very little furniture obstructed the room. Hence there was space for outsider to crowd in. Here on that Sunday afternoon we three priests took turns at saying mass while the other two heard confessions in corner. It was no cathedral; but no consecrated church ever held a more grateful crowd of worshippers than the cold barracks at bad orb, where the priest lacked vestments and the dirty table of an altar left much to be desired in the way of fine linen, crucifix and altar cars, to say nothing of such luxuries as flowers and lights. Yet around that rude setting mere hearts filled with faith, hope, and love; faith in the sublime mysteries enacted under the visible forms of bread and wine, hope in the power of the redeeming sacrifice to free us from the hands of our enemies, and love born of fellowship with the suffering Christ in cold, hunger, and privation.

Chapter five

Hammelburg

Rumors circulated through the camp at bad orb on January 9th and 10th that the American officers would be moved to another prison. Fathers Madden, Hurley, and I discussed the rumors and also the obligation we had of doing all in our power to get permission for one of us to remain with the two thousand or more enlisted men in stalag ix b. The duty of leaving some officer personnel behind was also taken up by the protestant Chaplains and the doctors who were with us. On the night of the tenth it was officially confirmed that the officers would be taken away within the next few days. At the request of the senior American officers, three doctors, a catholic priest, and a protestant Chaplain were permitted to remain at bad orb. Every man eligible under the three categories offered his services to stay. Father Hurley insisted that he was the logical man to supply the position of catholic Chaplain, so Father Madden and I acceded to his desire.

Father ed Hurley (*) and Chaplain Neal (the protestant who remained with him) did splendid work at bad orb. So did the doctors who were left with our GI's. In February the non-coms were moved to Ziegenheim. Easter Monday, April 2, stalag ix b was liberated. Among Father Hurley's memorable achievements was the establishment of a hold name society in the prison camp. Of this Paul Dalton, my assistant writes, "while at bad orb Father Hurley started a holy name society and promised the fellows they'd receive membership cards when they got home. Sure enough, a swell letter from Father Hurley came to the men along with a card which read like this: this is to certify that.... Is a charter member of the holy name society of stalag ix b, bad orb, Germany. The fellows are certainly proud of it and say it's the most valuable souvenir they have of PW days."

* see appendix 9: Father Hurlley's letter provided by Corinne Pray.

* see appendix 10: John Robb's letter on Father Hurley.

At dawn the morning of January 11th, we were aroused early by the guards who told us the officers would be moved immediately. We scarcely had time to get our morning cup of tea. We needed no time to gather our belongings, for no one possessed anything he could not pick up in a moment. In the sportplatz in the middle of the compound we were assembled, counted, and called by name: the only time in all our Kriegie life we were recognized as individuals with name and rank. It was a cold winter morning and we were kept standing at least an hour in the snow. A German officer finally came with the list of names. We were to be arranged in the order designated by the list. The difficulty came in trying to recognize our names from the pronunciation used by the German. After much bungling we at last were line up. There was a final count and roll-call as we marched out of the gate of the American compound.

Near the administration building of the stalag we were assigned two empty barracks in which to await the movement orders. The barracks protected us from the wind and snow, but afforded little relief from the severe cold. At non we were issued rations for three days: a half loaf of bread and pound of canned corned beef for two men. Father Madden and I teamed together.

Early in the afternoon we assembled again at the main gate of the camp. There was further delay as we were handed over to a new company of guards who were to escort us away. The never-ending counting took place again as one commander consigned us like so many cattle to the other. Then we were arranged in groups of sixty - the old boxcar number - and six guards assigned to each group of prisoners. As the delay and confusion grew, someone remembered that Father Madden could speak German. He was therefore summoned to head of the line to act as interpreter. But he had my bread and I carried his corned beef. Therefore we complained about being separated. I was then permitted to go to the head of the line as aide-de-camp to the interpreter.

Cold and numb from standing in the snow, we off down the long hill to the town of bad orb. Easier as it was going down hill, the trip was hard on us due to our weakened condition and the extreme cold of the day. Again we looked at those hills covered with Christmas trees; saw the children skiing down the slopes. And came into the town with the summer hotels named after the saints. Father Madden and I were near the head of the column and as we came through the business district we noticed the shopkeepers raising the metal screens which protected the plate glass windows from fragmentation during bombings. With what seemed to be a certain amount of pride they stood at the doors of their shops to watch us pass. Sad to say, however, bad orb experienced the desolation of destruction before the war was over.

At the railroad station there was another wait. The railroad yards were filled with several lines of boxcars, but no locomotives were in sight. "there is an engine!" Someone exclaimed. "and there's another!" Several locomotives had been moved onto sidings and very carefully camouflaged.

Our train at last arrived and pulled in a string of the familiar "40 and 8's". Again it was sixty men to a car, except the first one to which the senior officers, their interpreter, and his aide were assigned. We were only twenty-five, but that did not mean more space per prisoner, for in the middle of the car was a crude barbed wire screen with a little opening in it. We prisoners were all crowded beyond the screen. The rest of the car was reserved for a squad (ten men) of the guards. In their half there was some clean straw and a little stove.

The trip was uneventful. We were fairly comfortable with a little heat from the stove and the bread and corned beef we had for rations. In the evening we tried to engage the guards in conversation and get them to tell us whither we were going, but they were not anxious to communicate much with us. We got to singing and by chance sang "holy night". It warmed the Germans' hearts to hear a melody they loved sung in a foreign tongue. We sang it again, they in German, we in English. Then they sang some of their favorite melodies while we listened. We all laughed and joked and they turned out to be tolerably congenial traveling companions. All night long the train started and stopped, jolting us with each change of motion. Some colonels and majors dropped off to sleep, but the cramped quarters and jolting made sleeping much worse than on the wooden shelves in stalag ix b.

The following morning we detrained at Hammelburg, on the map a distance of twenty-five miles from bad orb, though the train no doubt covered much more than that. Perhaps it was only the bright sunlight and the clean snow that heightened the impression, but Hammelburg appeared a most picturesque village. The houses and shops were all built of stone in the Bavarian style and almost every one of them had a niche over the doorway or in the center of the front with a statue of our blessed mother, st. Joseph, or some other saint. At the street intersections shrines were built in honor of the sacred heart, the guardian angels, and patron saints. A beautiful catholic church, with school, playground, and convent, occupied a prominent position on the main street. Weeks later Lt. Robert Frash, of south bend, Indiana, and regimental adjutant of the 422nd infantry, arrived at Hammelburg with another group of prisoners. He too was impressed with the statues in the village. "our lady seemed to smile." So he said, "and say", "see, I am with you. Why should you fear?"

At the far end of the town the main road branched, the right fork going off parallel with a little stream, the left spanning the water and winding up the side of a long hill. At the fork in the road stood a humble wayside shrine, a bas-relief depicting Christ carrying his cross, and our lord was facing the road up the hill. He seemed to smile (and many remarked this to me), "life is an uphill road for anyone in the hands of his enemies and each man must carry his cross. I am the way, follow me." It was a spiritual uplift that relieved the agony of that ascent. Slowly, slowly, on and up we toiled, stopping now and then to eat snow to slake the thirst we suffered. As we wound around the side of the hill we looked down on the "village of the lamb", Hammelburg, quiet, peaceful, not yet touched by the ravages of war.

It was five kilometers when the road leveled off on a ridge and the view opened into a rolling country of snow-covered meadows, forest-covered hills. Off to the right about another kilometer was the prison camp, number thirteen, many long one-story stucco buildings sprawled over the hillside; in the midst of trees fine stone structures were half concealed and a stone water-tower lifted itself more than a hundred feet. Around the

entire group of buildings wound the familiar, high, barbed wire fences, interrupted every hundred yards with the wooden watchtowers.

As we approached nearer to the camp, the elegance of the buildings convinced us that this place had not been originally intended for prisoners of war. We learned later it was a training camp for the regular army, but for the last two years had been used as a prison stockade for Russians, poles, French, Yugoslavs, and Dutch captured in the war. Now the first Americans were arriving. The heavily wired gates swung wide to admit us. We were counted again. The gates were locked behind us and we remained standing in the snow. Later we were taken into a large indoor riding academy, the floor of which was covered with tanbark. Here we were lined up, locked over, and starred at by a contingent of some fifteen high ranking officers of the Wehrmacht. Father Madden interpreted for us that we were not to be lodged in this stable permanently, but that later in the day we would be assigned barracks. During the wait we found a hydrant with fresh water, sat down on the turf and ate some more bread and corned beef.

At three o'clock in the afternoon exactly one hundred officers were taken at random and removed from the riding floor. An hour later the second hundred, which included Father Madden and me, were conducted past a row of barracks that housed slav prisoners, through two guarded gates into a compound that consisted of ten erstwhile barracks for Hitler's pick of the master race. This was Oflag IX-B. We were led onto the first floor of the only two-story building in the enclosure. This building was formerly used as a dining-hall, with a well appointed kitchen and two spacious, lightsome dining rooms. Now the rooms into which we came were free of all furnishings, except a few battered benches, an old piano, and a stove which had not held live coals for a long time. What window panes were left were very dirty. The broken ones were patched with cardboard and wood. A closed double door opened into another large room the same size as the one in which we were. In this second hall the equipment and personnel were set up for processing the latest arrivals. A guard at the door admitted one or two at a time. Curiously we sized up the situation in the next room. As each man was admitted he was assigned to a place at a long counter or table and given a stool or chair to stand on. He then removed every stitch of clothing he wore and handed it over to the inspecting officials. When they were satisfied that all documents, maps, secret weapons, or parts of radio sets were not left in the pockets or sewed in the lining of shirts or pants, the clothes were returned to their owners who then dressed and left the building by another door. All of us had things we valued personally and did not care to have fall into enemy hands. Every effort to contact men who had gone through the processing to whom we could slip those articles failed. So it was either destroy or surrender what things we had on us. As we glanced again and again during the intermittent openings of the door it was all too evident that this search was thorough and complete.

A deep secret of my own was not in jeopardy. Several weeks previously I had sewed into the hem of my trouser leg one ten and three twenty-dollar bills, nicely concealed from any superficial inspection. Could I now take a chance of having them discovered, and I a priest? My better judgment prompted me to put the money in a place where it would appear that I was not attempting to conceal it. I ripped open the seam and transferred the money to a secret pocket in my wallet. I was then ready to expose myself and all that I carried on me or in my pockets to enemy view. The door opened; it was my turn to enter.

Assigned to a place at the counter, I said, "i am a catholic priest, "priester, Katholich." A few eyebrows raised and a group of Germans gather round. To prove the statement I withdrew from my pockets the winter volume of the breviary, a small ritual, my stole and

the triple oil-stocks. The breviary and ritual were passed from one to the other German and all nodded assent that they were evidence of the catholic priesthood. The oil-stocks were something new to them. For all the world this brass cylinder, the size of a small arms' cartridge, might be a booby rap, a secret weapon, a radio.

"now these are the holy oils," I said, "used in the administration of baptism and extreme unction."

"oil for sacraments," one of them said in an undertone.

The sergeant held out his hand to take them from me.

"no", I said, "you cannot have this. This is a sacred thing. These oils are consecrated, and may not be profaned."

"give me," he insisted.

"no, no, only for priest" I was more insistent.

"ya, ya." Another soldier came to my aid. "for sacrament, for priest." And he made a gesture in my direction that showed he understood the predicament I was in.

And they motioned me to put the oil-stocks on the counter.

The emptying of my pockets proceeded. Out came my flashlight with the worn out battery, a wooden spoon, a pen-knife, two pocket notebooks, gloves, some dirty handkerchiefs, a dirty pair of socks, an overseas' cap, a piece of soap, some toilet paper, my watch, a comb, pen, and pencil.

All these things were looked at with mingled disappointment and indifference. Then came the wallet. That was seized quickly and set apart with the notebooks and flashlight. Holding my breath and looking at them with an air of suspense I felt the last pocket in my pants and slowly pulled out the contents in one handful - three dollars and forty cents in American, British, French, and Belgian coins, a rosary, and a pair of dice. They all gazed at the little pile in silence and amazement. Then the sergeant picked up the dice. "you are a hell of a priest," he said in English and walked away.

"helmet," said the clerk. And my steel helmet and fiber helmet liner were passed back to a pile near a window, leaving me with only a little knit cap.

"take off your clothes!" And beginning with my field coat, I removed field jacket, woolen OD shirt, woolen undershirt, and cotton undershirt, shoes, woolen socks, cotton socks, OD pants, woolen drawers and cotton drawers. I stood there in my dogtags, POW identification tag and scapular medal. The clothes were thoroughly searched to make sure nothing was hidden in them.

Before long I was fully dressed. My breviary and ritual were stamped "gepruf" (passed y censor) and returned to me. I picked up the oil-stocks casually, as a division was being made of the other things on the table. Everything was returned to me except the helmet, the flashlight, the two notebooks, my wallet, the coins and the pair of dice. These placed in

a manila envelope, marked with my name and POW number, and carried to a desk at the end of the room. I filled my pockets and left the inspection room by the other door. Across a corridor a group of about twenty officers were waiting. This room had once been the cocktail lounge or gar - more properly, perhaps, beer hall - in the Nazi heyday. The walls were painted with life-sized cartoons of drinking parties and characters from German stories. A legend in German script was woven into the pattern of the pictures.

"the Heinies will take us to our barracks when we get thirty men here," was the latest news. We fell to discussing what we had lost and what we had retained and speculating what disposition would be made of the things taken from us.

It was not long before the required thirty men came through the inspection ordeal and were marched from this building to barracks eleven, room seven. "seven come eleven." I had played by dice well, for I landed in a room with thirty (later increased to forty-five) of the grandest fellows I have ever lived with. In this room we were to live together for more than two months in closer quarters than is fit for man or beast, excepting of course sixty men in a boxcar.

Barracks 11 was one of six buildings in the compound all built on the same plan. At one end were two small rooms on either side of a narrow corridor, then four or five large rooms one after another down the length of the building. Room 7 was like all the rest, one door opening into a camp street, two windows facing the street and three at the back of the room. The room was approximately square, fifty feet more or less each way. On the windowless sides double deck and triple deck beds stuck out from the wall its entire length. In the space down the middle were a brick chimney, a stove, three kitchen tables, and a few benches and chairs. Two dirty electric lights hung by cords from the ceiling. Two dirty electric lights hung by cords from the ceiling.

The thirty of us entered the barracks and were left to ourselves by the guards. Each man selected his bed and all were satisfied with the lodging accommodations, for there were several bunks left over. Father Madden and I had adjacent beds on the second shelf about the middle of the left. Side.

Before dark German guards came again to bring us blankets and eating utensils. The blankets arrived on a cart and we were each to receive two. As the supply was short, it amounted to three blankets for two men. This challenged American ingenuity again. We pushed two tiers of bunks together making a sort of double bed. Then by spreading one blanket over the two bunks and the pallets of wood shaving as far as it would reach, the two men sleeping adjacent to one another had two blankets to cover them or roll up in. During our stay at Hammelburg there were few nights when the cold was so severe as to keep us awake. Of course, we piled into bed clothed with jackets, overcoats, and all the wearing apparel we possessed.

The issue of tableware made us anticipate some nourishing meals. Each man received an earthenware bowl, a thick porcelain mug, a pewter knife, fork, and spoon. Whatever the quantity and quality of the chow that was to come we at least could eat it like civilized men and not with our hands out of tin cans. That first evening we were to be given no food, for on leaving bad orb the ration of bread and bully beef was to last for three days and this was only the second day. For those who had some fragments of a half loaf of bread and half pound of beef there was something to restore a bit of the energy lost in the

climb from the village to the camp. Around the warm fire we gathered, toasted the slices of black bread we had, and absorbed some heat.

The senior officer of our room was captain John j. Madden (not Father Alan P. Madden, also a captain's rank). Captain Jack Madden is a Chicago lawyer and holds a commission in the national guard. At the time of his capture he was an artillery liaison officer with the 423rd regimental combat team. To him as ranking officer fell the task of preserving order among the prisoners of barracks 11, room 7 in matters pertaining to domestic discipline? He appointed men to specific tasks - tending the fire, carrying food and water, sweeping the floor and other duties of an occasional nature. The splendid cooperation and comradeship of the men in 11-7 relieved the barracks-leader of the necessity of issuing any harsh commands or placing burdensome tasks on unwilling shoulders.

7 Appendix 4: Father Cavanaugh photo and inscription to Capt. John Madden

Jack Madden saw to the equitable distribution of the blankets and tableware, then gave us verbally the few regulations received from higher headquarters governing the order of the room;-

the blackout curtains must be put up before dark.

lights must be out by ten o'clock.

anyone wanting water to shave or wash should carry it himself from the hydrant on the street.

one pan of water would be heated after meals to clean the mess equipment.

The situation that first night at Oflag XIII-B forebode a long sojourn together in the crowded and ill-equipped quarters in which we found ourselves. All of us realized that we could make life pleasant for one another in proportion to our mutual cooperation and forbearance. Selfishness, pettiness and jealousy, suspicion and recrimination just had to be overcome if our life as Kriegies was to be made bearable.

Suffering with a fellow-man is the root meaning of sympathy and acquaintance with the background of fellow sufferers is the foundation of friendship. Here we were, a group of men thrown together by the vicissitudes of war as fellow prisoners at the mercy of our enemies. The first gathering around the fire that cold January night offered the natural opportunity to get acquainted, for, though we had all been prisoners for several weeks, we had always previously been in much larger groups and knew one another only by sight and not by name. Captain Madden suggested that we have a round of introductions. Each man of the thirty took a few minutes to acquaint all the rest with his name, his home town, his civilian background, his army career and the highlights of his combat experience and capture. Late into the night we uncovered mutual interests, mutual friends, and opened up new appreciations, new sympathies. When the fire smoldered and the wind howled outside we climbed into the hard beds to get some sleep.

The first roll-call, or 'appell' was held in the morning. All the prisoners in the compound were lined up in a column of five's along the main street - the Herman Goering Strasse - by platoons according to barracks. Each room leader reported to the senior officer of the building giving the number of men present in his room; each building leader gave the strength of his barracks. The senior American officer in turn reported the total to the German captain and his staff who came to make the count. We then were counted to verify the numbers. This procedure was repeated day after day at eight in the morning and five in the evening, rain or shine, sleet or snow. There were times when we felt the cold wind blowing through our thinning arms and limbs and were chilled to the marrow while the camp was searched - barracks, kitchen, lazaret, and latrine - for some missing Kriegele.

On warmer days we prolonged the counting in bright sunshine when out of mere devilment, little men hid behind big men to make the number fall short of the total, or spaces were left vacant in the ranks to step up the count beyond the reported number. Smiles of mischievous delight rippled the files as back and back and back again came the guards to count the spoils of war, each time arriving at variant figure until they were so confused as to call one another nasty names in sharp sounding phrases in the very presence of their captives.

Our second day at Hammelburg was the third for which we had been given rations. Therefore we were not strictly entitled to an issue of food. Noble charity and inter-allied cooperation came to our aid. In the compound next to the north fence and separated by a single barbed wire barrier four thousand Serbian officers lived, prisoners of the Nazis for almost four year. Hitler had begun the invasion of Yugoslavia on April 6, 1941, throwing huge forces and mechanized equipment in the campaign. In twelve days the battle was over. Over a hundred thousand prisoners of war were taken, practically all of them Serbs. A very high percentage of their officers were in this camp.

Beyond the south fence another group of several hundred Serbs were quartered in the Serbian lazaret or hospital and a few adjacent barracks for the old and infirm. Some of these officers were again men who had spent up to forty years in the army, had been in action in three wars and been prisoners in both world conflicts. About a hundred of their number were already buried in the military cemetery at Hammelburg. Knowing the rigors of captivity through long months and years of waiting, their pity for us manifested itself in a most remarkable manner. From the meager stores of food they had individual Serbs served small groups of yanks hot coffee in tiny tin cups and thin slices of bread and sugar through the barbed wire fences.

It was on this day that I met Captain Mihotovich, a Serb who spoke story book English like so many of his compatriots. They had learned English from books and from a few of their number who knew something about the pronunciation.

Considerable rivalry had existed between tow English speaking teachers; one had spent some years in London, the other in Chicago. Hence there was a marked difference in their pronunciation, especially in the sound of "a". The Chicago trained Serb was vindicated when we arrived at Oflag XIII-B. In fact all the Yugoslavs were thrilled when real Americans came to live next door to them and happier still when they found they could understand and be understood by them. Capt. Mihotovich served a small group with whom I happened to be at the moment two cups of black coffee and a slice of bread.

In addition to their individual benefactions, the highest ranking Serbian general (there were some twenty generals held as prisoners at Hammelburg) arranged to send us through the German authorities enough potatoes and salt to make a thin but delicious soup as an evening meal for the five hundred of us Americans. Out of their penury they gave generously, these noble men of a conquered country but of unconquerable soul.

It is difficult to portray adequately the remarkable manliness of this Balkan race. Courageous and deeply honorable every last man of them they possessed strong, abiding patriotism toward the little nation on the Adriatic where for eight generations there had not been a Serb who did not experience the hardships of war. In its resort town of Sarajevo the shot was fired to open world war 1. In April 1941 the mechanized army of Nazi expansion rode roughshod from Ljubljana through Belgrade and down onto the Greek peninsula.

Orthodox Christians for the most part, they hated with Slavic hate communism, atheism, and materialism, and all that the philosophy personified by Hitler and Stalin stands for. So gallant was their devotion to king peter, the exiled boy monarch, that they honored him with the same acclaim as Churchill and Roosevelt. They were also staunch adherents of general Drazh Mihailovich, the leader of the Chenik forces, and equally brave in their denunciation of Tito and his partisans. Unwavering in their loyalties to god and country, they strikingly brought home to us the tangled mix of European politics in which philosophy, religion, nationality, tradition, together with all the noble and all the base manifestations of human nature are so inextricably intertwined. A humble French priest in Normandy expressed the situation perfectly before I was captured when he told me, "you Americans are so naive to think you can solve the problems of Europe." Poor Europe - land of strong convictions, intense loves and devilish intrigues; yet from the mingling of its diverse racial stocks and culture has the united states of America risen to its position of power and wealth among the nations of the earth.

We had arrived at Hammelburg on Thursday. Saturday the regular schedule of meals was begun. The kitchens of the one time spotless dining hall of the compound still housed three seventy-gallon vats. Everything warm that the Wehrmacht served us was cooked in these boilers; hence we subsisted on hot water, coffee, soups and stews.

For breakfast the usual drink was ersatz coffee, which, substitute though it was, far surpassed the ersatz tea of bad orb. Tow men were detailed to the kitchen to carry up to barracks 11-7 the galvanized eight-gallon pot which was welcomed as often as it came with the boisterous cry, "hot stuff!" Seldom was the pot filled to the brim. At breakfast time we were often fortunate to have it more than half full, for then we had a second demi-tasse of coffee. The arrival of the pot always occasioned pleasant suspense until we saw for ourselves the level of the liquid and tested its flavor. The big container was placed on a bench in the middle of the room, then all filed past to receive their cup of coffee or tea.

Breakfast over, we cleaned up the barracks and swept the floor with those miserable twig brooms, which seemed to follow us form bad orb, emptied the ashes, and washed the tables. I said, "we"; I should have said the rest of barracks 11-7, for to the eternal credit of our fellow prisoners they never allowed the padres to use a broom or carry chow up from the kitchen. "Father, this ain't no work for you to be doing."

On this Saturday morning the Chaplains (priests and ministers) thought seriously of Sunday services. Father Madden and I paid an official visit to the Oflag commandant, who had a small office in barracks 10. We asked for a mass-kit so that we might have mass for the catholic men. The officer, Oberleutnant Schmidtbauer, was courteous enough to promise his help in securing one. We further informed him that mass kit or not we wanted to hold a service for the men.

"you will deliver a sermon?" He asked sharply.

"yes, of course," we replied.

"then you must submit a copy for censorship today," he said.

"oh no," we argued. "one of the principles for which we are fighting this war is freedom of religion, and it would not be right for us to submit sermons to you to be censored."

"then you may not have a religious service," he said.

"oh yes, we can. We can have a service without a sermon. Sermons are not essential. If we have mass, that is everything. If no mass, we will say the rosary and other prayers."

"very well. I shall ask the general." General von Goeckle was the commanding officer of all the Stalags and Oflag's in the Hammelburg area.

Father Madden and I left the office and wandered through the compound. At every barracks we met catholic prisoners who asked us where we would have mass on Sunday. We could only tell them that there was much uncertainty as yet and in all probability there would be no mass, but we would have a prayer service if at all possible. And we repeated over and over again the account of our interview.

Later in the day we stopped at the block headquarters. The officer on duty at the time said there was no mass-kit available but that something would be done to get one. We could hold a service if we submitted our sermon in writing for him to censor. Again we stubbornly refused while insisting that a sermon was not necessary for a catholic service.

The German officer finally agreed to a Sunday gathering, but warned us that a representative of the commanding general would be present. We set the time and place - half past nine in the beer-hall, the room with the wall cartoons of drinking bouts, beer songs, and ungainly German caricatures. Two sour faced guards stood at the door while sixty to seventy Catholics strolled in and gathered in small groups to discuss the situation. Several deplored the lack of mass equipment and asked questions about ways and means of obtain it.

"why don't you write to the pope, Father?" Suggested one.

When the guard began looking a little anxious about the meeting and completely bored because of having to supervise such a function we started the rosary. This was followed by the litany of the blessed virgin and the hail, holy queen. Then just as if it were part of the prayer, I preached the following sermon.

"almighty, everlasting god, we are gathered here this morning to honor and adore you. We would prefer to give you the infinite praise that comes to you from the holy sacrifice of the mass, but being at the mercy of our enemies, we are deprived of the means of celebrating these mysteries. We unite ourselves with all the masses which are being celebrated today throughout the world. Please accept this desire of our in place of the sacrifice we would offer, if we could. You know, lord, that we are not ---- you by our failure to attend mass since it is impossible for us to do so."here we are, lord, cold and hungry. We are suffering very much, but we accept it all as coming from your hands. We know that your divine son was also cold during his life and many times was hungry. All we ask is that we may be patient in our sufferings and courageous to bear them generously. May these privations serve to bring us closer to you, to make us better men, and more perfect sons as you would like us to be. So, lord, give us the graces and blessings that we need.

"we are sorry for our sins because they have offended you who are so good. Here in this camp are two priests who are ready to hear confessions at any time. Whenever and wherever we meet them they are ready to listen to our sins and give us the advice that we need.

"bless also, of lord, our dear ones at home across the sea. Bless our armies that are still fighting on the fronts and all those in the service of our country. Lord, grant that your peace may be restored to the world, your peace which will unite all men in that brotherhood of the human family which is your creation and which you so dearly loved as to send your divine son to be our brother. Have mercy on our enemies and prevent them from doing any harm to us and the many thousands they hold captive. Have mercy on all sinners and enlighten them in truth that they may see the errors of their life and repent. Have mercy on the souls of the faithful departed, especially those who were with us on the battlefield and lost their lives defending the things we hold sacred. We ask you to bless us in the name of your son, Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with you in the holy ghost, world without end."

And all answered a fervent "amen".

The guards were off as quickly as we were. As we returned to our barracks, someone remarked, "gee, Father, that prayer was better than a sermon."

The first substantial meal - as full meals sent in Oflag XIII-B - we had that Sunday. It was a soup, almost a stew, of potatoes and horsemeat.

The metal pot came up from the kitchen heavy and full. Before its arrival the tables we had in the barracks were arranged in a u-shape at the back of the room. A few boards spread between chairs stretched our seating capacity to meet the needs of all. Our issue of the eighth of a loaf of bread apiece had been sent up earlier. Our earthenware bowls, porcelain cups, and pewterware were set out. Lt. Matthew J. Giuffre of new York city took charge of dishing out the individual portions. A bully beef can wired onto the end of a wooden slat made a fancy soup ladle. No speedier and more equitable distribution was ever made than the division accomplished by Mattie. First a full tin of soup went into each bowl, then a half-cup and lastly a few drops until the bottom of the pot was clean with the last man receiving the final drops. So fair and expeditious was Mattie's serving that we elected him the official divider of soups, and office he held as long as we were at Hammelburg.

With the bowls of soup steaming at each place we paused as Father Madden said grace and gave thanks for the meal we were about to receive through the bounty of god and the Wehrmacht.

It was a festive occasion as we all sat at table to partake of soup and bread. We even had a smoke to top it off. The Serbs had been generous in giving us a few cigarettes and by cutting them in half, we had enough for all the smokers.

Thus life settled down to routine Hammelburg prison, two roll-calls a day and three so-called meals. And in between emptiness, empty stomachs and empty minds. But it was not for long. In a short time we found means of filling the void.

Chapter six

Kriegie pursuit of happiness

A prisoner's life hangs by a thread, for in all, the phases of our life is cheap; his liberty is hemmed in by barbed wire fences, watchtowers, and guarded gates; but the "inalienable right to the pursuit of happiness" cannot be taken away even by solitary confinement. In Hammelburg prison camp we sought and found many ways to make our lot a happy one.

Our first Sunday afternoon at the wire between the Serbian compound and our own we were meeting and talking with the Serbs in various languages. Those who had studied English during the long years they had spent in prison found great delight in speaking with Americans. Father Madden, Lt. Col. Joseph C. Matthews, Jr. And I became acquainted this afternoon with a remarkable Serbian officer, colonel Alexander Kostic of the Yugoslavian engineers. Though he had studied English and also could read and write it, he hesitated to speak it. He spoke German fluently, and so did Father Madden. This was the language used in our meetings with him. He told us he had been a chemical engineer in civilian life, had studied at the military institute in France, had fought as a young man in world war I, was married and had a lovely wife and two grown daughters. A robust, graying soldier of fifty years, his sparkling brown eyes and hearty laugh endeared him to us. Col. Matthews, also a chemical engineer in civilian life, found much to talk about in common with the Serbian colonel.

It was cold that Sunday at the wire and our feet were more than ordinarily chilled standing in the snow. Colonel Kostic wanted to go and make us some coffee, but we agreed to put off his hospitality until the following morning at ten o'clock.

Monday morning was cold and the snow was deep, but Col. Kostic was waiting for the three of us when we arrived at the wire. He greeted us pleasantly, shook hands (a ceremony never omitted, though friends might meet several times the same day), then left to get the food from his barracks. He returned running with a little blue pot of coffee and three small cups made from American tin cans. In a paper wrapper he had three slices of toasted bread with a chocolate frosting. It was a delicious breakfast and the first taste of genuine coffee we had had since our capture. After coffee and toast Col. Kostic gave us a small wooden plaque of the dimensions of a postcard on which was chiseled in relief the

portrait of Saint Saba, the national patron of the Serbs. On the back he had written in pencil, "en souvenir et mon devouement et sentimente cretiensing. A. Kostic."

This little work of art was just one of many such carvings that were the occupational therapy of those clever men from Yugoslavia in the days of their forced idleness. Without precision tools they produced excellent pieces of high grade workmanship from small chunks of wood and old tin cans. The popular souvenirs of Hammelburg were cigarette cases made of wood and engraved with fancy designs or inlaid with tiny bits of tin of various colors, a monogram or mosaic of some noble personage. The Serbs themselves treasured small pictures of their king peter either carved in wood or inlaid with pieces of tin.

This meeting with col. Kostic was eventful not only because it marked the beginning of many such gatherings and tete-tetes over tea cups, but also because from him Father Madden and I learned of the presence among the German guards of a catholic priest.

"Breiner, do you know Breiner?" Col. Kostic exclaimed. "he is a priest."

"what does he look like?" We asked.

"he is a little man and always smiling."

Now our task was to find Breiner unostentatiously and casually as it were. All we knew from Kostic was that Breiner was an Unterofficier who worked in the Serbian lazaret, that he was a little man with a smile. From the hospital to the German enlisted men's barracks outside the prison the shortest route led through our compound. We had seen guard going back and forth daily. To meet Breiner therefore we loitered along the Herman Goering Strasse keeping our eyes set for a short smiling guard. Now and then a German soldier would stop to say a word or two, but not often as they held aloof in keeping with the regulation for all guards of prisoners of war. For three days our search brought no results. Then cone morning Father Madden came in to the barracks all bright and happy. "I met Breiner and he is a capuchin," he said.

From that day the two sons of St. Francis became fast friends and had much in common to talk about. Not understanding German I missed many of their Franciscan jokes. One pleasantry I did enjoy was that neither of them wore beards according to the capuchin fashion, Father Madden because he had been exempt from the time of his entrance into the order, Father Breiner because of the exigencies of war.

The next day i, too, met Father Breiner, or as he was known in his order, Father Erluin. He answered col. Kostic's description perfectly, "a little man with a perpetual smile'. As pharmacist in the hospital, he had a little office where he mixed and dispensed medicines to the prisoners of war. We told him of our desire to say mass and our request for a mass-kit.

"it will come," he said, 'but not very soon.'

"could you bring us holy communion?" We asked.

"yes. Tomorrow morning. Watch for me in the street, then follow me into the dispensary."

Next morning we were up early and on the watch. He came along quietly a little after seven, bowed recognition and walked on to the dispensary. We followed at a casual distance and entered the building a few steps behind him. He went upstairs to a narrow corridor on the second floor. Unlocking the door of a small room he admitted and locked the door within. We knelt in silence beside a small table, the sole piece of furniture in the room. He laid his brief case on the table, unstrapped his pistol-belt and laid the weapon beside his case. Then out of his pockets came a small crucifix, a ritual, a piece of candle and candlestick, his stole and the pyx wrapped in a corporal. He genuflected as Father Madden and I began to recite the confiteor (i confess-) together. We got out of unison when Father Madden mentioned "our holy Father, st. Francis." Father Erluin said the prayers for communion of the sick and gave us holy communion. Then silently he replaced the pyx (small pouch to carry the Eucharist to the sick), the candle and crucifix in his pocket, buckled on his arms, and cleared the table of everything save the brief case. This he opened and gave to each of us still kneeling at the table an apple and a German muffin, saying wittily the words of the prayer he had just recited, "tam animae quam corpori" (as to the body so to the soul). We left the room and building separately, Erluin to his day's work, Alan and I, in opposite directions, to make an appropriate thanksgiving. This sweetly consoling and charmingly simple ceremony took place every three or four days for the next two weeks.

The first two or three days in barracks 11-7 we burned coal and wood extravagantly for a prison camp. We kept a low fire going continuously during the day, adding several more lumps in the evening to heat water for washing our soup bowls and toasting bread. Too late one day we learned that what we thought was a day's issue of coal had to last for three days. Necessity being the mother of invention, fuel had to be found somewhere. In sauntering around the compound old boards in wooden boxes for holding sand to be used in icy weather were spotted. Under cover of night a small group led by Lt. Mannis Schlitt of Akron, Ohio, left the barracks and returned by way of the rear windows with a supply of wood. Larger pieces were broken up and the wood nicely concealed under the thin mattresses of the empty beds.

As too many cooks spoil the broth, so too many stokers ruin a fire, or worse still, in periods of scarcity, use up too much precious fuel. By unanimous agreement the best fireman we had in the barracks was Lt. Manning Kessinger, a scientific farmer from Carlinville, Ill. Somehow or other Kes managed to get more and more heat out of less and less fuel than any firemen ever did; he was appointed sole custodian of the stove. When others had failed even in lighting the fire, Kes succeeded in getting glowing coals from damp wood. Besides discoursing on the merits of stoves and fuels, he could entertain by the hour with his knowledge and explanation of breeding of cattle, mechanized farm equipment, and storage of produce, buying and selling of meats, fertilization, irrigation and rotation of crops. Kes was always busy. Parts of the stove had to be repaired, new gadgets made for toasting bread, boiling water; wood broken up to fit the stove; ashes and clinkers to be disposed of. With all his work he kept his mind off food and remained the sanest of us all.

Daily inspection of the barracks had been routine at bad orb. The rare inspections at Hammelburg were events. One day late in January we were warned that Herr General von Goeckle, the commander of all the prison camps in the Hammelburg area, would make a careful inspection of flag XIII-B. In barracks 11-7 the boards which had been confiscated for fire wood were concealed with some anxiety behind beds and under blankets. The u-shaped dining section was meticulously arranged and everything that might arouse

German suspicion carefully covered. In the afternoon the inspecting party arrived in camp and made the rounds of every barracks.

They solemnly entered our room as we stood at attention in two neat files. Two or three enlisted Germans scrutinized the corners of the room while the general and his officers stood and studied the horseshoe arrangement of our banquet table. The hearts of all of us sank as we thought about what was being concocted in an undertone before our very eyes, "there go some of our tables and chairs." Then Herr general brightened up and spoke to us, "this is the most orderly room I have seen. Your dining room is very fine. Congratulations!" Our chests swelled with mingled pride and relief. We roared with laughter after the inspecting party had left.

By slow stages gnawing hunger and gastric pains subsided and hunger became more of a mental obsession in regard to food. The eons of time between soups became more and more a mental fantasy of good food. No matter what the subject of discussion, unless we were wary, it turned into talk about food. A few men refused simply to speak of food. It annoyed them and made them irritable. Others found a catharsis of a sort in talking about it. At times we played a game of dietetic charades. Sitting in a circle around the fire each man in turn would order an imaginary dinner from an imaginary kitchen. From hors d'oeuvre to la palinas the gamut of an a la carte menu was run through. It was an anticipation - antirealization game, but it was fun.

