RAINWATER AND POTATO PEELINGS

by Art Kuespert, Company F, 423rd Infantry
and Joe Kleven, C Company, 423rd Infantry ,
106th Infantry Division

This is a personal account by two American G.I.'s whose paths crossed in a Prisoner-of-War arbeit kommando in Grossenhain, Saxony, Germany. They were members of the ill-fated 423rd Infantry Regiment of the 106th Infantry Division. Their regiment was surrounded and surrendered by their unit commander.

As P.O.W.'s, they were forced to work on the German railroad and spent most of their time working in Dresden before and after the three raids on February 13 and 14, 1945. They saw first-hand destruction of one of Europe's cultural cities. In contrast, they saw the pristine beauty of Czechoslovakia during their odyssey.

They were two travelers, without a map or provisions, determined to reach Allied lines on their own. They left their German guards as the war in Europe was flickering out.

You can follow the lives of these two men from the early threats of war by Adolf Hitler, entering the Service, their combat experience, the trauma of becoming a Prisoner-of-War, the prison life, their unique experiences while on their own and the return to civilian life.

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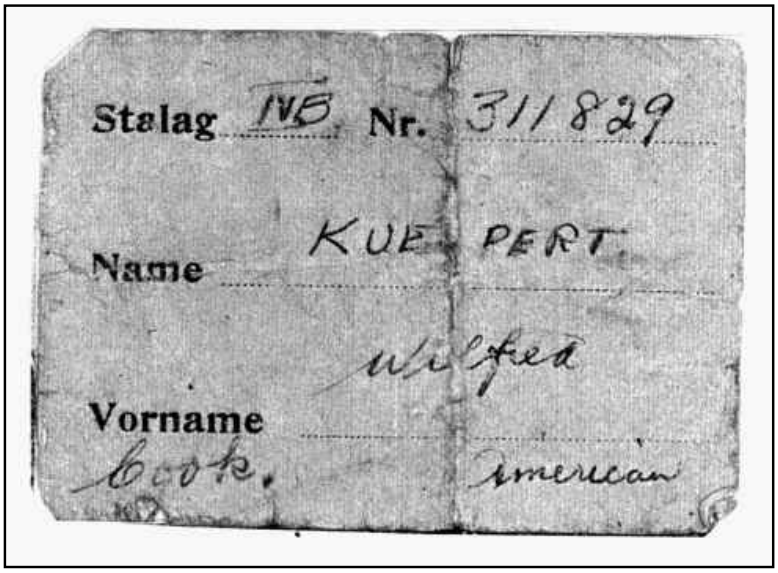

RAINWATER AND POTATO PEELINGS

Our story is dedicated to you !

Your brilliant decision to read about the experiences of two former Prisoners-of—War from World War II shows integrity, sincerity and sympathy. Joe Kleven and Art Kuespert thank you!

Our story might be fifty years old, but it is interesting. Its smooth-flowing dialogue will hold your interest through every page. If you read straight through, you will give up over three hours of your life. If you study Joe's catchy sketches, it will take a little longer.

This is a hand-crafted publication and you will note the personal interest in each page ~en you see some of the elements that have been added to make the book more attractive. Headlines of yester-year appear along with clippings from the World War II era.

Joe did a beautiful job on the cover illustration (and I like my appropriate lettering) We use a unique method of telling the story. We alternate. And it isn't difficult to learn who is "talking." When Joe talks, its after a dividing line that shows "JOEJOEJOE":

and when I talk, it shows "ARTARTART." I did forget to place a divider somewhere in the

text. If you find this gross error, I warn you, there is no prize. You may find some mis-spelled words, typos, bad cor-rections, bad verbiage, split infinitives, dangling participles, wrong use of transitive and intransitive verbs and too many compound sentences.

And now you may read RAINWATER AND POTATO PEELINGS

The two American G.I.'s referenced in the preceding introduction can be identified. I am Art Kuespert and my companion is Joe Kleven. It took almost fifty years for us to decide to tell our story, but our recollection of incidents that took place along the way is oblivious to the extended interval. We met for the first time in January 1945 when assigned to the same Arbeit Kommando as German Prisoners-of-War. We were "kriegsgefangenen."

Let's go back to August 1939 when Adolf Hitler threatened to invade Poland. Neville Chamberlain of Great Britain made a promise to Poland that the British would defend them should Hitler decide to carry out his plan. In short, chamberlain told Hitler that "War is up to you." Hitler's answer never came. Hitler wanted to establish "neighborly relations" with Poland which was tantamount to taking over the entire country. -

HOME EDITION.

The South Bend Tribune.

Departments and Features

VOL. LXVII. ... SOUTH BEND, INDIANA, TUESDAY EVENING, AUGUST 29, 1939 ... PRICE THREE CENTS

'WAR UP TO YOU,' HITLER TOLD

Chamberlain Calls Britain's Message 'Final'

LINER BREMEN Bomb Blasts | English Pupils Study New 'R'—Raids. | EVERY HOUR PROMISE TO POLAND

On September 1 1939, Hitler issued a Nazi Army Order blaming Poland for not meeting his offer. Europe was like a tinder box after this action. Hitler declared "Only Victory or Death!" He even selected two successors to take over if anything should happen to him. They were Hermann Goering and Rudolph Hess.

2 CENTS

Chicago Daily Tribune

FINAL

WAR! BOMB WARSAW!

NAZI ARMY ORDER

BERLIN, Sept. 1 (Friday) (A.P.) – Adolf Hitler today ordered the German army to meet force with force. His order of the day to the army read:

"The Polish state has rejected my efforts to establish neighborly relations, and instead has appealed to weapons. Germans in Poland are victims of a bloody terror, driven from house and home. A series of border violations unbearable for a great power show that the Poles no longer are willing to respect the German border.

"To put an end to these insane incitations, nothing remains but for me to meet force with force from now on. The German army will conduct a fight for honor and the right to the life of the resurrected German people with firm determination. I expect that every soldier, mindful of the great traditions of the eternal German military, will do his duty to the last.

"Remember always that you are representatives of the National Socialist great Germany. Long live our people and our reich!"

At the time these blazing headlines were printed, we were totally unaware that the world situation would eventually involve Joe Kleven, 17, living in Viroqua, Wisconsin and Art Kuespert, 18, living in South Bend, Indiana

1

Why are we telling you about Hitler and his plans? *BECAUSE it will eventually affect OUR plans for a NORMAL life !* After graduating from high school, a young person is exposed to the real world. Our world was uncertain and the actions of the World leaders helped change it on a daily basis. With storm clouds rumbling, planning ahead was futile. it was a matter of days when Britain was drawn into the conflict. She had to back up her promise to Poland. It was like a person picking a fight with the neighborhood bully who was twice his size. Britain's boast about fighting Hitler was: "I can lick him, can't WE?" That "WE" is US. US is U.S.

We were not involved in the conflict immediately. But, the U.S. was supplying trucks, equipment and supplies through the Lend-Lease Program to both Great Britain and Russia. In South Bend, Indiana, we saw numerous Studebaker trucks leaving the city and bound for Russia. It was only a matter of time before we would be snared into the fracas.

A sneak attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 was like firing the starter's pistol--each day brought forth another entry into the second World War. It became official that we could enter it as WORLD WAR II in our war log book.

On December 8th, Franklin D. Roosevelt made his historic speech in which he said: ". . .a state of war exists between the United States and the Japanese Empire." By December 11th, the United States had declared war on Germany and Italy.

There are two dates in history that

most of us can recall where we were at the precise moment we learned what had occurred. They are the attack on Pearl Harbor arid the news about President Jack Kennedy's assassination. On December 7, 1941, I was in our

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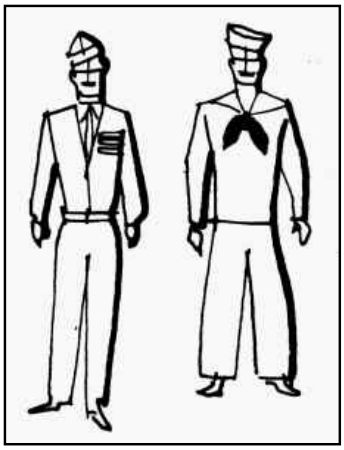
dining room with a camera focused on a kitten in a vase. A solemn voice came over our floor model Sears Silvertone radio informing us that Pearl Harbor had been attacked by Japanese aircraft and that thousands of lives were lost. On November 22, 1963, I was working at the Missile and Surface Radar Division of RCA in Moorestown, New Jersey. The rumor mill was in full operation, but none of the experts could give us full information on what had happened to President Jack Kennedy. Being in communications. we sent a teletype directly to Parkland Hospital in Dallas. We received a "twixie" in return with full details including the fact that our president did not survive the assassination attack.

Eventually many other small countries entered on one side or the other and the melee was at full throttle. our country seemed to unite overnight. We all reeked with patriotism-—unlike today. The women went to work and the men went to war. Automobile manufacturers converted their lines to planes and tanks. There was a run on the recruiting



offices of all branches of Service. Conscription or the "Draft" was expediting "Greetings" letters to men whose numbers in the "flshbowl" were drawn first. Single men between the ages of 18 and 35 were siphoned into whatever branch of service had to fill the quota of the day. Wealth, politics and falsehoods played a role in deferments received in that age group. If you had money or a friend in the Selective Service office, you could arrange a deferment without much difficulty. As the human resources dwindled, married men and married men with families were called to duty.

I was twenty years old in 1941. I was concerned about my future. It was up to me to make a decision since this war wouldn't be over in a day or two. My only obligation was to my parents, brothers and sisters. Marriage or a steady girlfriend were unknown factors. There was no hardship case to prevent me from entering the Service. I did elect to enlist in the Air Force. The Navy was out because I never learned to swim. I always felt that water was for drinking, baths, doing dishes, putting out fires and making coffee. I reported to the recruiting office that was located in the Federal Building and Post Office in South Bend, Indiana. The "Service Salesman" Sergeant Brown extolled the virtues and benefits of being a flying man. He read it from the recruiting brochure in a distinct David Brinkley style. I believed every word he uttered.

I reported to Fort Benjamin Harrison on the outskirts of Indianapolis, Indiana early in July 1942. I was in camp almost three weeks before I realized that all of the recruits on my roster had been deployed. When I questioned the Officer in charge as to when I would be assigned to a unit, he checked my papers and informed me that I had been rejected three days after I reported to Fort Ben. The reason given for my not being able to grace the Air Force with my presence was that my left eye did not pass the acuity test. I was rejected and dejected. What should I do? I really hated to give up my duties of picking up cigar-ette butts, cleaning latrines, working K. P and attending the mess hail for three meals a day.

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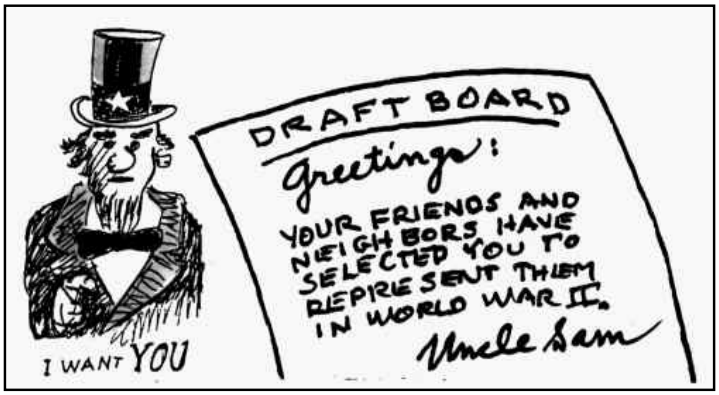
The OIC gave me a travel voucher so I could return home. I was so naive about traveling that I gave my destination as Indianapolis, because I planned on going to the Soldiers and Sailors monument on the Circle. I was entitled to full fare to South Bend even if I chose to do a bit of sight-seeing. One other gift from the OIC was my original application form with the word REJECTED stamped diagonally across the sheet. As I walked past a McCrory Five and Ten Cent store I noticed a big sign in the window. It read: "TODAY ONLY--TWO POUNDS OF GINGER SNAPS FOR 25$." I was hungry and took advantage of the bargain. I still had the $2.15 fare for the trip to South Bend and enough for a bottle of Nehi root beer.

After several ginger snaps, I got a little bilious. I went to the lower level of the monument and looked up my Uncle Frank's name in the list of Spanish-American war veteran roster. I took the elevator to the observation deck of the monument. It was a great panorama of Indianapolis for the full 360 degrees. The ginger snaps haunted me after getting my fill of them. Since I was the only one in the tower, I thought I would try several aerodynamics experiments with the rest of the ginger snaps. I sailed them out over the Circle. Watching the cars enter and leave the Circle with ginger snaps fluttering into their windshields helped alleviate the disappointment in not being accepted by the United States Air Force. The supply of ginger snaps dwindled to a precious few. I tucked them in my pocket in the event

I would get hungry on the three-hour bus trip to South Bend.

It was bus time and we were on our way. The trip was boring. I did come up with a plan. Upon arrival in South Bend, I immediately called the Selective Service Board. I asked if there was any way possible that I could be a volunteer for the next draftee trip to Port Clinton, Ohio. I explained my situation--I had quit my job and sure that I would be flying in the "wild blue yonder." and I told them that I had been rejected. The "we-take-anything" group said "Yes!" with no hesitation.



I said: "How soon? " They said: "Be at the bus pickup area at 7 A.M. tomorrow." I agreed to go to the Selective Service office and pick up my travel orders today. Like right now! After I arrived home with my paperwork, I received a phone call from a most grateful person. It was from the gentleman whose place I was taking on the morning trip to Camp Perry. This happy individual informed me that he tried everything to get an extension of time to take care of some personal business before answering his Draft call. Shortly after the Board turned down his final plea, they called him back and informed him of the good news. He couldn't believe it. He thanked me over and over again.. .and I thanked him. We were both very happy.

I was inducted into the Army on July 22, 1942. My mother placed a service star in our window.

JOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOE

Art filled you in on our reasons for ending up "in the Service for our Country." I'll go back to the fall of 1941. I began my freshman

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year at Saint Olaf College, Northfield, Minnesota. I well remember where I *was* when we received the news that Pearl Harbor had been bombed and that we were at war. I received my Draft notice in August 1942, but was given a short deferment due to an appendicitis operation. Back in college, I was able to join the enlisted reserve on October 25, 1942. A few weeks later I was called up for active duty and sent to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri for basic training. And now a Service flag could legally be placed in the window of our Kleven residence.

After Fort Leonard Wood, I was sent to the University of Minnesota for ASTP training. ASTP stands for Army Specialized Training Program where various enlisted men were sent to universities and colleges around the country. Sane studied engineering while others were involved with languages. My group, at the University of Minnesota, concentrated on Northern European languages--German, Swedish, Finnish and Norwegian. My concentration was in Norwegian in addition to classes in Military Government, police science and area studies. What were we supposed to be doing there? I'm not sure. We were told the Army would need interpreters and junior officers for occupation duty.

Some of the hard core line soldiers looked upon ASTP as a soft job in the Service. In place of pushing a ramrod down the bore of an M-1 rifle, they were pushing pencils. We took a lot of kidding about our different Army lifestyle, but the opportunity was there for others provided they had the background required and the ambition to pursue the assignment. We even kidded among ourselves as evidenced by the caption under the hastily drawn Service flag.

The Army in its infinite wisdom felt that ASTPers could better serve their Country as infantrymen. So, after a year at the University of Minnesota, I again found myself back in Fort Leonard Wood. Fran there, I was sent to the 106th Infantry Division stationed at Camp Atterbury, Indiana. I along with a number of Air Corps cadets (the Service didn't need any more pilots either), were now infantry soldiers. In retrospect, if my studies had been in the German language, this ASTP training could have been beneficial.

ARTARTARTARTARTARTARTARTARTARTARTARTARTARTARTARTARTARTARTARTARTART

While Joe was in the ASTP program, I was in Camp Forrest, Tennessee taking basic training and working my way up to a cadre position. I was a member of the Both Infantry Division and we were in the process of forming a new division--the 106th. A core group of officers and enlis-ted men were selected and I was fortunate enough to be one of them. This meant an extra furlough before reporting to Fort Jackson, South Carolina. I was a T/4 which was one step below a Mess Sergeant. I hate to admit it--I was a "First cook." This paid off later in the Service career when we were routed to Camp Atterbury before going over-seas in October 1944. During the period we were at Camp Atterbury, I was able to spend many nights with my family in South Bend.

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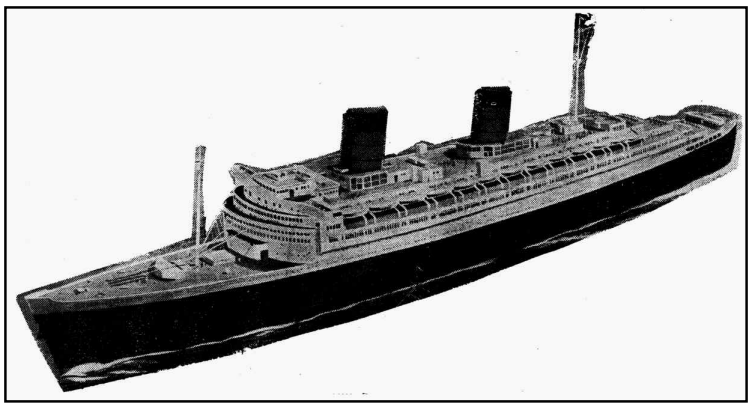
We were alerted for overseas duty early in October 1944. I paid my last visit to my parents and our family before we were quarantined. During our stay at Camp Atterbury, we participated in games of war that would improve our proficiency as fighting men. We were considered "well trained" arid ready for combat. Huh !

Prior to our leaving Camp Atterbury, we had to dispose of excess baggage. If some prospector ever found our Company F area, he would think he struck oil if he dug down about one foot. I personally buried gun oil, patches, dubbing compound and tools that we had to leave behind. After we turned the last shovel full of dirt, we were rushed to a railroad siding to board a troop train.

The trip to Camp Miles Standish required traveling overnight. We really received first class treatment--sleeping on a Pullman car. I slept on the upper bunk and enjoyed the trip. We arrived at Camp Miles Standish which is located near Lexington and Concord, give a bridge or two., late in the afternoon. This was a short stopover as we would be moving to Hoboken Docks the next day. The Chaplain held a midnight service for those who were interested and it was my pleasure to attend.

The next day was a busy one. We checked all of our equipment arid prepared for the trip to Hoboken Docks, New Jersey. We arrived around midnight. We were marched from the railroad siding directly to a big opening in the Queen Elizabeth. She was a majestic girl and a member of the Canard White Star Line. The British charged the United States Government $100.00 per head to transport we fighting men to Glasgow, Scotland. ~nd there were 5,000 troops on the ship for this crossing.