Sometimes it was the preparation of delicacies that topped the conversation.

"this is the way my mother makes the stuffing for the turkey."

"this is the way my wife makes ice-box cookies."

It was never agreed just what were the ingredients and method of making apple strudel.

Again it was the restaurants and cafes of New York, Chicago, Los Angeles and Timbuktu that were noted for their steaks and French fries, corned beef and cabbage, waffles and sausage, vegetable salads, banana splits and coconut pies, all "out of this world".

Another pastime consisted in filling notebooks with recipes and menus. For many Kriegies the cherished souvenirs of Hammelburg are the little cookbooks they composed in the days when starvation was at the door. Here are some samples of the recipes that were transcribed from notebook to notebook.

King Edward toast. Slice of white or raisin bread - thick. Dip in sweet wine, cover with mixture of brown sugar and cinnamon; dip in egg and milk batter and fry.

Baked potatoes. Partially bake. Slice lengthwise and mash. Add butter, cheese, strips of raw bacon and raw eggs. Mix together and bake.

Waffles. Chip chocolate and add grated chopped nuts to waffle batter. Serve with syrup or ice cream.

Schwein fus salad. Get wooden bowl and rub with garlic. Chop in raw vegetables and thin sliced pigs' feet. Mix. Use mayonnaise and oil for dressing. For serving garnish with pimentos, chopped olives, raw carrots.

Pie a la mint. Cold cherry pie; put chocolate covered mints on top and put in oven until mints are melted. Serve with ice cream.

Fruit royal. Three scoops of ice cream mixed with fruits, dates and pecans. Cover with whipped cream and cherries.

Date pudding. Layer of graham crackers, layer of chopped dates, layer of whipped cream. Keep on piling into deep dish. Place in refrigerator until ready to serve.

Veal a la chili. Put precooked macaroni in a casserole. Cover with grated cheese, put in small pieces of veal, onions and add bottle of chili sauce over dish. Bake until veal is done.

Barley breakfast. Barley soup cooked with raisins, prunes and figs. Thicken with cornstarch. Serve in bowl with sliced bananas, cream and sugar.

Thus page after page was filled with recipes. It will be noticed that the vast majority of dishes were delicacies certainly out of the ordinary run of preparations in a normal household. Much emphasis was placed on the use of proteins and fats, sugars and condiments, in the planning of meals. It is interesting to observe that these were the very things we were lacking in our prison diet and for which our stomachs craved. Indeed, a steady diet of the rich combinations such as we concocted at Hammelburg might well have done a healthy man more harm than the austere fare of soup and bread on which we survived.

The weather became colder and the nights clearer in the latter half of January. This meant frequent air-raids over Germany. At Hammelburg the regulations proclaimed that when the strict alert was sounded by short blasts from the siren no one was to go out into the open. By day and by night the guards were prepared to fire upon any prisoner outside the barracks during an alert. As the tempo of bombing missions over Nazi territory increased, the alerts lasted longer. It was common enough for the men to be caught in the latrines at these times or in barracks other than their own. To remain in a cold, windswept latrine for several hours was definitely a hardship and to remain late into the night in a neighboring barracks was at least an inconvenience after ten o'clock. It was not too great a risk to slip from one barracks to another in the streets not visible from the towers. To cross the Herman Goering Strasse in view of two towers and the main gate was a hazard even in the blackest night.

On the night of January 25th in total blackout Lt. Varion ventured to run from one barracks to another across the main street. In the nearest tower was a guard blind in one eye and classified as unfit for front line duty because of his poor eyesight in the other. The clatter of feet on the pavement attracted his attention and he fired into the darkness. Lt. Varion died the next morning.

That same night a fair number of Kriegies began to suffer from a form of dysentery. Day by day I became weaker and thinner and more languid from the interruptions in sleep and hurried trips to the latrine. The American doctors Berndt, Linguiti, and Demarco in the dispensary were plagued with fellows in the same plight as me. Handicapped by lack of

medicines, they tried to little avail all the drugs supplied them. Those of us who suffered worst received ten drops of an opiate once a day until the supply ran out. Doctor James Yamasaki of Chicago paid me a daily visit to bring me a pill or two that he had acquired somewhere in his travels and to cheer me up with his pleasant conversation. Father Breiner also brought me a few lozenges, but the fifth, sixth, and seventy days passed without any relief. The eighth day was the worst of all and I was resigning myself to being completely liquidated when all of sudden the inconvenience ceased and I was never bothered again. Though I remained thin, I gained back my strength in a few days.

During my siege of sickness the good Father Madden carried on the campaign to get a mass-kit from the Germans. Two and a half weeks had passed since our first request and still we were put off with vague promises. For three Sundays we conducted services without mass. We said a rosary and a prayer to god telling him what we wanted the men to know. On the 31st of January we decided on a drastic step; we wrote a formal and urgent letter in Latin to the apostolic numcio in Berlin.

to the Papal Nuncio

the Apostolic Nunciature,

Berlin.

Your Excellency,

in Oflag XIII-B the two undersigned American priests have been prisoners of war for three weeks. We have repeatedly asked the officials of the camp to provide us with the essentials for the celebration of mass. Our patience is exhausted. In the neighboring village there are two catholic priests who can help us, but neither we nor the German soldiers are allowed to approach them.

we therefore ask your Excellency to help us. Thus you will aid not only us priests but the catholic men who are our fellow prisoners to enjoy the consolations and freedom of religion, which the German government, according to the Geneva convention, has promised.

we commend ourselves to your holy sacrifices.

you Excellency's servants in Christ,

Paul W. Cavanaugh, S.J.

Alan P. Madden, O.F.M. Cap.

This letter was presented open (we had no envelope to put it in) to the block-commandant, Hauptman Stammler. He read it with interest, translated it into broken English and remarked pleasantly, "you have a fine Latin style." He broke our bold front

with this remark and we all laughed. We then discussed ecclesiastical ceremonies, Latin liturgy, and German cathedrals, discovering in the course of the conversation that the German captain had a brother a priest in Bavaria.

On the evening of the next day, February 1st, a German guard delivered without comment to Father Madden a knapsack containing complete equipment for mass. We were delighted and spread the good tidings to the Catholics in prison. The following day was the first Friday of the month and the feast of the purification of our lady. Without saying a word to the Germans we passed the news around the camp that there would be mass at four p.m. in barracks 11-7 and that the men should come in quietly without making any appearance of having an objective in view or seeming to be congregating. At three-thirty they began to drop in singly and in twos. By four o'clock we had a congregation of sixty men.

We had moved the tables to one side except the one we used as an altar. The chairs, boards and benches in the room were arranged in the form of a church. In that rude and lowly setting the great event of the first mass in Oflag XIII-B brought all the participants great consolation. Surely we knew that the scared heart and our blessed mother had answered our prayers. We had many reasons to be grateful to them. When mass was over and since no guard were present, I preached a little sermon urging the men to come to daily mass and telling them how we would conduct it.

"we rely on god to help us in remaining undiscovered. Every day we shall have mass, but every day we must have it in a different barracks. In this way we will not attract attention. Now don't come in bunches, not all at the same time. Urge all the men to come. Tomorrow we shall have mass in barracks 11-7, room 5.

The setting was rough, but faith was there. The immaculate whiteness of the clean altar linens was intensified by the dirty aspect of the men, the furniture, and the barracks. It seemed almost like a desecration to put the spotless white alb over my dirty clothes. The white silk chasuble had evidently been made by some nuns who were suffering from the poverty caused by the war. They had no gold braid to hem the edges but just enough to outline the large cross on the back. In the center was an inscription, "Christus ist mein lebon" (Christ is my life). The letters forming the legend were carved out of wood, then colored with a silver paint; each individual letter was glued securely to the cloth. As mass began the sky cleared and the lowering sun shone in upon the altar through the dirty window. It almost seemed that god was sending a visible token of his good pleasure. Mattie Giuffre expressed in writing what thoughts were in the minds of the men who knelt around that altar: "i can't express my gratitude adequately enough to you and Father Madden for the spiritual guidance you gave us all, for the symbol of home and good life you represented in the unusual circumstance, for the courage you imbued us with, for everything good you both represented, I shall never forget you both as you said mass in your vestments, the sun shining in over the altar and you in an aura of heavenly light that spoke eloquently of godliness and good faith."

Lest any good Christians should be scandalized that we had mass in holy communion in the afternoon, let me explain here that our holy Father, pope pius xiii granted permission to all military personnel to attend mass and receive holy communion in the afternoon or early evening. Ordinarily four hours' fast from solid food and one hour fast from liquid was required, but since we were in a danger zone and in constant danger of death from

bombings, we celebrated mass without fasting and gave holy communion to the men under form of viaticum. We also gave general absolution.

When mass was over and since there were no guards present, I preached a little sermon urging the men to come to daily mass and telling them how we would conduct it.

"we rely on god to help us to remain undiscovered. Every day we shall have mass, but every day we must have it in a different barracks. In this way we will not attract attention. Now don't come in bunches, or all at the same time. Urge all the men to come. Tomorrow we shall have mass in barracks 11, room 5."

"a further announcement. Tonight at seven-fifteen in this room we shall begin to hold a catholic study club. We have been forbidden to preach, as you know, but we have not been forbidden to discuss religion. We can sit around the stove and after the fashion of a tavern hang-out get our minds off food for a while each evening. You get the idea. God bless you all."

At seven-fifteen we had a group of twenty-five from other barracks gathered around the fire with many of our own thirty-five companions of barracks 11-7. We had previously arranged with the grand crowd in our room to have a half-hour of quiet and a gang of visitors in the room. All of them were sincerely willing and cooperated magnificently. That first evening we felt our way, though we had a plan in mind. We began by giving some incentives for wanting to attend a course of instructions and how excellent was the opportunity we now had of learning something about religion. Our plan came from the men themselves - fifteen minutes of explanation followed by a period of discussion and questions. We would follow the broad outlines of the catechism as a framework of topics. Beginning with the apostles creed, on the first night we explained and discussed what is meant in the catholic sense by "i believe." The meeting was gratifying to Father Alan and me and very satisfactory to the men.

The study club grew in popularity and the numbers increased until 11-7 was nightly jammed with men. We spent two or three nights on each article of the apostles' creed, explaining the theology underlying it and its relation to the whole field of catholic doctrine and practice. We got into some lively discussions on the proofs for the existence of god, the absolute gratuity on god's part of the incarnation and redemption, the certainty of faith regarding the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church, the mystical body of Christ, and the nature of heaven and hell. Often enough someone would preface his remarks by, "Father, you said..."

If the statement had any bearing on matters of faith, Father Madden and I insisted that we were teaching not some pious opinions of our own but the infallible teaching of the catholic church that was included in the act of faith when we say, "i believe these and all the truths that the catholic church believes and teaches." The apostles' creed finished, we had a few sessions on the sacraments of baptism and penance, spent approximately a week explaining the theology, ceremonies, and prayers of the mass. We had some very interesting meetings about marriage, divorce, birth control, the duties of husbands and wives, the training of children. In these matters that pertained to sex and the physical aspects of matrimony, Father Madden and I were often aided by the expert advice of two doctors, major Charles Serbst of Chicago and Captain Eugene F. Galvin of Rosendale, N.Y. after the sacraments we took up the ten commandments. We were discussing the seventh when our study club met for the last time on march 26th. Words of appreciation for the

study club have come to me again and again since liberation. Lt. Ted Altier of Rochester, N.Y. put his thoughts in these words: "Father, you know all of us fish-eating Kriegies learned something from you spiritual leadership while in the jug. Without it I think I would have cracked wide open. We got pretty close to the lord when things were tough and you did the miraculous in keeping us going. Thanks, I suppose, are best expressed by what we do when things are back to normal." Doctor Galvin wrote from his home in New York words that would warm the heart of any catholic religion teacher: "very few people, I fear, in POW camps were as lucky as we were at Oflag XIII-B especially in religious ministrations and instruction. I shall never forget the informality and seriousness of those evening meeting, not shall I forget, I hope, the innumerable things I learned about my religion which I never knew before. I do not know how it could be possible to interest people in that type of instruction here at home - but it is exactly what they need."

Among the splendid men who sustained an interest in the evening sessions and kept the meetings going with their fidelity in coming (besides many others who's names are mentioned elsewhere in this history) were Captains Max Shaver (Chippawa Falls, Wisc.) And Charles Gibbons (Lawton, Okla.), Captains Al Menke and Paul --- of Cincinnati, Ohio. James Sailer and Joseph Buhr (also Cincinnati), Robert Fleege (Galena, Ill.), Melvin Maderis (San Jose, cal.) Harry Gleason (Trinidad, Colo.), Fred Gardner (Long Island), Charles Kelly (Kirksville, Mo.) Robert Kelly and Robert Rutt of Detroit, Leo Champagne (Breaux Bridge, La.) Harry Rollins (Chicago, ill.), Brandan Fullam and Stanley Kasper of Brooklyn, William Bogan (Williamsville, N.Y.) Ed Burleigh (Ville Platte, La.).

"prisoner of the Germans" by Chaplain Mark R. Moore, Page 35 "Chaplain at work in prison"

The work of the Chaplain did not stop when he became a prisoner. It increased rather than lessened our responsibilities and opportunities for doing spiritual work. There were seven protestant and two catholic Chaplains in Hammelburg. --

We had four types of services. Sunday worship, evening devotions, morning devotions, and bible study. --

The morning devotions were started to help the Chaplains in their inner lives. We were giving out in the services and felt we needed a time of inspiration for our selves. Chaplain Ralph E. Maness, (Baptist) of Springfield, Missouri, was put in charge but after several services was sent to stalag XII-A and I was appointed to his place."

(Fr. Cavanaugh cont.)

Saturday afternoon, February 3rd, Father Madden said mass in 11-5 while I heard confessions and received holy communion with the men. This plan we followed thereafter

on weekdays, each of us saying mass on alternate days until in one barracks after another we offered the hold sacrifice in every room in the Oflag where there were prisoners living.

Never was there the slightest complaint from any of the non-Catholics and each day the group in the room designated for mass had their quarters neat and clean (as far as that was possible) and the furniture arranged orderly for the congregation. Lt. Levene J. Weigel, a teacher from St. Joseph's college, Hays, Kansas, did faithful work by coming each day for the mass-kit and setting up the altar in the barracks where mass was to be said. After mass he packed it all up again and returned it to 11-7 where it was kept in a cardboard box on a shelf near my bed.

That Saturday we wondered not a little about what would happen on Sunday. Did the mass-kit, brought us so quietly come through the camp authorities, or had it come through some quasi underground? We determined to have mass and trust that the good lord would take care of us. The beer-hall was inconvenient for several reasons. It was very cold, too small, did not contain even a table; and these grotesque cartoons on the wall were not appropriate church decorations.

All our misgivings were climaxed that Saturday evening when Hauptman Stammeler summoned us two priests to the block headquarters. To our astonishment he had another mass-kit for us. This one we had to sign for and check the contents against a list that came with the package from the catholic pastor of Hammelburg, Dr. Mahr. Sunday mass was now authorized, sanctioned, and attended by German authorities and guards. "catholic mass tomorrow at nine o'clock in barracks 11-7." Was the announcement made to the entire detachment of Kriegies at roll-call Saturday evening it was mentioned again on Sunday morning?

Our Sunday congregation numbered about a hundred. The prisoners in 11-7 outdid themselves in making the barracks tidy and neat. Father Alan and I each said mass and the men stayed for the second service. There were no sermons because guards were present.

Lt. John J. Murray, once a roly-poly, jolly New York mail carrier, but now thinning to scarecrow trimness had a worn leaflet with the prayers for the novena to our lady of the miraculous medal. "Father, how about saying these prayers after mass? Many of our wives and mothers and sisters are making the novena for us back home."

"swell idea, John," I said. "we can have the novena every day after mass. It will only take a couple of minutes to say the prayers."

Beginning that Sunday whenever we had mass we concluded with the novena prayers. The fervor and the volume as we said the memoraro (imperative form of 'to remember') together was very gratifying.

Lt. Murray wrote me after our return to the U.S: "I'm positive that our lady did a thoroughly good job on us. When I think of some of the things that happened I'm convinced that, as my mother used to say, her blue mantle covered us." John now has the old battered novena booklet and treasures it as the finest trophy of his army service.

And Lt. Bill Gardiner of Baltimore: "I am now making the novena to our lady of the miraculous medal with my wife every Monday night because while we were making it at

Hammelburg she started making I ever since she read about the 106th being all beat up. It was on the ninth Monday of the novena when she heard that I was no longer missing in action but a prisoner. There is something stronger than coincidence there."

Though it is jumping ahead a little in the story, this seems to be the place to mention our ash Wednesday service. On February 13th I said to Father Madden, "tomorrow is ash Wednesday. What do you think we ought to do about ashes?"

"oh, just take some out of the stove," was his reply. "any kind of wood ash will satisfy the purpose." We found a small piece of fly screen and sift some ashes from a wood fire. Ash Wednesday before mass we distributed the ashes giving each man a generous black cross on his forehead. We reminded the men present of their catholic duty to do some penance.

The diet supplied by the Wehrmacht would necessitate that we conform in the most rigorist manner to the church's law of fasting what we should do therefore was to accept the situation in the spirit of penance and offer our privations to almighty god in reparation for our past sins. Perhaps in the years gone by we had not entered into this penitential season with much generosity; now we had a chance to accept without complaint the sufferings imposed upon us and to sanctify them for our own benefit and the glory of god.

We also called their attention to the relation between penance, especially fasting, and purity of life. Unrestrained eating and drinking open the door to temptations against the flesh. More often than not temptations to impurity assail a man who practices little or no self-denial in the matter of food. It was to combat such assaults that the saints undertook the heroic penance's that we read about in their lives, abstaining entirely from meat, living on bread and water, sleeping on boards, chastising their bodies. Indeed from personal experience with the rigors of prison life we discovered the truth of the statement of ascetical writer and the Fathers of the church, "jejunum facit castes" (fasting makes chaste men).

Rumors flow fast and furious through the camp on February 4th that we were to get food parcels from the American red cross through the international red cross. The reports were affirmed, denied, believed, and doubted all that evening. It was a red letter day for the Kriegies of Oflag XIII-B. The next afternoon our emotions and jubilation shot skyward. A white angel - the name affectionately applied to any of the 53 American trucks used by the Geneva red cross to deliver the food parcels to prisoner of war camps throughout Germany - drew up to the warehouse outside our compound. Dreams of chocolate bars, real coffee and solid food ruffled our night's sleep. Then came a great surprise.

This shipment of boxes of American food was not sent to us Americans, but to the four thousand Serbs next door. Due to the disruptions of communications the international red cross at Geneva had probably not heard as yet that there had been a contingent of American prisoner at Hammelburg for three weeks. But we were not disappointed for all that.

Once again the magnificent generosity of the Yugoslav officers manifested itself. By popular vote they agreed to surrender 150 boxes to their American friends. Their senior general communicated this decision to the German authorities who agreed to the plan. Furthermore we were to receive the parcels before the Serbs were given theirs as there were approximately 500 of us Americans at that time, one parcel was to be divided among four men. Starting with the first barracks the men foured off down through the last room

and each foursome chose a representative to go to the warehouse to get the box. These representatives then went under guard in groups of twenty. So complicated was the method of distribution at the warehouse that it took two days to issue all the packages.

Barracks 11-7 got theirs late in the afternoon of the first day when captain John Madden (I repeat again that this is the artillery officer and not the Chaplain, Father Madden) went as the representative of Lt.'s Kessinger, Jones and myself. He took with him two soup bowls, two cups, and an empty pasteboard box. At the warehouse the red cross parcels were stacked behind a long counter. Each prisoner took his turn to receive a box from a German guard. In his presence the guard opened the box, handed over the two bars of soap unwrapped. Then opened each and every item in the box. Into the middle of the can of powdered milk and the tin of coffee he plunged a knife. The tins of meat, fish, and jelly were opened and the contents poured into the bowls and cups. One of the dozen crackers he broke in two; all the cigarettes were removed from the packages and two or three taken at random and split down the middle. The mixture of salt and pepper was confiscated. This was the normal procedure in pw camps and was done presumably to prevent weapons and instruments of escape from being smuggled into the camp. The tins were withheld because they could be used to fashion instruments of escape; and the pepper taken because it could be used to blind a guard in an escape effort or to prevent the dogs from trailing the scent of an escapee.

Captain Madden and the rest returned to the barracks with our supply. Loud and long were the cheers that greeted them and busy was the evening as we divided each item into four equal parts. The dozen crackers, a half-pound of domino sugar, a bag of chocolate drops, pound of prunes, and 100 cigarettes were easy to divide----- were required to portion out equally, a pound of powdered milk, two ounces of powdered coffee, a pound of butter, individual pounds of tuna fish, pork loaf, and spam, cans of liver paste, sardines, and an eight ounce piece of cheese, plus a small amount of jelly. The assortment of container that turned up that night was amazing; improvised paper bags, tin cups, bottles, and cigarette cases.

"prisoner of the Germans" by Chaplain mark r. Moore

Page 27 "line up for boxes"

"we drew boxes from the warehouse by rooms. Our room sent one man for each box we were allowed. Thus if we had forty men and were allowed a half box per man only twenty men went after the boxes. Chaplain Stonesifer and I drew together. He went after the first box and the next time I went for the second."

It was a trial of will power to resist eating our lives sick. In fact some men did get sick from the dose of concentrated foods suddenly thrust upon half-starved men. The next difficulty was to keep some of the things from spoiling. The butter was specially treated to

keep in tropical climates, hence offered no difficulty in cold Hammelburg. The meat and fish seemed most likely to spoil so they were eaten the first few days.

The plan of the red cross was that each prisoner of war receive a full box every week. If and when it was carried out (as was done in the earlier years of the war in most camps) this food alone supplied sufficient calories for a man leading an inactive life. Together with the food provided by the enemy country it made an adequate, though monastic and monotonous diet.

At Hammelburg we received a quarter of the normal supply with the highest probability that more than a week would elapse before another shipment arrived. Hence the stern necessity of spreading what we had over as long a period as possible.

Little children with their toys and trinkets on the floor around the Christmas tree never were filled with more joy than we experienced that day. What simple things can gladden the hearts of serious-minded men when they have been deprived of the comforts and luxuries they had grown to take for granted. No wonder that where a high standard of living prevails, advertisers must ever seek new superlatives and prefix a super to every known adjective in order to attract people to buy their products. Certainly god's intention in scattering the world with raw materials and endowing man with the genius to design lovely things and the production lines off which they roll, never intended that half the world should starve while the other half became bored with his ---.

The possession of private property made all equally wealthy, but all did not place the same value on each item they possessed. Smokers, for instance, put a high appreciation on cigarettes, while non-smokers found no personal satisfaction in them. That most human of all social traits trail in material wealth- very naturally grew out of this situation. Trade and barter began.

"how many cigarettes will you give me for eight sardines?"

"i'll trade you my crackers for your coffee.

"who will give me meat for powdered milk?"

"cheese for prunes?"

"liver for chocolate drops?"

"tuna fish for sugar?"

Such were the calls that preceded the "deals" which continued from that night until we were back on the diet of wormy soups again. Experts in bargaining even went so far as to trade on margin. When cigarettes were plentiful they traded small amounts of food for large numbers of cigarettes; then when the cigarettes increased in value because of scarcity, a few cigarettes were traded for bigger quantities of food. The basic law of supply and demand governed the trading value of all articles and strangely enough cigarettes became the norm to which other things were preferred as to monetary standard.

Necessity is the mother of invention. Necessity for stoves among prisoner of war mothered a generation of identical children. I doubt that there was an Oflag or Stalag or Dulag

throughout Germany where little stoves made of tin cans were not a household appliance. "herky ferkies," "smokey joes", Kriegie kooders", or whatever they were branded, were constructed by prisoners of war everywhere. Some stoves were crude, some were fancy, but the principle of operation was the same and unrestricted by patent.

In simple form two tin cans were fastened one on top of the other. The top can had holes punched in the bottom or the bottom was replaced by a wire grating. The lower can had an opening in the side which furnished the draft and allowed the ashes to be emptied. The top can was the fuel burner. Over the stove was placed the pot (usually a third can) in which water was boiled and the foods cooked. The best fuel was wood-shavings, cardboard or newspaper would do.

With these very efficient furnaces a pint of water could be boiled with a cubic inch of wood slivers or a couple of pages of newsprint. The main drawback was that the smoked badly, but that was negligible in Kriegsville.

Our Serbian friends had an ample supply of smokey joes, some of them cast-offs of other years, others recently constructed with tender care for their American friends. With the advent of food parcels, the stoves multiplied throughout the camp. The value of wood and paper skyrocketed.

Evenings became the popular times for smoke and the use of the kookers at first we had four or five stoves in barracks 11-7, but as time went on the number grew to fifteen or twenty. With a dozen of these going simultaneously the room became filled with smoke and set us all to coughing.

In time the walls, the beds, the tables and chairs, our clothes, even our hands and faces became black with soot, but we enjoyed it, for many a delicious morsel was happily prepared on these wonderful little furnaces.

Hot coffee, hot milk, hot soup were the staples of the evening bill-of-fare. Toasted cheese sandwiches, meat loaf, stewed prunes, Kriegie candy and Kriegie pudding were common enough.

The ingredients of Kriegie candy were sugar, butter, powdered milk, chopped prunes and a bit of chocolate. It could even be made without any heating by beating the mixture long enough, but it was extravagant as a delicacy.

Kriegie pudding was made with varied recipes. Here is Lt. Robert Frash's:

One ration of bread (normally an eighth of a loaf) grated.

2 spoons of cocoa

2 spoons of powdered milk

2 lumps of sugar

1 spoon of jam

Raisins and/or prunes, chopped and stewed

Mix together and let harden.

Sometimes a frosting was made with powdered milk and sugar.

Was Kriegie ice-cream. To a large bowl of packed snow was added a dab of butter, a lump of sugar, and a bit of jelly. The longer the mixture was whipped the creamier it got. Then out on the window sill the bowl was placed till the froth congealed into a savory ice-cream.

To spend hours preparing a little snack, which was eaten in less than five minutes, was amusing, satisfying, and vastly contributory to that will-o-the-wisp, Kriegie morale.

Many handy smokey joes occasioned another odd custom. Whenever a thick soup was served us by the Germans, especially on a Thursday or a Sunday when only one meal came up from the kitchen, some of the liquid was "stashed", that is, set aside for a later hour. Any old can would do for the container. As we sat at table, it frequently was one spoonful into the mouth, the next into the can. The self-control in holding back at noon was rewarded in the evening when the stoves were blazing again. Then hours could be spent in heating the soup or using it as an ingredient for some other concoction. Lt. Ozzie Brothman of Chicago used to save the lumps of potatoes and in the evening have German fries. Lt. Donald Prell stashed the meat and made a miniature hamburger. Stashing grew in popularity until it became universal. One day Lt. Garnett prior of Huntingburg, ind. Asked Lt. Norman Smolka of New York, "what is your wife going to say when you get home and bring an old tin can to table to stash some of her cooking?"

Stashing was a means of stretching the food supply. Prowling was a method of increasing it. The cats and chickens which slipped under the barbed wire were Kriegie prey. Once the Germans brought in three cats to combat the rats around the kitchen. Lts. Donald Dunkelbegger of Vail, Iowa, and John Mix of Alma, Michigan, caught one after dark. They skinned and cleaned it under the outside water tap, then spent three freezing hours in the bathhouse making a delicious white meat stew. Lt. Dunkelberger will always contend that a large tom-cat properly boiled in small pieces in a "klim" tin over a fire made of "kraut" shower room boards is a dish unequalled - for a Kriegie.

Now that we had food of our own and especially coffee our contacts with our Serbian friends across the wire became even more cordial (if such were possible) when we first arrived at Hammelburg guards would frequently patrol the inner fences and break up our social visits. Gradually the patrols were detailed to other duties and we were unmolested with the danger of detection relaxed, prolonged conversations at the fence were replaced by climbing over the fence and visiting our friends in their barracks. A Serb would bring a Yugoslav hat and coat which his American friend put on after jumping the wire. Then down the streets of the Serbian compound they would walk together, even past the German guards.

My first visit to the Serbian compound was at the invitation of Col. Kostic. Col Matthews, Father Madden and I were his guests. At eight o'clock when our study club was over we met our host at the wire away from the line of sight of the watch-towers. With great caution we scaled the eight feet of barbed wire in the darkness, slipped into Serbian hats

and coats and walked boldly two by two to the blacked out barracks. At the door we were greeted by a Serb sentinel and identified by Col. Kostic. When we came into the dim light of the inner room, the courtly gentlemen within rose from their chairs, bowed, saluted, and shook hands with us no diplomatic tea was ever more ceremonious. The colonel showed us to a secluded table which had been covered with a beautiful blanket. We sat around the table to chat. In the soft light we saw col. Kostic at his best. His steel gray hair was freshly cut and groomed, his ruddy face shaved and powdered. He wore a full dress suede military jacket with re piping buttoned up to the neck; he was a picture of Balkan elegance and graciousness with his broad smile and hearty laugh. Immediately he served tiny tin cups of coffee and cigarettes. For the first time we met the colonel's friend, Captain Milan Pantich of Belgrade, a young man of 34 years who spoke English well. An orchestra consisting of two banjos and an accordion entertained us with music and songs; songs of the homeland on the Adriatic, Spanish, Italian and American songs; songs with a melancholy nostalgia for the brighter days of love and life and laughter and peace. Poor Pantich wept. Nor could we hold back the tears. Another round of coffee was served and the music ceased.

A few nights later col. Matthews entertained the same crowd in his barracks. We met Kostic and Pantich at the fence, helped them over barbed wire, dressed them in American field coats and stocking caps and merrily laughed as we passed a German guard in the snow-covered street.

Col. Matthews served dainty, sandwiches, coffee, and cigarettes. We discussed balkan and American foodstuffs and family customs, talked about the war and all the latest rumors.

Father Madden a few days later held a similar party; Pantich reciprocated. Then it was my turn. Thus all through the prison every night there were little visits going on with as many Serbs on our side of the wire as Americans on theirs.

Capt. John Madden's friend, Capt. Andre, invited John and myself to a party to meet the Serbian orthodox priest. The priest was a small thin man, ascetic looking with his trimmed black beard and deep piercing eyes. We had no common idiom to converse in, but Andre did the interpreting and we got along splendidly. Andre's barracks was brightly lighted. Over clean tables throughout the room generals and colonels busily studied maps and charts of the fronts. A messenger arrived with a hand written copy of the day's bulletin from the Oberkommand Wehrmacht. Some minutes of quiet study followed, the military strategists smile. The western and eastern fronts were pushing hard on the Germans. If you were to read the communiqué of a single day, the position of the allies looked bad because each bulletin was propagandized to serve the German hopes, but by studying the bulletins from day to day and marking the loci of the reported actions on a map, the victories that were making headlines in allied newspapers showed up.

Each day the good tidings were spread from room to room through the Serbian camp and relayed by the grapevine over into ours. During February and march we learned in this way of the Russian drive to the Oder, the first crossing of the Rhine, and the establishment of bridgeheads all along the valley.

This news together with the air-raids of which we were informed by the camp sirens almost daily in the fine flying weather of February and march raised our hopes for a speedy termination of our imprisonment. Betting pools were started on the date of our

liberation, there were dates ranging from the end of February to Christmas, 1945, as each man in ----

Dictate the date of his choice.

When the cities of Schweinfurt, Wurzburg and Frankfurt on the main were bombed we could see the raids. On a clear cold day the squadrons often circled near Hammelburg leaving the sky marked with vapor trails as flight after flight moved in over the targets. Sometimes these raids lasted well into the afternoon and we got hungrier and hungrier waiting for the all clear signal so that our chow could be brought up from the kitchen. Never once however did a raid take place in the late afternoon and cause us to postpone or cancel our daily mass at four o'clock.

Brave attempts were made to organize small groups for educational and morale purposes. A group of about ten of us, for instance, got together to learn French by the direct method from a French officer, who was a fellow prisoner. We met daily for ten days and learned a few expressions and words, but the class became something of a drudgery and died a natural death. One group I know of formed an "Oflag XIII-B toastmasters' club" and under the leadership of Lt. Robert King of Los Angeles practiced public speaking. Meeting twice a week they took turns giving impromptu and prepared talks; and derived some profit from the friendly criticism and opportunity to express themselves.

So passed the days of February and early march. For me and for most of the Kriegies the emptiness of waiting for the next meal was filled with activity and time was rolling rapidly.

"well, another week gone by," captain John Madden would remind me every Saturday night as we went to bed.

Chapter seven

Saint Joseph answers a prayer

Washington's birthday, February 22nd, we received another issue of red cross parcels, again one package for four men. About the same time we had a clothing issue. We all wanted socks and underwear, but not too many received them. However, everybody took the opportunity to visit the clothing warehouse at the far end of the Serbian compound. We were taken there under guard in groups of about forty. Serbian officers worked in the stock room where assorted clothing from any nations was neatly piled on shelves. Each man filled out a card with the items he needed and in his turn had most of them scratched. Only one or two items were given each man. Some got socks or pieces of flannel to be wrapped around the feet in place of socks. There were a few shirts, trousers, jackets, and a little under wear. I received the queerest looking fuzzy pants to be used as undergarment. There were strings to tie the ends around the ankles. These I soon ripped off.

While waiting in a sort of anti-room at the warehouse a large box of coal was discovered near the stove. It was easy to slip two briquettes of coal into the overcoat pockets; thus we provided ourselves with a little more heat against the bitter cold.

February ran out leaving us with little or no food of our own. Furthermore the chow served by the Jerries was getting thinner and more bitter. The thinning out of the soups was accounted for by the fact that the number of officers in the camp was mounting almost daily. Some were being moved in from other camps; others were fresh from the front lines and had news for us about the allied drives on the western front.

An officer said to me, "you better start praying harder for food, Father. We're really hurting." It was the first day of march, the month of St. Joseph, and the great provider of temporal necessities. Father Madden and I hurriedly translated from the breviary the litany of St. Joseph and we added it to the prayers of the novena of the miraculous medal with the specific intention that St. Joseph supply us with food.

The next day the soup was thicker and substantial, but it was quite a blow to have it announced that the Germans were cutting our bread ration: on one day a week we would henceforth receive no bread at all. The bombing of the bakeries was given as the reason for this. There would also be another cut in the amount of vegetables supplied the kitchen. Morale sank to a new low. On Sunday march 4th Father Madden reminded the men again of the season of lent and urged them to patience and humble acceptance of the penance imposed on us.

We continued to say the litany of St. Joseph daily and on march 6th had our first "breadless Tuesday". Two days later Father Alan Madden and Chaplain Mannes were transferred, on a half-hour notice, to Stalag XIII-C the American enlisted men's prison a mile away from the Oflag. It was the answer to several requests the Chaplains had made that we be permitted to take care of our comrades in the other camp. The two Sundays previous, Father Madden one Sunday and I the next, were granted permission to go there to say mass for the catholic men.

Our GI's were lodged in what had once been cavalry stables. The buildings were clean but the bunks in tiers of four beds crowded the space unmercifully. In fact when it came to saying mass a small table at one end of the stable and massed humanity standing down the long narrow aisle or sitting on bunks was the church setting we had to tolerate. There was no time to hear confessions, so general absolution had to suffice. Before and after mass I was besieged with men asking if their officers were in the Oflag. To many I could give an affirmative answer, but many more could only be answered with an, "i don't know." It surely was gratifying to see these men solicitous for their company commanders and platoon leaders. Mainly officers too asked us to try to locate their sergeants, corporals, and privates among the enlisted men. Had the Chaplains been allowed to go back and forth to the stalag much could have been done to bolster the morale of officers and men, but the uplifting of spirits was not in the Wehrmacht's plan for the handling of prisoners of war.

The guard who accompanied me hurried me away and took a short cut home. But the short way was the hard way, for it led over a hill. That climb was exhausting and I had to stop to rest a couple of times. Once as I was sitting on the roadside a four-wheeled pushcart passed with the chow for the stalag, pots of soup, tubs of potatoes and loaves of bread. As the GI's were trying to keep the wagon from rolling out of control on the hill it swerved, hurling four of five small potatoes off to the side of the road. I picked them up and ate them. This is the depth of humiliation, I thought, a priest eating half-rotten

potatoes out of the gutter. But they supplied the energy to get me back to 11-7. I stayed in my bunk for the rest of the day.

After moving to the stalag Father Madden and Chaplain Mannes lodged in the dispensary with the American doctors and a Serbian orthodox priest. For the next month they did much to help the enlisted men by way of administration of the sacraments, personal contacts, and their physical presence. Father Madden and I sent notes to one another once or twice by a devious underground postal service, but we did not meet again until we spent a few days together at the capuchin friary in Pittsburgh after the war was over.

The day Father Alan Madden left for stalag XIII-C a shipment of red cross parcels arrived for the Americans. It was a generous allotment of boxes. We were issued then the following day - a box for two men. Captain John Madden and I paired for a box. At mass that afternoon we said the litany of St. Joseph with a new intention: thanksgiving for what he had sent us. Nor did we forget to express our appreciation by praying for all those who had any part in the work of the American red cross by handling these boxes or by contributing funds to aid that splendid organization of mercy. When we were enjoying the contents of the boxes we often spoke of the red cross and its work and in our hearts hoped that the day would soon come when we would be able to do our share of charity towards helping people in misfortune.