More about the Queen. She was gorgeous. She was almost 1,000 feet long. The dining room had a floor to ceiling clock that used the signs of Zodiac for numbers. Her original black coat was painted battleship gray.



The ship was divided into three sections—-red, white and blue. The reason for this was to control the weight distribution. Each G.I. passenger was issued one of colored tags appropriate for his section of the ship. Also, we were warned about crossing over to the opposite side of the ship en masse because that could cause the ship to list. When you take 5,000 G.I.'s with an average weight of 165 pounds, you have added 412.5 tons of human cargo to the ship's load. Not all of them were on the promenade deck at the same time.

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We occupied staterooms that normally accommodated four people. With our four-decker bunks, our occupancy totaled forty. We had to stash our barracks bag and rifles in our bunks which made it very uncomfortable. We used our full-field packs for pillows. I still remember my (our) stateroom number was A-73 (on A-Deck). One bathroom was shared by all. I remember trying to take a shower in salt water. After lathering up, there was no way to rinse the salt water off. I did not complain to the management.

The only excitement on the trip to Grennock, Scotland was the rumor mill. There must have been thousands of submarine sightings on this trip. Each morning, the gun crew would drop a buoy into the ocean and fire at it just to be sure their guns were operable should a submarine be more than a rumor. The Queen--as we got to know her--did not travel with a convoy or escort. Her speed was much faster than a submarine and the ship's captain played the odds.

Upon the advice of the experts who said that if you kept your stomach full, you were less likely to get seasick. I took care of that by consuming 24 Mallow Cups during the trip. This was a candy of yesteryear. It looked like a cupcake made of thick chocolate and filled with a marshmallow goo that would string out like cheese on a pizza. By the time I finished the

box of Mallow Cups, I wished I could get seasick.

Between Mallow Clips, Ed Meyer and I came up with a plan that would allow us to see both the stern and the bow of the Queen Elizabeth. We were assigned to the middle or white section of the ship. We were curious to see both ends, but were restricted because of the color of our badges. Our plan was to bump someone standing near the line in the other sections--the red and the blue. Remember, blackout conditions were in effect. It was difficult to see anyone's face, but you could tell where they were when you heard them talk. It took a few bumps before we each had badges for the other sections. We traveled to the bow and stern several times before we reached our destination.

The first land we saw after being at sea for overt three days plus was Northern Ireland. We could barely see land, but the clouds hovered over the shoreline and inland. We passed Ireland early in the morning on October 22, 1944.

JOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOE

Art and I were unknowingly in the proximity of one another from the time I was assigned to C Company, 423rd Infantry Regiment of the 106th Infantry Division, but had no occasion to meet. I joined the 106th in late August 1944. He was in F Company of the Second Battal-ion. We concurred on our accounts of the Atlantic Ocean crossing. It was a thrill to see and be transported by the original Queen Elizabeth. We landed at Grennock, Scotland.

We had to remain on the Queen from late October 22nd until the 24th. We left Hoboken Docks at 0600 on October 18th. The trip took four and one-half days, but disembarkation took two days. Granted, it was raining hard when we arrived and there wasn't any suitable dock space available for the Queen. After leaving the Queen on the 24th, we walked up a hill that I thought would never end. It was worth the trip, because the Salvation Army was at the troop train to greet us with hot coffee and a doughnut.

7

Once loaded, the long trip to Che1tenham was underway. This was not the standard troop train, it was an recruited passenger train with a Royal Scot type engine and those passenger cars like you see in the movies with individual cubicles. During out trip Southward, we had to take a break for a meal. The English served their famous fish cakes. They looked like cupcakes, but had the fishy odor and taste. You had to hold your nose when you ate them and spit out pieces of fin now and then. We arrived in Cheltenham late at night.

We spent the night in transient barracks and it was a short night. The various units were deployed in the area. My company was spread out in several country estates. My platoon ended up on an attractive farm called Sissencoat. It was easy to remember since my platoon sergeant's name was Roger Sisson. Our stay at Sissoncoat was really a very nice month's vacation. We had no duties, no reveille, no drill and no inspections. We could have greatly benefited from a little basic infantry tactics since most of us were from other branches of service such as the Air Force or ASTP. We didn't complain but a few weeks later would find us in combat woefully unprepared.

I also had the good fortune of getting a three-day pass to London a week or so before we

shipped out to France. I recall that we cut cards to see who would get the passes. I drew the ace of spades and went along with three others to London. We visited Westminster Abbey, Buckingham Palace where I remember hanging on the iron fence and along with other G.I.'s counting cadence for the palace guard. This was wartime so the guardsmen wore regulation British Army uniforms rather than the high bearskin hats and the scarlet outfits of today. I also remember Piccadilly Circus, London Bridge and Big Ben.

I do have some vivid memories of England, especially when we celebrated Thanksgiving. This is not a traditional holiday for the English as a group of Pilgrims staged one of the earliest protests against their government. So they hopped into the Mayflower and sailed all the way to the United States so they could have Thanksgiving dinner with the Indians. There was nothing in the rule book that said American G.I.'s could not celebrate Thanksgiving on English soil.

Our Mess Sergeant, Frank NMI Basaxnanowicz, and his crew whipped up one of the most succulent meals for Company F and their guests--twenty young war orphans. The interaction with these children and our G.I.'s was tear-jerking. Tears were not limited to the men who had children back in the States, there were plenty to go around for we single guys.

The highlight of the evening was to watch and hear these young people who were thrown together by fate present their musical program. They sang several standards and in their finale they included God Save The King, America The Beautiful and The Star Spangled Banner. They didn't miss one word.

Other memories of England before leaving for the Continent were the tour of Toddington Manor and the visit to Stratford-on-Avon.

From Thanksgiving day on (Thanksgiving in 1944 was observed on November 23rd), we prepared for our journey to Southhampton and a trip across the English Channel. I had no idea that I would be returning to England on my way home from the "big war" in June 1945.

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I was a "first cook" wearing a T/4 patch until a few days before we shipped out of Camp Atterbury, Indiana. I can't recall any of the circumstances that led to being busted to a private. Nobody died that I heard about. It must have been justified as I had a lot of respect for our Company commander, Captain Charles J. Zullig. He was a fair and considerate person. In retrospect, if I had continued in the Company F kitchen, I would have met the same fate as many good friends did. They were not captured and they had to scurry for survival when the excretion hit the fan. Most of the kitchen force ended up in a line company as combatants.

(Space permits me to tell any readers* that *the comradeship in our Company is prevalent today since we meet in March* each *year at* Old Hindenburg Castle *in Sarasota, Florida. Captain Charles J. Zullig, now "Charlie," who lives in Bonita Springs, Florida, Bill Lacy from Clearwater, Jack Sulser from Alexandria, Virginia and myself have received royal treatment from the staff and management of this fine German restaurant and entertainment center.)

We have crossed the Atlantic, moved from Glasgow, Scotland down through England to

Cheltenham and now history finds us living in Quonset huts near Toddington Manor. Looking back to Scotland, I will never forget the sepia-toned banks of the Firth of Clyde and the panoramic view of Glasgow from the troop train window as we progressed up the green carpeted hill. As for the Quonset huts, they looked like halves of a giant metal drainpipe or culvert. Our beds were World War I U. S. Army folding cots. We didn't have the luxury of indoor plumbing and had to walk a block or so to the community latrine. Remember, blackout restrictions applied. We had the illumination equivalent to three 25-watt light bulbs. Our leisure time was spent playing cards or rolling dice until someone had all of the money. Those who didn't participate in the games spent their time lying to one another about their assets and large land holdings.

Our working day was well-planned. We had reveille at 5 A.M. Our calisthenics period lasted thirty minutes. It was back to the huts to clean up using our helmets for sinks and our canteens for the water supply. After performing our hygienic duties, we reported for breakfast at 6 A.M. Each day was spent learning tactics, hi7d~ng and stripping our rifles down and reassembling them. The theme was "get to know your piece!" Creeping, crawling, cover and concealment were drilled into our brains. The ground was always cold and damp. Our exercises were carried out in fields lined with hedgerows. We had to crawl over them during our field training. On occasion, we would nick our knees on the sharp rocks that topped the stone wall. It was difficult to drag an M-l rifle or a bazooka over these obstacles.

When we mustered at 5 A.M., we were joined in the air by Flying Fortresses that converged on our area. We saw the same aerial show every morning. The different bomber groups would line up for their daily visit to the Continent. It was a pretty sight to see all of the colored flares floating in the air. This system was used to get each group in the proper formation for their bombing run. When .the last group was pointing their noses East, the drone of the Wright-Cyclone engines faded into the cold morning air.

9

Joe and I remember bouncing around on the English Channel on December 2nd and 3rd in 1944. The chop of twenty to thirty foot waves made the journey a bit rough. Our entertainment was the Aimed Forces Radio until we had to maintain radio silence for fear of submarines picking up sounds from our location.

The ship was adrift waiting for docking space. We were listening to a Notre Dame-Dartmouth game when the radio was silenced. We didn't learn the score of the game for several years.

The English channel was filled with all types of ships. The flotilla included troop and supply ships. Our geography books show the mileage between Dover and Calais to be twenty-two miles. I think we took the scenic route to LeHavre, because it took over two days to get there. Our transportation was one of the Brit's nondescript vessels. Several miles from the beach, we were transferred to LST's. They were flat-bottomed boats with a hinged front panel that could be lowered and serve as a ramp. These critters were designed to haul tanks up to the beach. You guessed it! LST stands for "Landing Ship Tanks."

Remember the bumper sticker that would be appropriate for the next comedic action that took place? "S--- Happens!" It does 1 Picture each G.I. wearing a full-field pack, carrying a duffle bag and trying to manage an M-l rifle as he climbs down a rope ladder from a ship onto an LST. Supply ships had priority for the limited docking space, so our ship had to anchor a few miles from shore. Our LST "taxi 's" pulled up beside the ship and the ladder-climbing or descending operation was underway. Both the ship and the LST were bouncing around on the rough waters. 'When it was my turn to hit the ladder, I tossed my duff le bag to the LST deck. The rest of the story is that the clasp came unfastened and sane of the contents of my duffle bag were strewn on the deck. I made extra work for myself.

The next episode in our tragedy was the LST's failure to make it all the way to the beach. It hit a sand bar approximately one hundred feet from water's edge. We had to wade to shore in waist—high water. The duffle bags floated most of the trip, but were waterlogged when we hit the shore. Once we learned that every man was present and accounted for, we stepped off in a slow trudge that took us to a bivouac area outside LeHavre. It started misting when we hit the beach and then it turned into a steady downpour. What a greeting, France!

We pitched our two-man tents on a field of mud. The rain continued for three days and finally let up. We spent most of the time cleaning our rifles and bitching. Our kitchen unit deserved great praise for their ability to set up and serve meals under such conditions. Every item in our duffle bags was soaked and it took days before we could —--wear dry clothing. The temperature was around fifty degrees.

And then another faux pas came to pass. We were promised overshoes f ran the time we left Salisbury, England. They finally arrived during our last day at Mud City. Candid Camera, where were you? A supply truck pulled up to a clearing. The driver and his assistant climbed into the back of the 6 x 6 and started tossing overshoes into a pile.

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It looked like a rubber pyramid. Once the shoes were unloaded, the truck pulled away. The message was relayed to all Company F members to come and pick up their overshoes. There was a stampede when the entire Company converged on this pyramid. Surprise! Surprise! The overshoes were not paired. Individual shoes had to be mated. If you were lucky, you found a right and a left shoe of the same size right away. There was cooperation of sorts. Guys would shout out a size and whether it was a right or a left shoe. I settled for a pair two sizes larger than I would wear in civilian life. This proved to be a good decision, because I could slip them over my combat boots with some space to spare.

The only evidence of the rubber pyramid was several shoes of the sam size and all for the left foot. I'll bet there are a lot of "right" guys somewhere in our midst. A familiar red diamond-shaped logo on the boots generated a bit of nostalgia. The overshoes were manufactured in Mishawaka, Indiana which is the twin city of South Bend, my hometown. The smell of rubber was prevalent in that area as was the aroma of cereal in the Battle Creek area where most of the break fast cereals are made. When the wind was blowing in a Westerly direction the smell of processed rubber from the Ball Band plant of the U. S. Rubber Company would drift our way.

The 423rd spent several days in this bivouac area. We needed time to dry our clothing and clean our equipment. The landscape when dry looked like Southern Indiana. The stone buildings made the difference, We didn't do any training in this muddy area, but did have good meals once they could set up the kitchen. We needed this interlude to recover mentally from our experiences of inconvenience since we left England.

Thanks to Supply Sergeant Ray B. Otto, I did get to see a French city and its commerce. I volunteered to go on a gas detail with him. Our trip took us to Rouen, one of the leading refinery locations in France. We made the 35 kilometer trip last- as long as we could. We left the bivouac area at noon and didn't return until midnight. One of the highlights of the trip was to drive into the' town proper and stopped at a bakery and bought some French bread. They never wrap the stuff and it is displayed in a barrel-type container. The loaves were at least a yard long and stacked vertically in the container. We made a turn around the police or gendarme pedestal once we were cleared to move. The gendarme in his kick-in-the-ass French cap bowed to us. Did he think we were royalty?

We reached the Rouen refinery and picked up twenty five-gallons of petrol and gave the dispatcher twenty empty cans in exchange. The trip back was a bit testy since our only lights on the jeep were the green blackout lights.' The road was barely visible. We unloaded the gas and hit the sack. I spent the whole day lifting five-gallon cans. Earlier in the day, I was on a water detail. We had to shuttle back and forth between our encampment and a water source.

The constant rain was demoralizing. Was it a curse? As I recall, there was no rain after we were down the road a few miles on our way to Rouen.

They said "Tomorrow will be a better day." Well, on the morrow, we will be leaving "Mud City."

11

Our convoy left Mud City outside LeHavre early on the 7th of December. We passed through Dieppe, Amiens and Longwy, France, the last city in France before entering Belgium. We were heading directly East. After traveling twenty miles, we crossed the border into Luxembourg. The Ardennes Forest ranges from the French and Belgium border Northward paralleling Luxembourg.

We did pass through Luxembourg and its capital--Luxembourg. The convoy moved slowly through the streets crowded with citizens who were welcoming the American fighting forces. At times, the convoy was halted. We received flowers and some of the lucky G.I.'s received kisses from the young girls. Only G.I.'s who sat near the tailgate of the trucks were lucky. The convoy moved on and we were nearing our destination.

We crossed the border of Luxembourg and Belgium. Road signs read Bastogne, Malmedy, St. Vith but no Medell, our new home for several days. Company F was billeted in houses in this quaint little village. Seven members of our squad were assigned a room in the Yoakum family house. The family was very hospitable as they probably were when the Germans occupied the territory for a short while. We communicated with' them in an awkward way.

We had Army-supplied books with German expressions that were most common. We had to cram since the time we might have to rely on some of the German language to get by.

Our mess hall was set up down the main street of the village. We had a few hot meals before we were committed. Our last hot meal for months was a breakfast of hot oatmeal with raisins. That was the end of organized feeding for Company F. The date was December 15, 1944.

During our stay in Medell, the Yoakum family became more talkative. They spoke German since they lived so close to the border. Many Germans had settled in this area over the years. We could hear the sound of artillery coming from the front lines. A strange event took place one day. A man in religious clothing roamed our area asking many questions about our presence. The natives didn't tell him anything. We were too naive to think he was a spy or part of a patrol.

We pulled guard duty and were always aware of the Germans infiltrating the line that was so poorly covered. As Joe mentioned, we were supposed to be in a "quiet sector" far away from any real action. While standing guard duty one crisp winter night, the executive officer of our O3mpany approached the area I was covering. I could only see a figure and was apprehensive. When I said the famous "Halt! Who goes there?" and asked for the password, I received no reply. I clicked the safety off my rifle. He heard this and immediately uttered the words "I 'm Lieutenant Brownell" in his low raspy voice. I didn't gig him for this as we were distracted by a strange roaring noise. We looked up and saw an object flying through the air with a tail of flame. It was a German V—1 or "buzz bomb" heading for England. In the distance, we could see tracers from our shells that were fired at the V-1. We saw several more that night. Lieutenant Brownell apologized for not knowing the password.

I returned to the Yoakum house after my watch was over. My G.I. family didn't believe me when I told them about the V-i bomb. Lionel Terzi returned from his guard duty a bit later and confirmed my story. I noticed that the Yoakum family had a visitor. She was young and friendly. She was aware that there were seven pairs of eyes looking at her. When it came time for her to leave, they trusted me to escort her to her house. Don't get any ideas!

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After spending a week with the Yoakum family in Medell, our visit ended on Saturday morning, December 16, 1944. We were alerted to move to the front line and replace the weary 2nd Division. They had been guarding this 27-mile front for months. This was considered a "quiet sector" and there was very little action. We were told that the Germans were changing troops, too.

It was like going to work somewhere. The convoy pulled up to a wooded area and we de-trucked.

From this point on, you have the option of reading an account of our three days plus a few hours of combat in the Battle of the Bulge. We were committed on December 16, 1944 and at 1600 hours on December 19th, we were guests of the German government. This account was written fifty years ago. While in a P.O.W. camp, I was scratching out notes on any kind of paper I could find. Our aged guard named "Pop," who you will meet later, gave me a German theme book in which to record my account. With full consideration for anyone

reading Rainwater and Potato Peelings, I will change the type face to Script. You can skip any and all of the copy in *italics* as it does get boring. Here goes...

At daybreak on Saturday morning, the 16th of December, we were alerted to move to the front lines. This was it ! All of our training would be pt to the test. We drew our ammunition and rations. Our leaders reviewed details of how the Germans were dressed, their weapons, and their cleverness in impersonating American soldiers. For the exercise, some of the instructors were dressed in German gear. They looked "for real." At the climax of the training session, we were handed a small booklet entitles "Some Important Facts You Must Know." The last item on the last page was a precursor of things to come :

IF YOU ARE CAPTURED— If captured in time of war or on maneuvers, you are required to give your Name—your Rank—and your Serial Number. That is all. Give nothing more and don't talk. Don't try to fake stories; you may harm your own cause and aid that of the enemy.

We left Medell around noon. IN less than an hour, we were assigned real estate for our squad. The many squads and platoons received their positions in a like manner. The only order given was "Keep that five-yard interval !" The same trucks that brought us to the "front line" hauled 2nd Division troops to the rear, so we were told. None of us were gung ho to see action. In fact, each member of the squad was in deep thought.