On March 9th a contingent of five hundred American officers arrived at Hammelburg under the senior officer, colonel Paul D. Goode.⁸ this group had been imprisoned in Oflag 64 at Szubin in Poland. Early in January they were marched through snow and cold and rain first up to the Baltic sea, then down past Berlin to Nuremberg. Then by train to Hammelburg. One out of every three men who began the march dropped out along the way from sickness, exhaustion or starvation.

* see appendix 11: Col. Paul D. Goode, Atlanta journal constitution articles

They had had two priests with them at Szubin: Father Stanley C. Brach (*) of the diocese of Newark whom they left behind in Oflag 64 with those unfit to travel, and Father John J. Glennan of the congregation of the most holy redeemer who fell out on the road from sickness. The officer who came to Hammelburg in this group never tired of telling me about the wonderful work that these two priest prisoners did for the Kriegies with them. More than once during their march the Russian lines moved so close to them they were in imminent danger from soviet guns, so imminent in fact that the German guards had fled. Among those who arrived in this company were many officers of the 422nd regiment who had been captured with us in the bulge. We had been together at Gerolstein but separated when the trains we boarded set out for different destinations. Those who survived the long march were in fine physical condition. In recent weeks they had fared well enough and the long marches in the winter climate toughened them.

Colonel Paul d. Goode (*) was a soldier from helmet to boot-tips rugged, husky, and bronzed by the wind, he presented a front that was dynamic. He had taught at west point and at the time of the Normandy invasion was regimental commander of the 175th regiment of the 39th infantry division. He was captured in France shortly after the landing

in June 1944. Imperative in his demands for discipline and order in his ranks, he was more demanding of the Wehrmacht that his men be treated as human beings, as soldiers and as gentlemen. Underneath his rough exterior he had the heart of a Father for every man in his command. He lived and thought, not in terms of his own personal safety, but in terms of his responsibility for the health, morale, and well-being of his comrades without arms. For these qualities he was respected, appreciated, and honored by his men. With these qualities he compelled respect and received better treatment for us from the Germans. His arrival at Hammelburg changed the condition of the camp. Men whose spirits had drooped, and their shoulders with them, straightened up and looked at life with new hope. Men who had lost to a degree their self-respect in the unnatural environment of prison life cleaned their clothes, shined their shoes, shaved their beards, and looked the soldiers that they were.

See appendix: col. Goode

Father Brach

Atlanta journal constitution articles

Col. Goode instilled in them a sense of discipline. Assemblies were more military, barracks were cleaner, everybody was happier. Because he demanded it, the food improved, a pell was canceled in inclement weather, the sick were better provided for, and the facilities of the camp opened up to better use.

Fifteen hundred officers now taxed the capacity of Oflag XIII-B. The nine big barracks were crowded. We had forty-five men in barracks 11-7. The winds shifting from the cold currents off the alps to milder breezes from the far Atlantic mitigated the constant feeling of cold. Clear skies and warm sun drew us out of stuffy barracks into the camp streets. Some days it even got warm enough to sit in our shirt sleeves on the leeward side of buildings. Chairs and benches lined the streets as men gathered in groups to talk away the hours. Laundry was done in the open near the hydrants with cold water blankets were hung out for airing. Up and down the streets prisoners strolled, bantered with the guards, and formed new friendships with occupants of other barracks.

Red cross parcels came again. St. Joseph's day it was. This time one apiece. It was almost gluttonous to possess an entire box, coffee, cigarettes, meat, butter, cheese and chocolate, all for one's self. Yet it was not a selfish joy, which is never satisfying anyway, but a community rejoicing. merky ferky stoves burned all day long now. Bartering and trading reached a stock market level. Friends got together to partake of one another's hospitality. I look back now with fond memory to the many invitations tendered me during those days of march.

"come on, Father, let's have a cup of coffee."

Indeed, had I not received a box of my own I still could have been the best fed man in the camp, so generous were my hundreds of friends in asking me to share their boxes with them. Well remembered are the coffee sessions with colonels Johnny Ray and Joe Matthews, Majors Garner and McKee, Doctors Charlie Serbet and Gene Galvin, Captains Max Shaver and Charlie Gibbons, Lts. Bob Frash and Tom Galloway. The list could go on indefinitely.

The sweetest recollection of is a few evenings spent in barracks 9-5 where some thirty enlisted men lived. Sergeants Hugh Brady and Ralph Nordman, and Pfc Jack Adams were the instigators. Nothing stingy about that crowd.

"come on, Father, another cup of coffee." Not little tin cups, but big mugs.

"another cigarette, Father."

"no thanks, I've had enough."

"aw, come on, we got lots of 'em."

May god bless them all, that splendid bunch of GI's.

Then there was captain John Madden (*) who bunked and shared everything with me. Never during those days did I get near a smokey joe stove. He did all the cooking for both of us. Experimenting with culinary formulas he prepared some delicious dishes. An old bully beef tin we treasured held two heaping mugs of water. Two and sometimes three times a day John fed his tin stove with wood shaving to heat water for our coffee or milk. Sometimes I would be off to another barracks and come home to find John puttering over the stove. "I thought you would like some coffee, Father." Three in the afternoon (which was an hour before mass), and eight o'clock in the evening (which was after the study club meeting) were sacrosanct coffee hours. And our supply did not run out. John was playing the market with cigarettes he did not smoke.

So incessant was the exercise of the gastronomic art that the stoves were going long into the night. Then one day at appeal a reprimand from General von Goeckle was read to us by a German officer:

"there will be no koo-king on the lee-tle koo-kers after the lights are out."

St. Joseph had certainly answered our prayers and we thanked him by larger numbers at mass and more fervent holy communions. We continued to say the litany for a continuance of his favors.

* see appendix: Father Cavanaugh photo and inscription to Capt. John Madden, John Madden Jr., letter regarding his Father's career

The block commandant saw the crowd coming out of barracks

8-5 one afternoon after mass. We had for some time given little thought to secrecy in holding our afternoon service, though we continued to hold mass in a different room every day. It was always a big event for the prisoners who occupied the particular room where mass was said. The Oberlauteutenant investigated and discovered we had just finished mass. He sent for me a few minutes later.

"how often do you have divine service?" He asked.

"every day," was my bold reply.

"does General von Goeckle know that?" He asked.

"i don't care whether he does or not," I answered.

"I shall have to inform him," he stated hesitantly.

"no, lieutenant, you will not have to say a word to him. This has been going on for six weeks, and you have just found it out today, and only by accident. We are causing no disturbance; we are planning no harm to anyone. We just have mass and communion, say some prayers to the blessed virgin and to St. Joseph and then dismiss. It is agreeable with the men in different barracks, and we all derive much good from it. We even pray for you and the general."

The Oberleutenant was torn with indecision. The next few days we were just a little more cautious in leaving the room where mass was said. Then the oberleutenant sent for me again. He had some good news. I told General von Goeckle about your divine service every afternoon. He was very glad to hear it and approves of it highly."

"thank you, sir", I said. "I will be very happy to have you and Herr general come to mass any day with us."

Was this a volte (face, continence) or had we been too suspicious of a hostile attitude toward religion on the part of the high command of Hammelburg prison? It may well have been that the impending doom of Nazi Germany softened the policy of the Wehrmacht in its treatment of us. Yet in fairness to our captors it cannot be said that outside of the demand to censor sermons we were officially denied the freedom of worship for which we fought.

After this incident we changed our method of conducting mass from the secrecy of diverse barracks to the large public hall in the administration building. We even advertised mass on the bulletin board.

This bulletin board was an innovation that came with col. Goode and his far-marching Kriegies. The colonel had a staff of officers assigned to specific tasks for the good of prisoners. Lt. Col. Charles waters was g-e; on the army staff, director of plans and training; in Kriegie organization, director of recreation and entertainment. Instead of holding a bull-session with anybody that would listen to your favorite topic or hobby, you could now draw a crowd of interested --- subject you might be urged to talk about. Just arrange with col. Waters for a time on the lecture schedule. You and your subject would be advertised to the entire camp.

The schedule of lectures for a day might run like this:

0900 hrs. Irrigation of crops

100 how to make ice cream

1100 economic geography

1300 child psychology

1400 roller coasters

1500 glee club

1600 catholic mass

bring your own chairs.

Having daily mass in a spacious hall was much more in keeping with the dignity of the ritual. And more men attended. They were relieved of the effort of having to inquire which barracks would have mass. The balmy days of march feed them from the torture of trying to keep warm, and aided them to devote their minds to spiritual thoughts.

On march 16th Lt. John Weeks was killed by a guard. It was the first day we had been permitted to go to the latrine during those protracted air-raid alerts. As the raids were becoming longer and more frequent. Col. Goode arranged with General von Goeckle for the prisoners to go to the latrine with this provision that they go alone and not in groups. The siren announced that planes were near about nine o'clock that lovely morning. All of us were confined to our barracks and wished we could get out into that warm sunshine. I was playing bridge in a tournament game in barracks 11-7. Several men from barracks 10 and 11 had used the new privilege and gone down the street, turned right to the latrine and then returned. From the windows some of the Kriegies noticed that the guard at the gate fifty feet from the corner of the building, but on the opposite side of the barbed wire, was muttering something to the men as they passed.

Lt. Weeks left his room across the street, walked down to the corner with his hands in his pockets. He had just turned his back to the guard when there was a shot. The guard had leveled his rifle on a stand of the wire and hit weeks in back of the neck. We heard the rifle-shot and looked out the window. At the moment we did not know who fired the shot or at what. Immediately another guard came running to the fence. The two were gesticulating and looking toward the end of our building. There was a hubbub in all the barracks.

"don't go outside!" Was the warning someone kept repeating.

"what happened?"

That guard fired his rifle!"

"did he aim at a Kriegie?"

Someone came from the back of our room. "they say there is an officer lying around the corner." He said.

When I heard that, I went to the back of the room, jumped out this window, and ran along the edge of the building to the corner. From the barracks back of ours someone yelled, "hey, Father! Don't go out there!"

I was concealed from the view of the guard at the corner, but could see weeks lying face down, his hands still in his pockets, and a stream of blood trickling four or five yards down the gentle slope of the walk. It was not the sight of blood that frightened me, but the way that Kriegie blood was acting. Natural healthy blood does not flow like milk, but congeals and coagulates. "is this the condition all of us are in?" I thought to myself. I peeled around the corner and saw that there were several guards now congregated at the gate. No PW's had come out of the barracks. There was no doubt about weeks' being unconscious; most probably he was dead.

"hey, Father, get inside! Do you want to get shot?" Someone yelled.

I crept back along the barracks' wall, and climbed back through the window. After crossing the room to the windows from which we could see the guards, I noticed col. Goode and several other Americans with some German officers passing up the street. It was safe to go outside now. I jumped out the back window again, ran to weeks and anointed him. There was a hole in the back of his neck at the top of the spine.

When the alert was over, weeks was picked up and taken to the morgue on a stretcher. Next day General von Goeckle apologized to Col. Goode for the action of the guard, but that did not restore life to a fallen hero, nor erase cold blooded murder. We buried weeks with military honors.

Speaking of funerals, we had several of them at Hammelburg, Serbian and American. On February 5th, Lt. Colman died of pneumonia in the camp hospital. He was the only American officer to die from natural causes during our stay at Hammelburg. Weeks and Varion had been shot.

February 17th I was summoned to conduct the funeral of pvt. Robert d. Simmons of Carlisle, Ohio, who died of pneumonia in the stalag. He was one of several American enlisted men from Stalag XIII-C to die at Hammelburg. Sgt. Toothman, the man of confidence from the Stalag met me at the prison gate-house. A man of confidence, by the way, in the parlance of the Geneva convention, is not a crook. But the representative of a group of prisoners of war in their dealings with enemy officials. I was issued a pass to identify myself and my mission. With Toothman I went to the camp hospital where a detail of twenty-four enlisted men were waiting. A German non-com led us to the room where the body of Simmons lay. It was a mortuary chapel with a few potted evergreens before a wall fresco of Christ inscribed with the words, "ich bin die auferstehung und das leben" (i am the resurrection and the life). The body of private Simmons lay on a table wrapped in blankets. On the floor was the wooden coffin in which he was to be buried.

Our instruction were to place the body in the coffin, nail it shut, and return the blankets to the Germans. This we did with tender care realizing that we were doing our best for a hero that had given his life for the cause we held most dear. The arrangements completed, six of the burial party lifted the coffin to their shoulder and we formed the funeral procession. Down the Adolf Hitler Strasse we slowly walked, I leading the column with the purple stole fluttering around my neck. It was a bitter cold day and snowing. About every four hundred yards we halted to allow six other men to carry the precious burden. After walking a little more than a mile, we reached the military cemetery.

There were plots and monuments to the dead of world war i, English, Russian, Italian, polish, and German soldiers. At the far end were sections where the various nations buried

their fellow prisoners of this war. Simmons' grave was the seventh in the American plot. Another group of American enlisted men had just finished digging the grave before the cortege arrived. They stood at attention in a neat rank, as did the German guards who accompanied us, while the coffin was placed on ropes and lowered into the grave. I read the funeral service from the ritual and spoke a few words of encouragement to those present. Then the grave was filled in and marked with a wooden cross.

In the same manner I buried Sgt. Ladislao Loera of New Gulf, Texas, on February 23rd, and Cpl. Joseph J. Shernigo, of Winber, Pennsylvania, on March 4th.

Oberleutenant Schmidtbauer summoned me to the block headquarters one afternoon in march to tell me that I was to report to the camp headquarters on a matter of business. With some uncertainty I followed the feldwebel who was sent to accompany me to the fine stone structure where the interview took place. On the way I examined my conscience something like a schoolboy who is called by his disciplinarian. I remained completely in the dark. At the office of the Wehrmacht intelligence bureau a Hauptman sat at a large table covered with the manila envelopes into which our confiscated belongings had been placed the day we arrived at Hammelburg. He spoke English and bade me sit down. He picked up a plain white envelope. It was the one on which I had marked the coordinates of the grave of a German soldier I had buried in the Siegfried line and in which I had sealed the half of his dog-tag. German dog-tags had no names stamped on them, just a number and a few letters. The Hauptman questioned me for specific details of the location of the grave, thanked me for having buried the man and said his relatives would be notified of the circumstances of his death and burial. The boy had been wounded while on a patrol near our battalion area the night the battle of the bulge began. He was brought by our medical aid men to the battalion aid station where he was treated by doctor Diamon. His death and burial occurred December 17.

A few days after this interview much of the material confiscated by the German authorities at the searching when we arrived at Hammelburg was returned to us. Notebooks had pages torn from them. Photographs of wives and sweethearts were stamped "gepruf". Billfolds were given back considerably slimmer. I looked into the secret pocket of mine and found my seventy dollars untouched. "the treat will be on me, when we get to a place where we can buy food," I told the crowd in barracks 11-7.

After mass on St. Patrick's day I baptized Lt. Gernott Joseph prior of Huntingburg, Indiana. A faithful member of the study club he embraced the catholic faith with a light and happy heart. It was simple ceremony in the empty room of the administration building. Lts. Levene Weigel and John Losh acted as sponsors; the newly baptized Joseph has two godFathers, since no godmother was available. Lt. Prior made his first communion the next day, passions Sunday.

St. Joseph's day, the 19th, the culmination of the apostolic work of Lt. Joseph Seremet of west Hartford, Connecticut, came in the baptism and first communion of Lt. Wilbur Busehow of San Antonio, Texas. Joe Seremet and Lavene Weigel were the sponsors of the baptism. Wilbur was happy and so was Joe who had done most of the instructing in the elements of the catholic faith.

The evening that we buried Lt. Weeks, Col. Goode sent for me to come to his room strangely enough it was the same room Father Breiner had used to bring Father Madden and me communion during the first days we spent at Hammelburg. Some incident in

connection with the funeral of weeks had brought to the colonel's attention the fact that Father Madden and I had refused to submit sermons for German censorship.

"i want you to know that I highly approve the action you two priests took." He said.

"we only did our duty, sit" I said.

"come on and have a cup of tea with me, padre," he changed he subject. Then over the cups of English tea and English cigarettes we discussed the murder of weeks and the morale of the camp.

"keep up the fine work, padre," were his parting words as I left to conduct a meeting of the study club.



Chapter eight

The Liberation of Hammelburg

We had a large crowd at mass on Sunday, march 25th. It was palm Sunday, but we had no palms to distribute. For the first time I preached a Sunday sermon. "let's sanctify the coming week and unite our sufferings with the suffering Christ," was the gist of it. I announced that we would have special services during the last days of holy week and that the details would be published during the week. It was my desire to have a mission or retreat in preparation for the feast of easter, but I hesitated to announce it definitely, stupidly doubting that I could stand the strain myself.

Lt. Arthyur Hoell of green bay, Wisconsin, was organizing a choir to sing at high mass on easter; anyone wishing to sing in it should come to the rehearsals each afternoon at one o'clock.

On Tuesday morning, the 27th, we distinctly heard the sound of firearms. Men stood along the barbed wire fence at the edge of the camp looking out over the meadows dotted with grazing flocks of sheep. Across the hills they saw columns of German troops maneuvering and vehicles and ambulances moving down the roads. By noon rumor was spreading that an American force was approaching Hammelburg. The rumble of guns grew louder; even those with poor hearing were sure they could distinguish the caliber of the weapons; machine guns, bazookas, mortars, tommy guns, panzer fausts, etc.

Col. Goode and I met on the Herman Goering Strasse at two o'clock.

"padre, that's the way a tank battle starts. I've heard enough of them to know. General Patton's boys are getting close, and the Germans are going to move us out of here. They first wanted to move us at five o'clock this morning. I got them to put it off till evening. Now I'm hoping to have it postponed to five o'clock tomorrow morning. If we can stall them off long enough, the Americans will get here before the Germans move us."

To my amazement the colonel ordered me not to go. "you won't be able to stand the march, padre."

"but colonel, it is my duty to go; I must stay with these men as long as I am able."

"you go to the hospital this evening and tell Major Berndt to put you to bed. When the liberating force gets here, you get word through to the air corps as fast as you can that a column of prisoners is marching by wooded roads in the southeasterly direction, and tell them, for gods sake. Not to strafe us."

I reported to the medics immediately and told the major that it was the colonel's order that I be put to bed in the hospital. I would report after dark. The doctors put my name on the list of those who were too weak and sick to travel.

The atmosphere about the camp was tense with excitement. The noise of battle grew louder. The infantry officer prisoners were convinced that our forces were making rapid headway against weak opposition.

There was great activity in the kitchen also. As this evening's soup was to be our last at Hammelburg, the supplies that were on hand could be used up potatoes were being peeled furiously; cans of meat were opened; vegetables - except the rutabagas - were being prepared.

Three-thirty: time to get ready for mass. I started hearing confessions and was interrupted at ten minutes to four by a series of short blasts on the air-raid siren. "all men stay in the barracks where you are!" The command was shouted across the compound from doors and windows. A few came running as fast as they could to get to mass. Fortunately many had come early to be present at the last mass in Oflag XIII-B.

"since no more can get here, I will start mass immediately and give you general absolution before holy communion," I said. While I was vesting several shots landed very close to the camp. I began the prayers at the foot of the altar with trepidation.

At the gospel a shell exploded in our camp. We all dropped flat on the floor, I under the table we used for an altar. A few tense moments waiting for another round to hit; but it

did not come. I stood up, told the men to be calm (though I did not give them very good example) and to remain kneeling. "if anything happens, just stretch out on the floor. I'll give you general absolution now." With trembling hands I made the sign of the cross over the kneeling congregation.

At the lavabo (washing of the hands) the building shook with another explosion - a direct hit, it seemed. Again we were all prone on the floor.

A few more moments of terrifying waiting and a dead silence. I realized I must finish the mass quickly. I stood up - "men, be calm." I said to the prostrate forms. "i am going to shorten this mass as much as possible, so that everyone may get to holy communion; we will have only the consecration and communion. Then I will distribute holy communion."

Facing the altar I read the "hanc igitur-" prayer (first two words of a prayer from the Latin mass 'this therefore...'. In the tenseness of the situation the words were packed with meaning. "graciously accept, o lord, this offering of our subjection to you. Give us peace today. Save us from eternal damnation and number us in the flock of your chosen ones, through Christ our lord."

Then the twofold consecration and elevation.

The ringing of the bell was accompanied by another explosion in the camp. Quickly I said the threefold, "domine, non sum dignus," "o lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed."

The host and chalice were consumed. On the corporal lay the pile of small particles. Filling the paten with them, I turned to the congregation.

"behold the lamb of god; behold him who takes away the sins of the world."

Burp, burp-burp went a German gun. Put-put-put a machine gun answered.

I began distributing holy communion; even here the ceremonies were mutilated. The rubrics call for the formula of viaticum in a situation like this, "receive, brother, the viaicum (which means provision for a journey) of the body of our lord Jesus Christ, who, we hope, will preserve you from the treacherous enemy and bring you to eternal life. Amen."

The formula was too long to repeat with each communion, and my trembling hands made me fear dropping a consecrated host. I gave holy communion as fast as I could, while the men pressed toward the semicircle around the altar. They were composed and orderly, but I could not help noticing how the tenseness of fear relaxing their faces as each one received the body of Christ.

There were approximately a hundred men at mass. Just as I finished the last line of communicants, a tremendous shout of jubilation rose from the windows across the street. Loud talking, shouting and laughing came from men who had rushed from the barracks into the street. I looked at my congregation; they were quiet and absorbed in their thanksgiving prayers. With relief I turned to the altar and finished the mass. After mass we

said the novena to our lady of the miraculous medal and the litany of st. Joseph. Then I turned to the kneeling crowd.

"what happened?" I asked.

"Father, we're free!! We're free! We're liberated! "

"the German general has surrendered to Colonel Goode."

"the stars and stripes are flying from this building."

It was the raising of the American flag that occasioned the shouting from the other barracks and with it went the order to cease fire.

Major Fred Oseth spoke the sentiments of crowd: "wasn't it wonderful. While mass was going on we were liberated. You're not a keiegie any longer, Father"

Lt. Paul Moynahan of Roxbury, Mass., wrote me of this incident months later, "a pretty emotional moment; nothing will even compare with your 'short mass' of march 27th at Hammelburg. I still use the well-thumbed prayer book I had then, and believe me, Father, the mass has taken on a new meaning for me that will never fade."

As I stood before the altar, still clad in the vestments and hearing the story of the liberation, and American tank rumbled to a stop on the street just outside the window. Liberated prisoners crowded around it. It was a grand sight. Better still was the appearance of Americans in combat dress, the tankers with their steel helmets, ammunition belts, field jackets and boots, and with rifles in their hands. Their ruddy faces and lithe bodies contrasted strangely with the drawn looks and emaciated frames and the dirty clothes of the Kriegies. From the wondrous recesses of the tank came cases of k-rations, which were distributed prodigally to the skinny hands that reached out for them.

Slowly I removed the vestments and packed them away for the last time in the cardboard carton which Lt. Weigel, faithful to the end, spirited away to the store room where we had kept it since we began to have mass in the administration building. As I stepped outside the building a strange sight confronted me. From all the windows of the buildings facing west, white sheets were draped; also along the barbed wire fences white strips were hung. These were the surrender flags that Americans and German alike had hung out. In the compound Americans and Serbs mingled together in groups and shouted their joy, shook hands around and around. The familiar scene of prisoners carrying the tubs and cans of chow to the various rooms from the kitchen was enacted for the last time. I began to make my way along the Herman Goering Strasse to my barracks.

"Prisoner of the Germans" by Chaplain Mark R. Moore. Page 45: "Old Glory Waves Again"

"I heard some of my comrades calling me and as I looked out of the door I saw a scene that I shall never forget. There in formation was the German General and his adjutant with a white flag of surrender. He was turning the camp over to to the Americans. Beside them I saw our Colonel (Col. Goode) and our Adjutant and they had something I had not

seen for some time. It had been saved for just such an occasion. There held high in her rightful place, we beheld Old Glory waving in the breeze"

The last meal at Hammelburg was an event to be remembered by the old gang in barracks 11-7. Mattie Giuffre divided the brimming pot into equal parts for us and we stood around the tables for the last time together. As usual I said grace: "bless us, O Lord, and these thy gifts which we are about to receive from thy bounty through Christ, our lord - and thank you for delivering us from our enemies."

"amen!" They all shouted.

The soup was rich, saturated with vitamins and thoroughly satisfying. We scarcely needed to touch our reserve supply of red cross food to feel full. Had we actually been served a normal meal, we could not have done justice to it; our stomachs had shrunk so much. During supper we received marching order, not from the Germans, but from the Americans who liberated us.

As night was closing in we formed a column of fives on the Herman Goerring Strasse and proceeded with blankets on our backs, the extra food and keepsakes of prison life in our bulging pockets and in the motley assortment of containers we carried. I had an old flour sack which a Serb had given me for a towel which contained an extra pair of socks, a woolen shirt, a bath-towel, my breviary and two or three pounds of food. Captain John Madden brought the rest of our food and the old smokey joe.

Through the Serbian compound we moved like a triumphal parade, cheered and farewelled by those stalwart soldiers who had made our stay at Hammelburg so interesting and so comforting.

One of the buildings that was used as a recreation hall by the Serbs had received direct hit and was still burning. The fire threw a ruddy glow on the faces that smiled for the last time on us. We marched out of the prison stockade, through the holes made in the fences by the tanks.

We crossed a field and then ascended a hill on top of which a straw stack was furiously burning. Near the pyre lay the corpses of three Germans, most likely the team that manned a gun emplacement that was covered by the straw. A mile out on the hills from the camp was the main body of liberating force. The excitement of the afternoon and especially the exertion of climbing that hill exhausted most of us. But there were k-rations and cigarettes for us in the tanks that equated like giant ducks on top of the hill.

As free men we sat down on the damp earth. The chilly night became cold. The shots from small arms were fired in the darkness near us. Talking and laughing ceased. Tenseness came over us again and when we spoke we whispered. It was the first foreboding of trouble ahead. Orders were passed along, "no smoking, no lights". The full moon was obscured by clouds, and only glowing embers from the burning building and straw stack were left. Two hours passed and still we sat.

Then the truth came out. This task force had come sixty miles ahead of the lines to liberate what was understood to be 200 American officer prisoners and bring them back in

the tanks. 1600 could not possibly ride on thirty-five tanks which would have to fight their way out as they had fought their way into enemy territory.

There was a council held somewhere in the hills of the liberated colonels and majors with the commanders of the tank force. Then it was over the disappointing word was brought down to us.

"we have been liberated and are free. But until we can get within the American line each man is on his own. Sixty miles is the distance we will have to make - without food and supplies, without transportation, and we are in a weakened condition. Hence, it is the opinion of the field-grade officers that any man who thinks he cannot make the trip go back to the barracks and await developments. Each man is free to do as he things best."

In desperate situations like these a man does not ordinarily act on his own. He looks to see what his buddy will do and they act together.

"what are you going to do?"

"do you think we can make the sixty miles?"

"will it be safe to go back to Oflag?"

Such questions as these were in the minds and on the lips of all. A half-hour passed and there was only aimless strolling around the field. The tanks sat on the hilltop, their motors silent. Gradually the retreat to the prison camp began. In small and large groups many of the liberated, now stiff from their rest on the cold ground, and slowly wound their way along the hillside, past the darkened silhouettes of the tanks and down the hill. From my point of view this is what seemed to be happening and hence my duty was clear. I must go back to and see this thing through with them.

In reality only a third of the liberated returned before one-thirty in the morning. Most of the others remained for the time being in the hills. Another third returned during the rest of the night and early dawn. Of the remaining third very few were not recaptured during the next day or two. None of the tanks, it is said, got back to the American lines.

Captain John Madden and I reached the gaping hole left by a tank in the barbed wire fence shortly after midnight. As the line of stragglers found its way through the compound of our Serbian friends, there wasn't an atmosphere of tension; the joyous spirit that animated the Serbs when we marched out five hours before was changed to silent gazing and dejection. There was scarcely a word spoken as we trudged along. In the compound we had inhabited for over two months an American officer on guard at the gate told us to go directly to our barracks and remain inside. Madden and I found our way to barracks 11-7. We were neither the first to arrive there nor the last of the old group who had lived so happily together. Col. Seeley was the senior officer of barracks 11. He ordered all the connecting doors between the rooms to be opened so that we would have inside communication in case of trouble. No one was to remove his clothes if he lay down to sleep.

Page 47: "time for decision"

"we walked past the tanks and on over the hill and were ordered to stop and get down. After a wait we began to sense something was wrong and the word reached us the tanks would not be able to carry so many and we would all be left to do what we thought best. Since most of the 1,500 were officers, the decisions were individual. --

So I ran and caught up with Stoney (Stonesifer) and 500 others and we went back into camp. I was so tired that I went to my old bunk and even went to sleep.

"Prisoner of the Germans" by Chaplain Mark R. Moore, Page 47: "Time for decision"

"We walked past the tanks and on over the hill and were ordered to stop and get down. After a wait we began to sense something was wrong and the word reached us the tanks would not be able to carry so many and we would all be left to do what we thought best. Since most of the 1,500 were officers, the decisions were individual."

12 Appendix 20a: Lt. Don Prell's letter on his experience after the Task Force Baum "Liberation".

13 Appendix 20: Herndon Inge, Jr., Article on Task Force Baum"

And there were signs of trouble. After the liberation at four-thirty o'clock and the surrender of our compound to the liberating task force, the German guards had been withdrawn from the Serbian and American enclosures. Under cover of darkness some of the Serbs had gone to the magazine and armed themselves. They held a few German officers and enlisted men hostages in one of their buildings. There were reports that the Germans were preparing fight. We sat in the dark for an hour or more discussing the situation.

"we are not free yet, Father."

"well, let's get some sleep anyway," I said and rolled into my bunk.

"Prisoner of the Germans" by mark r. Moore

Page 41: "day of liberation" (refers to task force baum and the liberation of the camp on march 27, 1945)

"on march 27 I had written, (diary) 'nothing unusual,' and when I wrote again on April, I had to change it. Then I wrote, 'i held service under tank fire. Liberation and marched out.' it happened like this. We had been hearing artillery shells for a week or more in the distance and then it sounded like tank fire.

On march 27, the German general in charge told us we would have to leave camp march 28 at 5:00 a.m., but many doubted that he would march so many of us out like that.--

I found that the Catholics were going to have mass and several men said they wanted at least a prayer service so I went to the senior Chaplain and the colonel and got permission to hold the service which had been called off. Both services were at 3:45 p.m. --

Tank fire sounded almost like it was over the hill. We remarked to one another, 'doesn't that sound like music?' but it was time to start services, so I went inside and others gathered. Chaplain Paul W. Cavanaugh was to conduct mass in the room beside ours. The catholic men were already in and the service was about to start.

I believe we had 250 to 300 protestant men for our service and I had asked Chaplain Stonesifer to help me. Just as I stood up to begin, I noticed a flash to my right at the windows and an explosion. The windows shook and every man hit the floor. Since we didn't have a pulpit I had placed a pool table in front of the room and was standing behind it. When the explosion occurred, I started under it but those in front had gotten there first and I found shelter under the organ. In a moment I looked up and saw Chaplain Matthews, a six-foot-four-inch Chaplain from Minneapolis, Minnesota, standing there. I had been told that he was the bravest Chaplain on the line and he had been in combat for some time, so I crawled out and stood beside him. I asked him what he thought we ought to do and he said to go ahead with the service. So I said, 'men, you may know more about shells than I do but I think we are just about as safe here as anywhere so we will go on with the service.' --

To my left was Chaplain Stonesifer and I called on him to lead in prayer. Half way through the prayer we had another explosion close by and this time I made it first under the pool table. When I looked out Stonesifer had dropped on his knees and had not missed a word. He was still going strong, --

When we got outside the guards had put up everything they had that was white so the tanks would not shell the camp too much. We heard that the camp was surrounded and that the Americans would soon be in. The catholic service was over and I made my way through the crowd to Chaplain Cavanaugh and told him what had taken place. He said it was wonderful and we made the announcement to his men before they went out. I went back into the room where we had had services and since we were ordered not to leave the building the men were still there and Chaplain Kospamp, at their insistence, was leading them in a prayer of thanksgiving. A number of the men too were praying.

(Chaplain Kospamp was killed during the bombing raid at Nuremberg on April 4, 1945)

(Fr. Cavanaugh cont.)

I was there but a few minutes when I heard a command, "get ready to march. The Germans have taken over and are marching us out of here. Be ready in fifteen minutes."

At one-thirty in the morning we lined up quietly in the Herman Goering Strasse - about five hundred Americans under a guard company of forty officers and men. Some of our number had passed the kitchen and brought up a few dishpans of cold boiled potatoes. We stuck these into our pockets and were quickly off. Through the headquarters area of the prison grounds, down the Adolf Hitler Strasse, then out into the open country to the east. I was on the march that col. Goode had ordered me not to take and he was not with us. Col. C.c. Cavender was the senior American officer.

Prisoner of the Germans" by Chaplain mark r. Moore

Page 49: "moving day"

"at 3:30 a.m. March 28, I was awakened and heard that the Germans had returned and were marching us out. --

We marched past a great number of German soldiers and started our journey which lasted thirty-six days. The other 1,000 men were recaptured, put on box cars and shipped to Nuremberg and marched eighteen days to camp at Moosburg.

Chapter nine

Way of the cross

In the darkness of the early morning hours we plodded once again along a gravel road. The comparative ease of living behind barbed wire was replaced by the prisoners' march. From our own experience we knew that forced marching under guard was not a comfortable way to live. There was a mist in the air and the chilly dampness disheartened us. Just outside the camp area to the east a Volksturm unit was busy with preparations for combat. Along the shoulder of the road, in clumps of trees, and in the lee of knolls and ridges groups of soldiers, horses, wagons, trucks, and artillery caissons waited for the hour when the fighting would be resumed. General von Goeckle had surrendered the American officer prisoners to Colonel Goode and the task force which had reached Hammelburg. He had not evacuated his troops from the rest of the camp nor abandoned the defense of the sector. It is not likely that he had much authority in the tactics the Wehrmacht was adopting in this crisis.

Another motorized unit turned from a side road head on to our column a short distance from the camp. We were shunted to the side to allow the convoy to pass. It moved slowly. Some vehicles momentarily stopped and there were short conversations in undertones between our guards and the troops in convoy. The Germans appeared to be as befuddled as we were. When the road was clear we pushed off again. Small pebbles tortured our

tender feet. Pebbles of another sort tortured our minds. "was it the better thing to have gone back to the Oflag? Would it not have been safer to stick with the American tanks?"

Our column moved sluggishly for an hour. A ten minute rest and we tramped for another hour. A sort pause, then on again. The first light of dawn was breaking through the clouds. German artillery and tanks moved swiftly past us on their way to Hammelburg. At six o'clock we began to hear the rumble of battle behind us, a tank battle that occurred near the prison camp this morning. At least seventeen Americans were killed. Father Madden, who had remained in the enlisted men's stalag, buried them a few days later.

Stalag XIII-C by the way had not been liberated by the American forces that had reached Hammelburg. It remained in enemy hands for another week until the expanding front of the third army moved up and freed the entire area, including Yugoslavs, Russians, French and poles.

At eight o'clock it started to rain. Walking was a hardship now. But like infantry troop, which most of us were, we became numb to the pain and continued shuffling along over the stony highway. We turned south onto a narrow dirt road into rolling country. Up the slippery slopes the going was rough and the column seemed barely to move. By ten o'clock we had walked for eight consecutive hours with only five or six rest periods of ten minutes each. We had had no sleep and no food had been issued us. Of course, the pace was slow, probably not much more than two miles an hour. There had been little talking among the prisoners.

The guards occasionally muttered their gripes to one another. They were equipped with long heavy overcoats and a full knapsack; a couple of hand grenades, which we called "potato mashers", and a mess kit were strapped to their belts. Over the shoulder they carried their long, heavy rifles. Although our physical condition was much weaker than theirs, these guards were not the blue-eyed, blond apolloes with broad shoulder and barrel chests whom we had seen behind barbed wire in the prisoner of war camps in the united states. Most of them were older men, stoop shouldered, flat footed, unfit for last stand fighting. Marching a column of American prisoners of war was definite hardship for them. By ten o'clock they were morose and sullen, spluttering only unintelligible imprecations to themselves.

We left the dirt road, crossed a soggy meadow and entered a woods. In little groups we were assigned places to rest on the wet leafy mold of the forest. Guards were posted around the perimeter of the woods. We were told that this would be along rest, possibly till evening. Hungry and tired we took off our shoes and rubbed our aching feet. Cold boiled potatoes from our pockets made the breakfast most of us had. Along a wagon trail small bonfires were built to boil water which was brought to us from a neighboring farm. Captain Madden, the wise provider, had brought along his supply of food and even his smokey joe stove. He boiled some water and made coffee for us. But fires had to be kept from smudging. Smoke would reveal our location and planes might come over to strafe us.

I thought of col. Goode's injunction and wondered how soon he himself or some other American might get the intelligence to the air corps that a column of PW's was marching by back roads to the southeast. During the day a plane or two passed low over us. We were not fired upon. Fortunately for us the air corps was prevented from coming out in force because of the overcast.

During the long rest the five hundred of us were organized by our senior American officers. We formed four companies, each with a lieutenant colonel in command. Each company was divided into four platoons, each platoon into three squads. Lt. Col. Thompson commanded our company. Major Sanda Helms became our platoon leader and John Madden captained our squad of eight men: Lts. Smolka, Prior, Keough, Losh, Ruoff, Kessinger, Jones and me. The arrangement was to prove very satisfactory in accounting for our own men and in the distribution of food.

Some prisoners slept on the damp carpet of the woods. At three o'clock with the sky still overcast we started marching again; the danger from the air was remote. Now it became forty-five minutes walk, fifteen minutes rest. Just at dark at the end of the fourth hour we came to a small town named Schwankenwerth. Here we stopped for the night.

On this million dollar tour of Bavaria which we paid for in blood sweat and aching limbs we were provided excellent accommodations for the night in the spacious barns of Bavarian farmers. Throughout this country the villages are very tiny, perhaps a few dozen homes packed closely together, then open fields without a fence, not even a shed for farm implements; a mile or two away another village. The cattle lived under the same roof as the peasants who owned them, usually at the rear of the building. At right angles to the home was a large barn that housed farm machinery and bins for grain above was a loft where hay and straw were stored. Each farmer's I-shaped estate touched his next-door neighbor's so that two homes formed a courtyard in the middle of which was a refuse heap. It is said perhaps seriously that man's wealth is measured by the fragrance and size of his manure pile. The hay lofts became the "room and bath" for this group of American tourists seeing Bavaria under duress.

One barn ordinarily furnished enough space for a company, some times two companies, so that the guards had only two or three quadrangles to watch during the night. Arriving at a barnyard, each company would be assigned a loft, each platoon its space and each squad a section more or less roomy enough for eight men. In this crowded corner, Capt. Madden would designate each of his squad a few square feet of sleeping space. As we carried our own blankets, we were able to make a soft bed on the hay or straw. Occasionally sheaves of rain furnished the mattresses, but even these with a little arranging could be made as comfortable as a Simmons bed. In every case the barns were softer sleeping quarters than the floor of box-car or thin pallets on a wooden shelf in a prison camp.

"prisoner of the Germans" by Chaplain mark r. Moore

Page 49: "thirty-six days march through Germany"

"in our group we had a guard company of fifty officers and men. This is how they worked. A forwarding party went ahead and made arrangements for us to sleep in barns. Then the kitchen truck would catch up with them, get a stove or two and have a soup cooked by the time we arrived."

We arrived at Schwankenwerth aching all over from the forced march. Since two o'clock that morning we had been on the road for twelve hours, not counting the five hours rest in

the woods. We were kept standing for what seemed a long time in the middle of the village; then each company - about 125 men - was taken to a barn for the night. The barn our company was assigned had a single electric light in the loft. By its soft glow we arranged our sleeping quarters and spread out blankets over the hay. It was only common sense not to strike matches in such an inflammable place; hence in the semi-darkness men were stepping on one another or falling into the depressions in the hay.

We were served a broth of potato soup. A large vat, used by the farmer to prepare feed for his livestock, was placed over a wood fire in the farmyard. The potatoes were cooked and mashed in this. If it held sixty gallons each prisoner received about a pint of soup - not very much to recuperate the energy we had expended in marching. We lined up in the rain at the big pot to receive our pint of "hot stuff" in the tin cans we carried. The American red cross boxes for PW's had not only supplied us with extra food at Hammelburg but also provided us with the eating utensils for this march. The can in which a pound of powdered milk was shipped made an excellent soup bowl for barnyard messing. The potato soup, insufficient though it was, satisfied us. It was not long before we were all fast asleep.

At five o'clock the next morning we were served a cup of hot tea and at daybreak were on the march again. The rain had ceased, but the day was cloudy. Along a back road we walked for two hours, then came to the main river. The bridge we crossed was prepared for demolition on a moment's notice, for in the center lay two very large bombs. We entered the city of Schweinfurt. This city we had seen bombed from Hammelburg. Factory areas and some residence districts showed the results of terrific poundings, but the heart of the city seemed untouched. It took two hours of steady plodding to get through Schweinfurt.

It was Holy Thursday. Along the streets we passed some catholic churches; people were coming in or going out for the solemn commemoration of the last supper. Little girls in white veils and little boys with white collars reminded us of the Holy Thursday processions they were participating in that morning. For the most part civilians took little heed of us, even children hardly stopped in their play to gaze at the procession of weary prisoners passing down their main streets. Nuns and priests looked on us with compassion and then went on their errands of mercy. Only at the railroad crossings did we see any warlike preparations along the tracks were armed soldiers and on the freight cars ammunition and supplies ready to be hauled to the fronts.

Once out of Schweinfurt we were in the open country with those innumerable little villages. Early in the afternoon we left the road and went a half-kilometer into a woods for a two hour rest. A stone's throw from where our squad was lounging I noticed a group of enlisted men who's faces were unfamiliar. I went over to speak with them. They had been prisoners in stalag xiii c and had been out on an arbeit kommando (work party) in Hammelburg that day the tanks appeared on a hilltop and their guards fled. The American boys were picked up again during the night by the Jerries and joined to our column as we marched away from Hammelburg.

In that crowd I met two grand non-coms who became very dear and helpful friends. Sergeants jimmy miller of Louisville, Kentucky, and Waldo smith of Lima, Ohio. They had welcomed Father Madden to Stalag XIII-C and did not tire of telling me what a blessing he was to the enlisted men there. Jimmy and Smitty had with them even then a supply of food they had picked up in Hammelburg and which they were carrying along in a blanket. They gave me a can of sardines and some cigarettes. From that day on they saw to it that I did not go hungry. Before many days they were detailed to the mess crew and get to ride

ahead on the truck to the day's rendezvous where they helped prepare our meals. When Jimmy or Smitty were dishing out the soup I never left the line without a full can of food.

The German guard company had three vehicles, a staff car, a truck, and a wagon. The staff car was used by the German colonel to go ahead each day and commandeer barns for us to sleep in and potatoes for our rations; the truck carried the impedimenta of the guards and the pots for cooking. Our mess officer, Major Hazlett, with four or five enlisted men who did the cooking also rode ahead on the truck. The wagon brought up the rear of the marching column, picked up those who fell by the wayside, and carried the baggage of those who could barely walk.

From our resting place in the woods we marched off again for five hours until darkness came on and we were quartered in barns at Herlheim. Potato soup and bread were given us that night.

Good Friday morning we were aroused before the sunrise to continue our way of the cross. This day we traveled deeper into Catholic Bavaria. Every step was painful on this third day of forced marching, but at every crossroads and often in between we were reminded of the infinitely more painful way of the cross by wayside crucifixes and shrines. There was silence in the column as we trooped along and much praying. It was a day of meditation and suffering with Christ on his journey to Calvary. At the close of the day we arrived at the barns of Oberswarzbach where several men remarked to me what inspiration and encouragement to go on for another kilometer they obtained from the images of Calvary that they contemplated that good Friday.

I remember how Johnny Losh near me in the straw that night, his feet and legs aching from the march, said, "I have learned today a lesson I shall never forget; how close we can come to Christ when we suffer and how our suffering becomes easy when we look at him." Johnny was having his purgatory on earth. Before a week was up he met his death. I have no doubt that in that death he was welcomed by the Christ with whom he suffered.

At nightfall the first food served us by the Jerries that day was a can of soup with horsemeat in it.

"Father, can we eat the meat? It's Good Friday!" Lt. Edward Cassidy of Medford, Mass. exclaimed. Yes, Ed, we need every bit of food we can get," was my answer. The law of the church regarding fast and abstinence were not made for starving Kriegies. We are excused; if you have any scruples, I give you a dispensation.

It was a somber, long-suffering lot of Kriegies that slumbered in the haylofts that good Friday night.

Holy Saturday the sun rose in a cloudless sky as we were leaving Oberswarzbach. Frost was on the green fields and the household gardens of flowers and vegetables along the way. We were in a valley of the Steiger Wald now and it presented a new picture to us. Broad and open, about four miles wide, it was literally dotted with tiny villages about a mile apart. Buildings were all made of gray stone with red tile roofs. Above each hamlet rose the spire of its church. Walking seemed easier this morning because no doubt we were wearing out the muscle pains with continued use of our legs.

The sun warmed us, dissolved the frost on fields and gardens, perked up the gay colored flowers. The birds began to sing. But the cloudless sky cast a restive shadow upon our spirits. The weather was perfect for flying and none of us doubted that our own air corps would be on the job after three days of clouds and rain. What if we should be mistaken for a German column and strafed? We prayed for protection from the terrors of the sky. I realized the absolute sincerity of col. Goode's remark, "and tell them, for god's sake, not to strafe us!" From Hammelburg we had brought a supply of cloths as large as sheets. These had been torn into strips two feet wide in such size that they could be spread on the ground to form the letters u s p w. Each man who carried a piece of this cloth knew which bar of what letter in the signal he carried.

Sometime in the middle of the morning we sighted a few planes off the horizon to our rear. Looking back to the west we could see them whirling in graceful curves and now and then swooping out of sight. We knew they were our own fighters on reconnaissance and nuisance raids. Along the open roads there was no cover available. We shuddered all the more as the sound of their motors informed us they were getting closer. A lone plane swung an ard a mile or so away from us, veered round again, and hummed in our direction.

Guards and prisoners took off to the open fields and ditches. The panels were spread out and we all lay in a crouched position watching the maneuvers of the plane. The pilot flew up to a higher altitude, circled off, then turned toward us again. A German guard near me uttered something about Luftgangsters (air gangsters) and gave us a worried look. Luftgangster was an opprobrious word used commonly by the Germans to designate the fliers who - as they said - indiscriminately bombed women and children, hospitals and churches.

Out of the west came another plane. The two now swung high up overhead. Together they wheeled around and came down broadside for a closer look at us. There could be no doubt that we were spotted; but could the pilots read our signal? As they flew in parallel to the road we held our breaths and prayed. We felt sure they would open up their machine guns to strafe our column. Instead they sharply turned, flew in low again, and tipped their wings in salute. We all stood up and cheered, thankful that we were recognized by our own. The German guards made no protest, as our signals were their protection also.

Once again during the morning we were looked over by the air corps. We went through the same nerve racking experience of spreading the panels and waiting for the strafing, for we did not know when some trigger happy gunner might fail to see the sign or mistake us for enemy troops.

By noon we climbed with relief out of the valley into a wooded area in the eaten hills. We looked back from the top of the hill over a scene of peace and tranquility. I counted twenty-one church steeples in twenty-one clusters of red roods up the length of the valley. In the evergreens we were shielded from the eyes of pilots gaming over the Reich. We felt secure and laughed and talked again.

Walking was slow and painful that afternoon along sand trails through the forest. With the formation of an overcast sky, the wind came biting cold. We were weak from hunger, and only a few had some scraps of bread to eat. Late in the afternoon we walked along a

concrete highway for four kilometers, then a half-kilometer off the main road to the village of Heuchelheim. We threw our blankets over the straw in the barns and collapsed.

"and tomorrow is easter" and John Madden exclaimed.

It was an easter none of us will soon forget. Holiday Saturday night we received wonderful news. "we are going to stay here till Monday and we're getting red cross boxes tonight."

It was almost unbelievable until we saw the German truck pull into heuchelheim loaded with packages of food. By the light of the paschal moon we each received a box for ourselves as the last day of march faded away. St. Joseph must have smiled in heaven as he looked down on the material means he had provided for us to celebrate in a modest way the triumph and joy and resurrection of his foster son.

Hauptman Stammler, one of the officers of the guard company, was a catholic. After receiving the news that we would rest on easter, I searched for him to ask that he make arrangements for us to have mass in the village church on easter-day. He promised to do what he could.

It was daylight when I awoke to hear men calling: "Father Cavanaugh! Here is a Heinie wants to see you." It was Stammler. "you may have mass in the church at eleven o'clock. The priest does not live in this village. Already he has been here for mass. The sacristan of the church will be there to help you."

I spread the news to the Kriegies and warned them to be ready when the guards came to conduct them to the church two block away. With Lts. Ted Gorney and Douglas O'Dell I made my way to the church without a guard. Walking down the streets of a German village without armed escort was a new experience for me. The church, small, but solidly built, was dedicated to St. Joseph. When I stepped inside and knelt before the blessed sacrament I thanked the risen Christ for the sufferings we had been allowed to endure with him. I thanked him for his passion and resurrection and for the joy we would all have in celebrating his triumph with mass in a church and American food in a barnyard.

As I looked around the first catholic church I had visited since the days before our capture, I wondered how we would get all the men in. Presently an elderly gentleman and lady entered the church and bowed graciously to us.

"ich bin der priester" was all the German I spoke, but it was enough. By means of signs we arranged everything for mass. Later a boy of twelve who could speak some English appeared. From him we learned that the church was seven hundred years old. Maybe an exaggeration, but it's pleasant to think that in the thirteenth century when catholic Europe was building its great cathedrals, this little gem was also the manifestation of the faith of this simple Bavarian community. Ancient too were the heavy gold vestments which the old lady unwrapped from musty cloths for use at mass.

At eleven o'clock eighty men paraded under six guards into the little church and filled it to overflowing.

Ted and Doug dressed in black skirts that hung from suspender over the shoulders and clean white surplices over their dirty shirts. I vested in an immaculate white alb and sparkling cloth of gold chasuble. I also had found a biretta with a huge black pom-pom to

wear to the altar. Everything about the altar was clean and neat, such a contrast to the dirt and grime we had grown accustomed to. Every heart was filled with consolation as mass began. Before the credo I read the epistle and gospel from Ted Gorney's Sunday missal, which he had treasured these many months of prison life. Then the sermon:

"my dear Kriegies: - this is the day that the lord hath made; let us be glad and rejoice in it." And eighty pairs of eyes danced with happiness and joy.

"we have a lot to be happy about and a lot to pray for. We rejoice that god has blessed us with the privilege of mass today. We are especially glad that st. Joseph has provided us with food to eat, and with mass in a church that is dedicated to his name. We are happy with Christ in his glorious resurrection from the dead. Christ has suffered and died an inglorious death, but now he is in heaven. He is here on the altar in a state of eternal happiness, and his joy is overflowing into our hearts. We have suffered with him during the past months, and especially this past week. No doubt it has been the longest and most penitential lent we have ever lived through. During the past four days we have suffered our way to the cross and we have suffered with the Christ who was represented in the wayside crucifixes that flanked our line of march. Today we are happy with the happiness god wants every son of his to enjoy. And we are better sons of god because we have drunk deep of the chalice of suffering and sanctified that suffering by daily prayers and offering of it to him.

"let us offer this mass together (i am offering it for these intentions) in thanksgiving for the sufferings and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; in thanksgiving to the blessed virgin for her motherly protection of us; in thanksgiving to st. Joseph for the food he has sent us in answer to our prayers.

"we have many blessings also to ask our lord for. We ask him to continue his protection of us, to keep us free from sin, to help us to be better men. There are our loved ones, our mothers and Fathers, our sisters and brothers, our wives and our children, who need our prayers. There are our comrades in arms who are fighting on the fronts, perhaps dying today in order that we maybe liberated. There are the rulers of nations who need the guidance of the holy ghost to establish peace in the world.

"easter is the feast of peace - peace between god and men, peace between nations, peace in political life, peace in home life, and peace in the heart of every child of god. Let's offer this mass and holy communion that peace may come quickly to the world.

There were tears running down some faces, and my eyes were not dry the mass went on. I gave general absolution and all received holy communion. We had benediction of the blessed sacrament and the singing was wonderful. The incense, the flowers, the candles, the cope of gold clothe, the small medieval church all added to our sensible consolation. Our joy was overflowing as we sang, "holy god, we praise thy name".

Then we went back to the haylofts and the refuse piles and cooked and ate and rested for the remainder of the day.

"gosh, Father, we'll never forget this easter, and especially that mass" was the comment I heard again and again.

"prisoner of the Germans" by Chaplain mark r. Moore

Page 51: "easter morning service"

"Chaplain Kospamp and Curtis were elected to take the worship service. Stonesifer and I conducted the communion service immediately following.

We represented the following faiths: Dutch reformed, disciples of Christ, Lutheran, and Nazarene.

In the afternoon the American air corps gave us another scare for a half-hour. Three planes flew around the area on a reconnaissance mission. From the pattern of their flight we could tell that they were searching for something. We had our panels spread on a small knoll away from the buildings, but we were just as glad that they did not come near enough to be able to read them. Perhaps it was our friend from yesterday who was trying to keep track of our movements. If it was he did not find us.

We were roused before daylight on Monday, April 2nd and served hot water from an iron vat with which we made coffee from the supply we had. We were lined up as usual three abreast and were counted. A few Kriegies were missing, but were soon found back of a barn cooking breakfast. When they joined us, another counting took place. At last came the signal from the rear of the column: "wieter marscherin" (forward march). It was relayed from guard to guard up the line of Kriegies, but we did not start. There was some fussing among the guards as an oberlaeutenant came down the line checking guards. It seemed that some of them were now missing. "wieter marscherin" was shouted from the rear a second time. Americans took up the command and parodied it, "crank the machine!" "start the engine!" They sang in a monotone.

We left heuchelheim before daylight. Up another valley along a road that followed the river level we strolled through many villages and passed as many church steeples. In this valley the towers were Moorish in design and the turrets looked like gigantic black onions placed on top of pillars. The road was fairly concealed; though the day was clear, no allied planes were overhead, just one or two Luftwaffe pilots flew low in and out of the valley. In the afternoon we turned from the valley to cross over a range of hills. Again a long climb up a side road. Walking on the level had become almost a pleasure; hills were still a torture for most of us.

Whenever there was a hill to climb, I became a straggler. Often I slowed up my pace to such a degree that the entire column got out of sight. But I was never a lone straggler. On going up a hill there was always some charitable Kriegie who helped me by carrying my pack and blankets. These sturdy, thin Kriegies would have been willing to carry me had they the strength to do so.

At the end of the long climb this easter Monday we hid away in a forest for four hours while raids and strafing were imminent. The air corps was out in force during the afternoon. Squadrons of heavy bombers spun their vapor trails high above us like spiders in the sky. Fighter planes came lower but from the directness of their course we knew they were not interested in anything in our vicinity. During the four hour rest we opened our

red cross boxes, made some sandwiches with the bread that had been issued us and smoked American cigarettes. We were forbidden to build fires as a precaution against the notice of our airmen. Since walking no longer drew from us the last bit of physical and mental energy we got together in little groups to compare our experiences and speculate on the date of our liberation.

The distance we had walked became the subject of pleasant polemics. Some said we were a hundred kilometers from Hammelburg, other that we were anywhere from fifty on up. Over most of the roads we traveled stone markers measured the distances between points in kilometers. We asked the guards, "wie viel kilometer? (how many kilometers?)" They always had an answer, but it turned out that they were as much in the dark as we were about the location of the next stopping place. Even when they knew the name of the obscure town where we were to stop for the night, they had little idea where it was or how far away. In the early evening we walked along a plateau to the town of Weissenburg. A can full of potato soup, a ration of bread, and spacious haylofts awaited us.

Tuesday morning we left weissenburg before dawn, climbed farther up the Steger Wald by dirt roads with low gradients. We rested again during the midday hours in the crisp clear air of the hilltops. Surrounded as we were with forest of evergreen, there was little fear of danger from above. In the afternoon we began the descent of the range of hills. We passed a few hill towns and scattered houses on the hillsides. Little children from this backwoods part of Bavaria came out to wonder at us and to give us the Nazi salute, "heil Hitler!" In this out-of-the-way location these youngsters probably knew little of the sufferings of war.

We slept that night in Vach after traveling eighteen kilometers by accurate measurement. In preparing an evening snack with captain Madden and Lt. Smolka on a blanket spread out in a hayloft, I dropped by penknife in the hay. Search in the semi-darkness was the next thing to looking for a needle in a haystack.

We continued downgrade on Wednesday until we came to the main river again. This we followed into the town of Furth, the largest town in which we remained for the night. However, even the big towns had their barns and haylofts; in fact, the one we stayed in was bigger and better than any we had slept in. The barn at Furth was a triple-decker and the upper lofts were reached by ladders. It was not however without its hazards. In the darkness the wide openings where the ladders were could easily be missed or from the slick surrounding hay unconsciously slid into. Everyone looked for a safe place to sleep, well removed from the holes in the floor.

Bivouacking in a large town brought with it the likelihood of night air raids. We banished the thought of what might happen if a near miss should net our three-story hay mound burning with five hundred Americans soundly sleeping. There were rumors that our march was coming to an end and that we would be taken to a prison compound near Nuremberg. The fact is that the original plan of the Germans was to take us to stalag XIII-D or Stalag Luft 3, but the Nuremberg prisons were already so crowded that the authorities there refused to take us in.

The morning of Thursday, April 5th, we got started at two a.m. in a drizzle. Through the thinly settled area between Furth and Nuremberg we marched in the dark, then into the Nazi stronghold itself at daylight. We did not go through the center of the city but along the eastern part through the great industrial district. We saw enough of the destruction

from bombings to convince us that the air attacks on German cities were very effective. The i.g. farbin industries werk was a shambles that had been partially cleared up and at least partially operating again. The people walked the streets or rode bicycles. Shattered streetcars, buses, and auto trucks stood in the places where bomb fragments had smashed them.

Children were conspicuous by their absence; empty playgrounds and deserted schools. All children had been evacuated to the country areas. It was a contrast to the little villages we had passes through where every house was bulging with chubby German youngsters. The officer who said, "don't these German women do anything else but beget children?" Revised his observation.

The rain had ceased and the skies were clearing at eleven o'clock as we reached the southeastern edge of the city. In a sparse clump of evergreens we stopped for a break.

"take an hour to eat," was the order passed down the column.

At the base of some spruce trees our squad sat down in the warm sunshine, opened our red cross boxes and lunched. After a smoke we spread out to relax. We were approximately at the center of the group of Kriegies who sprawled a lock's distance in either direction a few yards back from the road.

At 11:45 the first air raid siren sounded and we thought we might start moving. Hearing the warning in the proximity of an industrial area cause some trepidation along the column. "let's get going!" Several said.

The hour of rest was just about up when the sirens shrieked a series of short blasts. Now we could not move. We sat up and looked around. To the south of us a railroad on an elevated roadbed ran diagonally to the street near which we were sitting. Between us and the railroad stretched a large open space that was mostly sand. No houses, no vegetation on it. It was marked here and there by large deep holes, probably sand pits; some of them perhaps bomb craters. On the opposite side of the railroad was a long row of factory buildings, chimneys and storage tanks.

Scarcely had the alarm sounded when crowds of Germans, many in military uniforms carrying rifles, began to swarm over the railroad embankment and run perpendicular to the railroad as fast as their legs would carry them.

"look at those Jerries run"

"hey, look here come the planes" and high up in the blue, just flyspecks in the sky, appeared one flight and then another of fourteen bombers each.

"there's a third flight!"

"and here comes the fourth!"

They were approaching in curves, two out of the west, two out of the south. Steadfastly they moved in from the horizon up over our heads.

"my god, we're on the target!" Somebody yelled as he pointed directly overhead.

The thin white trails of the target markers were coming down almost perpendicularly upon us.

"let's run." But where could we run to? There were no shelters near, nor even holes close enough to get into.

I jumped to my feet, and yelled in either direction, "make an act of contrition!" I repeated the short formula of general absolution first to my right and then to my left.

As I did so ...bang! Boom, boom, boom!

Bombs were landing on the factories on the opposite side of the railroad. I fell prone and pulled my blanket over my head and began to pray.

Bang..bang..bang..bang.. To the accompaniment of my ejaculations. "heart of Jesus, say unto us, I am your salvation."

I could feel the earth tremors rolling under me.

The bombs continued to land for a few more seconds; then a lull.

I looked up. Billowing clouds of smoke and flame came from the factories. Men were still running away like pygmies from the target.

"keep down! Keep down! Came a scream.

Another flight was moving in. The roar of ack-ack guns was deafening and the sky was dotted with the black puffs of their bursts.

Thump..thump..thump..thump.. The second flight was releasing its cargo of destruction. The bombs, the ack-ack, the explosions of chemicals in the munitions works, all combined into a reverberating thunder of demolition.

The three formations passed over the target. The crackling sound of fires and falling walls was added to the surging rumble. "this must be the end," I thought and peeked out from under the blanket at the men sprawled out near me. There was a strange darkening of the atmosphere. Madden, Smolka, Keough, Prior, Losh, everyone seemed to be clinging to the ground and trembling. The earth beneath us shook again as the fourth flight emptied their bomb-bays.

By now the atmosphere was dusty and heavy. Fragments of debris and sand were literally raining on our side of the railroad.

"stay down! There's a fifth flight up there."

The bombs were already on their way down.

Boom... A geyser of earth and sand spouted on our side of the track.

Boom..

Boom... And each time we felt the explosion was nearer to us.

Click, click, click, click. Five bombs landed almost simultaneously on the area where we were. The noise was terrific; the heaving of the earth staggering, a rain of sand, gravel, and dirt came down upon us. Men screamed:

"doctor! Doctor!"

"prisoner of the Germans" by Chaplain mark r. Moore

Page 53: "death under our bombers"

"on April 5 we were marched near Nuremberg and were taking a ten-minute break. --

As we finished we heard the air alarm and then saw our b-17's and b-24's coming our way. We all hit the dirt and waited. The first wave moved in and dropped their loads about five hundred yards from us. --

The second wave hit hearer. -- the third moved in nearer and then the fourth and fifth came quickly.-- the sixth wave dropped back on one of the other targets. The seventh wave hit the ammunition plant again and must have had all incendiaries for the plant caught on fire.--

The eighty waves, instead of coming in from left to right, came in from the front. --

After a few seconds I crawled out and looked around. I saw a number of lifeless bodies. I wanted to run, hide fly, or anything, to get away.--the guards moved all of the able-bodied out and left thirteen of us there to care for the wounded and deceased - four Chaplains, three medics and six others.

I yanked the blanket from my head. The thick dust and raining sand made everything dark. I took the holy oils from my pocket, stood up among the prostrate forms and fallen trees and started to work. There was confusion everywhere. Dead men lay among the injured. Those unhurt revived from their fright, stunned to find themselves alive.

Beginning with the nearest mangled body I anointed every dead and prostrate form I could find. I ran from one to another on the spur of the moment, not noticing where I was going nor paying any attention to the shouts that were made at me. The thunderous inferno of raging fires and explosions kept many men pinned to the ground. The target had been gasoline dumps and ammunition factories. Sections that had not received direct hits were ignited by the heat and explosions from the parts that did.

I paid slight attention to the identity of those whom I anointed. Few were recognizable where they lay. The farther I went the more dense the dead and dying became. I reached the head of the column. By then every able man was up and working with the dead and wounded. I collected my senses for a moment in the midst of the pandemonium.

"i surely have missed some..." i thought, "...and there is the other half of the column."

A yard or two from the head of the column lay a man in a German officer's uniform. It was Stammeler, captain of the guard company. Running over I saw that his head was all but severed, and I anointed him. He was a catholic and had been very decent to me as a priest.

Through the ferment and terror I hurried; jumping over fallen trees and fallen bodies. To add to the excitement, a water-main had been broken and the bomb craters and low places were filling up with water. Some wounded men were in danger of drowning.

"Father, come and help us get this man out!" Shouted three officers, while near them three others looked on stupefied. I shook two of them out of their daze, "come on, get busy! Help these fellows here. I have other work to do."

I jack-rabitted along the disordered lines, perhaps anointing a second time men who had been moved. How many anointing there were is impossible to say, perhaps fifty, perhaps over a hundred. Eventually I reached the other end of the column. There were not so many hurt in the part of the area. However, two German soldiers were killed there.

Satisfied that I had done my best for the dead and dying (though I must confess that there have been times when I

Have had doubts whether I anointed all; so confused was the situation) I turned to the living.

Running to the area where the bombs had fallen, I found the tree to whose roots I had clung during the agonizing duration of the bombing. Five feet away lay Jon Losh on his stomach. His buddy, Jim Keough, was sitting beside him. Johnny smiled in his pain, "hello, Father, I'm glad you did not get hit."

"Johnny got hit in the side, Father." Said Jim.

And I looked at the blood-stained shirt that had been wrapped around his abdomen to hold his vitals in.

I paused to speak with him, give him absolution again and tried to console him.

"do you think I'll be all right, Father?"

"i sure hope you will be, Johnny. We'll get a doctor here for you in a few minutes."

John Losh was heroic in his patience and was willing to have others treated before him. Doctor Dworkin came and gave directions not to move him until a litter could be procured. John lay on higher ground away from the running water and was not moved until an hour

later a litter arrived to place him on. He had been a model catholic boy during the months of our imprisonment and was a daily communicant when he could get to mass. A few days later he died in the British hospital for prisoners of war near Nuremberg.

Then there was Douglas O'Dell. I found him sitting on a bomb crater while two men applied a dirty torn shirt sleeve as a tourniquet above his knee. The rest of his leg lay a couple of yards away. "well, Father, it looks like I'm not going to make it." He smiled as he pointed to his severed limb, "that's part of me over there." But Doug did make it. He recovered and got back to the states and now walks with an artificial leg. After getting his prosthesis at Walter Reed hospital he wrote me: "I'll never be able to thank you enough for putting me at ease after I was it." Doug, you have felt more secure with me there, but I shall never forget the courage with which you inspired me by the sincerity of your smile and the calmness of your voice.

Another bomb crater was about eight feet deep and the sides were steep. In the water that was seeping into the hold several valiant souls worked to remove a dead man and two wounded. The work was hard as the walls of sand were slippery. From this crater I measured with my eye the distance to where I had lain. It was about sixteen yards. Why we were not all killed within that radius is explained by the sandy condition of the terrain. The bombs penetrated deep and thus lessened the lateral fragmentation. Near that hole were several trees splintered and gnarled by the bombs, some broken off, others with their tops bent to the ground. In that tangle were three more wounded who were hazardous to extricate because of the weight of the trees and the running water. There also were two horses which had been hitched to a wagon that had pulled under the trees at the time of the alert. Both animals lay dead and splattered about. There were four more bomb craters in the area, many more mangled trees, and pools of bloody water. With supreme effort the dead and injured were removed from that location to the road.

Captain John Madden came up to me, "Father, one of the protestant Chaplains has been killed and the others want you to come over here." I went with John to the site where Chaplain Kospamp lay. Chaplains Moore, Curtis, and Stonesifer were working over him and had just identified him. His face was charred and when first the cross was noticed on his shirt-collar, they had said, "oh, it's Father Cavanaugh."

"no, it isn't Father Cavanaugh," said John Madden. "he is over there giving the last rites to the wounded."

"well, please ask him to come over here," they said.

As I stooped to anoint him the mark of the oily cross on his soot-covered forehead where I had already done so was plainly visible.

"prisoner of the Germans" by Chaplain mark r. Moore

Page 55: "buddy, farewell"

"i was put in charge and it never occurred to me that I was senior Chaplain until I reached down for a dog tag. When I held it in my hand I read, 'Rowland A. Kospamp.' i dropped it

on his chest and took hold of the left side of his shirt collar. There was the cross! I looked into the face and surely enough there was Chaplain Rowland A. Kospamp! --

I had the personal belongings of twenty-four officers who had been killed. --

Twenty-four officers were killed the first day. We heard that five died the next day. Three Germans also were killed.

The following are portions of two documents obtained from the
National archives

Secret

Extract

Air intelligence summary no. 76 for week ending 22 april, 1945

Industrial targets

Nuremberg:

the marshalling yard, the Siemens electrical plant, the m.a.n. works, and gas works were all targets for eighth air force here on 5 April when 309 b-17s unloaded over 900 tons, and photos show most of the bombs to have fallen in the southern part of the town damaging all these establishments.

The Siemens Werks suffered the most severe damaged, with five large workshops and seven main shops in the electrical equipment plant, damaged severely.

Confidential

10 April 1945

Immediate interpretation report no. K. A223

Locality: Nuremberg

- a. Main railway station and goods yard.
- b. Railway marshalling yard.
- c. Railway workshops.
- d. South station and goods depot.
- e. Electrical equipment works of Siemens,
Schuckertwerke a.c.
- f. Transformer works of Siemens Schuckertwerke a.g. g. M.a.m. works.
- h. Gas works.
- i. Town.

Period covered: between 1030 a hrs. On 21 mar 1945

and 1500 b hrs. On 9 apr 45.

Attack: date s.a. reported weather

U.s. 8th air force 5 April 1945 3506 8/10 cloud to clear

Provisional statement on damage:

most of the bombs fell in the southern part of the town and all the places listed above have been damaged. Many rail tracks were obstructed by craters but at the time of photography, 4 days after the attack, repairs are almost complete. Large numbers of laborers are seen working on the few craters left in the main yards. The heaviest damage is seen working on the few craters left in the main yards. The heaviest damage is seen in the two works belonging to Siemens Schuckertwerke a.g. five large workshops in the transformer works and seven main shops in the electrical equipment shops are severely damaged.

(following lists the locations a - i, seem above and the damage observed.)

For example -

i. Town

much new damage is seen to business/residential property in the southern half of the town but there are no large areas of new devastation as the bombs have fallen in already severely damage districts. Industrial premises immediately west of the main station good yard are severely damaged.

(Father Cavanaugh's manuscript continues)

Within an hour after the bombing the guards gathered the living together and marched them off - a column of four hundred. Fifteen of us stayed to care for the wounded and the dead, three doctors, four Chaplains, and seven line officers. The wounded needed our attention first. A truck and trailer came from Nuremberg and transported as many as could be carried in one load to a German hospital. Some German red cross women came with syrettes of morphine and sterile bandages to administer what first aid they could. Later two more open trucks arrived from the British prisoner of war hospital to remove the wounded. With them came

Captain frank r. Lauvetz of Omaha, Nebraska, who had been with us for a few weeks at Hammelburg before being transferred to Nuremberg to do medical work. He had brought splints, litters, and bandages. We loaded the trucks with the most seriously wounded. Some twenty or more injured men still remained. We gathered them together in a grassy spot, covered them with blankets and tried to make them comfortable as possible.

We finally turned to the dead. Twenty-four bodies were lined up in orderly rows on the grass, identified, and tagged. Chaplains Moore, Curtis and Stonesifer did the graves registration work here; they removed billfolds and keepsakes that the men had had on their persons and made a record of their deaths.

All this time the ammunition factory and dumps kept blazing violently. Columns of black smoke rose into the sky; thundering explosions of chemicals interrupted our work and terrorized us. Occasionally fragments from the explosives landed near us.

After four o'clock another truck came to remove the score or more of less seriously wounded. We combed the bombed area for the last time to make sure that no one was missed. Two cardboard boxes the size of bushel baskets were filled with human parts, legs, feet, arms and chunks of flesh. We place these near the rows of dead that they might have proper burial.

Our work was done. For the first time we realized how fatigued we were. Unterofficer Bergman, a sergeant of the guards, asked me for a cigarette. "yes, here, take all you want, but get me a drink of water." I handed him an opened pack of cigarettes and slumped to the ground. Bergman soon brought the water and revived me. He sat down on the grass beside me and we looked over the scene of carnage. Each of us found no words to say. One of the doctors came over, "what about the burial of our dead?" "we are too weak to dig graves," I said. "besides, this is no place for even a temporary cemetery."

Some civilians came to make arrangements for the funeral. They assured us that our dead would be given a reverent burial. Next day some American prisoners who were in the area buried them in Sudfriedhof cemetery in Nuremberg.

Lt. James A. Sailer of Cincinnati was with a column of ex-Hammelburgers and air corps prisoners who were marched out of stalag Luft 3. This stalag was not more than two miles from the scene of the bombing and the Kriegies had not marched far when the midday raid took place. They timed its duration at forty-five minutes. Some of them said that it was the heaviest raid they had ever witnessed. Probably some of the attacks on the Ruhr district and Berlin were heavier in point of number of planes used, but this strategic raid

on Nuremberg at high noon on April 5th may well have had more Americans close to the sidelines than any other raid.

At five o'clock we weary Americans were gathered together by the six guards who had stayed with us. We were silent and pensive as we moved away from the rows of dead down the road to the south. Chaplains Moore and Stonesifer and I walked along together.

"we three have gone through much suffering together," remarked mark Moore. "we were in the same class in Chaplains' school, served in the same division, were captured at the same time, have been Kriegies in the same camps."

After a turn to the right we reached the autobahn to Munich and the Austrian frontier, a magnificent highway four lanes each way with a parkway in the middle. It was all but devoid of traffic. To our right was the huge engineering project of the anti-aircraft sites built for the defense of the city.

The evening was clear and warm as we pulled our tired feet along. Four times we took to the side of the road at the sound of planes approaching, frightened at the danger of strafing.

Two open trucks sped south, piled high with household goods, mattresses and bedding, on top of the chattels, clung a dozen nuns with their wimples flapping in the wind. Had their convent been bombed out? Or were they driven by penury and threat of starvation to seek refuge elsewhere?