What we didn't know was that the Germans were waiting for this moment. We were green troops and their intelligence knew it. They had a master plan and were planning to implement it. When you spend twenty-four hours a day with twelve people (I included myself), you learn about their families, their hometowns, their interests and their habits. My thoughts were about my parents, two brothers and two sisters. Lionel Terzi was thinking about his wife Kathryn. Santo Nicholas was thinking about his mother who was ill. Reuben Martinez was thinking about his wife Pauline and a baby girl he had never seen. Garfield Johnson's heart was back in Pueblo, Colorado. Benny Pierotti, the squad leader was checking his

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ammunition. Charlie "Tim" Holt was busy bitching about the Army not issuing everything mentioned in the "Stars and Stripes" publication before going into combat. Ashley M. Cooper was cussing us for kidding him about having a girl's name. Well, his parents thought they were going to have a girl. Arthur Genise didn't know which picture of which girlfriend to take into combat. Robert Young, the youngest man in our platoon at 18, was telling us about May Jane. Willie Davenport, Alexander Murawski and I were already munching on the D-ration bar that was supposed to be tomorrow's lunch.

Remember, we were proud members of the Golden Lion Division. Some critics dubbed our 106th Infantry Division with "The Hungry and Sick". Actually, we were better known as "The Bag Lunch Division". For those who are not familiar with our shoulder patch, I have taken the liberty of placing one in full color on this page.

We made several moves typical of inexperienced combat troops. We dug in and moved out several times. I heard that we were heading for Schoenberg that night. All

I remember is that we had only two hours that we could nap. The morning of the 17th came too soon. The platoon leader needed a squad for a roadblock detail. Than God he didn't call us ! The squad pulled out taking (borrowing) my bazooka. Shortly after the squad left, we were under fire from a house to our immediate front. It turned out to be more than a house and we were forced to withdraw.

I remember trucks picking us up and when we started to move, there were several German aircraft overhead spraying us with machinegun fire. Their aim must have been bad or they trying to frighten us, because we only received minor casualties. After forty-five minutes, they were gone. The truck drivers had pulled into the heavy foliage making it difficult for the pilots to spot us.

The final act of one of the fighter planes was a direct hit on an ammunition truck. It was a secular sight, but costly to us. I will never forget the explosion contrasted against the white snow and green pine trees. After the planes left, we re-grouped and were ready to go.

We marched for two hours passing through a little village. I could not find a sign that identified the place. We were ordered to dig in on a hill on the edge of town. After completing the most beautiful and spacious foxhole ever, Al Murawski and I flopped in and fell asleep. It was four o'clock in the afternoon. Our jeep drivers managed to get to us with a no. 10 can of of Colby cheese. The can was dressed in olive drab and did not come with a can opener. Al's ingenuity overcame this problem. He stabbed the top with his bayonet and worked it around to open the lid. He served slabs to the members of our squad on his bayonet. Very tasty.

This was the first food since yesterday morning. We did have D-ration bars in reserve. Wit the excitement, the last thing you thought about was food. Once we started nibbling on the cheese, we realized we were hungry.

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We planned to spend the night on this hill, but after a German recon plane flew over, we had to make other arrangements. Seconds later, the orders came through the chain of command that we were moving out immediately. Another nice foxhole had to be abandoned. This time, we were instructed to "travel light." It was a pleasure to discard my overcoat, overshoes, gas mask, sleeping bag but not the liner, my pack and the useless bayonet scabbard. We had fixed bayonets -- hoe else could we cut cheese out of a can ?: I wore my raincoat over my field jacket. My equipment was down to a rifle, a bazooka, two bags of bazooka rockets (two in each bag), two bandoleers of ammunition for the rifle and a cartridge belt.

During the time we were on a forced march, we had the presence of German and American fighter planes tangling overhead. There was no danger of being hit, because the level of action was between 4,000 and 5,000 feet. We could see planes from both sides being shot down. One American pilot whose plane was hit, pointed the nose skyward. When the plane came to a dead stall, he bailed out. We could see his chute open and he drifted away from us. We were always curious as to his fate.

At four-thirty on the morning of December 18th, our leaders decided to attack. Company F was the point of the battalion. The second platoon was the point of the company. The

approach march was underway. At seven-thirty, the fireworks began. A single shot was heard. Our scouts and flank security hit the ground. We did the same thing. The Germans used an old decoy trick. They had two vehicles on the road. Each had a driver. They were as surprised as we were ad the occupants jumped off the trucks and ran for cover. The remainder of the platoon worked their way around this roadblock. The first truck had been hit by one of our rifle grenades.

In the confusion, I thought I was following one of our men, I kept yelling at him to tell him he was going in the wrong direction. As I gained on him, I noticed his helmet was different from ours. Holy cow ! It was a German soldier ! I had my rifle pointed toward him and his pace was slower. I didn't have the killer instinct or I would have shot him...in the back. My next surprise was that we had walked into a German machinegun nest. When the group saw my rifle, the immediately raised their hands above their heads. The man I was following turned around and raised his hands and dropped his rifle. I thought I was Sergeant York for a few seconds, but released that thought when I saw men from my company with rifles pointed at the Germans. We took the five Germans prisoner and headed back to our Company C. P. Guess what ! The leaders didn't know what the hell to do with the prisoners.

Suffice to say, they weren't prisoners of the 106th for long , because their German Army was in the process of overrunning our weak defense.

We received the news that we were being surrendered at 1600 hours on this date of December 19, 1944.

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JOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOE

Like Art, I also shipped out of Southhampton, England. We were very likely in the same convoy. The flat-bottomed boat, wading to shore at Le Havre, France and a long trip to Belgium seemed to be the pattern. Within a few days, our company went directly to the line, replacing the 2nd Infantry Division. We took over their covered foxholes and immediately found ourselves manning gun positions--two hours on and four hours off. I remember how I wished I could have slept eight hours at a time. I did go on a few night patrols since I was supposed to have a language background. Until the 16th of December 1944, things were relatively quiet. Occasionally, we would hear German artillery or their flying V-1 bombs. Some called them buzz bombs because of the noise they made as they were propelled through the air by a jet engine. Our Division was spread over a 27-mile front. It wasn't difficult for the Germans to infiltrate our lines and surround us.

Little did we know that we were sitting ducks for one of the major battles of World War Il--The Battle of the Bulge. On December 18th, the

order was given for Company C, 423rd Infantry, to fix bayonets and launch an attack with the objective to break out. To this day, I can't imagine why this order was given--but we fixed them! I remember moving out, leaving behind heavy coats, barracks bags and other equipment which we were told would be picked up later. We found ourselves under heavy mortar and machinegun fire.

Sixteen from my Company C were killed that afternoon afternoon along with four missing. Most of these casualties were from my First Platoon and three from my squad.

ONE INTERESTING NOTE: Billy Hughes, the BAR (Browning Automatic Rifle) man from my squad was very seriously wounded. I was sure he could not survive. I last saw Billy lying on the ground next to another man from my squad, Bill Kleisrath, who had been killed. Now, after the war was over and in August 1945, Art and I* met *in Chicago. It was a warm August evening that* Art *and I were walking down Michi-gan Avenue when I looked up to see Billy Hughes shuffling slowly toward us! It was like seeing a ghost! I was surprised and very pleased to see him. I never expected to.

After our unsuccessful skirmish on December 18th, we ended up in a wooded area where we bedded down for the night. Early the next morning we were awakened by heavy mortar fire. I was trying to dig a hole large enough for Murray Schwartz, a man from my platoon, and myself. Murray had been hit, had his arm in a sling and was unable to dig. He urged me to dig faster. The mortar barrage continued for most of the morning. Tree bursts injured quite a number of men in the wooded area.

We were fighting against odds. Sane of us felt that we were being used as pawns to learn where the enemy was. Our leaders were unaware that the Germans had a plan to march to the English Channel and eventually invade England. Something had to happen!

By the end of the day, our lives were destined to change. It was early morning on December 19, 1944. An order filtered down through the ranks demanding that we destroy our weapons and bury them along with any ammunition. We were instructed to prepare to surrender at 1600 hours. The Germans had the wooded area we were in surrounded and let us know by firing artillery shells over our heads. They even used machineguns to get the message to us.

When the hour arrived, we came out of the woods with our hands over our heads. We were instructed to get into a line that would lead to a "welcoming station." I remember being searched by German soldiers. Some were grabbing anything that looked like a souvenir. However, I had taken the precaution of pushing my watch as far up my arm as I could. A German soldier grabbed my wrist, but didn't find a watch. We had to wait until all of our men were searched.

We were probably located in the same wooded area, but several hundred feet apart. The German soldiers followed the same pattern in searching. There were some bastards and some halfway lenient when it came to taking our possessions.

AT 1600 HOURS ON DECEMBER 19, 1944,

JOE KLEVEN AND ART KUESPERT BECAME GERMAN PRISONERS-OF-WAR!

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1600 HOURS, DECEMBER 19, 1944

This was the precise hour and day our lives changed abruptly. We were no longer soldiers of the United States of America. We were now under the control of our battlefield opponents. What's next? We had known that our Regimental Commander Colonel Charles C. Cavender accepted the conditions of surrender since early morning on this date. We were allowed time to dispose of our weapons and equipment. We were instructed to come out of the wooded area and report to check-points for initial processing. This "processing" was a formality whereby we would pass through a receiving line and told what items we had to discard. The steel helmet and liner were the main items that the men in charge had us toss onto a pile.

There was no point in contesting anything, because you were at their mercy. There were some discussions as to what a few horses' asses wanted to take away from the Americans, but as a general rule the German soldiers manning the check-points scavenged the same items we would go after if we were in their position. They were mainly interes-ted in watches, trinkets, cigarettes, lighters, money and wallets. I observed someone ahead of me displaying a picture of his family and holding his wallet up. The German soldier motioned for him to put his wallet back in his pocket. None of the German checkers wanted my can of Dr. Lyons Tooth Powder, a children's handkerchief that was wrapped around by cut-off tooth brush nor did he reach in my pocket to find a lonely Liberty nickel.

I don't think we realized the magnitude of our surrender at the time. We had no idea what to expect in the coming days. One thing we were sure of was that we missed our evening meal today.

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It was humiliating to see battle-trained men have their spirits reduced to lamb gentleness. And we were silent lambs while passing through the check-point. It was dark by the time we increased the German inventory of military equipment and miscellaneous souvenirs. After the last American G.I. was searched, we were marched away from the area of surrender. As I recall, we filtered through reserve troops who were heading for the front lines while we were being rushed as far away as possible from the front lines. We marched day and night for two days with very few breaks.

Joe and I were part of this bedraggled mass of captives who were threading their way through the oncoming reserves. In the area we were traveling, we saw first-hand how the German fighting team was outfitted. There was a layer of modern fighting equipment--tanks, half-tracks, their version of the Jeep and artillery pieces. A contingent of foot soldiers followed the modern units. Bringing up the rear were horse—drawn wagons of probably World War I vintage. The Army had no depth. But, they did a number on us and now we are subservients of their Government.

The equipment that was being moved to the front shared the muddy ruts in the road with us. It was all we could do to maintain our balance. We weren't the only ones having a problem. A German officer was trying to get his motorcycle up a slight grade. He zigged and he zagged nearly

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wiping out a few times. This was our only entertainment in our walk through the quagmire. It was not a night for motorcycles or P.O.W.'s. This officer was going to make it that hill come Heil Hitler! He decided to rev up the motor and when he did, the critter spun around and dumped him into the mud. wonder if he said "Aw shucks'[t] in German.

JOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOE

It was dark by the time we were checked. They marched us several miles to a bombed—out church where we spent the night.

At dawn on December 20th, we began our long walk into Germany. We were given drinking water for those who kept their canteens. At the end of the day, we were far enough behind the lines that we could get some sleep. It was cold and the ground was frozen and this is exactly where we slept. You couldn't or wouldn't think of relaxing in the horizontal position. We slept back-to-back sitting up. After the long hike, we had no trouble falling asleep. Upon arrival at our "Cold Ground Hotel," we were issued a bag of hardtack crackers similar to dog biscuits. We were given a small container of coffee. This was our first nourishment during the hike. Some of the guys complained to deaf ears.

Early in the morning, we were awakened by a strange feeling. Yes, our body heat thawed the ground we were sitting on and we were surrounded by water. In a short period of time,

we were on our way down the road. We reached a railroad siding in Pruin and became acquainted with the boxcars we would spend the next eight days in on our way to Stalag IV-B. We were not advised as to our destination, but did learn about it later on.

Ah yes, the boxcars. They were about two-thirds the size of our American boxcars. They had four wheels as opposed to our two trucks with four wheels each. The four wheels were in a stationary posi-tion and squealed if the curve was too sharp. The boxcars we were to ride in could hold up to 60 of us if we were sardined in. There was a pile of manure at each end of the car and the floor was covered with straw. The manure was supposed to provide us with heat. Our body heat in cramped quarters added a few degrees. We didn't count the heads in our specific boxcar, but we did know that it was crowded.

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The loading operation began. We were herded into the boxcars and we had to stake a claim on an area large enough to accommodate our legs and butts. It was to your advantage if you could get near one of the sides or the end of the car for back support. The manure seats were not too popular. This was an exercise for learning to work with one another. The back-to-back support method was put into use. We began our long journey.

When the door was closed, the only illumination came from a small opening in one of the walls of the car. We could barely see faces and it wouldn't help if we could. We were all strangers. If we heard a voice that we recognized, we would yell "Is that you, so and so?" If this person recognized your voice, he would shout back "Where are you?" Sometimes, you would find a member of your company. If this happened, we cooperated with one another and shifted around so the two guys could be near one another. This was a rare fortuity.

German troop trains had priority and our train was halted many times and routed to a siding while they passed. The train guards did let us out to relieve ourselves during some of the longer delays. At one stop, our chaplain was allowed out of his boxcar. He strolled past the locked cars suggesting that we might want to sing Christmas carols and read the Christmas Story. After all, it was the day before Christmas 1944. Most joined in the singing as it relieved some of the apprehension. The guards condoned our choral offerings.

It was Christmas Eve. Around midnight, we heard the air raid warning sirens screaming. We were on a siding near a town. Shortly after that, we heard planes overhead. They turned out to be British bombers. They had no idea that the train they were bombing contained P.O.W.'s. The boxcars were locked from the outside and the German guards paced back and forth along the train until they decided to take cover. There was one window, approximately 18 x 36 inches in size in each car. It was located near the ceiling or roof of the car. It provided ventilation and in this case, a means for escape.

We heard explosions in other parts of the railroad yard and could only think of getting out of the car. The guards didn't even consider our plight when they took off. One of the fellow P.O.W.'s managed to get out of the small opening, dropped to the ground and unlocked the door allowing all of us to get out and seek cover. We did. I was unhurt, but covered with dirt and gravel thrown up by the explosion. When I ran for cover, I hit the ground near a cement curb. Seconds later a bomb exploded a few feet away. i was lucky, but others weren't so fortunate. Several boxcars were hit.

After returning to our car, we found a large hole in the roof that was made by a rock. After the guards counted us, we were locked in again. The small window that allowed our "hero" to get out was covered with several strands of barbed wire. Our diminutive friend may have been short in stature but long in courage.

Our train stopped along the way to change crews. The kind and generous guards opened the doors and let us get out and stretch and do other things. A Prussian-type officer, stepped up to his imaginary podium and prepared to ask us some questions. I can remember his ankle-length gray leather coat and his high-peaked cap with an eagle on it. He asked in perfect English who among us were from the "bloody bucket" division--the 28th. There was no response. We had been told to give

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only our name, rank and serial number. He blew his cork. He shouted:

"Come on! You are all liars! You've got it on your sleeves!" With that, several of the fellows raised their hands.

ARTARTARTARTARTARTARTARTARTARTARTARTARTARTARTARTARTARTARTARTART

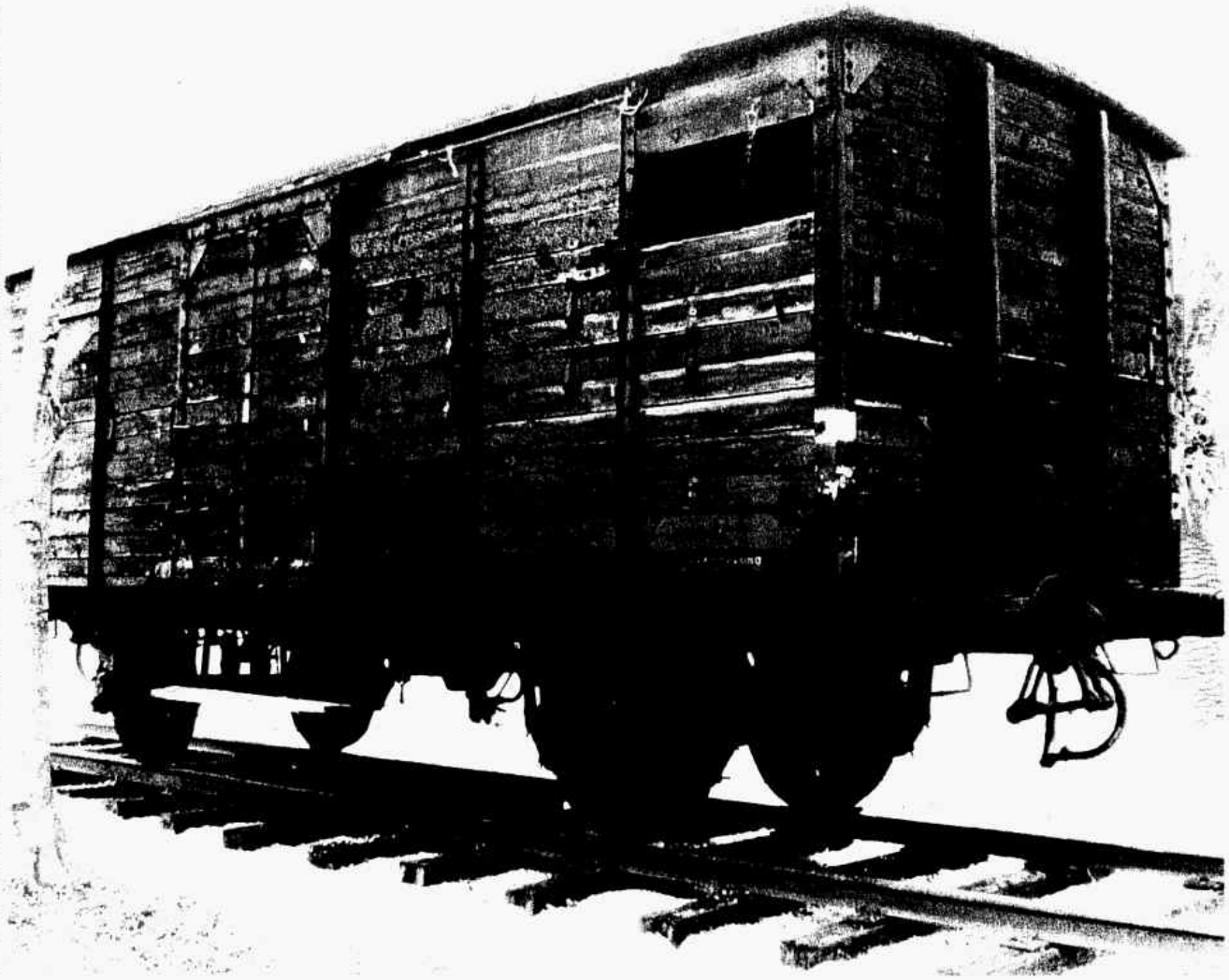
The next eight days seemed an eternity. it was most uncomfortable to sit in one place any length of time. We were packed in the boxcars so tight that when you wanted to stretch your legs, it interfered with the people near you. It took a lot of cooperation by everyone to avoid major problems. For those who smoked, it was torture. Any risk of setting the straw on fire had to be squelched.