Whatever the occasion for this unconventional movement of a nunnery at the hour of vespers across our path there flashed a glimpse of one of the minor tragedies in the vast catastrophe of Europe.

After three hours of very slow walking, the last hour through a wooded area on a wagon rail, we arrived at the barns of Feucht. A cup of coffee was all that I wanted. Then I threw myself on a bed of straw and fell asleep - oh blessed sleep, after the harrowing experiences of that day.

14 Appendix 2: "Way of The Cross" chronology

Chapter Ten

Bavarian trail of American tin cans

Feucht is a modernized town with shops, stores, factories and apartment buildings. Lying, as it does, a few kilometers directly south of Nuremberg, I suppose it could be called a suburb of that city. The shed where our company was lodged for the night was not a cattle barn but a store house for highway construction machines. It was rather new and clean, and what little straw there was to bed down the floor came from bails that were stacked to the side. This shed was set back about forty yard in a narrow alley onto which opened the doors of poorer class family dwellings.

When I awoke from the heavy and blessed dreamless sleep, following the bombing, it was already light. In the alley German children mingled with the Kriegies. Already and begging had already begun. Some Kriegies had even succeeded in beguiling the hausfraus along the alley to invite them into their kitchens for breakfast. Where the alley opened into the public street two guards were posted. But they were either too disheartened or too kindhearted to keep the Kriegies within the confines of the alley.

by bribery, persuasion, or guile Americans were getting past the guards and "operating" in the neighborhood for food. "I'm hungry," I said to John Madden and Norman Smolka in the shed. "Have you anything in your boxes? I lost all the food I was carrying at Nuremberg." John and smoky shared some of their food with me and we sat on the floor drinking coffee and eating cheese sandwiches while I answered all their questions and told them what had happened after they left the spot where we had sat down together the noon before.

The few of us who had remained behind when the Germans marched off the mass of prisoners had what definite information was available on American casualties of the bombing. Chaplain mark Moore and made an accurate list of the dead, and I had succeeded in compiling a partial list of the wounded that were taken to the German and British hospitals.

The first truck had gone before we thought of drawing up a roster; hence our listing of that load was made from memory and there probably were others who escaped our notice before being carried away. Twenty-four Americans and three Germans were picked up dead. Between forty and fifty were taken to hospitals in more or less serious condition. Probably fifty others, while still able to walk, had minor cuts and bruises. I spent most of the morning discussing the bombing and showing the list of dead and wounded to groups in the shed.

A few blocks away there was a dispensary where those who desired the attention of a doctor could be treated. Some returned with their heads or hands in clean white bandages.

By noon it became evident that the Germans were in a quandary as to what to do with us. The original plan was that we were to be imprisoned at one of the two American compounds just a mile or two south of the site where we were bombed, but these lagers were being evacuated and the prisoners marched out on the country roads in columns like our own. With the Russians closing in to the northeast and the American and British forces to the northwest the only direction open was the south.

The reason for the delay in moving us I do not know, nor was there any information available as to how soon we would be on the march again. Signs of the imminent debacle of the Nazi regime and national chaos appeared in the utterly forlorn faces of the guards and the conciliatory treatment bestowed on us by their officers. The truck was dispatched to the prison area near Nuremberg to fetch us red cross food packages. Toward evening we each received a full box and part of another. These arrived just after we had been served a substantially thick soup of potatoes and meat from a washtub in the alley. Civilians were anxious to trade bread and other solid food for cigarettes and coffee. A black market flourished at the entrance to the alley and, when that became came too embarrassing to the guards, over the wooden fences along the side streets.

Sometime during the day the Americans reorganized and compiled new rosters of our numbers. Col. Cavender was injured in the bombing and was no longer with us. In his place, col. Palmer, paratrooper, took over the responsibilities of senior American officer. Col. Thompson, our company leader, had also dropped out. Major sanda helms moved up from platoon leader to company commander. In our squad of eight men, Lt. John Losh was the only man missing.

Darkness came on and all fires that had been built in the alley or the yards were ordered extinguished. It was still undecided whether we would move on or remain in feucht for another night. We all were satisfied to sleep out the second night in the same sheds.

On Saturday morning, april 7, the Germans made up their minds to move us southward. In the morning they brought us a tub of hot water with which we made coffee in individual cups and breakfasted from our red cross boxes. By noon our reorganized column, reduced in round numbers from 500 to 400 prisoners of war, was on the road again.

We wended leisurely under clear skies on unfrequented roads, passed scattered farm houses along the wooded hills. The terrain slanted gently upward. We were in the frankische alb, a long range that reaches out across Bavaria like a finger from the Swiss alps. As we rambled along we realized that we were not the first column of prisoners of war to pass this way. Every few kilometers along otherwise clean and rubbish less roadsides were scattered for several hundred yards sardine cans, cheese boxes, milk tins, chocolate and cigarette wrappers from America. We rested periodically under cover of woods and strewed some more debris along the trail as we "bashed" the contents of red cross boxes and discarded the tin cans. Sixteen kilometers were paced off from Feucht to Buch where an old barn almost bursting with hay was commandeered for us.

The sleeping quarters were rather crowded, but the barn was in a central location in Buch where trading with the civilian population was favorable. I found Jim Keough of Philadelphia sitting on the floor of the barn with a far away look in his face. "Father, do you want some bread?" He unselfishly asked me. "how much have you got, Jim?"

"plenty! I made some good trades tonight and did well. Come on, Father, have some good civilian bread." And he pulled out a large round loaf of whole wheat bread. With some jelly he had we made sandwiches and in the dank corner of the barn talked about our buddy, John Losh. Perhaps it was that day that Johnny died.

We quit buch on Sunday morning at six o'clock. It was the first Sunday after easter and I had hoped we might stay in the town long enough to arrange a mass. There was a slight haze in the atmosphere and a light frost on the ground this crisp, chilly morning. We passed a few people trudging along the roads on their way to mass. Farther out in the hills families in horse drawn buggies were riding to church. Across the fields we saw the spires of distant churches pointing up from the depressions in the landscape and we heard the church bells ringing the hour of mass.

We rested for forty-five minutes in a scraggy woods for breakfast. Smolky, Madden and I ate sardine sandwiches and raw onions, a rather satisfying breakfast. We reached a plateau where the villages were few and widely scattered. There were clumps of forest through which ran wagon trails. Along them were thrown American tin cans, as yet

unrusted by rains; they reminded us again that other columns of Kriegies were not far ahead of us.

At eleven o'clock we came down into the town of Seligenporten, in which there is an ancient Cistercian monastery and a more recent abbey-church. We halted for a few minutes in the middle of the village. I prayed that accommodations might be found for us here so that we could have mass in the beautiful church. Instead we moved on for three kilometers out into the country to a farm which belonged to the same monks. On this farm was the largest barn we had seen, so large that in the hayloft there was ample room for 400 of us to sleep. Beside the barn were four small dwellings and a very tiny church.

"Father, did you see the church? Can we have mass? Today is Sunday."

I visited the little building set apart on a knoll to see if it were equipped for mass. The chapel was dedicated to the mystery of the scourging of Christ at the pillar. Over the altar was a graceless statue of Christ chained to the pillar. Along the side walls were about two dozen eight-by-ten inch drawings, all of the scourging. Each was dated with the year of its erection, running back to the seventeen hundreds - votive offerings of pious people. The sanctuary was very small. On either side of the narrow aisle were five pews that would seat three people each. A vesting table was on one side of the front door and a confessional on the other.

"well, we can't get them all in here," said Ted Gorney who was with me.

"the late comers can stand outside. They may learn to come early for mass."

Everything necessary for mass was there except the wine and hosts. Hauptman Minner, a catholic of the guard company, who was becoming friendlier since I anointed his friend Hauptman Stammerl, said he would contact the monks at the abbey in seligenporten. Happily a Cistercian brother was on the farm fetching a wagon load of potatoes and he promised to send some wine and hosts from the monastery for mass.

"tell him we want to have mass this afternoon, Sunday." I told Minner, to make sure the good brother understood the urgency.

Late in the afternoon a monk in his white habit with black scapular and walking stick was sighted coming up the dusty road to the farm he brought with him the wine and hosts for the mass I celebrated at six o'clock that evening. Father Theobald knelt in the sanctuary and the men packed the church even to overflowing.

It was a devotional mass and I said a few words on the gospel of the day - the appearance of Christ to the apostles on the evening of the first easter and his greeting to them, "peace be to you."

That evening we learned we were to stay here another day.

"let's stay a week," was my suggestion.

"let's stay to the end of the war," said Lt. Smolka. "nobody will ever find us here."

"yes, the war will be over and we won't know it," Capt. Madden said.

The place was truly a secluded spot up in the mountain region, but, as Hauptman Minner explained to me, we could not stay many days in one spot because of the food problem. Four hundred unexpected guests would eat up the potato supply of any small village even with the slim rations we were fed.

The next morning, we had mass again at nine o'clock. It was the transferred feast of the annunciation. Annually celebrated on march 25th, which this year happened to be palm Sunday, the feast was postponed until after the easter octave. 'twas another feast of peace and I preached a short sermon on how peace was restored between god and man by the incarnation of his divine son. I urged the men to receive holy communion for peace, not only the peace that follows the order to cease fire, but a just and lasting peace for the world. Father Theobald was present from the abbey. After mass he told me in Latin that the Father abbot wished to invite me to dine with the community at noon. I laughingly thanked him and the abbot, but explained that I was a prisoner of war and would not take the chance of going three kilometers in middle of the day alone. I pictured how sweet it would be to eat in a religious house again and on this day too, the feast of the annunciation.

i was resigning myself to eating soup out of a tin can when Hauptman Minner came running up excitedly.

"do you want to go to the monastery for dinner?"

"of course I do," I smiled.

"i will go with you as your guard."

"fine, I'll go."

I quickly got together some cleaning equipment. I shaved, washed my head, and tried to clean my dirty clothes and shoes. For the first time I became embarrassed at my filthiness. Walking mud roads, sleeping in barns, eating in awkward situations, not to mention the soot from the smokey joes that still slung to us, all conspired to make us feel at home with tramps and vagrants. Now suddenly t be invited to dine in a monastery - the very thought of which suggests cleanliness - filled me with shame. I scrubbed hard, but was not too successful in my efforts. In spite of my squalid appearance I set off for the Cistercian abbey with Hauptman Minner in the spring sunshine.

"hey, Father, where are you going?" Some solicitous Kriegie called to me down the road.

"I'll be back. Don't worry about me."

At the door of the church Father Theobald met us and showed us the new abbey-church and the old cloister where Cistercian nuns had sung the midnight praises of the lord as long ago as the thirteenth century. The part of the building once occupied by the nuns was now an historic relic protected by a government committee for the preservation of historical monuments.

We entered the monks' cloister and preceded to Father abbot's room. His desk was piled high with letters, his table with magazines and papers, and the walls with shelves of books. The abbot was an ascetic looking priest with black beard. I told him I had to come all the way across Germany to make my first acquaintance with a Cistercian abbot. I explained in Latin how pleased I was to come and how kind of Hauptman Minner to bring me.

"bonum et jucundum est habere fratres in unum," said the abbot. (behold how good and how sweet it is to live as brothers in unity)

(*) see appendix: L. Martin Jones letter

Father Theobald spoke Latin fluently; Father abbot had some difficulty but managed to remember some verses from the psalms. I explained that I was an American Jesuit priest.

"quomodo cantabimus canticum domini in terra aliena." (how will we sing a song to the lord in a foreign land)

That I had been a prisoner at Bad Orb and at Hammelburg where we were liberated for a short time.

"laqueus contritus est, et nos liberati sumus."

(the trap is destroyed and we are free)

That we had been walking for two weeks from Hammelburg.

"beati immaculati in via." (blessed are the pure as they travel their way)

That we had lost twenty-seven men in a bombing.

"requiescant in pace." (may they rest in peace)

Thus it went on. The benign old man had a quotation for every topic. Then we went to dinner. Twelve of us sat at the t-shaped table, six brothers, three on either side of the stem; the abbot, the three Cistercian priests, Hauptman Minner and I on the cross-bar.

Remember it was a feast day, a day of special meals in every religious community. After Father Theobald read the gospel of the day in Latin, the abbot said, "deo gratias" (thanks be to god) and we began a cross fire of conversation in Latin, German and English. Minner could not understand the Latin, I failed to grasp the German, and the monks missed the English. However we enjoyed ourselves. First a brother brought in a large tureen of potato soup, the like of which we had been served daily. But to sit at a clean table and eat from porcelain dishes made the soup taste much better than having it dumped into a tin can from an iron pot and eaten at the edge of a barnyard. Then came a small portion of roast pork, boiled potatoes and carrots. There was a slice of bread for each at his place at table. No desert, no wine, no coffee, not even a glass of water.

Yet for all my dubiously meritorious fasting of the past months, it was more than I could eat. It proved what I had been telling my fellow starvelings for several months, "it's not

the lack of food now that will do us permanent injury, but the abundance of good food that will be available after we are liberated."

At the conclusion of the meal, still sitting at the table, Father abbot and his community bid farewell to us; a strange place, I thought, to say good-bye to guests. We stood up at table for the grace after meals, instead of the laudate, the abbot intoned the miserere, slipped his cowl over his head and led the procession of his community into the church to sing the praises of god. Hauptman Minner and I stood at our places in the empty refectory.

"well," he shrugged his shoulders, "shall we go back to the barn?" Minner and I walked out of the monastery into the warm sunshine of the afternoon. He was as delighted with the visit as I was. We bemoaned together the wickedness of the world and the horrors of war. He told me how he had been a school teacher in Vienna at the time of Hitler's rise to power. Even in 1931 he foresaw the crisis that the national socialist party would precipitate and said, "we shall have another war." Asked about the present situation, he predicted that the war would end in about two weeks; then would come the collapse of the German people and chaos. He had a clear idea of what the Russian victory would mean for Europe.

In the shadow of the big barn that afternoon I was bombarded with questions "Father, where were you? Did you get anything to eat? Did you ask the monks for some bread?" I described the church, the antiquity of the nunnery, the conversation with the abbot, and the menu we had for dinner. "I had thought of asking for some bread, but when I saw the poverty of the monks and the scarcity of bread, I was ashamed to do so. After all, we are eating fairly well right now and won't be prisoners too much longer. Think of what we have to go home to! But these people will continue to live on inadequate rations for a long time to come.

We passed our second night in the monks' barn. After breakfast on Tuesday we departed for the south.

The countryside was rugged and some hills were steep, but our pace was poky and the rest periods long. Only once were we hurried at all and that was when we had to cross a bald knob on which we might easily have been sighted from the air. Once we passed a camp where Hitlerjungend were in training. A close-up view revealed them to be mere boys scarcely in their teens, and their instructors seemed not much older. They were undergoing military training in the Nazi tradition. Poor kids! They had never known anything but war and preparation for war. And what a legacy their generation was so soon to inherit.

A kilometer beyond the camp, reservations in several barns had been made for us. The guard were not strategically placed, so that exit to the neighboring houses was easy. I met a group of children along a back street and tried to talk with them. In my faltering German I told them I was a priest and asked if they had a pastor in Rsbach. Later, in the gathering twilight I was summoned to the same spot by a crowd of townsfolk, children and the village priest. I talked with them for half an hour while the priest interpreted in Latin for us. Before I left them two women brought me some eggs, and after dark the priest of his own accord asked a guard to bring me to his house a block away. There he showed me his church and presented me with a large sized loaf of wheat bread and a ring of wuerst.

The great problem he wanted to talk over with me was this. "what should we do when the American forces arrive" I tried to allay his fears of a barbarian attack. "when the fighting is going on, go to your cellars and stay away from your church, for very often the church steeples are used to zero in the guns. When the forces come into your town, treat them civil and you will find that they will do you no harm. It is not likely they will ask for much, but what they ask, give willingly." "what about our women and nuns?" He asked anxiously.

"the American soldiers will not harm your girls against their will," I assured him. "and your sisters need not fear. Americans are respectful of religion and those who represent it." He was so relieved and showed his gratitude by what he gave me. I trust that the American troops who shortly arrived as conquerors lived up to the reputation I established for them.

On the morning of the 10th our wandering column went south fifteen kilometer in the rain to Kevenhull. On the way we passed through a walled city. With its battlemented archways, narrow cobblestone streets, its central courtyard flanked by closely packed stores and residences, it looked like a Hollywood location for a medieval drama. 'SS' troops in thier modern uniforms seemed out of costume. Knights in armor and ladies in ruffles and farthingales would have seemed very much in place.

At kevenhull I met another priest, Father Strobel, and in company with sergeant Bergman of the guards visited his home. He gave me a loaf of bread, some spec (a kind of bacon) and most acceptable of all a bag of salt. Our squad enjoyed the extra food.

Kevenhull was a very dirty village. The homes were poor looking and the yards and streets had that dingy appearance so characteristic of the damp, dark days of early spring. We stayed in the town for two nights.

On account of the overcast there was no activity in the air. We built small fires in the barnyards to cook food for ourselves. Kriegies, in their chronic search for food, found a new source of supply. In many of the Bavarian barns there were bins of grain - wheat, millet, oats, and blei. What its purpose was no one exactly knew or bothered very much. Possibly it was saved for seed, maybe for feeding livestock and chickens. When the grain was ground in the farmer's power mill (which we had to operate by hand) a mixture of flour and chaff came out at the bottom. This whole grain cereal cooked in pound tins with a little salt. Sugar and powdered milk made the tastiest breakfast food we had every eaten. In flavoring such culinary productions Father Stroel's salt was most appreciated. Potatoes too were available to the inquisitive explorers of cellars and shed, while creative imagination suggested ways of preparing them

For sometime now the strict custody of the guards was somewhat relaxed. Some guards were more indifferent than others in enforcing the regulations that Kriegies stay within the limits of the barnyards assigned them. Provided Americans did not appear to be entirely contemptuous of the regulations the guard winked at their visiting the homes of German families in pursuit of food. Americans of course were a curiosity to most families in these poor mountain villages and some of them made capital of this to profit from the hospitality of these good simple people. The people themselves were generous; only their poverty kept them from giving us more than they did.

In one of the barnyards of kevenhull I met a middle-aged frau who spoke a little English. She told me she had a son who was prisoner of war in the united states. He had written her that he was well taken car of and that the food, shelter, living conditions were

wholesome. She had her doubts about the truth of his statements. I told her of my own experience with German prisoners in one of our camps and assured her that all he said was true. Tears came to her motherly eyes, tears of joy that her son was well provided for. To show her appreciation she gave me a loaf of bread. Poor little mother! How different war looks from the point of view of the individual whose little world is encompassed by the confines of an obscure village and the affections of humble family life.

Thought we never sighted another column of prisoners, their presence in the vicinity continued to make it evident by the tin cans and food wrappers scattered along the roads. We had further confirmation from the air-corps Kriegies who were almost daily joining our column. They had been imprisoned in Stalag Luft 3 near Nuremberg, but evacuated during the first week in April. They had found it exciting to slip past the guards of the large body of prisoners to scrounge for food in nearby villages. One of these who became a friend of mine was Lt. Howard Fish of Minneapolis. He had been shot down over Vienna in January and in spite of a wound in his foot, had done considerable walking in Austria and Bavaria.

At Kevenhull, he sneaked past the guards into town where he met a Polish girl named Anna. She was one of the many Polish women whom we saw doing heavy farm work in place of the German men who were fighting for der Fuehrer. Anna was twenty years old and had been a forced laborer for almost six years. While she was surreptitiously getting Lt. Fish some food, a couple of German officers came near. Anna hid Fish in a cubby-hole while the officers stopped at the house; then after they were gone she sent the airman off with a good meal and a loaf of bread.

On Friday the thirteenth we traveled sixteen kilometers from Kevenhull to Zell. Still in the Frankische Alb we climbed some very rough hills. Many Kriegies were forced to straggle behind the column. Even the wagon which always brought up the rear had difficulty on the sharp ascents. The horses were wearing out and could not pull a load of worn-out Kriegies up the hills. Everyone had to climb on his own power, but by slow stages all hills were successfully surmounted. Sometime during the day the guards brought us the news that President Roosevelt had died. We refused to believe it. At Zell I met the parish priest, Father Xaver Mayer, who told me the report was true. I believed him and told him we must pray for the dead president and for his successor, Mr. Harry Truman.

Father Mayer was pleased to have us offer mass in his church, and we were happy to have the opportunity to pray for our dead commander in chief. I announced the mass in all the barnyards where Kriegies were confined and invited everyone to the service as a tribute to the late president, the certainty of whose death I confirmed in the minds of many. A large number turned out for the mass. The church was big enough to hold them all. Father Mayer assisted in the sanctuary and marveled at the display of American devotion. As there was a soup boiling in the big pot I did not detain them with a long sermon.

We stayed two nights in Zell. It rained most of Saturday, the full day we spent there. A raw wind blew from the south and chilled us, though we still wore our heavy clothes. Unmistakable proof that the Germans were not in a hurry to get us anywhere was the desultory course our journey had recently taken.

We were moved only every other day now and for comparatively short distances. I recalled what Hauptman Minner had told me about a large crowd of prisoners eating up the potato supply of a village. The civilian who furnished our food at the order of the military were said to have been given receipts which could be redeemed at the national banks. No

farmer was gullible enough to believe that the vouchers of the toppling Nazi war machine would be honored by the bankers. Some even feared the retaliation they might suffer if they attempted to reclaim the value of the conscripted food stores.

Early Sunday morning we left Zell to march about ten kilometer across a mountain range. "five kilos up and five kilos down," was the way someone put the distance in his log. The guards at the head of the column picked their way along mountain trails following the general direction of a high tension line. By ten o'clock we were in Schafahill, where we had to stand in the middle of the street until the burgomaster and the commandant of the guard company decided which barns would be used as temporary prisons. When the decision was made we were led by companies into small barns widely distributed through the town here we became aware that the guards were wearing out and becoming still more discouraged. The news of the approaching end of the war dampened their spirits. Marching was difficult for these reluctant soldiers, perhaps more so than for us, for they had to carry their heavy rifles and knapsacks with ammunition and "potato mashers".

We had a report that General Eisenhower had announced the junction of the American and Russian forces south of Berlin, from the east and the west the allied armies were making rapid progress and it was only a matter of days before the total collapse would come.

American Kriegies were quick to take advantage of the guards' laxity. As our own supplies were running low, any meals or handouts from the simple people of the towns were extremely welcome.

That Sunday afternoon I visited the church about a block away from our barn found the caretaker, and arranged to say mass. Word was sent to the various barns and for the third consecutive Sunday the catholic men were able to fulfill their obligation of hearing mass. We stayed in schafahill for two days. On one of the days we had a light snow.

At five o'clock Tuesday morning we marched again. It was a clear cold morning. Allied planes were out in force, not in serrated echelons with targets in the big cities, but on nuisance raids over the entire country. Our line of march began and continued through a forest. Three times we took to the woods off the highway to hide from planes overhead. The road descended abruptly off the highlands down through rocky cuts until at noon we emerged from the forest onto a beautiful highway that skirted the Danube River.

The Danube was "blue" as it tumbled around an ox-bow turn against high perpendicular bluffs of limestone. On the opposite sandy shore close to the river stood an old monastic church and cloister, now used as a rest house for German officers. All of us crowded onto the highway to gaze at the great waterway of central Europe. The surprising thing to us was the speed of the current. Though it was only about a hundred yards wide at this point, there was an astonishing volume of water rushing past us. The scenic concrete road at the base of the cliffs made a wide graceful arc around the bend in the river. The sun was high in the heavens and illumined every detail of the view. Our sprites lifted with the grandeur of the picture before us, for it raised us - momentarily at least - thoughts of freedom, beauty, and peace.

Neither up nor down the Danube, as far as we could see, was there a bridge. The German officers seemed baffled as to what to do with us. They held a consultation; they ordered us to move along the highway to our right, which was up stream. As we proceeded in the bright sunshine, we admired the play of colors - the blues of the river, the greens of the

fields beyond, the grays of the stone walls, and the soft browns of the buildings and roofs of the monastery across the river. A half-kilometer up the river the bluffs tapered off to a steep tree-covered slope. Up under the trees we stopped for an hour's rest.

A rest was needed, for we had been on the road for seven hours and had already covered twenty kilometers, the longest distance we had walked during the month of April. Although it was mostly down hill, such walking was more exhausting than over level stretches. Our food supply was getting low; it had been eleven days since a red cross box had been given us. No fires could be built on the slope for fear of attracting the attention of pilots who continued to fly over at irregular intervals. There was much speculation during that hour as to what disposition would be made of us. Would they take us across the Danube? Should we refuse to go? Could we persuade them to keep us on this side of the river in order to make the day of our liberation nearer? After all, the war was lost, so what was the use of keeping us prisoners any longer. Eventually the American forces would catch up with us.

During the afternoon we crossed the river. We were taken out of the woods in groups of sixty, marched a half-mile up the river and ferried across the swift current. The ferry was a very ingenious contrivance that could only be used in conjunction with a strong force. Across the river was strung a heavy steel cable ten feet above the water. To this was fastened a rectangular barge. The force of the water against the long rudder in the stern of the boat supplied the power for its movement. Six or eight crossings were made before all were on the southern side.

In the crossing made by our platoon a team and wagon came along with us. The ferry pilot was a girl of sixteen who manipulated the rudder with such skill that the horses did not exhibit the slightest sign of fright or panic which could easily have resulted in the capsizing of the barge and the loss of the sixty of us in the rushing current. The ferry eased into the runway on the opposite bank where troops and horses stepped ashore.

We were left under the impression that we would continue our march south of the Danube that day. Many of us were exceedingly tired and exhausted after the twenty kilometer down hill walk. It had also warmed up considerably during the day as so often happens in the early spring. Spring fever attacked us in earnest. We sat down at the roadside and complained to a guard that we were too weary to walk any more. Though he looked bedraggled himself as he carried his heavy overcoat and rifle, he had no alternative but to prod us on. Happily it was scarcely a kilometer to the town of Weltenberg where we lodged in barns along the paved road that led to the ferry across the Danube. Behind the barns was an open grassy spot exposed to the warm afternoon sun. Here we spent some lazy hours delousing ourselves.

Hitherto in this narrative I have not mentioned the lice. Toward the end of February we began to notice them in our clothes and to feel them when we sat or lay quiet. As long as we kept moving they caused us no inconvenience, but when we went to bed then their field day began. Usually we were tired enough to sleep in spite of the creepy feeling we felt all over us. Washing the clothes did not destroy them; shaking and airing uniforms did not free them; the only effective means we found of ridding ourselves of them was to smash them individually between the thumb nails. If the temperature and time allowed, we would remove our clothes and work along the seams squashing the eggs and insects. For most of us the time thus spent was rewarded with one or at most two nights of scratch less sleep, for the colonies of lice we carried with us multiplied so rapidly. It was practically impossible to kill all the eggs and bugs. Besides we all carried them in our clothes and it would have

been next to impossible to keep from picking them up in the environment in which we lived.

Bartering and begging in Weltenberg was hampered by the presence in the town of German soldiers who were not responsible for our custody. Not only were the Kriegies aware of the danger of wandering abroad and meeting an SS trooper in some obscure spot but our guards also were more alert to check a straying Kriegie in order not to betray their despondency before those who still had a last ditch battle to fight.

Civilians however in their curiosity gathered along the high board fence that separated us from the street. Some of them engaged in banter and then in barter with the Americans. Lt. Kessinger for one contrived to gather a few pockets full of onions by giving children little pieces of soap for a handful of onions. It was quite a game until some parsimonious mothers discovered the sudden depletion of their onion bins.

Just at twilight captain John Madden and I were using the last bit of daylight to arrange our blankets in the loft. A great shout went up from the prisoners in the barnyard. It was a shout of joy and exaltation. The news spread like lightning, "here come two white angels!" I said to John, "now what do you think of that? Tomorrow is the feast of the patronage of St. Joseph." We joined the crowd of excited Kriegies at the gate of the farmyard and watched the two vehicles painted entirely white loom out of the dusk. They drew up alongside us on the highway and stopped. They were two German ambulances, the first cars of a large convoy which passed through Weltenberg during the night. Troops and heavy armament were moving up to establish a line of defense somewhere north of the river. All night long the grinding of brakes and shouting of orders went on in the street outside the barn. In these closing days of the war the Germans moved their troops and vehicles by night, camouflaged them by day or hid them in forests.

We had crossed the Danube somewhere between Regensburg and Ingolstadt.

Early the next morning it was evident that our guards were not at ease in the presence of combat units. Unceremoniously we were hurried out of Weltenberg before six o'clock. A forced march of eighteen kilometers brought us into rolling country and out of the precincts of Nazi defense activity. On our way we saw in the barnyards of small towns Wehrmacht trucks and kitchens carefully concealed. Through the open barn doors we could see German soldiers sleeping during the day on the hay and straw as we were accustomed to do at night. Our long misshapen column wandered across some fields over a slight elevation and came into a restful looking valley where lay the clean looking town of Helchenbach. It was a cluster of not more than fifty white stucco houses each surrounded by a white picket fence. Spring was burgeoning in the little garden-plots and on the trees. A half mile across the meadows through which gurgled a little stream rested a group of buildings - three large barns and two comfortable dwellings. Roomy sleeping quarters were supplied us by the barns, locations for fires by the open spaces around them, and pleasant lounging spots by the grassy knolls that were exposed to the sun. We stayed at Helchenbach for three days and two nights.

Grain and potatoes were openly given us by the peasants. The mill in one of the barns was kept constantly turning. The kitchen in one of the homes was turned over to us during part of the day and a few officers appointed to see to the cooking of the cereals and potatoes that were brought in pound tins and were lined up on the stoop at the kitchen door. The three days at Helchenbach were like a picnic. We had hot water served us twice a day (in

the morning and in the evening) for making coffee and once each afternoon a thick soup and bread were issued. When not eating or preparing something to eat there was time spent in going over our clothes squeezing lice.

On the second day I arranged through Hauptman Minner to meet Father Fuz Georg, the parish priest who ministered to the surrounding villages and who had come to helchenbach that day. We had mass at eleven o'clock in the tidy little church in the middle of the village. After mass I talked with priest and minner in the sun-warmed churchyard until I began to feel hungry; then strolled back to the group of buildings on the hillside to find something to eat. After getting some cereal cooked in the kitchen I was sitting in the sun chatting with a group of Kriegies, four airmen whose names I've forgotten, but who called one another "duke, herky,rick and smitty". The view up the valley was enchanting.

Two miles away a placid red-roofed village with two red brick church steeples presented a picture of peace. On the white limestone road leading to the village a few wagons and people on bicycles lazily moved along. We almost forgot there was a war on, but we were soon reminded of the fact. Squadrons of heavy bombers appeared out of the southwest and flew high above us. A shower of "chaff" glistened in the sunlight. This was the tinfoil strips dropped from the planes to outwit the German radar. Knowing that such flights were not on their way to targets in country districts we watched them without trepidation. A safe distance to the east and north of us laid the cities of Regensburg and Ingolstadt. These were the objectives of the mission that afternoon. The bombers circled for the run in; the silver fish plunged on the targets; billowing clouds of black smoke rose into the air and a few moments later we distinctly heard the low rumble of the explosions. An hour or two after the bombing reconnaissance planes flew over the cities. In the direction of Ingolstadt some Luftwaffe planes came up to meet them. There was a dog-fight or two and a couple of planes went down in smoke.

We were now only a day's march from Moosburg, where there were large Stalags of allied prisoners and upon which many columns of prisoners like our own were converging. Moosburg was also a depot from which red cross parcels were distributed to prison camps. Our German commanders had motored to Moosburg, seen the crowded conditions and decided to keep us on the move. It was probably just as agreeable to them as it was to us. However we wanted a supply of American food. Colonel huff, one of our senior Kriegies made a trip in the wagon to Moosburg on the 19th but was unable to get the load of parcels. The trip proved profitable nonetheless, for our presence in the neighborhood and our location became known to the international red cross workers and they contacted us two days later.

After nightfall on the 20th we were sitting around quite contented to remain here till the end of the war and discussing how many more days it would be until we were liberated, when word came that we would continue our journey by night.

At eleven o'clock as we formed on the country lane, a body of troops marched up in the dark and stood near us, several hundred of them. They were to occupy the barns we were vacating. Some said they were Russians. Whatever they were they had some priority over us. We moved out, stopped fifteen minutes out of each hour until sunrise, with an hour's rest between three and four o'clock during which we became chilled and stiff from the night air and damp ground.

In the first light of the next day, the 21st of april, weary and aching as we were from marching and loss of sleep we encountered our German truck loaded with red cross parcels. Each of us received tow boxes, twenty-two pounds of concentrated food. The temptation was great to drop one of them by the roadside, but we manage to hold on to them until we finished the next excruciating kilometer and threw ourselves and the food in the hay at Boganhausen.

A few hours' sleep revived us and we feasted that day, knowing that the more we ate the lighter our packs would be. I tried to have mass that afternoon and did succeed in visiting the church with Sergeant Bergman and meeting the pastor, but the excuse was given that there were no guards available to accompany the men to the church a half-mile away. It is a pity we could not have had the service because of the human interest the church. In the sanctuary were seven elaborate reliquaries containing the skulls of martyrs - one of them the head of St. Valentine. An ornate shrine to St. Conrad of Parzham, one of the two Germans canonized since the reformation, and an altar dedicated to the black madonna of alt optting where brother Conrad lived. St. Conrad was a capuchin lay-brother and his picture reminded me of my two capuchin friends, Father Alan Madden and Father Erluin Breiner. I said a prayer for them and hoped that they were still unharmed. I would have liked to preach from the very high pulpit which was reached by a covered staircase outside the church wall.

After a restful sleep on the soft straw we loaded up our heavy packs for the march next day. Fortunately for me, my friend jimmy miller took pity on me and carried twenty-two pounds of my food supply on the truck with him. The distance we covered that day was mercifully short, ten kilometers to a little mountain town with a long euphonic name Margarethenried. Here we stayed for five days and five nights. Our accommodations were satisfactory as accommodations went and, most consoling to us catholics, a church was just next door to our barns. During those days we had mass three days in a row. I also baptized Lt. Fred Giggey, of Watertown, mass. And entered his name in the musty baptismal register. Ted Gorney and Dick Heil were sponsors.

On the last day about the middle of mass the church shook and the windows rattled from an explosion not far off. A few seconds later another loud report and violent shaking of the building. I momentarily stopped the mass, turned to my congregation and said, "stay where you are. We are as protected here in church as well as anywhere." After mass we learned that a plane had passed near and dropped two bombs somewhere in the vicinity, but we never found out what the target was.

The day the international red cross sent us the two parcels of food apiece, someone asked for DDT powder to combat the lice. The request was heeded and to Margarethenried cases of the miracle insecticide were sent. Each of received a small can of it. We generously sprinkled our clothes and our blankets and for the first time in ten weeks or more fell asleep knowing that the lice would not run their races tonight.

Major helms borrowed a clippers and shears and practiced the tonsorial art on us. Within the past few weeks while our diet improved our hair started to grow again. One of the effects of the starvation diet was the retarding of hair growth. Those who ordinarily shaved every day found that twice a week was often enough for the fussiest individuals. A haircut was a luxury in prison life, but as it happened not many worried about the lack of facilities.

These were the days when the hausfrau of margarethenried worked overtime cooking cereals and puddings and meat loaf from our ample supply of food. American cans were strewn everywhere. Typically American we dropped them wherever their usefulness ended; klim, milko and dairy maid cans; spam, pork and beans, and Argentina beef cans; Kraft cheese boxes; domino sugar and California prunes and raisin wrappers; all-coffee, Barrington hall, Nescafe and hasty maid coffee cans; chesterfield, camel, Raleigh, marvels, and old gold cigarette packages; and all sorts of other containers.

"Father, some day you will have to write a book about this march," remarked captain John J. Murphy of Chicago to me.

"yes," I said, "and the title of it might well be the Bavarian trail of the American tin cans".

Chapter eleven

"Der Keieg Ist kaput"

Father Karl Gotz, the pastor in charge of several villages in the neighborhood of margarethenried, walked over the hills from his home to pay us a visit on the afternoon of Thursday, April 26th. He was a tall, middle-aged man who wore a frock coat and heavy gold watch chain. In the warm spring sunshine we talked in Latin for an hour. From him I learned that the American forces had joined with the Russians at the Oder river, and that some of General Patton's units were advancing by powerful drives into southern Germany. Only token resistance was being offered at scattered points. It would only be a matter of hours until Moosburg, the central city of this area, would be taken. At Moosburg there were large camps for prisoners of war, French, English, poles, Russians, Italians and Slavs, in addition to a great number of Americans. Very soon you will be free.

That evening we distinctly heard cannonading in the distance. It depend our conviction that it was only a matter of time now before our liberating forces would encompass us. We celebrated in anticipation by making heavy inroads on our food supply. Many Kriegies gained entrance to civilian homes and had a meal. Others talked in groups about the future, the trips they would make, the places they would eat, and the homes they would build. Bartering and trading took second place to the polyglot discussion of impending victory of the allies. For the first time I heard the expression, "der krieg ist kaput.