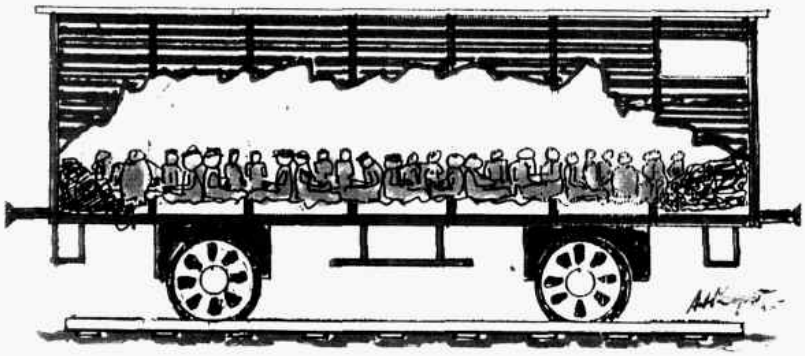
We did get out several times when we stopped to allow troop trains to pass. The guards made sure we didn't exceed their perimeter of control. If there was water available, they allowed us to get it. After the troop trains passed, we were rushed back into the boxcars.

Joe and I aren't sure we were on the same train. The train he was on was bombed the day before Christmas. The train I was on was bombed on the 23rd of December near Limburg. Again, we were told that it was the British bombers who were attacking. All I remember is that the guards let us out when they heard the first explosion. We ran for cover. I thought I was smart and placed myself approximately five feet from a stone wall. The stone wall was at the foot of an embankment. Bombs exploded near the top of the embankment sending loose rocks rolling down the hill. It was like a ski jump for the rocks. When they hit the top of the wall, they would bounce and fly through the air. One rock made a direct hit on my back after "jumping off" the top of the wall. I was laying face down to protect my eyes. Had it been a boulder, I would have been injured.

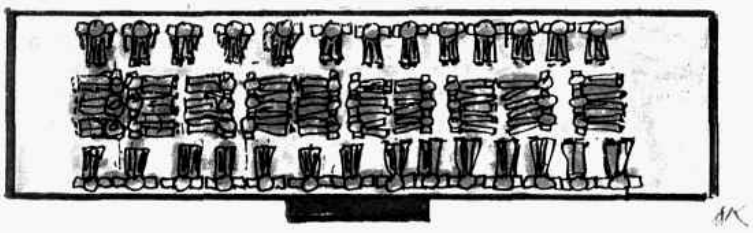
During our trip of eight days, we had some earthy experiences with bodily functions. We had no latrine aboard. We were at the mercy of the guards and the engineer when it came to relieving one's self. We did stop several times for troop trains and were given the opportunity.

It was a different story at night. When any of us had to urinate, we had to call for the only steel helmet on the trip. The helmet was passed to the requesting party or parties. After it was used, it was passed carefully to the next person on its trip to the corner of the car. Our ingenuity devised a system for disposing of the contents. And we were careful not to exceed the level of contents to avoid any slopping or spills. When you heard the words "Coming through," you were alerted to the fact that the helmet was on its way. We became experts at passing the helmet to the far corner of the car for dumping it out of the small opening. The helmet was hoisted to the lip of the opening and tilted up slowly. This was a delicate operation since we didn't need any of the contents blowing back into the boxcar.





SIDE VIEW



TOP VIEW

The Boxcar

The Germans transported most of the Prisoners-of-War in their "Goodswagens" that we refer to as a boxcar. Up to sixty men were crammed in these cars. You will note that the premium seats are along the outside walls of the car. If you sat in the center of the car, you would have to sit back-to-back to support one another.

The car was equipped with a straw liner and piles of manure at each end. The German theory was that the manure would offer some heat in addition to the human body heat supplied by the prisoners.

TOP VIEW prisoners.

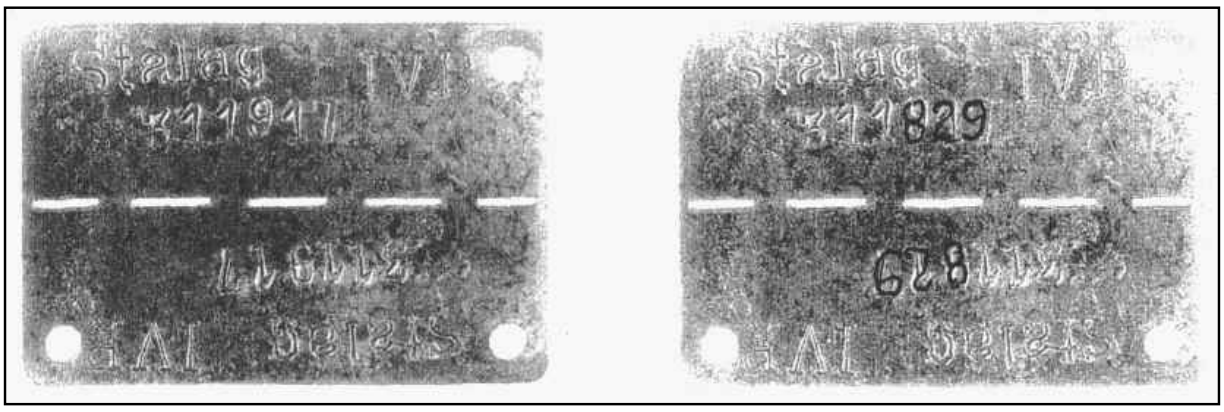
The Boxcar Picture

Thanks to some nice people -- we have a picture of a World War II German boxcar that served as our transportation for eight days while we were Prisoners-of-War. This German "goodswagen" is one of three known to exist. The Holocaust Memorial Museum in Maderia Beach, Florida brought it to the United States where it is now on permanent display.

Thanks to Ed Creel for making the print and sending it to Pete House. Thanks to Pet House for mailing it to Bernie Melnick, the Berga historian, for saving us a trip to Maderian Beach to photograph this haunting memory of our past.

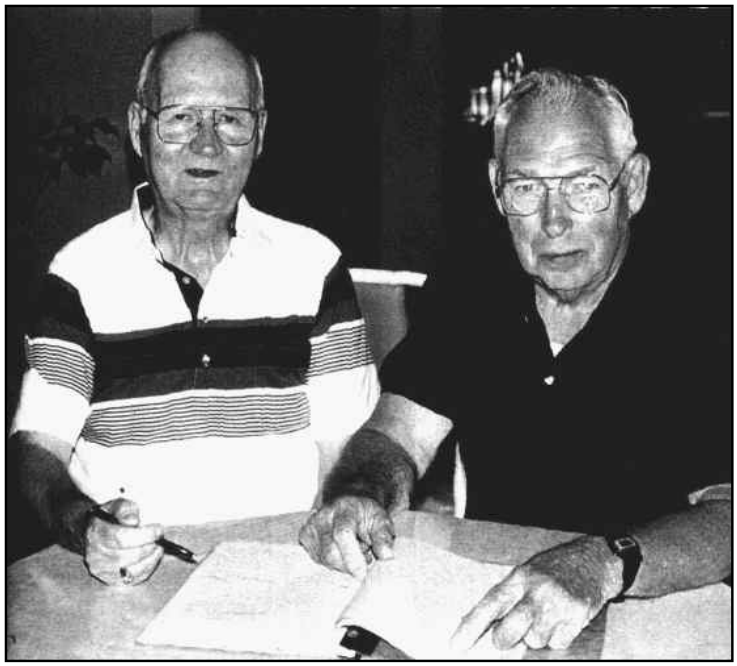
22

On December 27, 1944, we ended our long trip across Germany in boxcars. We had arrived at Stalag IV-B near Muhlberg. This was the processing center for P.O.W.'s. Our arrival time was around noon on this date, but our official P.O.W. status didn't come to pass for almost two days. We were directed to one of several long lines that led up to three desks. Our 36-our wait—-all of this time on our feet and out in the freezing weather--finally ended when we approached one of the "clerks" who was signing us in. They were very courteous and their English was discernible. We had to give our names, rank, serial number, next-of-kin and home addresses. We were photographed and issued a work classification card. The dog tags for our German identification was a metal piece that was perforated down the center with "Stalag Iv-B" and our serial number on both halves. My number was 311829 and Joe's number was 311917. Simple arithmetic tells us that Joe was 88 G.I.'s behind me. Our German I.D. tags appear below;



(NOTE: I had to borrow Joe's tag and enter my number on it because a thieving relative scrounged my tag and another P.O.W. memento.)

Color pages cost money, so we'll let you see what Joe Kleven and Art Kuespert looked like in 1945 and how they look today while working on this manuscript -


23

After spending two full days banging our feet together in the freezing temperature, it was a pleasure to be in a building with the temperature above freezing. A British P.O.W. who had earned his role as a trusty took us to our bunks. They were located in a large room with very little aisle space between the three-tier bunks. He instructed us as to where to place our clothing. Yes, we were issued overcoats and gloves. My-overcoat had a bullet hole in the left shoulder. It had red epaulettes on the shoulder area. We had to roll up the overcoat and use it for a pillow on the straw mattress.

We were received by the other long—timers and offered any assistance we needed. As soon as we received our bunk assignment and were settled, the mention of food caused a double-take. We hadn't eaten for two days. We were served a bowl of hot "skilly" The silly word skilly was added to our vocabulary. It's the Brits word for soup. Later on during our stay, we had a real treat. Each P.O.W. was issued a piece of stick cheese. It resembled a "twinkie" with an orange colored coating like Munster cheese.

Only privates were allowed to work and there were plenty of us. The German Army respected rank as one of the Brits told us. Officers and non-coms could work in administrative positions such as the trusty who handled our arrival. They replaced physically fit men who could serve in the army. We were told that we would be joining the labor force and that our assignment would be to Arbeit Kommando 1000 in Grossenhain, Saxony. This was a railroad detail and that we would receive "heavy worker ration's which was the same as the German line soldier received.

JOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOE

After processing, I was sent to one of the barracks. However, I didn't do too well since al]. available bunks had been taken. I was told I could sleep on the table which I did the tine we were in Stalag IV-B. I remem-ber using my shoes for a pillow, and did not have a bed of my own until we moved into the Arbeit Kommando 1000 lager.

Remember a skit that the Brits put on? It was "Cinderella." It was for our benefit (the American G.I.'s), but we did not respond in any way. We were completely listless, lethargic and it seemed in a daze so that the performer wanted to quit. He was encouraged by the British to keep on. It was kind of a disaster.

We weren't sure what rank all of the Brits held, but none of them worked. I think they found a home in Stalag IV-B. Our stay at IV-B included New Year's Eve. We sang songs with very little enthusiasm. The 1944-45 holiday season was not the same as those that preceded this one. I will always remember one of the Brits singing "My Ideal" with tears running down his cheeks -- he must have been thinking of someone back home in England. - He had a very good voice.

We were issued two postcards and one three—panel letter form. I sent a letter to my sister. I can't recall if I wrote it at Stalag IV-B or at our -new home in Grossenhain.

The Brits gave us some bad information. They said that we would receive a Red Cross parcel each week. Well, we were issued one and never saw another one during our confinement. After the war, I heard that the Germans kept the parcels for themselves.

24

Before we left Stalag IV-B, I recall that we went to a larger kommando where we were asked to volunteer for a 20-man working group and receive "heavy worker rations." While there, I was able to treat my foot which by now was infected. (I had been hurt shortly before we were captured, but the foot was never treated.) One of the fellows gave me some salt which I added to a bucket of hot water so I could soak my foot.

On January 2, 1945, we left Stalag IV-B for Grossenhain, Germany. This would be our home and base of operation for our duties as railroad right-of-way workers. We were privileged to ride in boxcars that had wooden seats. We are now narrowed down to twenty men and Art and I may have talked at one time or another, but only in greeting one another or talking business. The only way we learned names was to hear someone say the name in direct address By the time we arrived in Grossenhain, we knew a few names.

Art was lucky to have someone from his own Company and someone who lived in the same area back in the States. His name was Ed Meyer. I overheard them talking about Chicago and South Bend. Also, they mentioned the Cubs, the White Sox and Art told Ed that his father helped build the Notre Dame stadium.

I can't believe that I am going to be working on the railroad. Other members of the Kuespert and Darling families were railroad employees. *(My mother's last name before marrying a Kuespert was Darling. Two of the Darling family were engineers)* Counting them, we had two engineers, two railroad patrolmen, one detective and a crossing watchman.

The trip to Grossenhain took less than two hours. We admired the country side for its beauty and noticed that there was no evidence of bombing or destruction. As we pulled into the city, it looked peaceful and quaint. Our train pulled onto a siding that led to our stammerlager. Two elderly guards were on the welcoming committee. The spiffy looking

man left no doubts that he was in charge. He was stoic and was all business. His assistant was more congenial. The "boss" introduced himself as Unterofficer Feldmann. The second banana was Krause. Later on, we dubbed him as "Pop." If I could have had a grandfather, I would have had one like "Pop."

Herr Feldmann gave us a tour of the place and explained our working schedule to us. When he said that we worked seven days a week and got every other Sunday off, I was ready to quit this job. He let us pick our bunks and told us where our personal bins were located. We could store our belongings in these bins. What belongings? He explained which latrines we could use during the day and the one we could use during the night.

His next stop was the "day room." That's what we called it. On one wall there were twenty pegs. When he told us what they were for, we almost said "Holy s--t!" One of his rules was that we had to hang our pants on these pegs and leave our boots there, too. This would discourage any of us from escaping since this room was locked overnight.

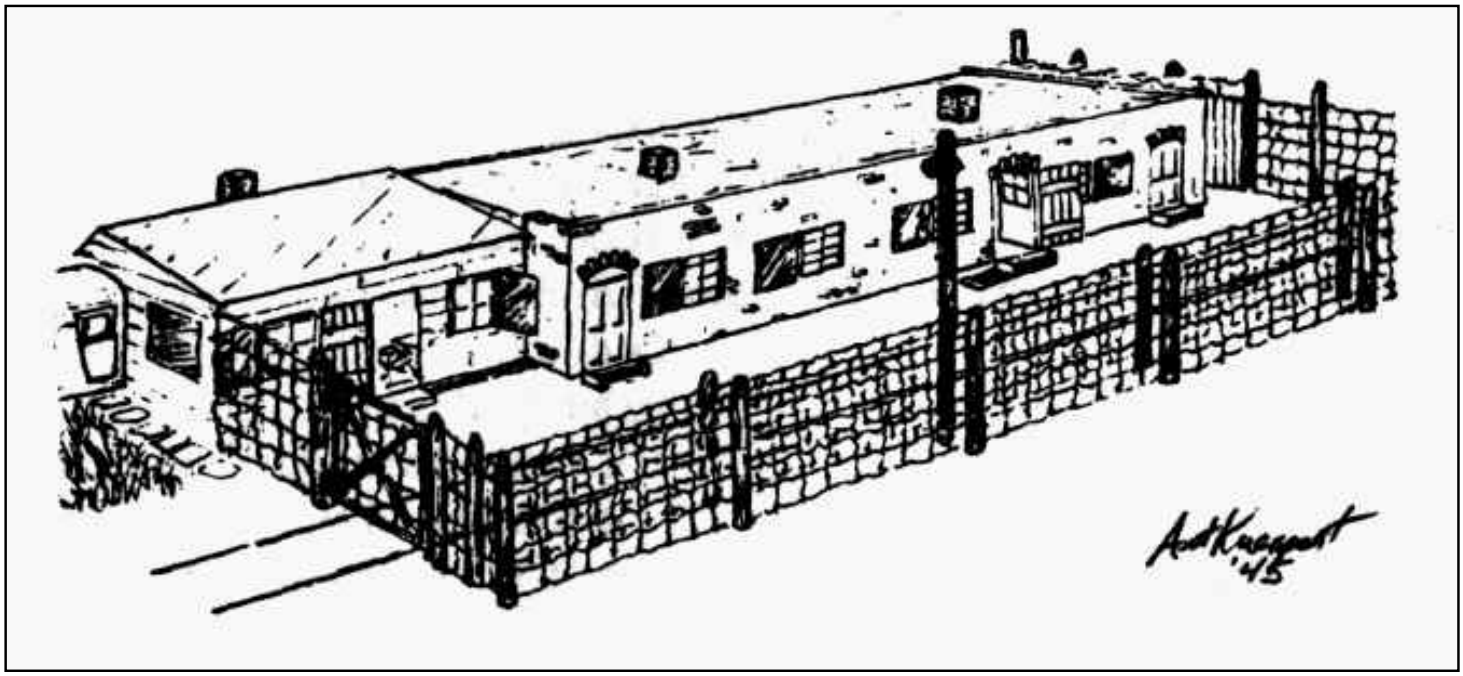
Herr Feldmann informed us that we would be meeting the people we would be working for sometime during the next day. Also, we would get a briefing on the equipment we would be using. Later on, we were served soup and bread.

25

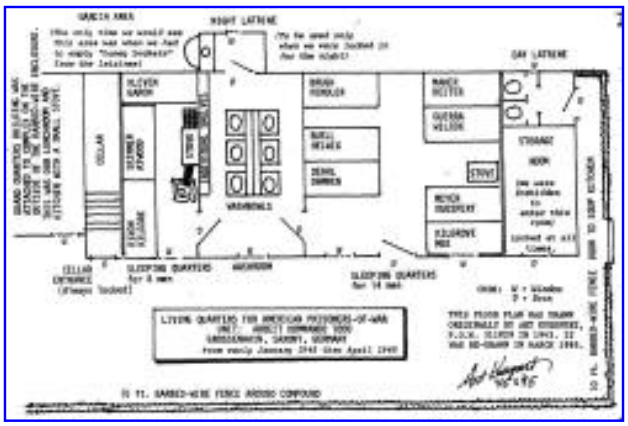
We occupied the same buildings that German railroad crews lived in and worked out of in peacetime. There were ten double bunks with straw for a mattress in each of them. The main building had two stoves that provided radiant heating. There was a washroom with six lavatories. We did have cold running water.

We were issued a supply of brickettes for heating use. The frigid winter of 1944-45 held the heat to a high of 60 degrees. We were always cold. The only time we could get the heat higher was when we sneaked brickettes out of the air raid shelter in Dresden.