"the German word "kaput" had been familiar to us for a long time. They use it constantly. It scarcely has an equivalent in English, for its meaning covers a wide extension - finished, done for, broken, used up. In many usage's it corresponds to our slang expression "busted". In the phrase "der krieg is kaput" it means "the war is utterly lost."

Our retention by the enemy, if it could still be called such, entered its final phase - five days of suspense, tense moments, high hopes, carefree hours, contradictions of all sorts. Because we had already overtaxed the food supply of Margarethenried, we were compelled to move; also it seems, order had come from higher headquarters to keep this contingent of 400 American officers in Nazi hands as long as possible. General von Kesselring was commanding the dying efforts in Bavaria. A body of American officers might prove an asset to him in the death agony of a vanishing empire.

In pouring rain our column took the gravel road out of Margarethenried early Friday, April 27th. By midmorning the rain had stopped, but off in the distance the booming of artillery fire increased. Our guards were indifferent, perhaps hopelessly despondent, in their duty of keeping us together. Our progress lacked any semblance of formation, for it strung out in detached groups with long gaps in between. In the small villages women and old men flocked out to talk with our guard, who seemed to welcome the distraction. They confirmed the news, and to many German hearts, "der krieg ist kaput."

I was feeling sick this day, not so much from hunger as from the rich food at Margarethenried. I was straggling alone. Ahead of me walked a little guard with a rifle taller than himself. He was fifty years old and less able to walk than I was. At a turn in the road he sat down and waited for me. As I shuffled up he motioned to me to sit beside him. After I did so, he said, "wollen sie coffee?" "ya, ya. Haben sie coffee?"

By his talk and his gestures he conveyed to me that the guard following a short way behind was "nix gut". I was to pretend that I was quite sick and unable to proceed. The guard approached, stopped a moment to converse with my new found patron. It was not difficult for me to play the part of a disabled walker. I made a wry face and emitted a stage moan. The guard who was "nix gut" went on; I brightened up and said, "well, what do we do next?"

"kommen sie!" And we were off down the road together. The next village was scarcely a hundred yards away. My guard led the way to the first house. As the door was open, we stepped into a hallway. The doors of the several inner rooms were closed. There was a chair in the hall on which my friend told me to sit. When no one appeared to inquire who we were, he began rapping on the doors. At the end of the hall an elderly woman came out. I understood from the conversation that the guard was telling her I was a sick priest who needed some coffee. During this explanation a well built man of about thirty years in a disheveled state issued from another room, gave some peremptory orders, then went up the stairs at the far end of the corridor. The lady took us into her kitchen where I saw the uniform of a Schutzstaffeln officer slung across the back of a chair and a rifle in a corner. I hoped that the man upstairs would not soon regain the full use of his wits. In a neat and tidy kitchen, which was adorned with pious pictures and a crucifix, the lady put the pot on the stove and prepared some sandwiches while the guard rehearsed the sad tale, "der krieg ist kaput." A half-hour later we left the house refreshed, walked through the town together, then stopped at the last house on the opposite side of town for another snack and a retelling of the same story.

Kriegies and guards still sauntered along munching the food they had acquired. My man Friday - he seem to have become my personal bodyguard - stopped farther on to talk with a group of three women who provided each of us with a thick sandwich of bread and meat. Rambling along each of us tried to outdo the other in setting the slower pace. Eventually we arrived at the day's halting place, Untermarchenbach. In spite of our straggling we were not the last by any means to arrive. Six hours later Americans and Germans alike were still catching up with the unit. Those who had arrived early took advantage of the opportunity to "operate" in the neighboring villages. Howard fish, for example, had a meal that included eggs and meat and brought back with him a large amount of bread, cheese and two bottles of wine. "all the wine shops are giving away their wines before the American troops come."

Fred Giggey and Charlie Nietman went to a village a kilometer or so away to "scrounge for food." They returned with thirty-two odd and varied-shaped pieces of bread ranging from

light gray in color to the standard black; added to these were a box of saccharine tablets, a bag of salt, thirteen eggs and a half bottle of rare German schnapps. In addition they had been served a meal of sauerkraut and sausage.

Lt. Garnett prior approached a cottage in untermarchenbach and courteously rapped on the door. When the lady of the house opened it, he made his proposal, "seife fur brot" (soap for bread)? The lady was hesitant and seemed not to comprehend. Garny repeated his request. From the interior of the kitchen came a voice with a Brooklyn accent, "no, we don't want any soap today. Come around some other time." Captain Gould had arrived beforehand and curried favor within.

That night the guard company broke into the local bar-room and kaputted a fifty liter barrel of schnapps. Our barnyard hostel was left unprotected, but we slept as soundly as ever. The following morning, Saturday April 28th, we were not served hot water for breakfast, but took to the road fasting. Our guards - symbols of our bondage - fell out staggering. There was some delay in getting started on the twenty-two kilometer trek due to their hang-over, but Americans obligingly carried the rifles of the more inebriated ones and the day's march was on. When they recovered their weapons, there were no cartridges in them.

The journey started in a drizzle; the rain increased in intensity as the morning lengthened. In peat bogs along the way we rested periodically. The pace was faster than usual and more and more of us fell behind. But the rear-guard was less tolerant than usual with the stragglers and were firm in pushing them along. Artillery fire not far behind us made the guards nervous; for the moment it rendered Americans not quite so nonchalant.

We crossed a concrete bridge with long approaches over a canal. At least it looked more like a man-made waterway than the natural course of a river, for it had a concrete bottom and sides and ran along a straight line that was banked with levees. The water was clear and green, but the flow sluggish. Somewhere in this part of Germany we crossed the Izar river, but this canal did not correspond to the description in the old elocution piece, dark as winter was the flow of Izar rolling rapidly.

On the bridge ox-drawn wagons were hurrying military equipment to the north. In the dikes along the far side of the canal soldiers and civilians were busily setting up machine-gun emplacements, evident preparation for resistance. On the central span demolition bombs were in readiness to low up the bridge.

Beyond the canal the column rested. In the teeming rain the vanguard waited for some evidence of the rear of the long drawn file of stragglers.

The miserable rain intensified the utter dejection of the guards and the uneasiness of the prisoners. The manifest haste that characterized the activity at the canal was proof enough that a local skirmish was expected soon.

This halt in the rain took place just outside of Wattenberg, not a village, but a small city similar to our American rural towns. It had a wide main street, stores, shops, five and six story commercial buildings. There was tenseness about the towns folk as they rushed from place to place and paused momentarily to look at us. Guards were so lax in their duty they practically left us to ourselves. The beer-halls were crowded, for the proprietors wished to clear their stocks before the American occupation. Many Kriegies obtained a meal in the

homes along the route and at some points women were out at their fence gates with pitchers of milk and coffee. Everywhere the loud whispers echoed, "der krieg is kaput." At noon a violent explosion not far behind us marked the destruction of the bridge we had lately crossed.

The walk through Wattenberg was interesting enough, but beyond the town walking became a torture again. I remember sitting down on a stone balustrade in my heavy wet clothes wondering whether I could go another kilometer. But no matter how hard the going became, we said, "we can always do one more kilometer." So it turned out this day for me.

We turned off the concrete highway into a side road that was a slippery mass of mud and water. At the road junction there was a platform such as we see in our railroad towns, with several ten-gallon milk cans on it. The Kriegies soon discovered that the cans were full of milk and two or three hilariously set themselves up as buss boys at the roadside refreshment stand, filling our cups as we passed by. "fresh milk, all for free!"

Norman Smolka and I stepped into a farm house where Russian slaves (four boys and two girls) were having coffee and bread around a kitchen table. Their overseers were off to town, probably to save what they could from the collapse that was imminent. A rest and a warm drink quickly made us forget our pains and we were off again in the mud and rain.

Hidden up in the hills away from the paths of heavy traffic was Hinteraurbach, a little village of a dozen houses and a small church.

Hinteraurbach, a little village of a dozen houses and a small church. The barns were spacious and the supply of potatoes good. We spent the afternoon trying to dry out, hoping that this would be the last point of interest in our Bavarian tour. That Saturday night passed peacefully enough; the noise of battle had ceased except for the occasional rumble of a heavy gun.

Lodging as we were under the very shadow of the church it was only right that we have Sunday mass. No priest lived in the hamlet, but I found the old lady who was the keeper of the keys to the church. She was so delighted to have a priest come on Sunday that she begged we delay mass until she could assemble the civilian congregation. We set the hour at eleven o'clock and for the first time I said mass with prisoners, soldiers and civilians present. The church was dedicated to St. Sabastian, patron of soldier and protester against pestilence. This little community had chosen its patrons with a practical bent. There were statues of st. Isidore, patron of oculists, St. Florian, preventor of fires, and St. Dasmus, the good thief. The guards, civilians and prisoners "fraternized" in the churchyard after mass. "der krieg ist kaput."

That Sunday afternoon the American forces were on the move again. German artillery units were maneuvering in the hills around us, setting up their high caliber guns. Not too distant concentrations of fire sounded and came nearer as the night closed in. After dark, firing started from the adjacent hills, and we surmised that the canal was being crossed in spite of the destroyed bridge. The guards looked uneasy as they took up their posts and seemed to be more intent in pondering their own safety and escape than in guarding us. Kriegies gathered in groups to discuss their own plans of action then as the tempo of the firing increased the order came, "hurry up! We're moving out immediately." We pushed up

a steep valley over muddy fields, the leaders of the column picking the way in the darkness.

All of us were alert to the danger we were in, and all the Americans were aware that thirty of our number had stayed behind, expecting to hide out until the territory was overrun. For three hours we paced off the kilometers along an open plateau moving away from the scene of battle. At one o'clock in the morning of the last day of April we approached a church with its steeple rising into the sky against a waning moon. The clear tone of the bell rang out the hour of one as we sat in the chilly air a hundred yards away. A half-hour later the church lit up and the Romanesque amber windows matched the pale yellow of the moon. A picture of peace; but there was war not far from that scene. Gunfire and rocket bursts broke the silence of the spring night.

We were taken into the church, the first time a church had been used by us as a shelter for the night.

"we are going to stay here until daylight and then march again. Everyone is to be careful not to damage the benches and all must keep away from the front of the church beyond the railing." These were the orders. The Catholics knelt down to say a prayer. I entered a pew with Captain Madden and the rest of our squad. All was subdued, yet it seemed almost sacrilegious to me to try to sleep in a church. I sat on a bench and could not even sit comfortably.

"did you ever sit in such uncomfortable pews?" I asked.

"that's what we've been trying to tell you, Father. Don't you remember us telling you not to preach long in these churches? All the jerry churches are like this."

A priest came into the sanctuary vested in surplice and stole, and accompanied by two ladies carrying candles. He removed the blessed sacrament from the tabernacle.

"I'm going to try to see that priest," I said. And I scrambled from the pew and out the door of the church. Going to the sacristy, I found it dark, but a couple of men outside told me that the priest had gone over to his house. The residence was back of the church and each door was guarded by a German soldier. The guard at the front door knew me and allowed me to knock. Father Georg Faltermeier received me kindly, took me to his kitchen where his housekeeper brought out a bottle of wine and some rolls. The priest was calm in his jubilation but the housekeeper danced as she spoke of the coming of the American forces. "in two days Americans will be here," she exclaimed delightedly.

They offered me a couch in the kitchen to sleep on. I accepted it gladly and laughed at the thought of my pals trying to sleep in those awkward pews.

"do you have mass in the morning, Father?" I asked.

"oh yes, at eight o'clock," said Father Faltermeier.

"when do you get up?"

"six o'clock."

"well be sure to call me because we will be leaving early."

Then they bid me goodnight, and I lay myself and all my lice down on the sofa and fell asleep.

It was broad daylight when I opened my eyes and saw the housekeeper moving about the kitchen. She had been there for some time working quietly, for the wood fire had been lighted, the coffee boiled, and the table set for breakfast. I sat up with a start, and she laughed at my bewilderment.

"have the Americans gone?" I asked excitedly.

"no. They are still here, you have time to eat some breakfast."

She fixed me some eggs, toast and coffee; then went out the kitchen door and left me alone. In a few minutes she returned and astounded me with her perplexing remark, "die kirche ist schteenken - schteenken. Ou! Ou!"

I understood what she meant when I went over and looked in.

The stench was horrible. This crowd of unwashed humanity had come into a closed building after spending over four weeks living with animals. Four hundred aliens eating breakfast out of dirty cardboard boxes and tin cans was a sight for angels to behold. However, it did not stop Father Faltermeier from saying mass for his people. Some twenty-five old folks and a few children came for mass and were assigned places to kneel in the sanctuary.

Mass began and the congregation, prisoners and civilians, assisted reverently. My good catholic boys knew they could go to holy communion, even during breakfast in this case, and a few did so. I also received holy communion, hesitating to say mass because of the uncertainty as to when we would move. After mass I returned to the parish house and had another breakfast with the pastor. It was nine o'clock when the movement started.

The guards warned us at the beginning of the march not to attempt to run away. Thirty of the men, they said, who stayed behind at Wartenburg twelve hours before had been killed. The story was too preposterous to believe; nor was it true, as we learned later. The fact is that those thirty ----

"der krieg ist kaput."

Inning is the name of the town where we had spent the night. We reached a wide highway to the south after walking a kilometer. Along this road captain Madden saw a small wagon like the toys children play with in our city streets. He and Smolka and I put our packs in it and took turns pulling the vehicle along the road. A guard was about to take it from us, but Madden bribed him to let us keep it by offering to carry his pack also. Before long we had carts and wheelbarrows and sleds all along the column. We called them our convoy.

A two hour walk brought us to Taufkirchen where the road blocks were being closed and preparations made for resistance. Taufkirchen was another local metropolis with five story buildings and a commercial district. A combat unit with a few tanks and motorized equipment signified that the place would fall into American control only at the price of blood. A large hospital, probably a converted sanitarium, set back from the street in a landscape of beautiful lawns and shade trees. From its roofs and windows flew great white banners with red crosses, the sign of its immunity. We were to see Taufkirchen again.

The heavy cloud banks had blown away and left the sky fairly clear as we strolled out on the highway again. Reconnaissance and combat planes flew over the locality. We were aware that a marching column on a gray colored open road was plainly visible to them.

Remembering that this was now a combat zone, we had two hair-raising scares when the planes swooped low as though coming in to strafe us. Contrary to the order SS said to have originated with general von Kesselring, the panels U S P W were spread out. We jumped into the ditches. After the second horrifying threat two fighters swung around again and tipped their wings to let us know they recognized us. With considerable relief we moved off the highway to a settlement named molten. From the safe concealment of barns we watched the planes maneuvering in the air around us. Hope of an early release lifted our morale. "any day now we will be free."

The soup supplied us that evening was rather thin and we received no bread. Kriegies griped, of course, but turned their attention to gathering and cooking food of their own. A generous supply of fuel lay in a woodpile near one of the barns, so that by twilight bonfires were blazing furiously. A fitful wind blew. One fire got out of control and spread to an unoccupied hen house. A corps of firefighting Kriegies was on hand to extinguish the blaze before much damage was done. A crestfallen guard looked on indifferently and muttered something that seemed to mean "go ahead and burn the town, and see if I care." Strange sign of our impending freedom was the lessening of the number of guards and the apathy of those who held on. Yet as long as we continued to play at this phase of warfare our guards were our protection should German fighting units come upon us, and we were their protection in case American forces overran our location. An occasional booming or crack beyond the horizon kept us conscious of the fact that actual fighting must come much closer before we could be free.

As if the weather too were drawn into the inconsistencies of those last days of the war, the month of may was greeted next morning with a blinding snowstorm and biting wind. Aroused before dawn we set out into the teeth of the blizzard at five o'clock. Along a windswept ridge the storm made walking very uncomfortable. Furthermore we realized the Jerries were making a sneak move away from the direction we had been going. Twenty kilometers in eight hours, which was fair enough marching under those weather conditions, brought us to Obertaufkirchen. This was a typical German village built around a gorgeous byzantine church.

The snow had ceased to fall when we arrived there and the visibility improved greatly. I went to the church and prayed to our blessed mother that she would protect us just a few days more. The time of our liberation was surely at hand, but with it came the danger of being caught between the lines or in the cross-fire of opposing armies.

"this is your month, dear mother; bring us all unharmed into the hands of our own countrymen and send peace to the world."

The pastor of the church, Father Obermeier, found me kneeling in the church. He invited me to his house. I went with him and had supper with himself and a Lithuanian refugee priest who was hiding out in that part of Bavaria. While we were eating, artillery fire landed close to the village.

"what about the church?" Said Father Obermeier.

-----that his church would not be hit. I sincerely hoped it would not. He canceled his services for the evening, (die maiandacht), the may-devotions in honor of the mother of god, which are so popular with the Bavarian Catholics.

Before dark the sounds of battle increased and I returned to my apartment in the barn. Here there was great excitement and no little trepidation on account of the firing that continued to grow louder.

"sounds like tanks to me," said Captain Madden.

German troops were moving hurriedly through the village, and convoys were rumbling along the roads in the night. None of us tried to sleep. The firing continued intermittently and shell bursts could be seen the northern sky. A few rounds landed very close to obertaufkirchen. About midnight we were told to get ready quickly, for the guard were going to march us away during the night. We gathered our few chattels together (captain Madden still had his wagon) and not unwillingly we let the Germans lead us down a valley road into a forest. The snow was deep and plodding along in the dark with the sky lighting up behind us with shell bursts was ominous. The snow, wet and sticking to the tree tops, fell down on us in lumps when the wind stirred the branches. One valley opened into another as we went along. We were descending lower and lower into a wide river basin. Our spirits were tense.

At daylight our leaders sighted a detachment of vehicle, tanks and troops in battle formation moving through a clearing a few hundred yards ahead. Word was passed back to get into concealment, to remain quiet, and not to strike any matches. The tenseness grew. It was discovered that the column was German. That intensified our alarm. What if in the morning mist they should mistake us for combat Americans/ fortunately they identified us before firing and we were safe for the hour. When the task force had moved across our path, it was daylight. We had made a forty-five minute halt, which proved to be the time element that saved us from a longer captivity.

We emerged from the forest onto the Munich-Passau highway on which some German military traffic was moving. We started west on the autobahn stringing out in a long file on the edge of the road. The ceiling of clouds was beginning to lift. Low flying planes, should they appear, would find us an easy target. There was some relief as we approached a group of buildings with giant red crosses on the roofs, and orphan asylum out in an area by itself. Less than a kilometer beyond we turned off the highway onto a narrow side road to the south. This road skirted a woods. The guards tried in vain to get us all together under the trees. Many Americans were straggling and stopping along the side of the autobahn. Not only the laggards, but all the rest of us were interested in discovering the local disposition of the fighting forces. An American artillery liaison plane flew at low altitude out of the north, zigzagged over the hills and forests, then disappeared in the direction whence it had come. A dense column of smoke began to billow up from the wooded area where we had sighted the German concentration of troops and vehicles.

"they must be destroying their equipment," and American officer surmised. "they know they're licked. American tanks can't be very far behind us."

"prisoner of the Germans" by Chaplain mark r. Moore

Page 59: "signs of the end"

We knew that the end was near because we could hear tank and artillery fire on either side.

When we arrived at Gars on the Inn river, we stopped. They were going to march us across. Our colonel told us to be hard to find, and we disappeared.

"please, we must be moving on," said a sergeant of the guards with an unusual politeness that betrayed the instability of his power to command.

With exasperating slowness the Kriegies began to drift along the snow-covered road. Not much more than a mile directly ahead and down in a valley a tremendous explosion thoroughly disconcerted us. Whither were we heading? Only a small amount of white smoke rose up to give us the exact bearing of the demolition a few prisoners stopped in their tracks to await further developments; the other moved on cautiously for a short distance and came to the brow of a steep descent. Hidden under the pitch of the hillside was a little town of Gars-am-Inn. As we came to the edge of the sharp slope overlooking the town we saw that it was an open city. All the larger buildings had white roofs with red crosses. At the bottom of the valley, another hundred foot drop below Gars, flowed the Inn river, broad, smooth and deep. The Inn river marks the boundary between Bavaria and the national redoubt. At that time the redoubt was a place we feared to enter, for there were rumors that Hitler was withdrawing with an army into the craggy region around Berchtesgaden for his last stand. A bag of American officers would have been a valuable prize to hold as hostages.

We commenced the descent into Gars. On the road just short of the village, we stopped and were arranged in ranks; then marched into the town with some semblance of formation. The column halted again in the middle of a narrow street of the pretty German village. The people, with anxious looks on their faces, were gathering at doorsteps and windows. We soon found out the cause of their apprehension and of our own delay. Word was quietly and cautiously passed from Kriegie to Kriegie.

"the Jerries cannot take us across the river because the bridge has just been blown up. Do what you can to scatter through the town so they will have trouble rounding us up. Col. Palmer says we will stay here as long as we can."

I stood with the rest in the middle of the street. Gradually the neat formation began to disintegrate as Kriegies casually stepped out of sight. I found myself in front of a two-story stone house with the monogram of the Society of Jesus worked in metal on the door. Two priests were looking out of an upper window. Perhaps this is a Jesuit house, I thought. I quickly mounted the steps and rang the bell. The door opened immediately and I quickly slipped inside. There I was confronted by a nun.

"ich bin priester...katholicher...jesuita." I exclaimed.

The sister looked at me for a moment in surprise; then she laughed. "oh Father, come in!" She spoke in perfect English. "we are glad to have you come. Come upstairs to see the Fathers." "is this a Jesuit house?" I asked her.

"no. The Fathers here are redemptorists. But you are a Jesuit?" "yes. From Chicago."

"our founder is a Jesuit." She said with evident pride.

"so is our founder." I said. "who is your founder?"

"Father Rupert Mayer. Have you ever heard of him?"

"the great orator of Munich, whom Hitler put in concentration camp?" "yes. You know about him."

"what is the name of your congregation?" I asked her.

"sisters of the holy family."

Upstairs three redemptorist priests seemed to be equally alarmed about the blowing up of the bridge and the arrival of Americans in gars. They were surprised that I should have come into their house as a prisoner.

"that's all right, Fathers. Don't worry. The guards know me. I will stay with you only a short time."

Sister Paschalis, who had opened the door to me, asked if I wanted something to eat.

"yes, I will take a meal."

Soon she brought a cake (one of those sugarless pound cakes), a bowl of soup, some bread and cheese. It was a joy to be so hospitably entertained. The Fathers recovered from their dismay at having an American soldier at their table. We talked freely in a three language conversations, Latin, German and English. Sister Paschalis communicated her gaiety and joy to all of us. Before I had finished my lunch, she brought me a large paper bag of sandwiches. "these are for your friends," she said. But my friends were at the door.

Smolka and Madden came in to tell me that some of the stragglers had made contact with the 80th division and that a task force was being sent to liberate us.

The all convincing proof that liaison had been established between American prisoners and front line troops was the box of King Edward cigars which Lt. A. c. stein of Cleveland bought with him into gars. Smolka was too excited to stay in the redemptorist house. He took the bag of sandwiches away with him, while Madden stayed for soup and cake.

After he finished and to stall for more time, I said, "sister, look how dirty we are. We have not had a bath for over three months." "yes Father, I will heat the water."

Captain Madden and I had a bath and sister gave us some clean socks. With the exception of socks and underwear I wore the same clothes which I had put on thanksgiving day. And since landing on the continent December first I had scarcely spent a night that I did not sleep in them. The bath was foretaste of better things to come. For good measure we sprinkled DDT powder over the bathroom floor.

From our hosts we learned about the town of Gars. One of the finest byzantine churches of Germany was located here. Next to it was a large seminary of the congregation of the most holy redeemer. It had formerly housed three hundred students, but now was used as a hospital. No courses were being taught because of lack of students. There were also two other hospitals in the town conducted by two different sisterhoods. Those three hospitals explained the reason for the red crosses on the roofs of the buildings.

Smolka came again to tell us that the Germans were trying to round us up, but that our own men were well scattered about the town. It seemed to the German soldiers that a bottle was at hand. They were tense and excited, no doubt because they knew only too well that they would soon exchange places with us and themselves become prisoners. Of war. After three o'clock they made no further effort to guard us. They too would enjoy the brief moments of freedom that remained to them eating and drinking and visiting went on throughout the entire village. Americans and Germans fraternized over cups of coffee and mugs of Bavarian tea, waiting for the end.

At half past four o'clock a convoy of ten American tanks lumbered down the steep slope into Gars. Not a round was fired. Shouts of joy went up all over the village. "we're liberated!"

"what outfit do you belong to?" The tankers were asked.

"the 14th armored division"

"prisoner of the Germans" by Chaplain Mark R. Moore

Page 59: "liberation" (May 2, 1945)

"contact was made with the 14th armored."

Their air reconnaissance had spotted us and their tanks had arrived before the 80th division could get to us.

All through the town there was jubilation on the part of Germans and Americans alike. The redemptorists in the seminary were serving meals to our men and offering them utilities to cook the food they had with them. The sisters in the hospitals were doing the same for the men who dropped in there. In the homes of the people Americans were partaking of the hospitality of the townsfolk and giving them in return real coffee which they had not tasted in years.

Catholics, Americans and Germans, were visiting the great church, the most beautiful of all the byzantine structures we had seen, to thank God for liberation and protection of the city.

In the monastery at sundown Father Weishaupt candidly stated the feelings of the German common people: "Father, this is the day of your liberation and ours. We are freed from twelve years of the denial of freedom, justice and of truth."

Aftermath

With the capitulation of Gars-am-Inn we ceased to be Kriegsgefangenen and possessed the freedom of the city. The tankers commandeered quarters for the night, but ordered the entire liberated American to sleep in barns near one of the hospitals. I had to decline the offer of a bedroom from the redemptorists because army trucks were expected to evacuate us during the night.

The next morning, May 3rd, however, found us still in Gars. The vehicles had been delayed. They arrived late in the morning and we were loaded immediately. But not before we all had eaten at least two good breakfasts and gathered our remaining supplies of American Red Cross food to give to the sister who had been so kind to us.

We saw the German guards, who had restrained us with rifles from the night we left Hammelburg, marched away despoiled of their arms under American MPs to become prisoners of war. The little guard who had taken pity on me when I was staggering under the strain of climbing hills was too footsore to walk. The last time I saw him he was sitting inside an American half-track eating K-rations with a noisy crew of tankers. He smiled as he waved good-bye to me.

Our convoy of trucks was off up the hill. From the peak we looked down at the broken blasted bridge - striking symbol of the toppling Nazi tyranny.

We retraced many of the roads we had walked during the last days of our captivity. At Taufkirchen we stopped to change vehicles and were delayed an hour. The quiet and well kept city we had passed through three days before was now a battle scarred site. The level roads had become rough and rumped and furrowed with disabled tanks and burned out trucks. The stone buildings were scratched with rifle and machine gun fire. A few frame buildings were smoldering heaps of ashes.

Within a hastily constructed wire enclosure, thousands of German troops, not prisoners of war, were milling around and cooking over small bonfires. American doughboys patrolled the streets and filled the beer halls. For Bavaria the war was over. Munich had fallen on the last day of April and all resistance ceased. Not till five days later, however, on V-E Day, May 8th, were hostilities officially over in Europe.

We motored to Moosburg where an estimated 70,000 recovered allied prisoners, Russians, Yugoslavs, Italians, French, English, Poles, and Americans, were celebrating their redemption and victory. In what was labeled a cheese factory, but in reality a store house for airplane parts, I celebrated the mass of liberation with a mass-kit borrowed from Father McVeigh, an English priest who had jumped with the British at Arnhem. At Moosburg we received a new designation. Instead of Kriegies we were called ramp's (abbreviation for repatriated allied military personnel).

The American ramp's were flown in b-17's and c-47's to Rheims and ramp camp, near St. Valery en caus. Here were thousands and tens of thousands of Americans from the Stalags and Dulags and lazarets of Limburg, Bad Orb, Ziegenhain, Nuremberg, Szubin, Sagan, Neubrandenburg, Moosburg, and many other German owns. They were showered, doctored, clothed, banqueted and entertained as long lost brothers.

Transports and liberty ships were overloaded a LeHavre to bring them home - home to America, truly the land of freedom, freedom from want and from fear, freedom of speech and of religion. The America which, in spite of wartime restrictions, abounded in good food, and the conveniences and luxuries of life. The America which was far removed from mechanized columns and terror in the skies. The America whose rostrums, radios, and presses are free means of communication and open to the expression of everyone's

Private opinion. The America, whose churches welcome all who would worship the god who made us, and thank him for his blessings, the America whose fundamental goodness the Kriegies had learned to appreciate and whose security they helped to purchase even with the cold and hunger and lice of Nazi prisons.

L.D.S.

APPENDIX

1. MAP - PATH OF 'WAY OF THE CROSS'
2. "WAY OF THE CROSS" CHRONOLGY
3. ITINERARY OF CHAPLAIN PAUL W. CAVANAUGH
4. FR. PAUL W. CAVANAUGH PHOTO / INSCRIPTION

PROVIDED BY JOHN MADDEN (EUGENE, OREGON), SON OF CAPT. JOHN J. MADDEN

5. FR. CAVANAUGH - BY L. MARTIN JONES (LETTER)
6. FR. EDWARD T. HURLEY'S PHOTOGRAPH

FR. HURLEY LETTER PROVIDED BY CORINNE PRAY, DAUGHTER OF JOSEPH S. ARSENAULT, 423 REG. 106TH DIV.

7. FR. HURLEY - LETTER PROVIDED BY JOHN ROBB, D CO., 422 INF.REG.,106TH DIV.
8. CAPT. JOHN MADDEN'S CAREER

PHOTOGRAPH OF CAPT. JOHN MADDEN

122 FA Reg., Illinois National Guard, 1937

PROVIDED BY JOHN MADDEN JR.

9. CHAPLAIN STANLEY BRACH

ATLANTA JOURNAL CONSTITUTION ARTICLES

SZUBIN, POLAND - OFLAG 64

BY WRIGHT BRYAN

10. FATHER CAVANAUGH'S MANUSCRIPT ROSTER

11. AWARDS: SILVER STAR

LEGION OF MERIT

ORDER OF PREFERENCE

12. PETE HOUSE - "BATTLE OF THE BULGE"

13. MILITARY MAGAZINE ARTICLE MARCH 2002

"TASK FORCE BAUM"

BY HERNDON INGE, JR.

14. COL. PAUL D. GOODE

DOB: 28 JUNE 1892

USMA AUGUST 1917

INFANTRY: 29TH DIVISION, 175 REGIMENT

POW GERMANY 1944-45

SILVER STAR, LEGION OF MERIT, BRONZE STAR, PURPLE HEART

DIED: 117 Jan. 1959

Appendix 3

Itinerary of Chaplain Paul W. Cavanaugh

Oct.12, 1944 - left Camp Atterbury (Indiana)

- 14 - arrived at staging area near Taunton, mass
- 20 - sailed from new York on Aquitania
- 29 - feast of Christ the king. Landed at Gurock, Scotland, in firth of Clyde
- 31 - arrived guiting power, little village in central England.

Nov.5 - moved to fairford, England

15 - moved to stow-on-the-wold. Visited Heythrope, Oxford, Cambridge. Spent 5 hours in London. Traveled by jeep to many places in central England, ministering to men of our regiment.

Dec.1 - landed in LeHavre France

- 2 - 8 bivouacked near San Laurent, Normandy
- 8 - 10 traveled in convoy through France
Belgium and into the Siegfried line.
- 10 - 18 lived in a German pillbox
- 19 - captured
- 23 - bombed in RAFat Limburg
- 25 - arrived at bad orb
(first prison I was in.)

Jan.8 - said mass for first time since capture.

- 11 - moved to second camp near Hammelburg

Feb.2 - got mass kit and able to say mass daily until march 27.

Mar.27 - attack on Hammelburg by American tanks.
no liberation.

28 - (2 a.m.) beginning of 5 weeks walk thru	bavaria.
Apr. 1 - easter. First mass on the march. Said	mass 10 out of 35 days.
5 - bombed by American planes at nurnburg. yards from me, - but did not get a scratch.	500 pounder landed 20
May 3 - liberated by American tanks at gars am inn	20 miles east of Munich.
May 6 - Munich	
18 - Paris	
22 - Rheims	
24 - St. Vallery (St. Valery en Caux - near Dieppe on English channel)	
June 21 - landed in Boston, Mass.	



*To Captain John J. Madden,
The best cook in Oflag 111 B,
who kept me from
starvation as Hammelburg
and on the march to Gars.
In sincere gratitude.
Paul J. Conran S.J.
May 2, 1946.
Four anniversary of our liberation*

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ITINERARY OF CHAPLAIN PAUL W. CAVANAUGH

OCT.12, 1944 - LEFT CAMP ATTERBURY (INDIANA)

- 14 - ARRIVED AT STAGING AREA NEAR TAUNTON, MASS
- 20 - SAILED FROM NEW YORK ON AQUITANIA
- 29 - FEAST OF CHRIST THE KING. LANDED AT GUROCK, SCOTLAND, IN FIRTH OF CLYDE
- 31 - ARRIVED GUITING POWER, LITTLE VILLAGE IN CENTRAL ENGLAND.

NOV.5 - MOVED TO FAIRFORD, ENGLAND

15 - MOVED TO STOW-ON-THE-WOLD. VISITED HEYTHROPE, OXFORD, CAMBRIDGE. SPENT 5 HOURS IN LONDON. TRAVELED BY JEEP TO MANY PLACES IN CENTRAL ENGLAND, MINISTERING TO MEN OF OUR REGIMENT.

DEC.1 - LANDED IN LeHAVRE FRANCE

2 - 8 BIVOUACKED NEAR SAN LAURENT, NORMANDY

8 - 10 TRAVELED IN CONVOY THROUGH FRANCE

BELGIUM AND INTO THE ZIEGFRIED LINE.

10 - 18 LIVED IN A GERMAN PILLBOX

19 - CAPTURED

23 - BOMBED IN R.A.F. AT LIMBURG

25 - ARRIVED AT BAD ORB

(FIRST PRISON I WAS IN.)

JAN.8 - SAID MASS FOR FIRST TIME SINCE CAPTURE.

11 - MOVED TO SECOND CAMP NEAR HAMMELBURG

FEB.2 - GOT MASS KIT AND ABLE TO SAY MASS DAILY UNTIL MARCH 27.

MAR.27 - ATTACK ON HAMMELBURG BY AMERICAN TANKS.

NO LIBERATION.

28 - (2 A.M.) BEGINNING OF 5 WEEKS WALK THRU
BAVARIA.

APR. 1- EASTER. FIRST MASS ON THE MARCH. SAID MASS 10
OUT OF 35 DAYS.

5 - BOMBED BY AMERICAN PLANES AT NURNBURG.
500 POUNDER LANDED 20 YARDS FROM ME, - BUT
DID NOT GET A SCRATCH.

MAY 3 - LIBERATED BY AMERICAN TANKS AT GARS am INN
20 MILES EAST OF MUNICH.

MAY 6 - MUNICH

18 - PARIS

22 - RHEIMS

24 - ST. VALLERY (St. Valery en Caux - near
Dieppe on English Channel)

JUNE 21 - LANDED IN BOSTON, MASS.