Our soup and bread ration was doled out in what we would call a "day room" in the U. S. There was a combination heating and cooking stove for our use in preparing our bread dish. Some guys really had great imaginations.



Included on this page is a sketch of the compound that I made back in 1945. The floor plan appears below. Of the twenty names on the bunk beds, only Joe Kleven, Albert Atwood and myself have maintained contact with one another over the years.



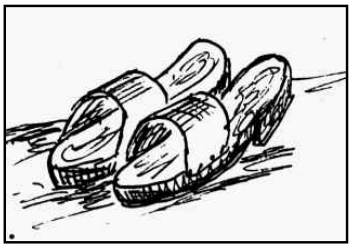
Click for larger view. When your cursor changes to a "+", click again for full size.

26

Each day was a long day. Our schedule started at 5 AM and ended around 8 PM. During the first hour, we retrieved our pants and boots, got dressed answered nature's call and answered roll call. I'll let Joe reminisce...

JOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOE

Thinking back, do you remember how we lived there? Remember the evening ritual. After



our "banquet" in the kitchen area, we would take off our pants, hang them' on wall pegs, remove our boots and slide into wooden clods line up in three rows to be counted and then make a dash for the bunkhouse in our underwear. Our double-decker bunks had a straw mattress and we covered up with a very short German army blanket and our overcoats.

You may have had a fancy-cut French overcoat with epaulettes, Art, but mine belonged to some Polish soldier. For some reason, it had a black armband on the left sleeve. And like yours, had a bullet hole in it. We were pretty moldy looking as a group the way we were dressed.

Do you ever wonder if our "home" is still there? ***(The lager in Grossenhain)***

ARTARTARTARTARTARTARTARTARTARTARTARTARTARTARTARTARTARrARTARTARTART

Joe, I think our "home" was there for many years sans barbed-wire and will be there many more years. German people never throw anything away or tear down buildings like we do in the U.S.

I wanted Joe to explain why we had to "retrieve our pants and boots." Continuing with our schedule, we boarded a train if we were working out of town. If we went to the Dresden area to work, we would arrive around 7 AN if the lines were clear. By that, I mean that we had to give troop trains priority for use of the railroad main lines. We had to wait on a siding until the troop train passed. Our tools were issued and we went to work as soon as we arrived at the job location.

Whatever day it was, everything came to a standstill at exactly nine o'clock in the morning. It was fruestuck! That means it was breakfast time The guards and bosses would drag out their lunch buckets and start chomping on a sandwich. We watched them do this for several days and realized that if we saved a slice of bread, we could eat with them. Things were so bad that our slice of bread had only one side. Our employers did soften up a little and provided coffee for us. We didn't celebrate lunch period as we didn't have the provisions. We rested during the time it took for our guards and bosses to crack their lunch buckets again.

The workday ended at 5 PM. After we checked our tools in, we boarded the

P.O.W. Express and headed back to Grossenhain. We arrived around 6 PM. There was always a mad scramble to see who could get one of the six washbowls first. We had plenty of time to take care of our hygienic needs since our bowl of soup and daily bread ration wouldn't be served until after 7 PM. We had these meals in our "day room" per se. By the time we finished, it was almost 8 PM. Our last detail was to close and secure the blackout shutters. It was still light outside and some of the crew were in bed already. We really needed the rest. But first, remove your pants and boots.

We take things for granted in our everyday life. I don't recommend that everyone try

Prisoner-of-War life to learn how to appreciate the simplest thing in life. Our freebies up to now are limited to one--air. Water, shelter and some form of subsistence can be bargained for with money or labor. Try going without air for a few minutes. Try going without water for three days. Try going without food for a week. It's an experience. did not attempt the first "try."

Baths, showers, shaving, brushing your teeth, getting a haircut when you need one, going to your dresser and getting clean underwear and sox, going to the refrigerator for a snack, going to the sink and getting a drink of water, calling someone on the phone, listening to the radio *(Did you notice that I didn't mention TV--there wasn't any back* in *1945) (O.K., Smartee, I* do *know that Dumont was testing TV in New York and New Jersey long before World War II)* and going for a walk were just a few of the things a person is deprived of when he or she becomes a Prisoner-of-War.

I visited the National Prisoner-of-War Museum in Andersonville, Georgia and copied two wall plaques that explain the transition from freedom to involuntary, servitude. They are printed below:

"AS A PRISONER-OF-WAR, YOU ARE IN THE POWER OF YOUR ENEMY. YOU OWE YOUR LIFE TO HIS HUMANITY AND YOUR DAILY BREAD TO HIS COMPASSION. YOU MUST OBEY HIS ORDERS, GO WHERE HE TELLS YOU, STAY WHERE YOU ARE BID, AWAIT HIS PLEASURE, AND POSSESS YOUR SOUL. IN PATIENCE."

Winston Churchill

THE FORTUNES OF WAR RENDER IT INEVITABLE THAT SOME PORTION OF THE ARMED FORCES INVOLVED IN THE CONFLICT SHALL FALL CAPTIVE TO THEIR OPPONENT. FIGHTING MEN THROUGHOUT HISTORY HAVE DECLARED THAT IT IS NEITHER DISHONORABLE OR HEROIC TO BE TAKEN PRISONER, THEY SPEAK OF "THE FORTUNES OF WAR."

IN COMBAT, LUCK CANNOT SMILE AT .ALL PARTICIPANTS. SOME ARE BOUND FOR LOSS. THE MAN TAKEN CAPTIVE IS ONE OF THE UNLUCKY--"A SOLDIER OF MISFORTUNE."

TRADITIONALLY, HE HAS ALWAYS FOUND HIMSELF IN A WRETCHED POSITION. AT BEST, HE WAS IN THE "FORGOTTEN WAR," ONE WHO HAS BEEN HERDED INTO THE COMPOUNDS FAR FROM HOME, ABANDONED BY HIS HOMELAND AND DESPISED BY HIS CAPTORS.

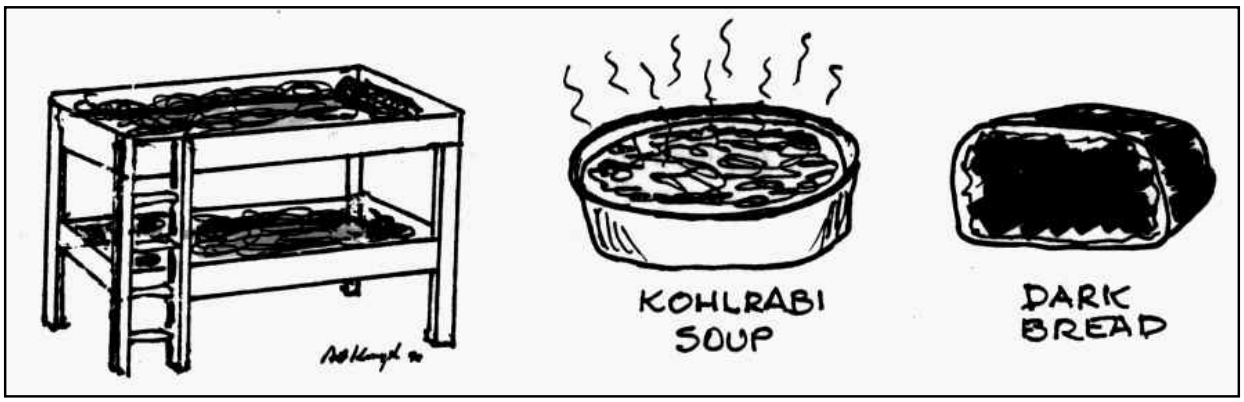
Author Unknown

28

If we worked in the area-—around Grossenhain——our workday would be two hours shorter when you compensate for the travel time. If we had the luxury of two more hours free time during the day, we had a mini—library of books and magazines of pre-war vintage that was left by the former occupants of the lager. There were German magazines that we couldn't read, but the pictures were interesting. A real surprise was to see National Geographic's dating back to 1936 and 1937. These were printed in English. Germany was billed as the "healing country." Just think, we were in the healing coun-try and had our transportation paid for by the United States Government. Only problem: No return date scheduled.

We had two guards. Unterofficer Feldmann was in charge. His assistant was Krause. We called him "Pop." He had been through World War I, and was serving his country again watching/guarding our 20-man kommando. He was easy to talk to and more open when Herr Feldmann wasn't around. Feldmann was too G.I. and didn't fraternize with we peasants. He was great in roll call. He would have us line up in three rows and attempt to count us. He had to make sure that none of us had escaped. We jerked this Prussian-type officer around every roll call. We would line up and stand like statues. He would start at one end and say: "drei-a, sechs-a, enun-a..." As soon as the first group of three was counted, the man in the back row would duck and go to the last row in which there were only two men. He stood behind the second man. When Herr Feldmann got down to the last group, he counted three men and would end up with twenty-one men and there were only twenty in the working group. "Gott Dammit!" would come out of his mouth and he would start over. The other trick we would play on him was for one of the guys to sneak off to the toilet. He would look all over for him. And the missing man would eventually show up. As he was writing the count in his report, he would mutter to himself: "em mann abort."

When you weren't reading, you were BS-ing. Most of the conversation was about food and meals we were going to prepare if we ever returned home. I had never been in the company of so many wealthy people. There were land owners, ranchers, bankers, brokers, a teacher and a big-time roller skating magazine publisher--Art Kuespert. I overstated my claim to fame. My national "Rolling Along" was circulated in forty-four states less than the forty-eight states that existed in the pre-war years. I had a difficult time giving away the two hundred copies I mimeographed each month. It is true that skating addicts from Illinois, Michigan, Ohio and Indiana read copies of Rolling Along.



29

Our families were concerned about us. As long as we were in the United States, we maintained contact with letters and phone calls. After we shipped out on October 18, 1944, correspondence via V-Mail was the only avenue either party could use. The process was crude by today's standards, but did the job at that time in history. Our address was the company, regiment and division we were assigned to plus an "APO" (Army Post Office) number.

From the time we left the U.S. until the our our unit was surren-dered was exactly two months. I think I received three letters while in England. Many letters written and mailed to me ~were returned with the indicia reading "Missing In Action."

The first news that established our whereabouts was in an article by the Associated Press that appeared in the South Bend Tribune with a dateline of January 22, 1945. Ten days prior to the appearance of the article, my parents received a telegram from the Secretary of War that informed them that their son was "missing in action." This upset my mother and father. My sisters, Norva and Doris, concealed their emotions in order to limit the anxiety of my mother. They told her that since my dad was born in Germany, this would have some influence on how I would be treated.

Loss of Two Yank Regiments Revealed in St. Vith Battles

By Associated Press.

WITH THE 106TH DIVISION IN BELGIUM, Jan. 22—One of the major battles of the war burst upon the 106th infantry division just five days after it took up positions Dec. 11 on what was supposed to be a "quiet" sector in the Ardennes.

And two days later two regiments and supporting artillery and armor of the Golden Lion division were wiped out.

Until yesterday censorship forbade transmission of the details.

(Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson announced Jan. 18 that the 106th suffered 8,663 casualties in the German offensive in the Ardennes, including 416 killed and 1,246 wounded.)

The men of the 422d and 423d regiments were engulfed by the overwhelming weight of the German breakthrough spearhead. Only a handful came back, but they pitched in and helped the remaining regiment, the 424th, make gallant delaying stands before and behind St. Vith.

The attack against the 106th started in the foggy dawn of Dec. 16 with a tremendous artillery barrage against their line.

Five minutes later the Germans opened up against St. Vith. The civilians were in their cellars, warned beforehand of the impending shelling.

By daybreak of Dec. 17 the Germans had thrown two divisions into this part of the front. By midmorning enemy columns swamped the 422d and 423d regiments and the 424th was forced to withdraw.

The two regiments continued to send back reports of the fighting until radio contact was lost. Because of the fog, parachuting supplies was out of the question.

In the last message that came from the 422d and from the 423d both said "We are now destroying our equipment." That was all, and presumably most of the two regiments were taken prisoner.

After the war was over, my sister Norva confessed that she lost hair worrying about me. This same sister passed away six days after I arrived home for good on November 30, 1945.

My knowledge of German was limited to the key words for eating (essen) and going to the toilet (abort). I could count in German, but there was nothing to count. And I didn't know

the words to use to get the Germans to stop the war and let us go home.

The Kleven and Kuespert families received a series of four Western Union telegrams identical in composition except for the addressee and our names. In that era, telegrams were delivered to the house by men riding bicycles. The crude makeup of the telegram is worth mentioning. The message was received on a strip of paper 5/16 inch wide that was fed from a "ticker." The strips were cut at sentence length and pasted on a blank telegram format. I am unaware of any automation to perform

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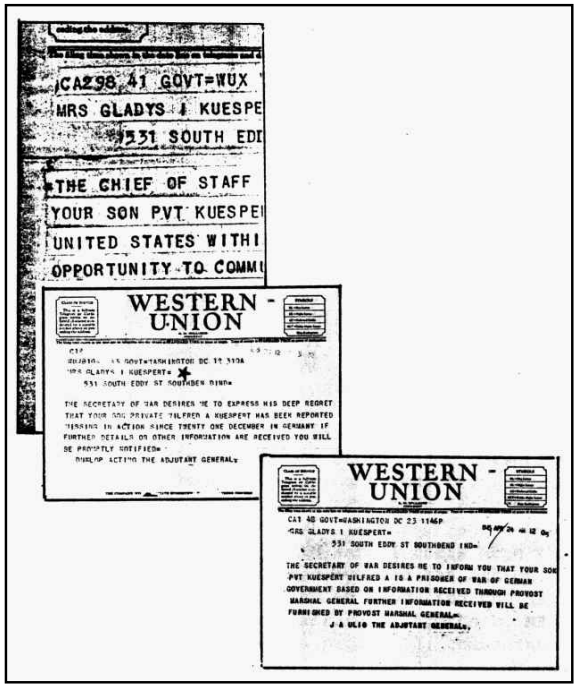
CA298 41 GOVT=WUX
MRS GLADYS I KUESPE
531 SOUTH EDI
THE CHIEF OF STAFF
YOUR SON PVT KUESPE
UNITED STATES WITHI
OPPORTUNITY TO COMM
WESTERN UNION
THE SECRETARY OF WAR DESIRES ME TO EXPRESS HIS DEEP REGRET THAT YOUR SON PRIVATE WILFRED A KUESPERT HAS BEEN REPORTED MISSING IN ACTION SINCE TWENTY ONE DECEMBER IN GERMANY IF FURTHER DETAILS OR OTHER INFORMATION ARE RECEIVED YOU WILL BE PROMPTLY NOTIFIED=
DULOP ACTING THE ADJUTANT GENERAL=
WESTERN UNION
CA1 48 GOVT=WASHINGTON DC 23 1146P
MRS GLADYS I KUESPERT=
531 SOUTH EDDY ST SOUTHBEND IND=
THE SECRETARY OF WAR DESIRES ME TO INFORM YOU THAT YOUR SON PVT KUESPERT WILFRED A IS A PRISONER OF WAR OF GERMAN GOVERNMENT BASED ON INFORMATION RECEIVED THROUGH PROVOST MARSHAL GENERAL FURTHER INFORMATION RECEIVED WILL BE FURNISHED BY PROVOST MARSHAL GENERAL=
J A ULIO THE ADJUTANT GENERAL=

the cutting and pasting operation. The strips on the four telegrams I have seem to be neatly attached to the base format. Copies of telegrams received on January 12, 1945 and Apri1 24, 1945 appear in minia-ture. The full text of each of the four telegrams appears below. The initial telegram displays a star that was stamped on the line of the next-of-kin. The star and the copy was printed in blue ink.

Joe and I made the local papers. Our families had faith in us and knew we would return some day, because they saved clippings, telegrams and full front pages of the local newspaper. Some of the announcements of our misfortune appear on this page. We almost waited too long to reproduce the yellowing paper.

PVT. JOSEPH KLEVEN MISSING IN ACTION

The Rev. and Mrs. O. M. Kleven received the crushing news from the secretary of war in a telegram last Thursday that their son, Pfc. Joseph B. Kleven, 22, has been missing in action in Germany since Dec. 21.

Kleven graduated from the Viroqua high school and attended St. Olaf college for two years before he enlisted in the army reserve. He has been in Europe about six weeks, according to letters sent his parents. They do not know to which unit he was attached. Training in the States qualified him as an interpreter in the infantry.

The deepest sympathy of the entire community goes out to the stricken parents, and all unite in the hope that he may be a prisoner of war rather than having been killed.

W. A. KUES... HELD BY...

Private W. Arthu... 24, who has been mi... tion since Dec. 21, i... of war in Germany, according to a card he wrote to his parents, Mr. and Mrs. W. A. Kuespert, 531 South Eddy street. The card was dated Jan. 9.

Private Kuespert, in service two and one-half years and overseas since last October, fought with the First army tryman. The report ... missing reached his ... mid-January. He is a ... Central High school.

W.

The series of four telegrams received by our families are printed below. The next-of-kin names have been omitted. I will list the date the telegram was received and the text for that date.

January 12, 1945:

THE SECRETARY OF WAR DESIRES ME TO EXPRESS HIS DEEP REGRET THAT YOUR SON (*Joe or Art*) HAS BEEN REPORTED MISSING IN ACTION SINCE TWENTY-ONE DECEMBER IN GERMANY. IF FURTHER DETAILS OR OTHER INFORMATION ARE RECEIVED YOU WILL BE PROMPTLY NOTIFIED
DUNLOP ACTING THE ADJUTANT GENERAL

April 24, 1945:

THE SECRETARY OF WAR DESIRES ME TO INFORM YOU THAT YOUR SON (*Joe or Art*) IS A PRISONER OF WAR OF GERMAN GOVERNMENT BASED ON INFORMATION RECEIVED THROUGH PROVOST MARSHAL GENERAL FURTHER INFORMATION RECEIVED WILL BE FURNISHED BY PROVOST MARSHAL GENERAL
J A ULIO THE ADJUTANT GENERAL

May 25, 1945:
THE SECRETARY OF WAR DESIRES ME TO INFORM YOU THAT YOUR SON (*Joe or Art*)
RETURNED TO MILITARY CONTROL
J A ULIO THE ADJUTANT GENERAL

June 19, 1945:
THE CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE ARMY DIRECTS ME TO INFORM YOU YOUR SON (*Joe or Art*)
IS BEING RETURNED TO THE UNITED STATES WITHIN THE NEAR FUTURE AND WILL BE GIVEN AN OPPORTUNITY TO COMMUNICATE WITH YOU UPON ARRIVAL.
J A ULIO THE ADJUTANT GENERAL

The last three telegrams were received later on in our story. For convenience, all telegrams relating to our being surrendered and repatriated have been included. Read on.

During World War II there were three major news syndicates covering the action. Each had their own slant on reporting the day-to-day progress or failure. Reports by NEA and AP appear on this page. One commentator took the 106th Division under his wing and spent hours reporting on our status. We had a post-war publication for several years entitled The Company F Guidon. Cedric Foster gave us permission by telegram that we could reprint any of his material in our newsletter.