ROSTER

US ARMY PERSONNEL

FR. CAVANAUGH MANUSCRIPT

"AMERICAN PRIEST IN A NAZI PRISON"

ADAMS, JACK PFC -
ALTIER, TED J., LT., ROCHESTER NY -
BARBEAU, JOHN, T/4 DAYTON OH -
BERNDT ALBERT L. MAJ. (AMERICAN DOCTOR OFLAG XIIIIB) -
BLACKE, CLIFFORD F., LT. - MEDICAL OFFICER (KILLED AT
LIMBURG, POW CAMP BOMBING)

BOGAN, WILLIAM S., LT., WILLIAMSVILLE NY -
BRACH, STANLEY C. FATHER - DIOCESE OF NEWARK (OFLAG 64
SZUBIN POLAND) -
BRADY, HUGH SGT. -
BRICE, WILLIAM B. LT. -
BROTHMAN, OZZIE LT., CHICAGO IL. -
BUHR, JOSEPH E. LT. CINCINNATI OH. -
BURLEIGH, ED J. LT., VILLE PLATTE LA. -
BUSCHOW, WILBUR L. LT., SAN ANTONIO TX. -
CASSIDY, EDWARD R. LT. MEDFORD, MA. -
CAVENDER, CHARLES C. COL. 423 INF. REG.(INJURED IN THE
BOMBING AT NUREMBERG) -
CHAMPAGNE, LEO LT. BREAUX BRIDGE LA. -
COLEMAN LT. (FEB. 5 DIED OF PNEUMONIA) -
CURTIS CHAPLAIN -
DALTON, PAUL H., CPL., MADISON WI (CHAPLAIN'S ASSISTANT TO
FR.CAVANAUGH)REMAINED AT STALAG IX B WITH FR. HURLEY
DEMARCO, MICHAEL CAPT. (AMERICAN DOCTOR OFLAG XIIIIB) -
DESCHENEUX, GEORGE L., COL. 422 REGIMENTAL COMMANDER
DIAMON, RICHARD C., LT. - BATTALION SURGEON (KILLED AT
LIMBURG, POW CAMP BOMBING)
DUNKELBEGGER, DONALD E., LT. VAIL, IOWA -
DWORKIN, SAUL CAPT (DR).
FISH, HOWARD LT. -
FLEEGE, ROBERT LT. GALENA IL. -
FRASH, ROBERT, M., LT., SOUTH BEND IN. -
FULLAM, BRANDON LT. BROOKLYN, NY -
GALVIN, EUGENE F.CAPT., ROSENDALE NY. (DOCTOR) -
GARDINER, BILL LT. BALTIMORE MD. -

GARDINER, FRED LT., LONG ISLAND -
GIBBONS, CHARLES CAPT., LAWTON OK. -
GIGGEY, FRED LT. WATERTOWN MA. -
GIUFFRE, MATTHEW J. LT., NYC -
GLEASON, HARRY LT. TRINIDAD, CO. -
GLENNAN, JOHN J. FATHER (CONGREGATION OF THE MOST HOLY
REDEEMER) OFLAG 64 SZUBIN POLAND WHO FELL
ILL AND DID NOT ARRIVE AT OFLAG XIIIIB -
GOODE, PAUL D. COL., 29 INF. DIV. 175TH REG. -

GORNEY, TED R.,LT. -
GOULD CAPT. -
GREENSPAN, HAROLD -
HADDEN - AMBULNCE DRIVER -
HAWTIN, RAYMOND T., LT. CHICAGO -
HAZLETT, ROBERT T., MAJ. -
HEIL, RICHARD D., LT. -
HELMS, SANDA MAJ.-
HENE, JULIUS, CAPT. - MEDICAL OFFICER (KILLED AT LIMBURG,
HOEL, ARTHUR LT., GREEN BAY WI. -

HUFF, GILMON A., COL. -

HURLEY, EDWARD T. FATHER, 423 REG. 106TH DIV.
JOHNSON, HERBERT, LT., MACON GA.-
JONES, ALAN W. MAJOR GENERAL, COMMANDING OFFICER 106TH DIV.
JONES, L. MARTIN, LT. LAWRENCE, KS
KASPER, STANLEY, LT. BROOKLYN NY -
KELLY, CHARLES, LT. KIRKSVILLE MO. -
KELLY, ROBERT LT., DETROIT -
KENT, THOMAS, LT.COL - BATTALION COMMANDER -
KEOUGH, JIM, LT. PHILADELPHIA PA. -
KERSKY, JOSEPH, SGT MEMPHIS TN. -
KESSINGER, MANNING LT., CARLINVILLE IL. -
KING, ROBERT LT., LOS ANGELES -
KOSKAMP, ROWLAND A.CHAPLAIN (DIED 4/5/45 AS RESULT OF
BOMBING AT NUREMBERG) -
LAUVETZ, FRANK R. OMAHA NE. -

LINGUITI, PASCHAL A., CAPT. (AMERICAN DOCTOR OFLAG XIIIIB) -
LOERA, LADISLAO SGT. NEW GLF, TX. BURIED FEB. 23 -
LOSH, JOHN H., LT.(DIED FROM NUREMBERG BOMBING)-

MADDEN, ALAN P., O.F.M. FATHER 112 REG. 28 DIV (CAPUCHIN,
PITTSBURG PA.) HE WAS TRANSFERED TO STALAG XIIIC FROM
OFLAG XIIIIB -
MADDEN, JOHN CAPT., CHICAGO IL, 423 REG. COMBAT TEAM
MADERIS, MELVIN L., LT. SAN JOSE, CA. -
MALONEY, JOHN (AUTHOR OF "LET THERE BE MERCY - 1941) -
MANNES, CHAPLAIN (INCORRECT SPELLING, PAGE 113) -
MATTHEWS, JOSEPH C., JR., LT. COL., RALEIGH NC. - EXECUTIVE
MENKE, ALOYSIUS J., CAPT. CINCINNATI OH. -
MILLER, JIMMY SGT. LOUISVILLE, KY. -
MIX, JOHN E., LT. ALMA, MI. -
MOORE, MARK R, LT. CHAPLAIN -
MORRISSEY, JAMES (?), RICHARD D., LT., NEWYORK -
MOYNAHAN, PAUL R., LT., ROXBURY MA. -
MURPHY, JOHN I. CAPT. CHICAGO IL. -
MURRAY, JOHN J. LT., NEW YORK -
NAGLE, FREDERICK W., LT.COL. - 423RD EXECUTIVE OFFICER -
NEEL, SAM CHAPLAIN 422 INFANTRY REG.-
NIETMAN, CHARLIE F., LT. -
NORDMAN, RALPH SGT. -
O'DELL, DOUGLAS V., LT. (LOST HIS LEG AS RESULT OF NUERMBERG
BOMBING) -

OSETH, FRED W., MAJ. -
PALMER, ROBERT S., LT. COL. -
PRELL, DONALD B., LT. -
PRIOR, GARNETT J., LT.HUNTINGBURG, IN. -
PRIOR, GARNETT LT., HUNTINGBURG, IN. -
REGIER, DONALD, CPL., LINCOLN NE. (CHAPLAIN'S ASSISTANT)-
REID, ALEXANDER D., COL 422ND INF. REGIMENT
ROLLINS, HARRY W., LT. CHICAGO IL. -
RUOFF, WILLIAM F., LT. -

RUTT, ROBERT E., LT., DETROIT -
SAILER, JAMES A. LT. CINCINNATI OH. -
SCHLITT, MANNY LT., AKRON OH. -
SEELEY, THEODORE A., COL. -
SERBST, CHARLES A., MAJOR, CHICAGO IL. (DORTOR) -
SEREMET, JOSEPH J., LT., WEST HARTFORD CN. -
SHAVER, MAX CAPT. CHIPPAWA FALLS, WS. -
SHERMAN, LESTER, CPL. CUMBERLAND MD. CHAPLAIN'S ASSISTANT)-
SHERNIGO, JOSEPH J. CPL. WINBER PA. BURIED MARCH 4TH. -
SIMMONS, ROBERT E. PVT CARLISLE, OH. (DIED OF PNEUMONIA)-
SMITH, WALDO SGT. LIMA OH. -
SMOLKA, NORMAN H., LT., NEW YORK -

SPADOLA, CAPT. -
STEIN, JACK S., LT. CLEVELAND OH. -
STONESIFER, LT. CHAPLAIN -
THOMPSON, DOONALD F., LT. COL. -
TOOTHMAN SGT. "MAN OF CONFIDENCE" -
TURNER, AUSTIN LT. - BATTALION MOTOR-OFFICER
VARION LT. (SHOT AND KILLED AT OFLAG XIIIC, JAN. 25TH) -
VOGEL, BERNARD, SGT. (PITTSBURG PA) -
WATERS, JOHN K., CHARLES LT. COL., G-3 PLANS AND TRAINING -
WEEKS, JOHN LT. (MARCH 16TH KILLED BY A GUARD) -
WEIGEL, LEVENE. J. LT., HAYS KS (ST. JOSEPH'S COLLGE)
WINTERS SGT. (MEDIC) -
YAMASAKI, JAMES, CHICAGO (AMERICAN DOCTOR OFLAG XIIIB) -
COL. JOHN RAY, MAJ. GARNER, MAJ. MCKEE, DR. CHARLES SERBST, DR.
GENE ALLVIN, CAPT. MAX SHAVER, CAPT. CHARLES GIBBONS,
LT. TOM GALLOWAY -

LETTER FROM L. MARTIN JONES

1329 Kasold Drive, M-1
Lawrence, Kansas 66049

January 5, 2004

Mr. Robert E. Skopek
7847 Cahill Road
Manlius, NY 13104

Dear Bob,

I am finally getting around to writing a letter about Father Cavanaugh to you. This is a difficult letter to write, because I am hesitant to write about an experience I had with Father Cavanaugh, because he is deceased and, therefore, unable to offer a rebuttal. Nevertheless, I will write about my experiences with him and I will write to the best of my recollection, which is quite good.

First, I will correct something I told you in an email letter several weeks ago. I said I knew Father Cavanaugh from March 28 into May, 1945. I knew him from about January 11, 1945, to the end of the war. I did not know him when we were fighting in December, and I do not recall knowing him while I was at Stalag IX-B at Bad Orb, Germany.

Thousands of prisoners captured in the Battle of the Bulge were taken first to a badly-overcrowded prison camp at Bad Orb. I was captured on December 19, 1944, and I arrived at Bad Orb on December 28. My feet were badly frostbitten when I arrived there. I had endured two days walking in bitterly cold weather, seven days locked in a small German railroad boxcar, a terrible bombing raid on December 23 while in the railroad yards at Diez, just west of Limburg-on-der-Lahn, and thirteen days with almost nothing to eat (four days while fighting and nine days enroute to Bad Orb). Father Cavanaugh wrote of this Royal Air Force bombing raid on pages 30-33 of his record. Apparently, he and I were not on the same train in this raid, as he arrived at Bad Orb on Christmas Day, but I did not arrive until December 28.

At the bottom of page 49 of his account, Father Cavanaugh stated that additional POWs from the 28th and 106th Infantry Divisions, including two American priests, arrived at Bad Orb on December 28. I was in a group that arrived on this date.

On January 10-11 many officers were moved from Bad Orb to Oflag XIII-B near Hammelburg, Germany. At this camp I was in a room with approximately fifty other American officers (POWs), two of whom were Father Cavanaugh and Captain John Madden of the field artillery, not to be confused with a Father Madden whom I did not know. My best buddy, Manning L. Kessinger of Carlinville, Illinois, was my bunkmate in this room, barracks 11-7 at Hammelburg, about sixty miles north northwest of Wurzburg.

While at Hammelburg, I participated in bible study classes led by Father Cavanaugh. The sessions were very informative, and they helped pass the endless days of boredom.

Kessinger, Madden, Cavanaugh, and I were in the same squad after we left Hammelburg on March 27 following the Baum raid on the camp. We were forced to walk along back roads and across the countryside to the southeast, away from approaching U.S. troops. See Cavanaugh's listing of squad members on page 122 of his record. Father Cavanaugh refers to my buddy, Manning Kessinger, and me a few times. See page 80 of Cavanaugh's account where he tells about Kes (Kessinger) taking care of our small stove. He mentions

Kessinger and Jones on page 92. Cavanaugh never mentions my first name, but I am the "Jones" of "Kessinger and Jones." He mentions Kessinger again on page 157.

Father Cavanaugh, Captain Madden, Kessinger, and I were part of the same group of POWs at Hammelburg (January 11 to March 27) and while we were walking, under guard, away from the front lines from March 28 to the end of the war.

Because we were emaciated when we started walking on March 28, we could walk only a few miles a day. Surviving our ordeal was uppermost in our minds, and survival meant scrounging for food. In a week or so, after getting more food to eat than we had in the camp, and doing some walking each day, my physical conditions and my mental attitude improved. Kessinger and I were 22 years old, so we could scrounge for food, begging for food and stealing food frequently. Because Madden and Cavanaugh were 42-43 years old, and they could not scrounge for food as Kessinger and I did. Because we felt sorry for them, we sometimes shared but potatoes and bread with them.

One night, at the end of a day's march, I was ill, so I did not scrounge for food, but Kessinger did. While I was lying on some hay near Cavanaugh and Madden, they thought I was asleep. When the German guards brought our squad's bread ration to them, they sliced the bread as usual. While they thought I was asleep, one of them suggested that they give the smaller pieces of bread to Kessinger and Jones. The other agreed. I do not recall which one made the suggestion. Kessinger and I had occasionally shared potatoes and bread with Madden and Cavanaugh, but they gave us the smallest pieces of bread.

We suffered many casualties in a 1,000-plane bombing raid on Nuremburg on April 5. Cavanaugh writes about this raid on pages 133-141 of his account. On page 139 Cavanaugh tells that Chaplain (Mark) Moore helped bury the dead. Moore, whom I know well, lives in Kansas City. He gave me a list of the men killed in the group with whom he walked. I was with another group of approximately 160 POWs at this time.. (See reference to Chaplain Mark Moore at the bottom of page 142 of Cavanaugh's account.)

There were many groups of POWs walking to the southeast along roads. I believe I was in a subgroup of the 400 POWs to which Cavanaugh made reference. Until the terrible air raid on April 5, there were perhaps 160 in my group. After April 5 there were perhaps 110.

After several weeks on the road, Kessinger and I noticed that Cavanaugh would sometimes leave our group of POWs with one of our German guards. It took us several days to figure out that he was being escorted to the nearby villages to meet the local priests. In his account, Cavanaugh admits to eating with the local priests, once or twice taking a bath or shower, and bringing food back to our group to share with his buddies. But he never once shared his food with Kessinger and me. On page 169, Cavanaugh refers to "My good Catholic boys..." He must have shared food with those Catholic men who attended the masses he conducted.

Of course, he did not need to share his food with Kessinger and me, because we were able to obtain food for ourselves. I spoke a little German, so I frequently begged for food from German housewives. But I was shocked and disappointed when I read Cavanaugh's record several years ago and learned that he had so frequently obtained food from village priests and had not shared it with Kessinger and me. I feel certain he was sharing it with men who needed it worse than Kessinger and I did.

Cavanaugh and I had quite different experiences while we were walking. He went with guards to visit priests who gave him wine, coffee, and food. I was never in a German home until May 2. Many times Cavanaugh received food. See page 148 (soup, roast pork, potatoes, and carrots), page 150 (eggs from women, and bread and wuerst from a priest), page 151 (bread, bacon, and salt), page 152 (loaf of bread), page 164 (coffee and sandwiches), 168-169 (wine, rolls, eggs, toast, and coffee, and a night's sleep on a sofa), 171 (supper), and 175 (cake, soup, bread, and cheese, and a bath).

On the other hand, Kessinger and scrounged for our food, which consisted almost wholly of bread, potatoes, and beets that German farmers fed to their cattle. No guard befriended us and gave us special favors and no guard escorted us to the homes of villagers for food, a night's rest on a sofa, or a bath. Cavanaugh received special treatment because he was a priest. Undoubtedly, he shared food with other POWs; perhaps with "my good Catholic boys" who attended masses he conducted.

Please do not conclude that I did not appreciate Father Cavanaugh. He was an excellent chaplain and a man of great character who helped many men during our time as prisoners of war. I told you the truth to the best of my knowledge.

I am taking the liberty of sending you a copy of the record of my experiences in W.W. II. I believe this is not something you will want to keep, so I ask you to return it to me before long. You are welcome to use any part of my account in your book about Father Cavanaugh.

Best wishes to you for 2004. I look forward to receiving a copy of your book.

Sincerely,

L. Martin Jones

OPERATION TASK FORCE BAUM

Donald B Prell Writes

After the "Raid" on March 27th, there was no way I was staying in Oflag XIIIIB.

Of all my memories dealing with the war, the most difficult for me to bring back into consciousness are the months during which, I was a Kriegsgefangen (POW) in Oflag XIIIIB, from early in January, 1945, until March 27th. I refer you to Father Cavanaugh's account.

Although some of my recollections differ from his, overall his description of the camp and events are valid.

On March 27th a small force of US troops liberated the camp. This event has been the subject of several books, not only because the objective of the exercise was to release General Patton's son-in-law (Lt. Colonel Waters) from the camp but also because the "Raid" (as it has been called) came to such a disastrous conclusion.

"48 Hours to Hammelburg" by Charles Whitting (New York: Ballantine Books, 1970)

"Raid! The Untold Story of Patton's Secret Mission", by Baron, Baum and Goldhurst (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1981)

Of course, to his dying day, Patton denied having ordered the assault to free his son-in-lawbut those of us in the camp know the first words of the Officer in charge of the Task Force were: "Where is Colonel Walters"! Patton told reporters (when asked about the affair) that he ordered the raid as a diversionary tactic.

The American POWs were given the choices of (1) climbing on the tanks and riding out on them, (2) staying in the camp and waiting to be freed, or (3) taking off cross-country on our own, trying to work our way to the American lines. It didn't take more than a minute for me to make my choice.

I and two other Kriegies gathered our meager belongings and took off cross-country (no way was I going to ride out on a tank ...and no way was I going to stay in camp). (At this point, Father Cavanaugh and I went our separate ways.)

We three tried to work our way southwest from the camp. After several days we had made good progress, and were hiding in a wooded area a few hundred yards from a farmhouse. Tired and hungry, we drew "lots" to see which of us would visit the farm to try to find some food. It was at the break of day when the "chosen" one took off, skirting the field, between us, and the farmhouse. About an hour later, three German soldiers came up behind us, and we were POWs again.

We were separated from one another and in Wurzburg, I was put on a coach train (with a Lieutenant as my guard) for the fifty-mile trip to a camp at Lanwasser (a short distance south of Nuremberg). My guard was most cordial, giving me his name and address, so that we might be in contact after the war had ended.

The Camp was Stalag XIIID - Oflag 73 (for photographs and a description of the camp log onto: <http://home.t-online.de/home/RIJONue/stalag.htm>)

Within a day after arriving at this POW Camp, I became ill, and was sent to the camp hospital. I was kept there by an Australian doctor, while most of the POWs in the camp were "forced marched" away (toward the east). A week later (mid-April) the German guards, just up and disappeared, and we were able to walk out the front gate. The Australian doctor and I commandeered a motorcycle from a residence near the camp (I gave the owner a receipt from the US ARMY) and we took off going west (for, maybe a few hours) until we found troops from an American Armored Division. We were given some food and "petrol" and we then took off for Paris. At the time we were riding the motorcycle away from the camp, The Australian told me Russian POWs were in a nearby camp, and that if they got loose, there would be one hell of a riot. I learned later (after the war) when the Russians got out they more than just rioted, they created mayhem.

From Paris, I was sent to Camp Lucky Strike and on May 6th, I boarded a hospital ship, which arrived in New York on May the 17th (we were at sea when we were notified the war in Europe was over, VE Day, May the 8th). You can imagine the reception we received upon our arrival in New York.

The day after arriving in New York, I was assigned to a Rehabilitation Center, located at the Baltimore Hotel in Montecito, California. I was allowed one week of "delay in route" before reporting to the Rehab-Center. The rail trip to the Los Angeles train station seemed as if it took forever to get there. Arriving in the late afternoon, I was met by my father. After a strong embrace and a series of hugs he asked me if I would like to do anything before going home. "Yes", I said, "could we stop by the Pacific Dining Car and have a New York cut steak?" We did and of course I couldn't finish it, but oh (!), did it taste, ever so wondrous....what a way to begin the task of erasing the memories of Hammelburg.

The Hammelburg Raid

Herndon Inge, Jr.

Military Magazine 01/17/2004

World War II in Europe was nearly over when, on 26 March 1945, Gen. George S. Patton, Jr., Commander of the United States Third Army, ordered a Task Force from the Fourth Armored Division comprising 294 men and 53 vehicles and composed of 20 Sherman tanks, light tanks, 105 Millimeter assault guns, halftracks and jeeps to break through the German front lines at Ashaffenburg on a strange mission. Capt. Abraham Baum was in command of the Task Force whose mission was to head for Hammelburg, 60 miles away, and liberate the American officers who were imprisoned in Oflag XIIIIB and bring back as many as they could.

Articles and books have been written about Gen. Patton's abortive raid to Oflag XIIIIB, (Offizierslager), an American officers' prison camp at Hammelburg, in which, it just so happened, his son-in-law Lt. Col. John Knight Waters was a prisoner. The end of the war was in sight and the American Army was fighting for every foot of ground against a defeated, but still potent, German Army composed of the troops that had escaped through the Falaise Gap after the Normandy invasion and made their way back to Germany and regrouped east of the Rhine River. In addition to the seasoned German troops who had escaped from Normandy, all able-bodied male Germans of all ages were mobilized to make the Americans pay dearly for every foot of ground taken.

Lt. Col. John Knight Waters, a West Point graduate and the Husband of Beatrice Patton, Gen. Patton's daughter, had been captured in the fighting in Tunisia, North Africa, in 1943. He was a prisoner in Oflag 64 at Szubin, Poland, with several hundred American Army officers. When the Russian Army troops began to threaten northern Germany, the prisoners in Oflag 64 were marched on the road south in mid-winter. They arrived at Oflag XIIIIB at Hammelburg in central Germany early in March. The group of officers from the Battle of the Bulge and other officer prisoners captured in North Africa and after the Normandy invasion were at Hammelburg making a total of about 1,500 American officer prisoners of war in the Oflag.

I was a lieutenant in Company D, 301st Regiment of the 94th Infantry Division and was captured by the Germans during the Battle of the Bulge. After forced marches in blizzard weather and two freezing boxcar rides I arrived at Hammelburg about 6 March, the same day Lt. Col. Waters and the officers from Oflag 64 arrived after their forced march. Col. Paul R. Goode, one of the Oflag 64 men who had been captured by the Germans in Normandy, became the senior American officer at Hammelburg after their arrival.

The American front lines were east of the Rhine River in mid-March and the German Army was putting up a fierce defense. Gen. Patton claimed he did not know that his son-in-law was at Hammelburg but military intelligence had indicated that the officers from Oflag 64 had arrived there.

On 26 March the Fourth Armored Division Task Force, after a fierce artillery barrage and tank battle, crossed the Main River and blasted its way through the German lines at Ashaffenburg. It headed toward Hammelburg, 60 miles inside the German lines.

We, as Kriegsgefangen, or Kriegies (war prisoners), at the Oflag were gaunt and skinny and lacked energy as we milled around the compound. On 27 March we heard the sound of tanks and artillery to the west and black clouds of smoke rose over the horizon. We knew the Americans were on their way and we were excited over the prospect of being liberated.

Task Force Baum

We saw several American tanks of Task Force Baum appear over the crest of the hill to the west of the camp firing their guns in our direction. Some German army vehicles sped ahead of them down the hill and past the prison camp. When the American Sherman tanks at the head of the column approached the compound the prisoners went inside the buildings as the shells shrieked toward us.

Several of the lumbering American tanks appeared at the Oflag and fired their guns overhead and to each side where they expected opposition. The shells screamed through the air and the deafening explosions echoed among the buildings. Black smoke billowed up over the camp as a building was hit and soon consumed in flames. About 1430 hours two of the big Sherman tanks broke through the double barbed wire fence, trailing the wire and uprooted fencepost. The pavement in the street cracked under the tanks' weight.

The American tanks on the hill were still firing their Cannons and shells continued to explode around the perimeter of the camp. A joyous feeling of liberation prevailed among all of the American POWs in the prison camp.

It was almost dark when I walked through the gaping hole in the fence and up the hill. The POWs were gathered around the tanks in small groups as darkness descended. We felt we were free men once again and would soon be back in the safety of the rear areas behind the American front lines. We were a group of jubilant prisoners, but there was not much chance of fighting alongside our liberators since we were weak from our starvation diet during the past few months.

Many of the freed prisoners returned to the Oflag.

As it got dark the tanks started to crank up their engines to prepare for the return to the American lines. While we were standing around, some German soldiers crept up and fired several panzerfaust rockets at the idling tanks. One tank was hit and burst into flames.

I decided to go back to the American lines with the tanks and climbed up on one of the Shermans along with five or six other former prisoners. The deck of the tank was crowded with extra tank tracks, jerricans of gasoline and water and clusters of 76mm shells. The tank drivers gunned their motors and began to move out. I felt exposed high up above the ground. As we moved out the cold wind blew in my face and I had an exhilarating and wonderful feeling of freedom.

Germans close in

None of us knew that hostile German troops closing in on the Task Force returning to the American lines. When the German military units in the area learned that the American tank convoy was loose inside their lines they began to close in. The Germans knew the size of Task Force Baum. We had seen a small German reconnaissance plane circling overhead before the Task Force arrived at Hammelburg.

I clung to the top of the Sherman tank as it roared and pulled out of the group and became the lead tank of the column in hostile enemy territory. The column of tanks and

other vehicles moved slowly through the dark woods along a narrow road until a log pile road block was spotted about 200 yards ahead.

The column stopped and the tanks ground around with much noise and confusion and headed back in the opposite direction. The Germans at the road block fired several bazooka or panzerfaust rockets at the column as we were turning around. One of the rockets swooshed by my head like a deadly Roman candle as it went past and exploded in

the woods. I felt the heat and crouched down and hung on for dear life. If the round had been a few inches closer and had hit the tank all of us hanging on would have been killed.

When the column slowed down, I climbed down from my place on the lead tank and ran back about 10 or 12 tanks and other vehicles in the column and climbed up on the back of a halftrack. Two other lieutenants and I hung on and we stood on the narrow metal flange on the back. I felt relieved that I was no longer at the head of the column behind the German lines.

The column of American tanks, half-tracks and other vehicles was hit again with German rockets and panzerfausts as they turned around and headed toward the town of Hessdorf. The column with the liberated prisoners hanging on headed back to Hill 427 and a large clearing. When the convoy disbursed around a big field, a group of liberated officers milled around the tanks and halftracks that had pulled into the clearing. In the center of the clearing was a stone building and the tanks, halftracks and other vehicles formed a defensive perimeter. It was extremely cold and we could hear the sound of German tanks in the woods beyond.

Colonel Goode

After reaching the Oflag and breaking through the barbed wire and heading back to the American lines with the liberated prisoners who could climb aboard, the tanks blasted their way through the quiet countryside. Those of us who were hanging on were exhilarated and happy at being free and headed for the American lines. I hung on the back of the halftrack for several hours and was totally exhausted.

As it began to get light, Col. Paul Goode climbed up on a tank and announced that those of us who had been liberated and who wanted to stay with the task force and fight could do so, but that he was going back to the Oflag at Hammelburg.

He jumped down from the tank and produced a white sheet and started walking back toward the Oflag at Hammelburg with most of the POWs, including me, following. We walked at a rapid pace down a narrow dirt road in the open German countryside to the Oflag, now retaken by German soldiers.

Although we were weak and had not eaten or had a drink of water or slept for over 24 hours, we followed Col. Goode back toward the Hammelburg Oflag. After we had gone about a mile we heard the noise of a terrific battle taking place. The Germans surrounding the beleaguered Task Force were firing point blank at the tanks and other vehicles with everything they had. We could see columns of black smoke rising up over the trees. We trudged the 11 or 12 miles back to the Oflag and were exhausted when we got there. The

German guards who had taken off when the tanks arrived had returned and reoccupied the Oflag.

At 0810 hours on 28 March the Task Force prepared to return to the American lines. On the command of Capt. Baum the tanks roared to life and began to slowly move out. The halftracks and other vehicles started up and moved in with the tanks.

Germans attack

The German tanks, tank destroyers and heavy guns cut loose with everything they had. The American tanks, halftracks and other vehicles were hit and many exploded in flames.

The German attack was well coordinated. Tank destroyers with cannons followed by German infantry converged on the surrounded vehicles. The 76mm guns on the American tanks and tank destroyers were no match for the German 90mm guns. Capt. Baum ordered all drivers not to stop at road blocks but to fight their way back to the American lines destroying anything in the way. After Capt. Baum's order to move out, the onslaught by the Germans damaged or destroyed nearly all of the vehicles. Many went up in flames as their gas tanks exploded.

Before leaving, Capt. Baum found a halftrack with a radio and he tapped out his last message to the Fourth Armored Division Headquarters in Morse Code: "Task Force Baum surrounded, under heavy fire. Request air support."

When it appeared that the situation was hopeless, the men in the Task Force and the remaining liberated officers took off into the woods and some eventually made it back to the American lines. Most were recaptured as they went through the hostile German woods and country side.

POWs again

Those of us who followed Col. Goode returned exhausted to the deserted Oflag where we stayed for several hours before we were ordered to prepare to leave under the watchful eyes of fully-armed and equipped German soldiers.

Lt. Col. Waters, while attempting a truce with the Germans when the tanks arrived, was shot by a German guard. He was taken to the Oflag hospital and a week later after the American lines had moved up, he was evacuated to a field hospital.

The German soldiers who had returned to the Oflag were now armed and equipped for combat. They marched us the couple of miles down the steep road to the rail yards at Hammelburg where we were ordered to get in box cars and were locked in. We were targets of our own P-47 and P-51 air attacks and were given no food, water or heat. The next afternoon we arrived at Nuremburg at the heavily bomb-damaged rail yards and marched to a prison camp there.

Lt. Col. John Knight Waters remained in the Army and later became a 4-star general. He served the United States with distinction until he retired. He wrote me several years prior to his death that Gen. Patton, his father-in-law, did not know that he was a prisoner at

Hammelburg when he sent the Task Force through the front lines to liberate the American prisoners.

Gen. George S. Patton, Jr., "Old Blood and Guts," was soundly reprimanded by both Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower and Gen. Omar N. Bradley for the abortive attack on Hammelburg and the loss of the Task Force. He told correspondents that he did not know until nine days after the Task Force reached Hammelburg that his son-in-law was among the prisoners. He produced his private diaries and said he attempted to liberate the prison camp because they were afraid that the American prisoners might be murdered by the retreating Germans.

Gen. Patton later admitted: "I can say this, that throughout the campaign in Europe I know of no error I made except that of failing to send a combat command to take Hammelburg. Otherwise, my operations were to me, strictly satisfactory."

RESTRICTED

HEADQUARTERS, 28 INFANTRY DIVISION

APO 28 U. S. ARMY

GENERAL ORDERS

10 JANUARY 1945

NUMBER 3 EXTRACT

SECTION I: AWARD OF SILVER STAR MISSING IN ACTION

SECTION I: AWARD OF SILVER STAR, MISSING IN ACTION

Captain (Chaplain) ALAN PATRICK MADDEN, 0418423, Chaplain Corps, 112 Infantry, for gallantry in action against the enemy at Kommerscheidt,* Germany on 9 November 1944. During this day Captain MADDEN constantly exposed himself to extremely heavy artillery, mortar, and small arms fire while disregarding his own personal safety to go to the forward elements of the battalion in order to help evacuate the wounded, attending their physical as well as ecclesiastical needs. He was fearless in his demeanor; and even when capture by the enemy was inevitable, he remained and was instrumental in the restoration of the physical health as well as the morale of many helpless wounded soldiers who otherwise would have thought the situation hopeless. He alleviated a situation which was approaching a dangerously tense status and, as a result of his efforts, he succeeded in getting the enemy to permit safe conduct of a hospital train, through which over 50 seriously wounded patients and medical personnel were brought to the safety of our lines. Captain MADDEN was himself a prisoner of the Germans at the time But escaped from

enemy control several days later. He became missing in a subsequent action against the enemy. His gallant actions and unselfish devotion to duty were of great inspiration to the men he served and reflected great credit on his profession and the Armed Forces of the United States. Entered military service from Pennsylvania.

By Command of Major General COTA

J.D. GIBNEY,

Colonel, General Staff Corps,

Copied from official document

Chief of Staff

* Battle of the Hurtgen Wald (SE of Aachen Belgium)

APPENDIX 14

SUBJECT: Recommendation for Award of Legion of Merit

TO: The Adjutant General, Washington, D.C.

1. Under provisions of AR 600-45, as amended, it is recommended that Chaplain (1st Lt.) Paul W. Cavanaugh, O-550270, 422 Inf. 106 Division, home address 509 N. Oak Park Ave., Oak Park, Ill., now a patient in Percy Jones General Hospital, Battle Creek, Michigan, be awarded the Legion of Merit for exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services while a prisoner of war in Germany during the period 19 December 1944 to 27 March 1945.

2. Chaplain Cavanaugh, together with a large number of Officers and men of the 422nd Inf. and other units, was captured by the Germans near Schonberg, Belgium on 19 December 1944. They were moved by marching and by box car first to Germalstien, then to Stalag IX-B, Bad Orb, then to Oflag XIII-B, Hammelberg. Enroute and at the P.O.W. Camps, they suffered severely from exposure to extreme cold and hunger, maintained a cheerful, courageous attitude that did much to encourage and inspire those with whom he came in contact. He conducted frequent services and visited many persons to bring comfort and cheer, though most of the time he was in worse physical condition than those to whom he administered. I was Regimental Executive Officer of the 422 Infantry Regiment at time of capture on 19 December 1944, and was the senior officer of the regiment with the group during a large part of the movement as POW's. The above account is based on my personal association with Chaplain Cavanaugh and frequent observation of his actions and efforts.

In addition to the services mentioned, Chaplain Cavanaugh, having been liberated and recaptured at Hammelberg on 27 March 1945, continued his good work with another group, and distinguished himself by heroic action during a bombardment at Nuremburg on 5 April 1945, in which a large number of officers were killed and wounded. I was not a

witness to his actions at that time, but intend to submit separate recommendations covering that act, when appropriate statements can be secured from those who were present.

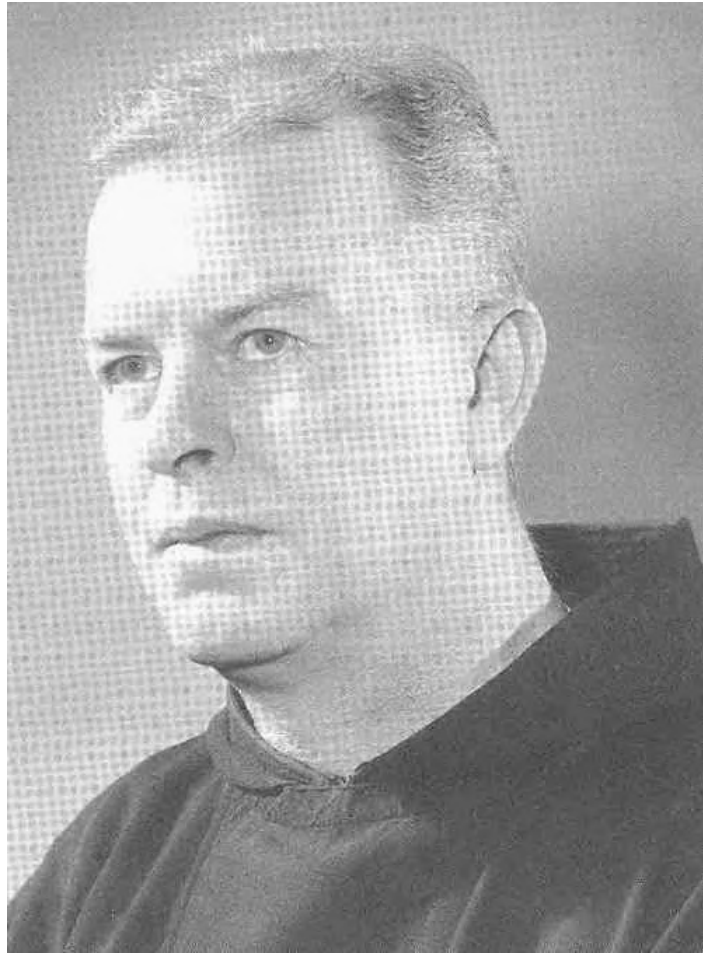
3. Proposed citation: For exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services while a prisoner of war in Germany. During the period 19 December 1944 to 27 March 1945, Chaplain Cavanaugh performed outstanding services in conducting religious services, in furnishing constant encouragement, comfort and inspiration to his fellow prisoners of war, despite living conditions, fatigue and hunger, from which he himself suffered severely.

JOSEPH C. MATTHEWS, JR.

0-255969, LT. COL. INF

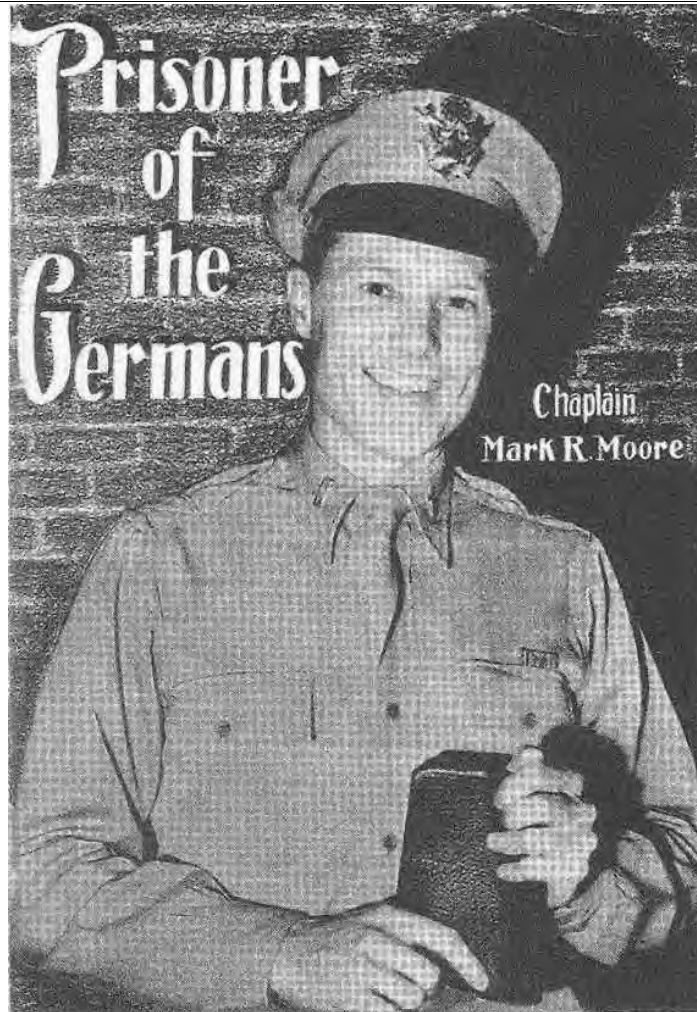
MIDWEST JESUIT ARCHIVES
4511 WEST PINE BLVD.
ST. LOUIS, MO 63108

APPENDIX 16: Photographs of Father Alan Madden receiving Silver Star award/Photograph of Father Alan Madden





APPENDIX 17
Mark R. Moore, Chaplain



Author of "Prisoner of the Germans"

Appendix 18: Photograph of Chaplain Rowland Arthur Koskamp. Denomination: Reformed Church in America. 110th Infantry Regiment, 28th Division. Killed in Action, 4-5-1945, Nuremberg GE.