Yank 106th In Line But 5 Days As Nazis Hit

By D. D. BALL

WITH THE 106TH DIVISION IN BELGIUM—(AP)—One of the major battles of the war burst upon the 106th infantry division just five days after it took up positions Dec. 11 on what was supposed to be a "quiet" sector in the Ardennes.

And two days later two regiments and supporting artillery and armor of the Golden Lion division were wiped out.

Until yesterday censorship had forbidden transmission of the details.

(Secretary Stimson announced Jan. 18 that the 106th suffered 8,663 casualties in the German offensive in the Ardennes, including

www.IndianaMilitary.org

8,863 casualties in the German offensive in the Ardennes, including 416 killed and 1,246 wounded. He said most of the division's 7,001 missing were presumed to be prisoners.)

Few Got Back

The men of the 422nd and 423rd regiments were engulfed by the overwhelming weight of the German breakthrough spearhead. Only a handful came back, but they pitched in and helped the remaining regiment, the 424th, make gallant delaying stands before and behind St. Vith.

The attack against the 106th started in the foggy dawn of Dec. 16 with a tremendous artillery barrage against their line that curved northward from the center of the Schnee Eifel, a rocky wooded ridge 10 miles long and two miles wide astride the Siegfried line.

Five minutes later the Germans opened up against St. Vith. The civilians, all pro-Nazi despite their pretense at being friendly, were in their cellars, warned beforehand of the impending shelling.

424th Withdraws

By daybreak of Dec. 17 the Germans had thrown two divisions into this part of the front. By midmorning enemy columns swamped the 422nd and 423rd regiments and the 424th was forced to withdraw.

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The two regiments continued to send back reports of the fighting until radio contact was lost. At 3:35 p. m. on Dec. 18 the radio sputtered that all units of the two regiments were in need of ammunition, food and water. Because of the fog, parachuting supplies was out of the question.

The last message came from the 422nd at 4 p. m., that day and from the 423rd at 6 p. m. Both said: "We are now destroying our equipment." That was all, and presumably most of the two regiments were taken prisoner.

Rocket Signals Barrage

The Germans then headed for St. Vith. They were stopped temporarily by the 81st and 168th engineer battalions, fighting heroically under Lieut. Col. Thomas Riggs of Huntington, W. Va.

Early on Dec. 18 division headquarters began moving west out of St. Vith. Some units were halted by English-speaking MP's who turned out to be Germans in American uniforms. One of them fired a rocket which signalled the opening of a terrific barrage against the division's halted vehicles.

The Germans occupied St. Vith at 11 p. m. on Dec. 21 after a stiff fight by the 424th, one combat command from the 9th armored division, Riggs' fighting engineers and the 112th regiment from the 28th infantry division.

Exhausted and sorely depleted, the 106th pulled back to rest and on Dec. 23. The next day the men were thrown into the line and helped halt the Germans on the north side of the salient between Stavelot and Manmay.

All Quiet—Then It Happened To 106th!

(By NEA Service)

The 106th Infantry (Golden Lion) Division arrived in Europe from the United States in mid-December, moved up to the front and because it was a green unit without previous combat experience, was assigned to a relatively quiet sector in the Ardennes.

And then it happened. Von Rundstedt's mighty winter counter-offensive exploded, and the focal point of the attack — the heaviest weight of German arms —was directed precisely at that "quiet" sector where the Golden Lions were stationed.

In the foggy dawn of Dec. 16, the German attack jumped off with a tremendous artillery barrage. This was followed by enemy tanks and infantry and, along with them, German soldiers disguised as American MPs, to create confusion.

The 106th fought back desperately against the fury of the Nazi juggernaut for two hellish days. The 422nd [redacted] 423rd infantry regiments h[redacted]ut against overwhelmin[redacted]bers, despite lack of food, [redacted] and ammunition. Finally, [redacted]adios were silent. The rem[redacted] Golden Lion regiment, the [redacted]th, clung grimly to its position near St. Vith, preventing the Germans from taking that vital communications center.

When the 106th's casualties were added up, the division had lost 8,663 men, of whom some 7,000 were prisoners.

Later, the Golden Lion outfit returned to battle, its ranks composed almost entirely of replacements, and gave a good account of itself. When the war ended, the 'ivision was assigned to the con-ol of 16 prisoner-of-war camps [redacted]h almost a million inhabitants. rdennes had been avenged.

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Yes, we did write home...

www.IndianaMilitary.org

Dear Mildred; Jan. 20, 1945

By this time you know that I'm a P. of W. in Germany. We were captured just before Christmas. Our Company was hit pretty hard so there are now only three of us still together. Needless to say I consider myself extremely fortunate to have gotten off as easily as I did.

Whatever I wrote in this area was CENSORED by the Germans.
-- Joe

Stalag IV A
42
geprüft

See Red Cross for particulars - also see them regarding letters.

We have moved to a new camp and are working now which means we get heavier food rations. So far I haven't been able to work, but will begin tomorrow morning. These past few days I've been catching up on some back reading. We have quite a library. Give my love to all and don't worry about me. Tell the folks not too. I'm feeling fine. Anxious to see you all again and when we do we'll really "go to town". Don't forget chocolate & cigarettes! Love, Joe

Kriegsgefangenenpost

A

An Mrs Paul L. Conlan

Stalag IV A
42
geprüft

Empfangsort: 1779 Humboldt Ave St.
Straße: Minneapolis
Kreis: Minnesota
Land: U. S. A.
Landesteil (Provinz usw.)

Gebührenfrei 11357 U.S. CENSOR

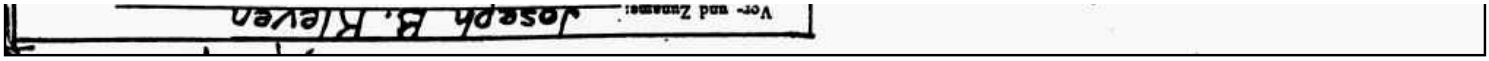
Deutschland (Allemagne)

Lager-Bezeichnung: M.-Stammlager IV A — Arb.-Kdo.-Nr.: 1000 1000

Gefangenennummer: 311973

Ver- und Zuname: Joseph R. Kleven

Arb.-Kdo.



Some of our initial letters and cards made it to the U.S. while we were P.O.W.'s, but anything posted after the end of January did not make it. Personally, I removed two cards from our mail box that I had written fourteen months previous.

Comparing the letters written by Joe and I, we both requested the same items—-cigarettes and candy. We did state that we used the cigarettes as money and that we hadn't developed a bad smoking habit.

Joe wrote for cigarettes and chocolates, I specified Phillip *Morris* and Luckies. I even told my mother to send my old *sox*.

My mother and sisters attended Red Cross meetings to learn how to send packages to P.O.W.'s. They sent a package to me and it was returned "Undeliverable." The meetings were supposed to be morale boosters as they said the people in charge could "check on the P.O.W. 'S. That was impossible.

The Germans did make an effort to get our correspondence to our families.

The legibility leaves something to be desired, but we could only use pencils. All of their fountain pens went to war.

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www.IndianaMilitary.org

Dear Mom, 4 JAN 1945

Fear not, the great Kuespert is still alive and well... and a prisoner of war in Germany. I can't complain in the least bit, the treatment 'cause it's all right. Our minds are thinking of the food we didn't touch [illegible] but we are getting plenty of nourishing [illegible] Dark bread rations is darn good. We are with [illegible] British fellows who have been in much [illegible] We have tea four times a day and have [illegible] preparing our extra dishes from Red Cross [illegible] and a cheese potatoe scallop yesterday. I send my regards and will be home [illegible] Tell M.J. to wait. You can write if you like [illegible] you can, send me these items. Cigarettes money so send me about six cartons of [illegible] Phillip Morris. Send me all my old sox, a [illegible] cap size 7½, handkerchiefs, shirts and shorts [illegible] four candy bars in it. Anyone can send [illegible] letter. Please do. By all means, don't [illegible] part of danger is over - no more combat. [illegible] but my feet are a little frost bitten. As soon [illegible] comes, it won't bother me. The war can't last [illegible] I can. Have faith in me 'cause I have mine all of [illegible]

We were issued two postcards and one three-panel letter when at Stalag IV-B. When we arrived at Arbeit Kommando 1000, we did receive additional postcards.

Kriegsgefangenenlager Datum: 9 JAN 1945

Dear Mom, Well here's another card to let you know I'm alive and well. It's a little cold over here, but Spring is on it's way. My best regards to the whole gang - each and everyone. Send me a few cartons of cigarettes. Send my old underwear and socks plus a few candy bars. Don't worry about a thing. My part of the war is over. I'm looking forward to home cooking. ART

Kriegsgefangenenlager Datum: 13 JAN 1945

DEAR DAD, I DON'T WANT YOU TO THINK I HAVE FORGOTTEN YOU SO HERE'S A CARD WITH HOPES THAT YOU ARE IN GOOD HEALTH AND NOT WORKING TOO HARD. AS I TOLD YOU FOLKS, PLEASE DON'T WORRY, I'M ON THE JOB AND KEEPING WELL. FOOD IS GOOD, BUT NATURALLY I LOOK FORWARD TO MOM'S COOKING. IF YOU CAN, SEND ME SOME CANDY IN WITH SOME SOCKS. ART

An MRS W. A. KUESPERT

Empfangsort: 531 S. EDD

Straße: SOUTH BE

Kreis: INDIANA

Land: U.S.A.

20 Gef. Lager Stalag IV B

Gebührenfrei

11835 U.S. CENSOR

Kriegsgefangenenlager Datum: 13 JAN 1945

DEAR MOM, HI KID! HOW'S EVERYTHING? I'M ALL RIGHT BUT WAITING FOR THE WAR TO END. I'M IN GOOD SPIRITS AND NOT HAVING IT BAD. AFTER IT'S OVER I'LL BE GOING TO CHURCH WITH YOU EVERY SUNDAY 'CAUSE I HAVE MUCH TO BE THANKFUL FOR. THANK GOD I'M OUT OF THE WAR BUSINESS. FOOD HERE IS GOOD BUT I'LL WANT EVERYTHING WHEN I GET HOME. TAKE CARE OF MY INTERESTS. LOVE, ART

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From our first day of work in Dresden on January 11, 1945 until 2215 hours on February 13, 1945, the city was a beautiful city of culture with structures dating back several hundred years. We did routine work in the Friedrichstadt Marshalling Yards. Dresden *(the Germans pronounced it "Drees'den)* lies on both sides of the Elbe River. It was founded in 1200 and was the capital of the Kingdom of Saxony. A city of culture and a center of arts and sculpture lost treasures in the saturation bombing that took place on February 13 and 14, 1945. Our guards marveled over the beauty of the many parks throughout Dresden. We spent some time in the Grosser Garten, a large park along the Elbe River.

There were several P.O.W. camps and Stalags that provided labor for industry in the Dresden area. The International Red Cross reported a total of 26,620 P.O.W.'s from all Allied nations interned in the area. This included 2,207 Americans. Joe Kleven and I were included in that total as was Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. We worked on the railroads and Kurt worked in a baby food factory. He based his book "Slaughterhouse Five" on the activities in his compound.

We worked in the inner city on special assignments. Our working range included the Dresden Central Station and Dresden Neustadt Station. Dresden was a manufacturing and trade city and was known for the famous Dresden china. Other familiar names of manufacturers are: Zeiss-Ikon, Siemans, Shell Oil, Sachsenwerk and Seidel & Nauman. Two major German cigarette factories--Grailing and Yenidze--were located within the city. We passed a building with a large sign reading "Kuhlhouse." We assumed that it was a frozen food locker of some sort. What we didn't see was any secret communication center that was the real target of both the Royal Air Force and the Allied Bombing Force.

As for prison life, it did take some adjusting. There were good days and bad days. Our worst enemy was the cold weather. It was the dead of winter and we were out in sub—freezing temperatures most of the time. It was necessary to keep banging our feet together to keep from getting frostbite and maintaining circulation. We could live with our 1200 calorie diet. This was just enough to sustain life. Calories were burned faster than we could replace them. Naturally, every one of us lost at least 50 pounds over a five month period. We looked like we were pregnant with our "soup" bellies. Our daily routine included getting up at 5 AM, standing roll call, having a cup of ersatz coffee, retrieving our pants and boots and waiting for the Prisoner Express to stop and pick us up for our trip to Dresden. We arrive anywhere from 6:30 AM to 8 AM depending on how many troop trains had track priority. Our work day would end at 6 PM. We arrived anywhere from 7 to 8 PM. After clean-up time, we were issued our bread ration, have a bowl of kohlrabi soup and a cup of coffee. On special days, we might get a bowl of carrot or potato soup. Our "cook" was an ancient German woman that reminded me of my German grandmother. Ed Meyer and I traded the pound of margarine that we received in our only Red Cross parcel for a constant supply of potato peelings.

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In order to keep our minds off being hungry and constantly talking about food, we did take advantage of the mini—library that the former occupants of our lager left behind. There were books, magazines and several copies of National Geographic. There was a mix of both German and English-printed books. I selected a copy of "A Tree Grows in Brooklyn" for two reasons. The first reason was that I had seen the movie, but had never read the book. The second reason demonstrated my resourcefulness. It served to replace the non-existent klosettpapier (toilet paper to you non-Germans). Because of our dysentery diet, I had to read fast--almost to speed reading. The spent pages were put to good use. When I finished the book, all there was left was a front and back hard cover.

Another bad day was when you were selected for latrine duty. This involved servicing two abort rooms. There was a giant honey bucket for each of the three holes--two in one latrine and one in the other. These were huge wooden buckets with loop handles on each side. A back panel was removed from outside the johns and the heavy filled bucket had to be pulled out and rotated until the handles were parallel to the building. A three-meter rod was threaded through the two handles. With a man on each end of the rod, the bucket was lifted carefully and walked to a garden area behind our lager. The contents were spread over the seeded area (Is this where our kohlrabi comes from?). If you were selected for this "honey bucket" detail, you always hoped that you would be paired with someone your same height. During transport, the bucket invariably slides toward the shorter person.

After working out in the freezing temperatures for weeks, I decided to inform Herr Feldmann that I was having problems with my ear. To my surprise, he made arrangements for me to visit an ear specialist in downtown Grossenhain. Within two days, I was walking to town with Guard Krause following me with a rifle on his shoulder. When we reached the business district, I stepped up on the sidewalk. Krause shouted at me and told me that walking on the sidewalk was "verboten."

The German doctor greeted me like I was one of his patients. His greeting was in German. Once I was in the examination room, he was thorough and careful. He was explaining my problem in German as if I could understand him. The nurse left the room and as soon as the door closed, he spoke to me in perfect English. I told him that my ear had drained constantly from the time someone fired a blank gun near my ear back in the States. He said that my ear needed a revision and that should be done as soon as possible when I arrived back home. This was almost like saying we will lose the war and you will return home. The guard poked his head into the room and told the doctor that he had to buy some tobacco and that he would return in a half hour. The guard said something to the effect that he "trusted" the doctor to guard me. Once the guard left, we were alone. The doctor really opened up. He had studied medicine in a university in Chicago, but didn't say which one. There was no shingle on the wall like in our doctor's offices to

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give me a clue. His English was perfect. When I asked him if he liked it in the United States, he said he did. He said he would be living in the U.S. had it not been for the restrictions placed on the German people who wanted to leave the country. He definitely was not in favor of war citing that our countries have so much in common. The guard returned before we could finish our discussion. One of his final statements was he was appreciative of the fact that he was serving his country in the medical profession rather on the fighting field. The doctor instructed Guard Krause that I should go to the local hospital for several days.

I traded a week of cold outdoor weather for a week of indoor cold weather. The only thing that was missing was the wind. The "hospital" was a big room with twelve beds. There was a one-briquette stove in the corner that in full blast moved the temperature up to 50 degrees. The only other American in the place was Mr. crude. He was an obnox-ious slob, but pulled a funny that made us laugh--just he and I. The wind would blow hard and if the door wasn't latched, it would blow the door open. Mr. Crude would get up and shut the door and-make sure it clicked. He tired of this and delegated the job of closing the door to a male Serbian nurse. First, he would shut the door as an example. At the same time, he would look directly at this nurse and repeat:

"Shut the f------g door!" The Serb absorbed these new words and repeated them over and over. Every time the door would blow open, he would say the words and close the door. Mr. crude laughed. So did I--I didn't want the hell beat out of me. When I left the hospital a week later, as I closed the door gently, the greeting from 11 patients echoed down the short hallway-—"Shut the f_____g door!"

At 2215 hours on the night of February 13, 1945, one of the most violent series of bombings began. Dresden, declared an open city until now, received the initial assault from the Royal Air Force Lancaster bombers. Air raid alarm systems were knocked out preventing any warning for the subsequent raids. At 0130 on February 14, 1945 another wave of bombers pelted the inner city with high explosive incendiary bombs. There was no target map per se as the fire storm theory was employed. The final raid took place at 1212 and 1222 hours with our Air Force sending 1,350 B-17 Flying Fortresses with both incendiary and fragmentation bombs. The RAF and the Air Force overlapped their target making sure that their missions were successful.

Herr Feldmann and Guard Krause came storming into our lager at 0400 on February 14, 1945. We had to "Mach schnell" and be ready to board a train for Dresden. The explanation was that we were needed to repair any damage to therailroad as there had been an air raid. We did get a cup of coffee before we left. The usual hour-long trip took several hours. We were side-tracked for troop trains and re—routed because right-of-ways had been bombed. We didn't arrive in Dresden until late in the afternoon. Thanks to the stupidity of the bomber command, the Marshalling Yard escaped total destruction. We saw troop trains on

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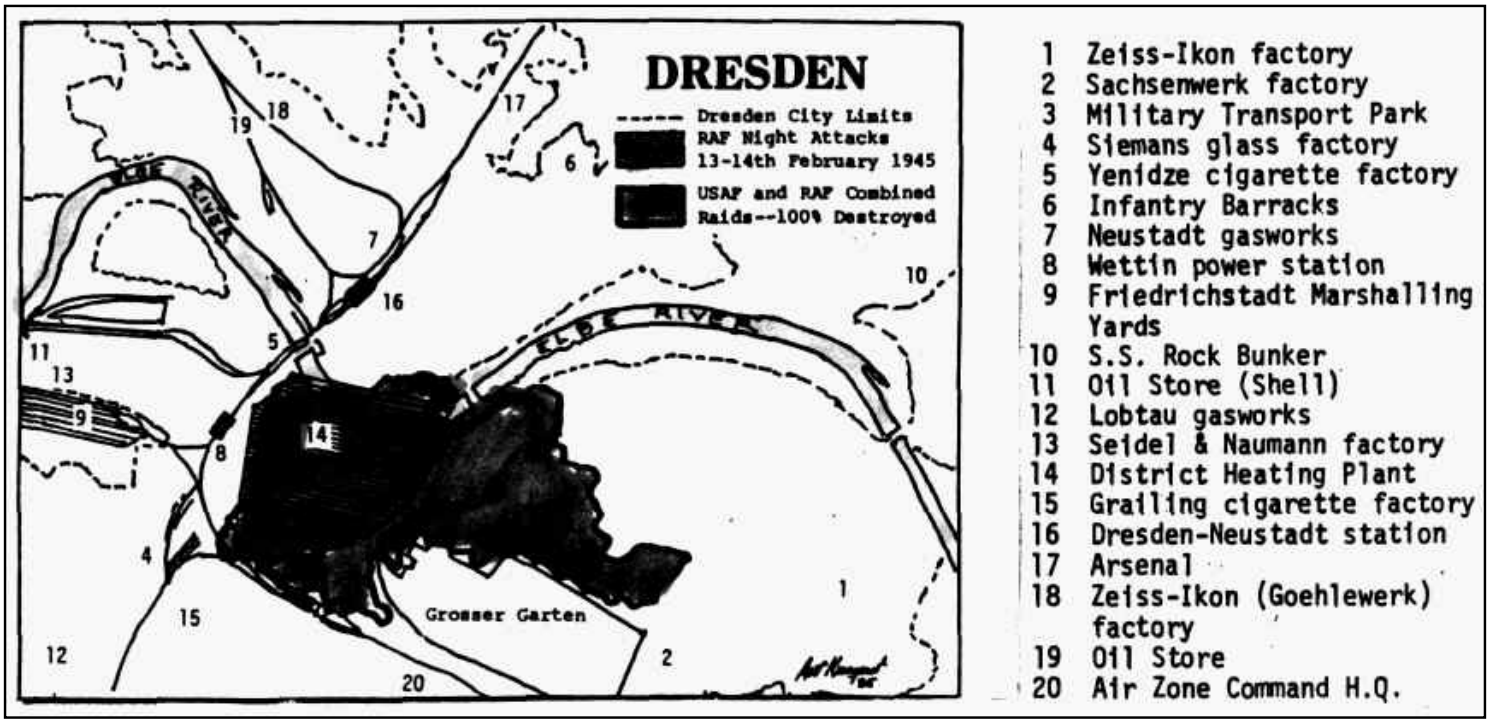
three tracks burned to the car platforms. Off in the distance, we saw a spectacular explosion and a huge fireball rise up in the air and dissipate. The guards would not let us go near the burned-out trains as there were bodies of German soldiers in the smoldering ruins. In the sky, German fighter planes were streaking their vapor trails against the azure background. Too late, the bombers had left.

After seeing the key buildings many times as we entered and left Dresden, it was a shock to see them as a pile of rubble. Our specialty was repairing railroads while other groups were working to restore power and water. The inner city was 100% destroyed. Some areas, including the Marshalling Yard, were damaged only because bomb loads went astray. The central Telegraph Office, which the Allied forces Intelligence pinpointed as the German Government's communication center, was totally destroyed.



Residents killed in this massive cremation will never be accounted for. Of the fifteen City hearses, fourteen were destroyed. Farmers and peasants from surrounding villages were ordered to drive their teams into Dresden for the task of hauling the dead to mass graves. Some of the victims were wrapped in brows ~paper. P.O.W.'s 'were used to remove charred bodies from buildings. The buildings were at least four stories tall and the streets were narrow. When the bombs' hit, the buildings fell into the streets and trapped anyone who was on the street as well as the people inside. A term that can be applied to what we saw-—the people were "broasted."

I agree with Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. when he stated that the bombing of Dresden didn't make that much difference in the outcome of the war.

To me, it was a fiendish act by British Air Chief Marshal Arthur Harris, who as head of Britain's Bomber Command, to order the nighttime

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saturation bombing of German cities. Harris preferred incendiary bombs which Americans were less inclined to use. There has never been a true accounting of how many civilians were killed in this massive raid. Normally, the city had 600,000 residents. When you add the number of refugees - who were stranded in the Grosser Garten along the Elbe River, the many troop trains waiting on sidings for combat orders and over 26,000 political prisoners and American Prisoners—of-War, it is estimated that there were over a million people in Dresden at the time of the raids. According to a conservative estimate, there were 130,000 people killed or cremated by the firestorm.

It was rough to go into Dresden each day and witness the horrors of war. After working around the stench of burning flesh, the putrid smell never leaves your clothing. We had no means to wash our clothing and if we did, we didn't have anything to put on while we

waited for the clothing to dry.

The stench was more noticeable if you were the person that faked illness for the day and more or less guarded our meager possessions while at the lager. We worked seven days a week and this was the only way to get a day off every 18 days.

THE DEATH OF DRESDEN

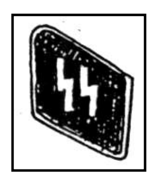
[illegible]

After, the raids, we were important personnel as they needed every able-bodied person to help with the cleanup detail. We were given a little more latitude. Joe and I took advantage of this freedom and we scrounged around the burned-out troop trains that we were forbidden to touch days after the raid. The bodies had been removed by German soldiers. They were afraid that we would have looting tendencies. Joe spotted a glazed area between the rails under what we determined was a food supply car. He chipped off a chunk and both of us tasted it. We came up with the same conclusion——it was melted sugars We broke off bite-size chunks and sucked on them while we were working. Anything that wouldn't dissolve in our mouths would be expectorated.

Joe picked up a large piece to take to the lager. We took this chunk and placed it on a sink drain basket. We ran water over it until all of the molten sugar was washed off. Unbelievable! There were pebbles, nails, screws, paper, sand and weeds locked in this new—found delicacy. None of these surprises deterred us from taking on this nourishment. It probably sustained our lives more than we realized.

Other food of this nature included what we called "mash." It consisted of fermented grapes and the stems. We found this material near a building in which produce was stored. Our staple was potato peelings. Thanks to the cook at the lager, she kept us in mind when she peeled potatoes. In the final days at our Grossenhain home, I imagined that the peelings were a bit thicker.

The only difficulty I had with any of the people in charge of us during our servitude was a Mongolian SS trooper. I was thirsty and headed for the water bucket. We were trusted to do this, but this nice guy didn't know it. We didn't understand one another. I guess he thought my request for "trinkvasser" meant "Hit me on the chin with the butt of your rifle." He answered my request. That was the only incident that any of our group experienced. We were respected as workers and they needed our services.



The hour-long trip to Dresden each day gave us some time to get better acquainted. I learned about Joe's family and that his father was a minister. We even talked about silk screening. My interest in printing and photography bordered on this process that was unknown to me. To think that I had to come all the way. to Germany to learn more about silk screening. It was worth the trip. We conversed about things we planned to do when we made it back home. This alone proved that we had faith that we would return home safely and pick up where we left off.

The commuter train we were riding in was made up of several boxcars. It carried P.O.W.'s, laborers and political prisoners to work in Dresden. And there were citizens who had jobs in Dresden. We would see the same people everyday. It was to your advantage to stand near the open door. The scenery was worth braving the cold breeze that the movement of the train produced. At times when the fireman threw on a few more brickettes, you would catch a few particles of soot.

We made many observations of our fellow passengers. A group of Nazi, Jr • 's tried to humiliate us, but we ignored them. They were kids thirteen and fourteen with full Nazi uniforms including the red armband with the black swastika on a white circle. It was all we could do to keep from pushing them out the door of the moving train. Joe and I were just two nice guys or the little krauts would be bouncing off a rock or two along the right-of-way.

We worked around all three main stations in Dresden on special jobs. Big thrill! We got to ride on the cowcatcher of the locomotive when we went to Dresden Neustadt, Wettin Power Station or Central Station. I have always been interested in railroads and came by this naturally as our relatives and family worked for the New York Central. I couldn't wait to get back home and tell them about my new trade.

In addition to our right-of-way maintenance, we were called on to help move rolling stock. Switching was done a little differently in Germany as Joe recalled. There were no switch engines so we took a hold and pushed boxcars where they were needed. Joe remembers Lee Skinner telling our

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German railroad boss that "In America, we use engines for this. The boss wasn't too pleased.

Herr Feldmann made a ceremony out of payday. Payday? Yes, we did receive useless German marks for our labor. It wasn't much, but it did help if you wanted to purchase cigarette paper. That was the only item you could buy with the money. No tobacco was available, so the cigarette paper was useless, too. Thanks to Joe for his thriftiness, we can show you sane of the money he received.

Being a railroad bug, I was thrilled to be able to ride on the front platform of the locomotive (zug). This was located above the cowcatcher. We would travel from the Friedrichstadt marshalling yard to Dresden-Neustadt and to Central stations on special details. It seemed like all of our relatives and neighbors worked for a railroad. My father and two uncles worked for the New York Central, a neighbor worked for the Grand Trunk Western and a distant relative worked for the D. T. and I as an

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engineer. My big thrill as a youth was to accompany the neighbor who worked for the Grand Trunk Western as a control tower operator to work. His son and I would have mother-packed lunches and a bottle of Nehi root beer as our lunch. Mr. McMahon worked the midnight to eight in the morning shift which meant that we would have to stay awake all night. During this shift, we learned a lot about railroads, routing, switches, block signals,

handing message loops to the slow-moving trains and how they set out cars. Today, OSHA would frown on letting kids anywhere near railroad activity. We were permitted to pull the levers that controlled signals, derails and some switches. All of this experience helped me be a better gandy dancer. (If you don't know what a gandy dancer is, look it up!)

Joe and I observed some items that the Germans had that were years ahead of the U.S. They had an electric switch that was gear driven and effected the opening and closing of a switch in one smooth operation. They had pressed steel railroad ties that never needed replacement. They still had enough wooden ties for us to stamp stones under. Track raising jacks, hand-cranked derricks and rail saws were about the same as in the U. S. We didn't see any welded rails during our working career in Germany. We did join rails with the conventional steel plates placed on both sides of the rail and secured with gigantic bolts and nuts. We had to be very careful in operating the jacks and derricks. A few strokes on the lever and our strength was sapped. Our railroad bosses didn't want any of us to be injured and stressed placing the pawl in the gear tooth at the first sign of fatigue. None of us planned on making railroad maintenance our career objective.

There was no cake and candles for my 24th birthday on March 18, 1945. Looking back, we spent Christmas in a boxcar, New Year's Eve and Day in Stalag IV-B, Valentine's Day in Dresden and Easter at Arbeit Kommando 1000 in Grossenhain.

On March 1, 1945, we were still working clean-up in Dresden. We worked all types of jobs. Our working group was down to sixteen men. While I was in the hospital for a week, Bill Fendler died of malnutrition. He's the guy who traded his bread ration for cigarettes. Ed Meyer, my upper-bunk man, had pneumonia and was taken to the hospital. Later on, he was turned over to the American Red cross and sent back to the United States. Two British P.O.W.'s disappeared overnight. We speculated that were cut from our herd by German Intelligence. We will miss their nightly reports on the progress of the war. They had a radio of some sort——it could have been a crystal set.

Joe and I had worked close to one another and seemed to exchange conver-sation from the time we discovered--or Joe did--the melted sugar under the troop train that was burned to the ground. We became good friends. I liked his philosophy and sense of fairness. Little did either of us know that we were storing up a mental file for Rainwater and Potato Peelings. It is amazing how two different minds can recollect experiences of fifty years ago in such minute detail. And today, I have difficulty in remember-ing whether I'm on my first or second cup of coffee.

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I have been asked strange questions about P.O.W. life. The main one was "Why didn't you try and escape?" The answer was and is simple. We were too far inland to take advantage of the "undergroud" that was near the front lines. Many people were risking their lives to help American and British evaders. Our family dentist, Bill Dehon, was a P-51 pilot and was shot down. He made it back to Allied lines through the help of the underground. They gave him another $50,000 P-51. He was 19 years old when he had this experience.

"Did you dream while sleeping in the P.O.W. compound?" Yes.

"What did you dream about?" One time I dreamed that my father had passed away. This

was on my mind for over two months. I learned that he was alive after I sent a cablegram to my family while I was visiting London after the war was over. The return cablegram contents eliminated the anguish.

"Did you dream about food?" Yes. I could visualize a loaf of Silvercup Bread with the red and white wrapper. Who said you couldn't dream in color and detail?

"Did you dream or talk about sex?" No, in those days food was our number one priority. And with our diet, there were no reports of nocturnal] emissions.

One Sunday when I was the only one that remained in the lager, the tough Herr Feldmann brought two women into the lager. I'm sure one of them was his wife and the other could have been his daughter. He showed them around and before they left, he permitted them to ask questions about the United States. Both could speak broken English and I answered them as politely as I could. What a mellow person he was in the presence of the two women.

I studied the countenance of each member of our group trying to learn who had the audacity to steal my bread ration from under my head while I was sound asleep. Yes, when it gets down to the nitty-gritty, people become animals. Survival is the name of the game. I made a short speech on how I felt about having a thief in our midst. The reaction of the group in unison was "Awwwwwww,,,," Except for that incident, I do think we got along O.K. Each of us had our idiosyncrasies and we tried to adjust to one another. It is unbelievable that Joe and I did not converse very much, but I remember him as a real gentleman and tolerant of some of the actions of others. If you look at our lager diagram, you will note that Joe was in a different room and we more or less remained in or near our assigned bunks. The reason for this was that we were spent after a day's labor on the tracks.

A student of behavioral science could have had a picnic studying our group of P.O.W.'s. At first there was total respect for one another. We received one and only one Red Cross Parcel for our entire P.O.W. experience We could leave our entire pantry (one-half of the items received since we had to split one parcel between two P.O.W.'s) on the bunk and not have one item disturbed. There was no temptation by the ones who devoured their parcel booty within a few days. By the time we had all consumed the items received, personalities were changing. Nice guys became thieves. You had to hide everything or take it with you. The only saving factor was that

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when we left the lager, we all went out of the door at the same time. After we instituted the one-stays-behind policy, if anything was missing, the charge of quarters was automatically guilty. By this time, there wasn't anything left to steal.

Some of these guys were serving their apprenticeship to become cat burglars. I still moan about my bread ration being stolen. Looking into their eyes and telling of my misfortune produced poker faces personified. I survived and the incident was forgotten.

The assignment of bunks was made by the Unterofficer Feldmann. The choice of top or bottom bunk was by agreement with the other person. There~ were no problems in this

respect. I observed that you more or less paired off with the person sharing the bunk--either top or bottom. Ed Meyer and I were from Company F, 423rd Infantry and he chose the top bunk. *(Perhaps he had first-hand info on a bread ration thief).*

Ed smoked a pipe. He did until he ran out of tobacco. He always had the pipe in his mouth and during the night you could hear that dry-sucking noise over all of the snoring. Ed and I lived within ninety miles of each other. He lived in Chicago and I lived in South Bend. We talked about the Cubs and the White Sox. The war took Ed out of a responsible position with his uncle's company, The Sloan Valve Company. Whenever you use a toilet or a urinal, look at the stamped or die-impressed letters. You will,, see Sloan Valve. Back at Camp Atterbury, you could look at the valve or look up on the wall and see a picture of a beautiful girl. The girl was on a V. D. warning poster with the caption: "She may look clean, but she may be Dirty!"& "Be Protected!" See, they were pushing condoms long before the AIDS scare.

The obvious pairing was done long before they arrived at Arbeit Kommando.. 1000. Dixon and Kilgore were Brits who had infiltrated the American P.o.W. group at Stalag IV-B. They were operators and had their own radio--we think it was a crystal set. Albert Atwood and Lee Skinner were bunkmates (that doesn't sound right). Albert Atwood and Joe Kleven had conversations since their bunks were next to one another in another room. *(A1bert Atwood is the only other person that Joe and I have had contact with since we left Arbeit Kommando 1000. His picture appears elsewhere in Rainpeel).* Lee Skinner and others who smoked had their own "butt cans." Lee's can was a green Lucky Strike flat-50 can that was popular in the forties. And then Lucky Strike green went to war. Lee would pick up cigarette butts of all sizes. He would strip them down and put the tobacco in the can. When he had enough tobacco to make a cigarette, he would bum a cigarette paper from one of the guards. He would roll his own. Lee ignored any sanitary logic as some of the butts were soggy. Lee's best source for butts was in the Friedrichstadt marshalling yards. German soldiers were generous in the length of butts discarded.

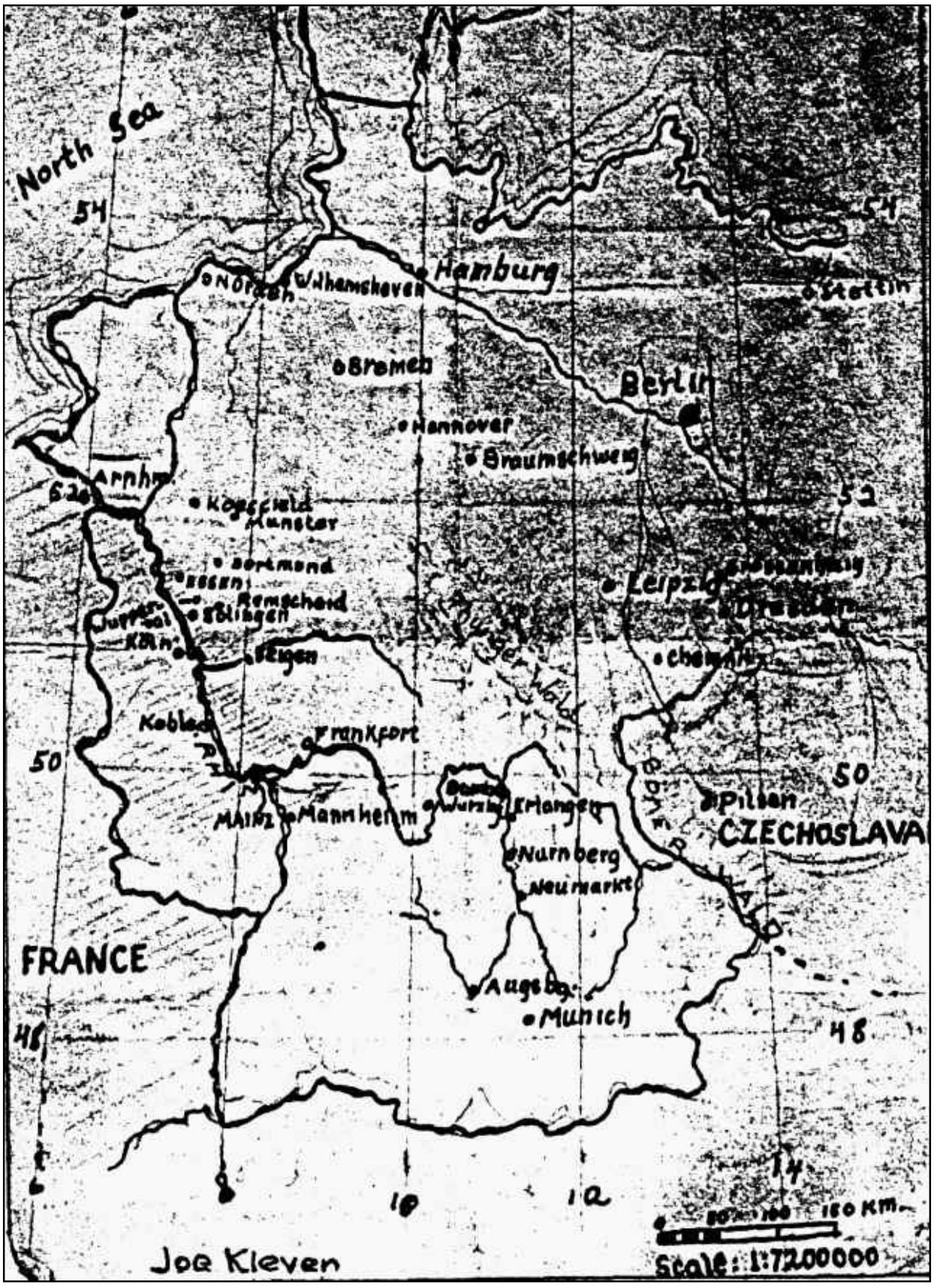
Guys like Joe and I traded cigarettes (received as a ration) for food. We had a member of our group named Bill Fendler who traded his bread ration for cigarettes and begged us to trade. It leaves you with a feeling of guilt when Bill was hauled out of the lager while we were at work. He had died of malnutrition because he liked cigarettes better than bread.