U.S. ARMY DECORATIONS

ORDER OF PRECEDENCE

1. MEDAL OF HONOR
2. DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS
3. DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL
4. SILVER STAR

AWARDED TO: FR. ALAN MADDEN, OFM CAP

COL. Paul Ryan Goode, USMA Graduate 1917

5. LEGION OF MERIT

AWARDED TO: FR. PAUL W. CAVANAUGH, S.J.

COL. PAUL RYAN GOODE, USMA 1917

8. BRONZE STAR

AWARDED TO: FR. EDWARD HURLEY (TWO)

COL. PAUL RYAN GOODE, USMA 1917

CHAPLAIN MARK REYNOLDS MOORE

HERNDON INGE, JR.

JOSEPH S. ARSENAULT

9. PURPLE HEART

AWARDED TO: COL. PAUL RYAN GOODE, USMA 1917

CHAPLAIN MARK REYNOLDS MOORE

HERNDON INGE, JR.

14. PRISONER OF WAR

NOTE: THE AWARDS LISTED HERE ARE NOT NECESSARILY THE ONLY ONES AWARDED TO THOSE INVOLVED IN THIS DOCUMENT. CRITERIA

4. THE SILVER STAR MAY BE AWARDED TO ANY PERSON WHO, WHILE SERVING IN ANY CAPACITY WITH THE ARMED FORCES OF THE UNITED STATES, IS CITED FOR GALLANTRY IN ACTION;

(1) AGAINST AN ENEMY OF THE UNITED STATES;

(2) WHILE ENGAGED IN MILITARY OPERATIONS INVOLVING CONFLICT WITH AN OPPOSING FOREIGN FORCE; OR,

(3) WHILE SERVING WITH FRIENDLY FOREIGN FORCES -

THE REQUIRED GALLANTRY, WHILE OF A LESSER DEGREE THAN THAT REQUIRED FOR THE AWARD OR A DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS, MUST NEVERTHELESS HAVE BEEN PERFORMED WITH MARKED DISTINCTION.

5. THE LEGION OF MERIT IS AWARDED TO MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES OF THE UNITED STATES WITHOUT DEGREE FOR EXCEPTIONALLY OUTSTANDING CONDUCT IN THE PERFORMANCE OF MERITORIOUS SERVICE TO THE UNITED STATES. THE PERFORMANCE MUST MERIT RECOGNITION BY INDIVIDUALS IN A KEY POSITION WHICH WAS PERFORMED IN A CLEARLY EXCEPTIONAL MANNER. THE PERFORMANCE OF DUTIES

NORMAL TO THE GRADE BRANCH, SPECIALTY OF ASSIGNMENT AND EXPERIENCE OF AN INDIVIDUAL IS NOT AN ADEQUATE BASIS FOR THIS AWARD

8.A. THE BRONZE STAR MEDAL IS AWARDED TO ANY PERSON WHO, WHILE SERVING IN ANY CAPACITY IN OR WITH THE MILITARY OF THE UNITED STATES AFTER 6 DECEMBER 1941, DISTINGUISHED HIMSELF OR HERSELF BY HEROIC OR MERITORIOUS ACHIEVEMENT OR SERVICE, NOT INVOLVING PARTICIPATION IN AERIAL FLIGHT, WHILE ENGAGED IN AN ACTION AGAINST AN ENEMY OF THE UNITED STATES; WHILE ENGAGED IN MILITARY OPERATIONS INVOLVING CONFLICT WITH AN OPPOSING FOREIGN FORCE; OR WHILE SERVING WITH FRIENDLY FOREIGN FORCES -

B. AWARDS MAY BE MADE FOR ACTS OF HEROISM, PERFORMED UNDER CIRCUMSTANCES DESCRIBED ABOVE, WHICH ARE OF LESSER DEGREE THAN REQUIRED FOR THE AWARD OF THE SILVER STAR.

C. AWARDS MAY BE MADE TO RECOGNIZE SINGLE ACTS OF MERIT OR MERITORIOUS SERVICE. THE REQUIRED ACHIEVEMENT OR SERVICE WHILE OF LESSER DEGREE THAN THAT REQUIRED FOR THE AWARD OF THE LEGION OF MERIT MUST NEVERTHELESS HAVE BEEN MERITORIOUS AND ACCOMPLISHED WITH DISTINCTION.

9. THE PURPLE HEART

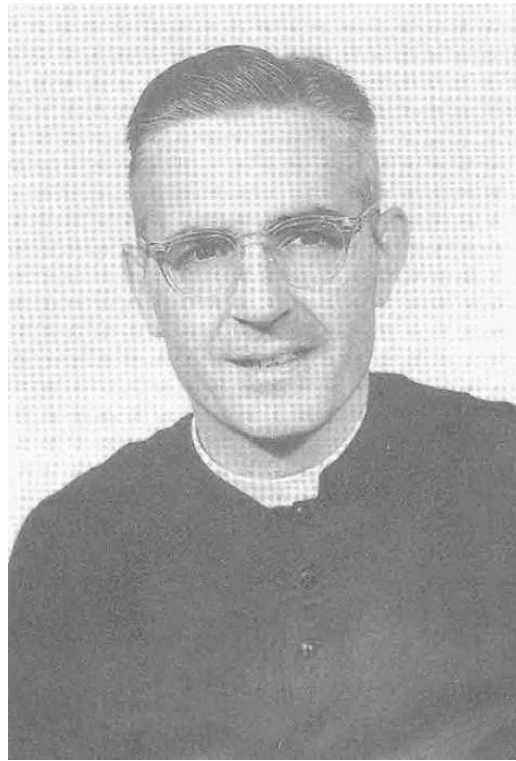
THE PURPLE HEART MAY BE AWARDED TO ANY MEMBER OF THE ARMED FORCES OF THE UNITED STATES WHO, WHILE SERVING UNDER COMPETENT AUTHORITY IN ANY CAPACITY WITH ONE OF THE ARMED FORCES, HAS BEEN WOUNDED, KILLED, OR WHO HAS DIED OR MAY DIE

OF WOUNDS RECEIVED IN ARMED COMBAT OR AS A RESULT OF AN ACT OF INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM. PURPLE HEART #1 WAS PRESENTED TO GENERAL DOUGLAS MAC ARTHUR on JULY 21, 1932.

PHOTOGRAPH / INSCRIPTION

FATHER ALAN P. MADDEN, CHAPLAIN

28TH DIVISION, 112 REGIMENT



FR. ED. Hurley Letter
to Joseph S. Arsenault



423rd Infantry, Co. C

DEAR KRIEGIE,

MERRY CHRISTMAS! THAT'S AN OLD, OLD GREETING THAT OFTEN DOESN'T MEAN VERY MUCH BUT I SUSPECT THAT TO YOU IT WILL HAVE MORE MEANING THIS YEAR THAN EVER BEFORE AND YOU CAN BE SURE THAT I SAY IT WITH ALL THE EARNESTNESS AND SINCERITY OF WHICH I AM CAPABLE. MERRY CHRISTMAS, KRIEGIE, MERRY CHRISTMAS!

WHAT DO I MEAN BY MERRY CHRISTMAS? WELL, LET'S PUT IT THIS WAY. I FEEL SURE THAT MOST OF YOU ARE OUT OF THE ARMY AND BACK HOME FOR KEEPS BY THIS TIME AND THAT IN ITSELF WOULD BE ENOUGH TO MAKE A GUY LEAP FOR JOY BUT YOU HAVE MORE THAN THAT. THIS IS THE PAY OFF TO ALL OUR DREAMS AND PRAYERS.

I AM THINKING OF FOXHOLES AND SHELL FIRE, BITING COLD AND FATIGUE AND HUNGER AND BOXCARS AND FILTH AND TERROR AND LICE AND SLEEPLESS NIGHTS. YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN AND THROUGH IT ALL ONLY ONE WHO GAVE ANY COMFORT OR HOPE OR CONFIDENCE. WE ARE CELEBRATING HIS BIRTHDAY ON CHRISTMAS AND ANY WISH FOR YOU IS THAT HE MAY BE AS CLOSE TO YOU THIS YEAR AS HE WAS LAST YEAR AND MAY YOU NEVER FORGET ALL THE FAVORS THAT HE GAVE YOU WHEN YOU NEEDED HIM MOST. THAT'S WHAT I MEAN BY MERRY CHRISTMAS.

YOU MAY HAVE FORGOTTEN THAT WHEN WE WERE STILL BACK IN DEAR OLD BAD ORB I PROMISED TO SEND YOU A CARD WHEN WE GOT BACK TO MOM AND WHEATCAKES FOR BREAKFAST. WELL HERE IS IT. A MEMBERSHIP CARD IN ONE OF THE MOST EXCLUSIVE CLUBS IN THE U.S. IS INCLUDED IN THIS LETTER. THE MEMBERSHIP FEE WAS PRETTY STEEP BUT YOU PAID IT AND NOW THE ONLY THING THAT REMAINS IS THE DUES. I THINK YOU WILL CONSIDER THEM VERY EASY AND SENSIBLE.

FIRST, EACH OF US WILL SAY THREE HAIL MARY'S EVERY DAY IN THANKSGIVING FOR OUR SAFETY AND LIBERATION AND IN PETITION TO OUR LADY THAT SHE WILL NOT LET US FORGET WHAT WE HAD TO PAY SUCH A HIGH PRICE TO LEARN.

SECONDLY, THAT WE WILL GO TO CONFESSION AND COMMUNION ON THE FIRST SUNDAY OF EVERY MONTH FOR THE INTENTION OF ONE ANOTHER. IN THAT WAY WE WILL BE HAVING MONTHLY MEETINGS TOGETHER AT GOD'S BANQUET TABLE AND DO MORE FOR ONE ANOTHER THAN IF WE COULD SIT DOWN IN THE BEST HOTEL AND SPIN TALES ABOUT POTATO SOUP AND BLACK BREAD. WHAT DO YOU SAY? AGREED?

I THINK THAT ALL OF US WILL FEEL PARTICULARLY CLOSE THIS YEAR AT CHRISTMAS. YOU CAN BE SURE THAT IN MY MASS CHRISTMAS MORNING I WILL REMEMBER EACH OF YOU IN A VERY SPECIAL WAY.

I AM MOST ANXIOUS FOR EACH OF YOU AND HOPE I CAN SEE YOU AGAIN AND SAY, "HI, KRIEGIE". BE SURE OF IT THAT I AM ALWAYS GLAD TO HEAR FROM YOU AND IF I CAN BE OF ANY HELP JUST SHOUT HEY FATHER AND YOURS TRULY WILL DO HIS BEST TO COME RUNNING ON THE DOUBLE.

AGAIN MERRY CHRISTMAS KRIEGIE AND THE SAME TO ALL YOUR FAMILY

EUERER KRIEGEGEFANGENE PASTOR

FR. HURLEY

LETTER PROVIDED BY CORINNE PRAY,

DAUGHTER OF Joseph S. Arsenault

423rd Infantry Division

(PROVIDED BY JOHN ROBB, D COMPANY, 422ND REGIMENT, 106 DIVISION)

FATHER EDWARD T. HURLEY

"I was at Bad Orb (Stalag IX B) from Christmas to mid April. There were two chaplains there, a Protestant Chaplain from Tennessee* (I do not recall his name), and Father Hurley. We saw both of them frequently to bolster our morale. I remember they came around often after the German guard was hacked up in the kitchen because the Germans threatened to execute every tenth man if the guilty were not found. Also prior to liberation, I remember Father Hurley pleading with us not to harm the Germans after liberation. I remember a fair amount of booing at that time. As it turned out, it was not a problem because when the 44th Division came in, the Germans had disappeared. Father Hurley was a wonderful and Godly man."

* Chaplain Dr. Sam R. Neel (Neal), 422nd Regiment 106th Division

CAPTAIN JOHN MADDEN - A letter from his son,

John J. Madden Jr., (3-9-04)

Here is some bio information on my Dad. He was born April 29, 1903 in St. Louis, Mo., and died on December 30, 1987 in Los Altos, California.

His parents were both Irish immigrants making him a first generation native born citizen. At age 16 he went to Chicago. In his youth he worked in a bicycle shop and a motorcycle shop. He raced motorcycles for a few years, which is ironic because my bothers and I were never allowed to ride motorcycles.

In time he matured and settled down. He attended two Civilian Military Training Camps in the early 1920's and apparently liked the military training and joined the Illinois National Guard in the mid 1920's. He enlisted in the 120th Field Artillery Regiment, 33rd Division, which was then equipped with horse drawn 75 mm "French 75's" guns. He was a member of the Regimental marksmanship team as well. He rose through the ranks and became a gun sergeant.

In his civilian life he graduated from law school and practices law in Chicago and married my Mom in February 1933.

In 1935 he was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant. In March 1941 the 33rd Div. was ordered to active duty for one year of training. At this time he was a 1st Lieutenant and the Battery XO. The Divisions participated in the 1941 Louisiana Maneuvers during which they had switched from horse drawn to truck towed artillery.

When Pearl Harbor occurred, the Division was kept on active duty. My Dad was sent to the Artillery School at Ft. Sill, OK to train on the new 105 mm howitzer from December 1941 to March 1942. At some time in 1942 the 33rd Division was split up to cadre new divisions being formed. My Dad spent a short time with the 78th Infantry Division, and then went to Command and General Staff School at Ft. Leavenworth, KS. This was from February - April 1943. When he finished that, he joined the 106th and was assigned to the 590th FA Bn. He remained with the 590th until he was captured during the Battle of the bulge on December 19, 1944. At the time of his capture he was a Captain and assigned to the S2 (Intelligence) shop of the battalion staff.

I remember a conversation with my parents about how he ended up being captured. The gist of it was that my Dad was considered, at age 38, too old for combat and was on the track for training positions. By the time the 106th was formed, the manpower pool was drying up and he no longer was too old.

He had wanted to stay with the 33rd Division when it was deployed to the Pacific, and he wanted to stay with the 78th. Instead he was sent to Command and General Staff School. He got his wish to serve with a division when he joined the 106th. My Mom used to say he got what he asked for whenever his being a POW would come up.

In the hardbound version "The Cub Passes in Review" there is a chapter on the 590th FA starting with their departure from England until their capture. If you don't have a copy of it, let me know and I will send you a copy of the chapter.

In summary, the 590th was overrun by the Germans while they were preparing to fire in support of the 422nd and 423rd attack on Schonberg. According to this article when the Bn. was overrun the Bn. Commander and part of his staff had gone forward to meet with Col. Cavender of the 423rd. I think my Dad was with them because I do remember him saying that he was not captured until a couple of hours after the Bn. was overrun, and had been trapped on the side of a hill in a meadow with a group of about 40 men with German Infantry on two sides and a German tank in front of them. They were heading for Schonberg at the time.

He was marched out of the area in an ever increasing column of POW's and eventually put on a train. He was at the POW camp at Bad Orb when he first met Cavanaugh. Many of the officers were transferred to Hammelburg, my Dad and Cavanaugh among them.

Cavanaugh's manuscript picks up the story from there. I got some POW information on my Dad from the Archives and this transfer list was one of the documents. If you want a copy let me know.

When he returned to the US he was sent to a rehabilitation center in Miami Beach and was there for several months. He had been in the Army 5 years and had no practice to go back to in Chicago, so he decided to stay in the Army. He transferred to the JAG Corps was first assigned to a Field Artillery training center at Ft. Bragg, NC. From there he was assigned to Ft. Jackson, SC, Japan, the Presidio of San Francisco, Germany, Washington, and retired at Ft. Sill, OK in 1960 as a Lieutenant Colonel.

While serving as a JAG officer, he was a military legal advisor at the Japanese Peace Treaty Conference in San Francisco, I believe 1952.

In Germany he created the U.S. Army Claims Service, Europe 1955-56. Shortly after D-Day, units known as Claims Teams arrived in France. They followed the combat forces and dealt with the losses of civilians as a result of the combat. These teams operated as Civil Affairs Units. When the war ended, these numerous teams were all over the occupied areas of Europe with no central organization. When the official occupation of Germany was ending, all the teams were consolidated and moved into the Heidelberg/Manheim area in Germany. Coincidentally, I was assigned to that organization from 1976-78 when I was on active duty as a JAG officer. There were still some people working there who remembered my Dad.

He was awarded the Purple Heart with 2 Oak Leaf Clusters. These dates come from a General Order I found in his papers dated August 25, 1945. He was first wounded at Schonberg, December 19, 1944 (the day he was captured). He was wounded a second time on December 21, 1944 at Diety, Germany. I have never been able to find this place on a map. I remember him saying that he was wounded when a British plane strafed their column when they were on a road march. Cavanaugh has a reference to strafing of the POW columns by British planes in chapter 3. He was wounded a third time on April 5, 1945 at Nurnberg during the U.S. bombing of the rail yard which Cavanaugh also talks about.

He also received the POW Medal, Army Commendation Medal; American Defense, American Campaign; European Campaign, Occupation (Japan and Germany clasps) National Defense Service Medal; Marksman Badge (Rifle), Sharpshooter Badge (Carbine) and Expert Badge (pistol).

After he retired from the Army all he ever wanted to do was work for veterans and went to work for the VA until he reached the mandatory retirement age in effect at the time. After he retired from the VA he became a Service Officer with the Military Order of the Purple Heart and worked for them until Mom lost her sight. When that happened he stopped working finally. He was about 79 or 80 then.

I hope this helps you a bit. If you have any information about my Dad I would love to see it. The same is true of Cavanaugh. I have the manuscript, the picture and that's it. I know he and my Dad corresponded, but there were no letters in my Dad's papers. I wish there had been. Cavanaugh seems to describe my Dad as a resourceful scrounger, and I can see that. In growing up, I remember my Dad never wasting anything; I think this is a trait he picked up in the POW camp.

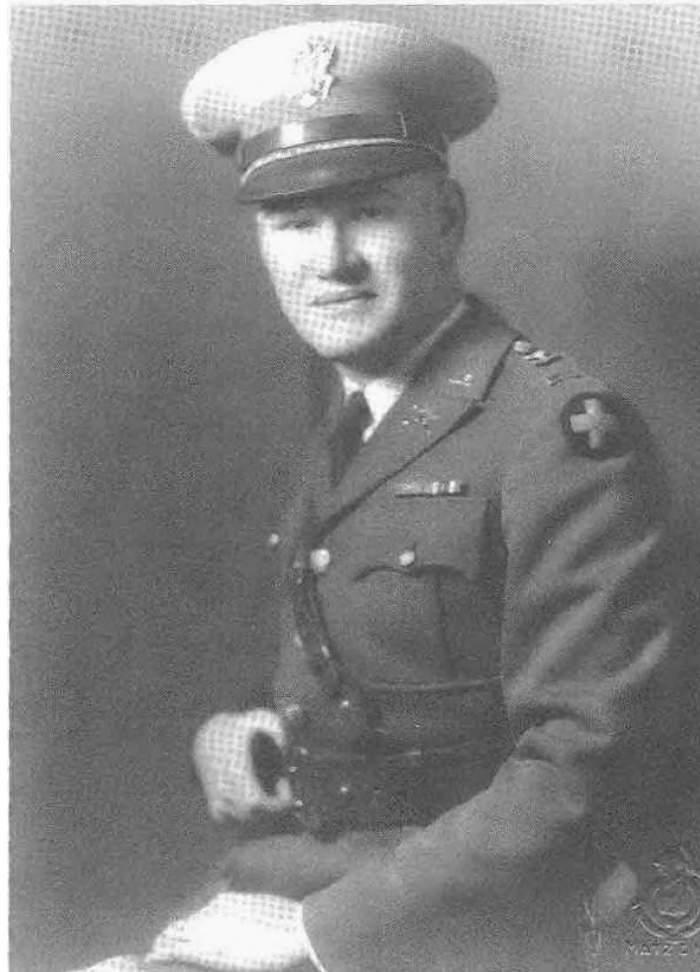
If you have any questions or think I can add anything more feel free to get a hold of me.

JOHN

3306 King Edwards Ct.

Eugene, OR 97401

(541) 345-6295



Captain John Madden, Sr.

Article by Pete House, A Battery, 550 Field Artillery Battalion

..

106 INFANTRY DIVISION'S FIRST SIX DAYS IN BATTLE The Battle of the Bulge, December 16, 1944 Pete House, A Battery, 590 Field Artillery Battalion

The 106th Infantry Division moved up to St. Vith, Belgium to replace the 2nd Infantry Division around December 11, 1944. Five days later, at 5:30 AM Adolf Hitler began his desperate attempt to capture Antwerp and thus divide the British and Americans. He said it would take a mere week to capture Antwerp! With this action he hoped to sign a separate peace treaty with the British. You have to remember that England was being blasted by the German V-2 Rockets, had been bombed since 1940, and the British Commander General Bernard Montgomery was feuding with the Supreme Commander General Dwight D. Eisenhower. With a separate peace with the

British the Americans would lose the use of the British Isles and could not continue the war.

This 60 mile sector was under the control of 8 Corps, Major Gen. Troy Middleton, commanding. 8 Corps was part of Lt. Gen. Courtney Hodges 1st Army. Individual units on line north to south (left to right) were: 1st Cavalry Group, 99th Infantry Division, 14th Cavalry Group, 106th Infantry Division, and 28th Infantry Division. This whole lightly defended 60 mile sector was considered a holding or rest area by the Allied High Command. Remember this!

The 102nd and 14th Cavalry Groups were never intended to hold ground like the infantry. They were not equipped nor trained for this work. They were to find the enemy, hit, and run. It is ironic that 14th Cavalry Group was assigned to guard the area known as the Losheim Gap. Two Squadrons, around 800 men, for 5 miles of front. This has been the historic route for armies to move from Germany into Belgium and France. The Kaiser's army crossed here in 1914 to start the First World War. Again in 1940 German General Rommel led his German forces in a lightning attack through here to capture France, Belgium, and the Netherlands. 'This was one of the main and most successful routes of the Germans in the Battle of the Bulge. The Losheim Gap was on the immediate left flank of the 106th Division, next to 422nd Infantry Regiment.

All three Infantry Regiments were on the line. Normally one regiment is held in reserve to be moved up as needed. Each infantry regiment has one battalion in reserve for emergency use. By the end of the first day all 3 Infantry Battalions in reserve had to be committed. Major Gen. Jones' 106th Infantry Division had no reserve forces left. 8 Corps did not have any divisions in reserve. This is what led to the isolation, loss, and capture of 422nd and 423rd Infantry Regiments.

When the 106th Division replaced the 2nd Division around December 11, 1944, the orders directly from Gen. Courtney Hodges (CG 2nd Army) were fox hole for fox hole and gun position for gun position. When Gen. Alan Jones (106th Div. Commander) requested permission to develop a better defensive line, Gen. Courtney Hodges refused. Many of the officers, from Gen. Jones on down, considered the division's position indefensible.

Because this was considered a passive area, ammunition was severely rationed. One of the reasons was the Allies still did not have enough ports to

unload supplies. The other was they were stockpiling materials for the spring assault on the West Wall (the common name for the prewar western German border.) On the days immediately preceding the Bulge my battery (105 how.) usually used up our entire ration of 105 mm ammunition by midnight. And we could not be re supplied in daylight because the one road was under direct German artillery fire. All ammo, food, gas, and medical supplies were in short supply when the Germans launched their attack on Dec. 16, 1944.

We had not been issued winter gear. Still wearing field jackets and overcoats, no hoods. We were issued a third blanket just before we relieved the 2nd Division on December 11. Of course we didn't have sleeping bags and were using the open ended pup tents..

By the end of the first day, the Germans had forced 14 Cavalry Group past the left flank of 106 division and were attacking Andler. Andler was the northern gate for the road net to the rear (west) of 422 and 423 Infantry Regiments and on the rear left flank of 422 Infantry Regiment. It is only 1 % miles north of Schoenberg. They had also penetrated between 423 and 424 Infantry Regiments to the town of Bleialf. 1 st Army sent both 7 and 9 Armored Divisions to aid General Jones' 106th Division. He assigned 7 Armored Division to move east through St. Vith and Schoenberg to relieve the German pressure on Andler and Bleialf while 9 Armored Division was to help 424 Infantry Regiment to the south. However 7 Armored Division was 60 miles away in the Netherlands and as proved later could not make the march in time to meet its objective. In fact they never moved east of St. Vith.

422 and 423 Infantry Regiments along with their artillery, 589 and 590 Field Artillery Battalions were ordered to remain in the Schnee Eifel, their original location. This meant there were no large defensive forces between these two regiments and Division Headquarters in St. Vith.

There were a number of tank destroyer units, both self propelled and towed, attached to the American units, but no tanks. In addition to infantry the Germans sent 6 Panzer Army against the Losheim Gap and 5 Panzer Army against 106 and 28 Infantry Divisions. An army could contain 9 or more divisions. Not counting armor the German forces had an advantage of anything between 10 to 1 to 20 to 1 in men.. There were many instances of Americans having to use machine guns against German tanks!

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The Germans were able to overwhelm the defenders at Bleialf, between 423 and 424 Infantry Regiments. They now had free access to the Bleialf-Schoenberg road. Around 8:30 AM Germans were able to break the defenses at Andler on the north with the aid of their new huge King tanks. Shortly they crossed the Our River in Schoenberg. Now both 422 and 423 Infantry Regiments and 589 and 590 Field Artillery Battalions were completely cut off from the rest of the American Army. 106th Division Headquarters was a scant 6 miles west of Schoenberg, at St. Vith.

Germans were able to break the defenses at Adler on the north with the aid of their new huge King tanks. Shortly they crossed the Our River in Schoenberg. Now both 422 and 423 Infantry Regiments and 589 and 590 Field Artillery Battalions were completely cut off from the rest of the American Army. 106 Division Headquarters was a scant 6 miles west Army Commander, Gen. Hasso von Manteuffel, said after the war that the 106th Division, through its stubborn defense of the Schoenberg-St. Vith road net, held up his advance long enough to prevent the Germans from getting to their final target, Antwerp.

It is interesting to note that many reports of increased enemy activity just prior to December 16 were collected and sent to 1 st Army and Supreme Allied Headquarters but apparently were ignored. The Allies had broken the German Code with their secret Ultra machine. Many hints were received about the movement of German troops and were provided to Allied High Command. Belgium women, Elise Dele, crossed the Our River on December 14 to the 28 Division's 109 Infantry Regiment. She said she was captured by the Germans December 10 and taken 10 miles behind the lines to Bitburg. She escaped and reported much armor and troops including SS. near the Our River she saw many boats in the woods (for river crossings.) From December 11 through December 15 requests for artillery fire missions increased daily. Some of the Infantry units also reported increased patrol activity just prior to December 16. (See Charles B. MacDonald's A Time For Trumpets, pages 29-79.) Some feel that this was a deliberate sacrifice of a division to get the Germans to commit. Others, including myself, believe it was just a callous lack of leadership on the part of a few at SHAEF, 1 Army, and perhaps 8 Corps.

After withdrawing from St. Vith the Division was recommitted with 424 Infantry Regiment, 591 and 592 Field Artillery, 330 Medical Battalion, and what was left of the 81 Engineers and other miscellaneous troops. Other units were added to replace the missing ones. .

On March 14, 1945 the division was moved out of the battle line to St. Quentin, France for reorganization, rehabilitation, and training. The units lost during the Bulge were to be reconstructed. By this time the German military were surrendering or being captured by the thousands. The division was ordered to the Rhineland to guard these Germans. They arrived by April 15. They were to guard administer, actually build the enclosures, screen, segregate, transfer, evacuate, process, discharge and transport German prisoners all over Europe. When they arrived in the Rhine River Valley there were already thousands of prisoners, no facilities nor food and medical help. During this period of eleven weeks they would process more than a million and a quarter Germans! And the division had just received the new replacements and not had time to reorganize when this took place.

COLONEL PAUL RYAN GOODE

DOB: 28 JUNE 1892

USMA AUGUST 1917

INFANTRY: 29TH DIVISION, 175 REGIMENT

POW GERMANY 1944-45

SILVER STAR, LEGION OF MERIT, BRONZE STAR, PURPLE HEART

DIED: 17 Jan. 1959

COL. PAUL D. GOODE

Lt. Stanley Brach

The accompanying article is by Wright Bryan, who was captured by the Germans near Cahumont, France, last September 12, after being wounded in the leg while serving as a war correspondent for his paper.

He was freed by the Red army from a Nazi prison camp,

Oflag 64 at Szubin, Poland, on January 22.

NOTE: LT. BRACH REMAINED AT OFLAG 64,

COL. GOODE WAS MARCHED TO HAMMELBURG OFLAG XIII B

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The Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

SZUBIN, Poland (AP)- Liberation for at least one group of American war prisoners who had been held here at Oflag 64 by the Germans came within eight days after the Red army had launched its swift, powerful offensive. Four of those freed are from New Jersey.

Although the number of prisoners released here was relatively few, there is hope that many others of all Allied forces may be close to freedom, if they have not already achieved it. Several of the largest war prison camps were located in this region and German efforts to remove them at the last minute may have been thwarted by the speed of the Russian advance.

An incomplete list of Americans at the camp includes Chaplain Stanley Brack, Newark; Lt. Louis Otterbein, Bloomfield; Lt. Stockbridge Bacchus Jr. Chatham; S.J. Sochy, Woodbridge; W.H. Jarrett, Philadelphia, and W.W. Smith, Wayne, Pa.

In this little Polish Corridor town was a camp where most of the American ground force officers captured in Africa, Sicily. Italy and Western Europe were living behind barbed wire.

Told to Evacuate

On Saturday, January 20, the German garrison warned the American prisoners to prepare for evacuation without further notice. Prisoners certified by German doctors as unfit to

march were told to ready themselves to leave immediately when transportation became available.

Sunday morning the American war prisoners held their last formation under German supervision on the camp assembly area and the men marched out the gate in a column of threes, escorted by German guards.

Transportation being unavailable for hospital patients and others unable to walk, they remained behind. This group, including a few doctors and orderlies to care for them numbered 91. I was one of them.

Newark Priest Took Keys

As they left, the last German officers handed the keys of the camp to Chaplain Brach.

Quickly we painted large Red Cross flags to hang on all sides and the roof of the hospital.

Father Brach, captured in Africa. had been a prisoner since November 1942, and had been through this once before. In Italy he had been in a camp abandoned by Italian guards on the surrender of their government, but had been retaken by the Germans before Allied prisoners could be evacuated. He said mass Sunday in the hospital ward and told us to be confident, this time we would be free, and to pray for our friends and comrades marching through snow and sub-freezing temperatures.

Monday morning we looked out to the deserted highway and wondered. Then some one saw two American-built military trucks and a light tank go by. They did not pause, but spirits in our camp lifted

"Saw They Were Russians"

Just after 10 o'clock a vehicle stopped between two German barracks across the street, and heavily armed men scattered to search the premises. from hospital windows we could not tell by their snow-covered Winter uniforms whether they were German rearguards or Russian advance units. When the vehicle turned we recognized it as an American-built three-quarter-ton reconnaissance car and when officers came to our gate we saw they were Russians.

An artillery captain was the first Russian officer into our camp. He was the first of three groups of Russian officers who visited us during the day and evening. Like every Russian who has been here , they were alert and soldierly, demanding proper proof of our status, but once it was established extending all possible courtesy and help.

They told us that Russian spearheads were pushing eastward on either side of Szubin, that Berlin was their goal and that things were moving so swiftly our friends in the marching column might be overtaken and liberated. At this writing we still have no definite news about that column, but we are constantly hoping.

The Russians have much lendlease equipment from America and they like it. Equipment of their own manufacture is abundant and first rate. They are eager to meet Americans. They

salute and shake hands and speak of Roosevelt, Stalin and Churchill and every one has his eyes on the road to Berlin.

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NOTE: COL. GOODE WAS FORCE MARCHED TO

HAMMELBURG OFLAG XIII BFRO SZUBIN POLAND

MAY 21, 1945

"Have a Cow Killed,"

Red Orders for Szubin PW's

Approach of Russians Panics Goons:

Some Prisoners Marched 350 Miles

By Wright Bryan, Journal War Correspondent

Szubin, Poland - The approach of the Russian Armies threw our German guard company into a tailspin. they sent German doctors around the hospital to check those of us who were patient there, under care of the American medical officers. The German doctor was passing on who was able and who unable to march.

It was obvious the camp would be evacuated soon. The Goons said they would provide transportation for the hospital patients. They told us to be ready to leave on an hour's notice. Those able to march would leave on foot.

Ironically after weeks of semi-starvation, we had plenty of Red Cross food parcels in camp when the break-up came. A complete parcel was issued to each Kriegie the day before the camp was evacuated. That was the second parcel within a week for most of the prisoners.

The last day our camp population was intact was a busy day of selection and packing.

Everyone was getting together his warmest clothes and combining his most valuable possessions with whatever food he thought he could carry from the Red Cross parcels. It was a question of how much each man could carry on a long march.

There was much exchanging of food items with a big premium on the highly concentrated stuff like D-bars and cheese.

On the morning that almost 1,400 of our friends marched out of the camp under German guard leaving 91 of us behind in the hospital and an adjacent barracks, we watched from the hospital windows while platoons formed outside. Each man was laden with blanket rolls and packs of every description. Most of them overloaded themselves and we heard stories later of stuff being left along the wayside as packs were lightened.

It was a cold clear day with packed dry snow on the ground. Some of the men had built small sled on which they towed their packs. One group had found an old cart, intended to be horsedrawn, on which they had loaded all their food and bedrolls and together the men pulled that car. I don't know how long they continued to do so.

the story of that march is one which I have heard many fragments. I hope to piece it all together after I have a chance to see notes which some of my friends kept.

Many of my friends marched 350 miles across Germany and were liberated on the West front. Others were left behind sick or with frozen feet at various stops. Some of those rejoined us in Poland after our liberation by the Russians. Some escaped from the marching column and rejoined us. We had hopes at Szubin, as those on the march did, that the entire column would be headed off and liberated by the Red Army, but that did not work out. apparently the Germans guards succeeded in marching our people between two spearheads of the Russian army, narrowly eluding both.

In Szubin those us who had been left behind found ourselves unguarded for the first time since our capture. Next day the Russians came in.

We had begun to eat well again by then. We had considerable stores of Red Cross parcels, with a greatly diminished population to use them. We sent a detail with a wagon to a nearby town where other Red Cross parcels had been stored. The parcels were gone but we got some beans and other German rations.

One day, before trucks came to evacuate us from the Oflag, a Russian colonel visited our hospital ward. He asked if we had any fresh meat. We said no. He turned to a subordinate and said "Have a cow killed for these people".

Next day we had steaks.

The following photographs are not provided in this document.

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PHOTOGRAPHS
NATIONAL ARCHIVES

1. AMERICAN TANK CRASHES PRISON FENCE, HAMMELBURG GE.

APRIL 6, 1945 BY 14TH ARMOURED DIVISION

(SIMULATES TASK FORCE BAUM)



2. SERVIDIAN POWs LIBERATED, HAMMELBURG OFLAG XIIIIB

APRIL 6, 1945 BY 14TH ARMOURED DIVISION



3. POWs LIBERATED BAD ORB, STALAG IXB

APRIL 3, 1945

4. ENGLISH POWs BAD ORB, STALAG IXB

APRIL 4, 1945



5. POW HOSPITAL PATIENTS BAD, ORB

APRIL 5, 1945



6. POWs RELEASED, BAD ORB

APRIL 2, 1945



7. POW DEMONSTRATES FOOD RATIONING, BAD ORB

APRIL 5, 1945







8. VIEW OF CONDITIONS DURING BATTLE OF BULGE

JAN. 19, 1945



9. SOLDIER SS 106TH DIVISION, LOSHEIM BELGUIM

MARCH 3, 1945



10. 106TH DIVISION SOLDIERS IN THE FIELD, BELGIUM

DEC. 28, 1944



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U.S. War Department, Military Intelligence Service

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Lt. Donald B. Prell, POW

Corinne Pray (Daughter of Joseph S. Arsenault, 423rd Inf. Company C

John Robb, 422nd Reg., 106th Division, POW

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Madden, John Jr. (Son of Capt. John Madden)

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Galloway, Thomas M. POW

"THE LAST ESCAPE" (THE UNTOLD STORY OF ALLIED PRISONERS OF WAR IN EUROPE 1944 - 45) BY JOHN NICHOL AND TONY RENNELL

The book is available for \$15 (S&H included) by contacting Bob Skopek at

[Email Robert E. Skopek](mailto:Robert.E.Skopek@us.army.mil)

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Note from Webmaster: While I have made every attempt to accurately represent the written book, here on the Internet, it is not an exact copy. If you want the complete and accurate story, I suggest you purchase a copy from the above address. Jim West

Page last revised