44

JOEJOEJOEJ0EJOEJOEJOEJ0EJOEJOEJ0EJOEJ0EJ0EJ0EJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOE

I believe it was during one of my trips to the doctor that I made this fantastic deal. I had a gold ring but had lost the onyx stone setting. A French P.O.W. that I met at the hospital needed gold for some dental work and offered to buy my ring. I sold the ring for 100 cigarettes and a chocolate bar. Remember, cigarettes were money, our only means of exchange which meant that I was wealthy for awhile. I didn't smoke and am not sure just how I "spent" the money. I hope I didn't buy Bill Fendler's bread ration. That haunts me.

It was pathetic to see intelligent men disregard the consequences of smoking and deliberately starve their bodies of nourishment for that demon called a cigarette. I never smoked and I conclude that Art never tried it from his condemnation of smoking. The problem is that when people smoke they can't smell it on themselves. Two odors that cannot be disguised are tobacco and kitty litter.



The map appearing on this page is one that I carried with me in Germany. It was hand-drawn and served its purpose. The German guards made sure that there were no maps in any of the publications we had in our mini-library.

If I would have known that we would be doing some extended traveling in the future, I would have included more detail in the map of Czechoslo-vakia.

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WEEKLY

No. 95 BERLIN MARCH 11, 1945

ROOSEVELT BACK FROM YALTA CONFERENCE

PRESIDENT REPORTS TO CONGRESS

The following is an excerpt of the speech of President Roosevelt before and after his return from the conference of USA, Great Britain and Soviet Russia Yalta in the Crimea.

'Vice President, Speaker, members of the Congress!

It has been a long journey Yalta. Speaking in all frankness the question of whether the conference is entirely fruitful or not, lies to a great extent in your hands. For, unless you were here in the Halls of American Congress, with the support of the American people, concerned with the general conclusions reached at a place called Yalta and gathered your active support, the meeting would not have produced

post-war Europe as had been some time before. And we came to the Conference determined to [illegible] a common [illegible]. To achieve that objective it is necessary, inter-vide for the formation of a new government much more representative than was then possible while Poland had two governments, one in London and one in Lublin, practically in Russia. Accordingly, steps were taken at Yalta to reorganize the existing Provisional Government in Poland on a broader democratic basis. This newly reorganized Government will be recognized by all of us as the temporary Government of Poland.

I don't agree with all of it by any means. It is a compromise. It is one, however, under which the Poles will receive compensation in territory in the north and west in exchange for what they lose by the Curzon line in the east. The limits of the western borders will be permanently fixed in the final Peace Conference, in the form that they will include in the new Poland quite a large slice of Germany. I am convinced that this agreement on the under the circumstances is the most [illegible] agreement possible for a free and powerful Polish nation.

[illegible] was not a participant in Co-

RAILROAD FLAK IN THE MOUNTAINS
Protecting travelers against the boogiebeepers of low-flying enemy planes

MILITARY

THE EASTERN FRONT

North of the Zobten the Soviets again attacked with strong forces and bomber sup-

FROM COAST TO C[illegible]

[illegible] the last few weeks queues [illegible] unknown word in America. But queueing has become so frequent lately, especially for gasoline, that it is rapidly creeping into the language. Today's queue story comes from Portland, Oregon, where, after waiting two hours for cigarettes, a queue found they were in front of the incometax office.

NEW COAL STRIKE THREAT

New York—They are beginning to talk of another miners' strike this spring because miner leader, John L. Lewis wants to embarrass Roosevelt again and break his no more wages' ruling to increase his own prestige for a big comeback as a national Labour leader. The miners are bitter because they think the nation-wide brown-out ordered to conserve coal supplies, was merely some preliminary psychological warfare against them.

PRIORITY TRAVELERS

Washington—As soon as peacetime travel is resumed top sailing priorities will go to [illegible] American sailors and marines

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The 'Big Three': Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill at [illegible]

... make ... and at the same time ... people of the country.

I have come from the Crimea Conference with the firm belief that we have made a good start on the road to a world of peace.

At Teheran a little over a year ago there were long-range military plans laid by the chiefs of staff of the three nations. No political arrangements were made. At the Crimea Conference, however, the time had come for getting down to a specific thesis on a broader field.

The lapse of time between Teheran and Yalta without conferences of representatives, of civilian representatives, of the three powers has proved to be too long — 14 months! During that long period problems were permitted to become acute in countries like Poland and Greece and Italy and Yugoslavia. We met therefore on all sides at this conference an urgent effort to reach an agreement.

When we met at Yalta, in addition to laying out strategic and tactical plans for a complete and final military victory, there were other problems—the settlement of differences that remained among us with the respect to the International Security Organization after the Dumbarton Oaks Conference.

The foundations for such an organization were then laid with one point up on which an agreement was not reached: it involved the procedure of voting in the Security Council. At the Crimea Conference the Americans made a proposal on the subject but it is not yet possible to announce the terms of it publicly, but it will be in a short time. It is almost a legislative problem.

There are special problems: we over here ... it difficult to understand the ramifications ... any of these problems in foreign lands, but ... will try it. There have been instances of political confusion and unrest—as in Greece or in Poland or in Yugoslavia—and there may be even more. Worse than that—unrest will grow up in some of these places and queer ideas about spheres of influence. They are incompatible with the basic principles of international collaboration. When allowed to go on unchecked, these developments might have had tragic results in time. But it is fruitless to try to place the blame of this situation on one particular nation or on another. It is a kind of development that is almost inevitable, unless the major powers will continue without interruption to work together and assume joint responsibility for the solution of problems that may arise to endanger the peace of the world.

Responsibility for political conditions thousands of miles away can longer be avoided, I think, by this great nation. It will be our own tragic loss, if we were to shirk that responsibility. Final decisions in these areas are going to be made jointly, and therefore they will often be a result of give-and-take compromise. The United States will not have its way exactly 100%. The whole Polish Question was a potential source of trouble in

I am convinced ... under the circumstances is the most ... agreement possible for a free and ... Polish nation.

France was not a participant in ... Conference. She will, however, be a ... the International Security ... member ... the other four major ... together ... natural that this Conference ... It is ... European War and ... cerned only ... of Europe and not ... political problems ... however, our combined ... War. In Malta ... staffs made their plans ... and American ... against Japan. ... crease the attack ... at I have said: War ... only repeat, ... It's a long, tough ... won the war ... road to Tokyo ... Tokyo, a long ... not mean the end of the ... Berlin ... on the contrary: We must ... war against ... long, costly struggle in the ... be prepared for ... Pacific.

The Conference ... the Crimea was a turning point. There ... soon be presented to the Senate and the American people a great decision that will determine the fate of the United States. We ... have to take the responsibility for world collaboration or we shall have to bear the responsibility for another world conflict. I know that the word "planning" is not looked upon with favour in some circles. No plan is perfect. Whatever is adopted in San Francisco will doubtless have to be amended time and again over the years, just as our own Constitution has been. No one can say exactly how long any plan will last: peace can endure only so long as humanity really insists upon it and is willing to work for it and sacrifice for it.

THE EASTERN FRONT

North of the Zobten the Soviets again attacked with strong forces and bomber support. After severe fighting they were driven back to the mountain slopes. In the Lauban sector the German positions were advanced by counter attacks.

Last week the German forces in Pomerania and Eastern Prussia were locked in hard fighting with strong enemy panzer forces. They succeeded in bogging the enemy advancing westwards between Stargard and Neugard. Stargard was lost after embittered street fighting.

THE WESTERN FRONT

... continued with undiminished intensity after fresh enemy forces had been brought up.

In the defensive battle between the Rhine, south of Düsseldorf, and the Erft-sector our forces halted the advancing enemy and frustrated the attempted break-through to Cologne. The enemy succeeded in entering Euskirchen and Crefeld. In the Forbach, Sarreguemines area and in the lower Vosges the enemy attempted a number of diversionary attacks.

London was bombed almost continuously with V1 and V2 weapons.

WAR AT SEA

During February German forces sank 54 ships with a total of 288 400 tons, 2 cruisers, 12 destroyers, 6 escort-craft and an E-boat. Furthermore 16 further vessels with 94 900 tons, a cruiser and 3 escort-craft were torpedoed. Some of these vessels were sunk.

PRIORITY TRAVELERS

Washington—As soon as peacetime travel is resumed top sailing priorities will go to relatives of American sailors and marines killed and buried on foreign soil. Congress is even considering a Bill to pay their expenses for them.

AGAINST THE PIN-UP GIRL

Washington—America's Roman Catholics are trying to break the pin-up girl habit.

At a conference in Washington William Smith, Assistant Executive Secretary of the National Council of Catholic Men, said that these pictures ... provide servicemen ... pictures ... gaze."

NEW YORK OR NEW-YORK?

New York—It seems I have been living these 12 years in a place called New-York, not just New York.

Some historian has discovered that the city council never officially deleted the hyphen. Just to make it legal, the council may soon solemnly meet to proclaim that it is all right to call New York New York.

NAMES MAKE NEWS

GOVERNOR TOM DEWEY, unsuccessful Presidential candidate. His biography, which sold in thousands at 10s. a copy before Roosevelt defeated him, is now available at drug stores for eightpence.

MRS. ELEANOR ROOSEVELT hits out at other American women for not urging a National Service Act to include themselves. Said she: I am not kidding myself. The women in this country do not want a National Service Act.

MARILYN KAEMMERLE, 22-year-old editor of a college magazine in stately Williamsburg, Virginia, has set off fireworks with an editorial urging that Negroes should attend the college, fraternize and "marry among us." Her magazine has been suspended.

CHARLES LINDBERGH, deprived of his colonelcy during his fight to keep America out of the war, may get his rank back.

THE DEATH OF DRESDEN

This article from 'Das Reich' is printed to show P's. o. W. the reality of the war of extermination

This has two features which distinguishes it from other happenings of a similar nature and of recent date.

1) The three air raids — two during the night of Feb. 13th and one the following midday — have in so far as it is possible to draw comparisons resulted in the most absolute destruction of a large town area and by far the greatest number of civilian casualties in proportion to the number of inhabitants and raids. The outlines of a city of perfect harmony have been extinguished in Europe. Tens of thousands of those who lived and worked under its towers have been buried in mass graves without any attempt at identification having proved possible.

2) Allied Headquarters in Paris countered the news of the destruction of Dresden, which was too dreadful to be realised all at once and therefore spread but slowly, with a denial of unbelievable cynicism. They said it was untrue that allied air chiefs had decided to bomb German residential centres deliberately. Their bombing and ground policy had in no way been changed. It consisted in destroying the German army and ensuring unconditional surrender. German cities were bombed in accordance with military considerations. The attack on Dresden was aimed at communications. It was a *fortuitous* circumstance that at the time of the attack the city was full of refugees.

What is the truth?

In the late hours of February 13th, a Tuesday, strong Anglo-American bomber forces bombed the centre of the city both sides of the Elbe and the encircling ring of residential streets and reduced them to blazing ruins. Only once previously, in the autumn of 1944, had a small sector of this area to the west of the inner old town been attacked. The circle of fire now enclosed many square miles of built up city and what had stood there can be read on any map of Dresden: dwelling houses, streets of shops and a few dozen public buildings, the gates of which had stood open to the world of culture for centuries. That evening there must have been about 1 million souls within the city — several hundred thousand bombed-outs and refugees from the two neighbouring Silesian provinces in addition to the 600 000 population. Through the streets of flame which consumed the narrow closely-built streets until then undamaged, many people found a quick death through lack of oxygen. Tens of thousands who, in many cases without knowing how, escaped from the fires found their way to the wide green spaces outside the inner city, to the Grosser Garten in the east and the left bank of the Elbe. At midnight a second enemy air fleet appeared in the red sky of the Elbe valley and started a massacre with explosive bombs and board artillery among the masses of people on the green spaces that no one but an Ilya Ehrenburg could have conceived.

Twelve hours later, on Wednesday — the sirens were out of action — a third attack laid a fresh belt of destruction upon the periphery of the city where the streams of homeless humanity might be expected to be. And on the Thursday at midday enemy bombing formations bombed the villages further along the Elbe valley where the long columns of refugees were seeking shelter.

Those are the four acts of a coldly calculated plan of murder and destruction.

WORLD AND WAR NEWS

THE STATUS OF THE BALTIC STAT[ES]

Washington—Acting Secretary of State said at the Press Conference that the ... of the Baltic countries as far as the U... States was concerned remained uncha[nged] even after the Yalta Conference. Th[e] ... nisters of the Baltic States—Estonia, Latvia Lithuania continued to be recognised by State Department.

Geneva—The Swedish newspaper "Folk Dagbladet" reports of the heroic stand of members of the Latvian Free Corps against ... Russian detaining power. Former Latvian ... ficers are in command of these Resistance Groups, while Latvian peasants support the movement. They could thus liberate already thousands of Latvians who were put into prison by the Russians, waiting their deportation to Siberia. Nevertheless since the beginning of February 14.000 Latvian peasants are reported to have been deported to Siberia.

POLISH COMMENTARY

Wisconsin—A Republican representative from a strong Polish-American section of Wisconsin made the following comment to President Roosevelt's speech: "He talked about a free and independent Poland when 130.000 Polish boys cannot even go home without being sent to Siberia".

THIS IS THE FRONT PAGE OF THE AMERICAN P.O.W. NEWSPAPER THAT WAS PRINTED IN BERLIN. WE ONLY RECEIVED ONE COPY OF THIS "WEEKLY"

Early in March 1945, Unterofficer Herr Feidmann called us into our lunch room. He distributed a mimeographed letter--probably run off on a Gestetner--that we had to read in his presence. The heading on the letter read; "Soldiers of the United States of America!" The letter was an appeal for we prisoners to join the German army in a fight that "will not only decide Germany's fate, but as well that of your own country, of your wives, children and homes which includes all that makes life worth living."

We asked some questions especially when one of the lines read: "Once the German barrier of resistance went away nothing else would nor could stop the unrestricted expansive force of the Bolshevik imperialism." One of our men asked if Germany's actions were along the same lines. Herr Feldmann did not answer that question. It was almost an admission that

Germany was losing the war.

The full text of this two-sided document is included. The second side appears on the next page.

Soldiers of the United States of America !

The Soviet rulers hope to inflict upon Germany and upon Europe at the same time the death-blow by a final vast effort and concentration of all their means of power available. Conscious of the fact that this phase of the war will be the decisive one the German nation too will gather all its forces to stem the bolshevik innundation.

Soldiers ! The bolshevik assault against the German eastern front like made all the defensive forces of the other European nations realize that a dreadful danger is threatening not only Germany and Europe, but the whole of the civilized world. There should be no doubt about the fact that a defeat of Germany would mean unchecked Bolshevism and the loss of individual freedom and the national independence of all nations.

Cast a glance at the already commencing extermination of all the national and cultural individuals in those parts of eastern, south-eastern, and north-eastern Europe as being occupied by the Soviets. That will make it clear to each of you that Stalin will not in the least respect any guarantees of his allies as to the preservation of the independence of these nations. Once the German barrier of resistance went away nothing else would nor could stop the unrestricted expansive force of the bolshevik imperialism.

The best men of the nations to-day subdued by Stalin also expect help from the representatives of those nations which five years ago by their own governments were called up to fight for the rights of the small nations against the violation by the claims of foreign powers. If these governments compelled by the Kreml are no longer able nor willing to stick to their word, it is not only a matter of a sane policy and self-preservation, but also of personal honour and national dignity already for the P.o.w. to do everything in their power for regaining the freedom of political activity by redeeming this word.

American Soldiers ! Does the word "fair" mean anything at all to you, if these cruel Asiatic hords slaughter and torment women and children, these things have nothing to do with humanity. Do you still remember the procedure of bolshevik enslavement in 1940, when the Red Army occupied the Baltic and Roumanian territories ? At that time countless thousands of people were sent to Siberia expropriated, or shot. In those days you all [illegible] in America and you should remember your papers then not sparing their words against such a cruelty. This cruel procedure of Bolshevism did not change in the meantime. Bolshevism has practically never turned into democracy, this phrase only being meant to calm the nations allied with the Soviets. It is not long ago that large graves were found at the Elas units in Greece, and such graves as found in Katyn and Winniza are an inextinguishable proof for the bestiality of Bolshevism.

Do you know that Roumanians, Serbes, Poles, Slovakians as a Soviet war-prey are now good enough to take a bullet and are forced to fight their former liberators and allies - against the very interests of their own countries ? The events in the baltic states, in poland, Hungary and Greece prove clearly enough the real aim hidden behind the mask of Moscow. In a bolshevik America there would be no way for anybody to economic rise. The fundament of your commercial system rests upon private initiative and that means personal success as well as the fate of your own country, women, children, and homes depending on your

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...on private initiative and that means personal success as well as the fate of your own country, women, children, and homes depending on your own assiduity and strenousness. In communistic America you would all have to renouce these things. The third world-war against Bolshevism often mentioned among your people at home and among yourselves is present enough for the fact that a war against the Soviets cannot possibly be

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avoided. For this reason the coming fight against Bolshevism will be easier now than at a later date, when some day the Soviet-Union will have outgrown all boundaries.

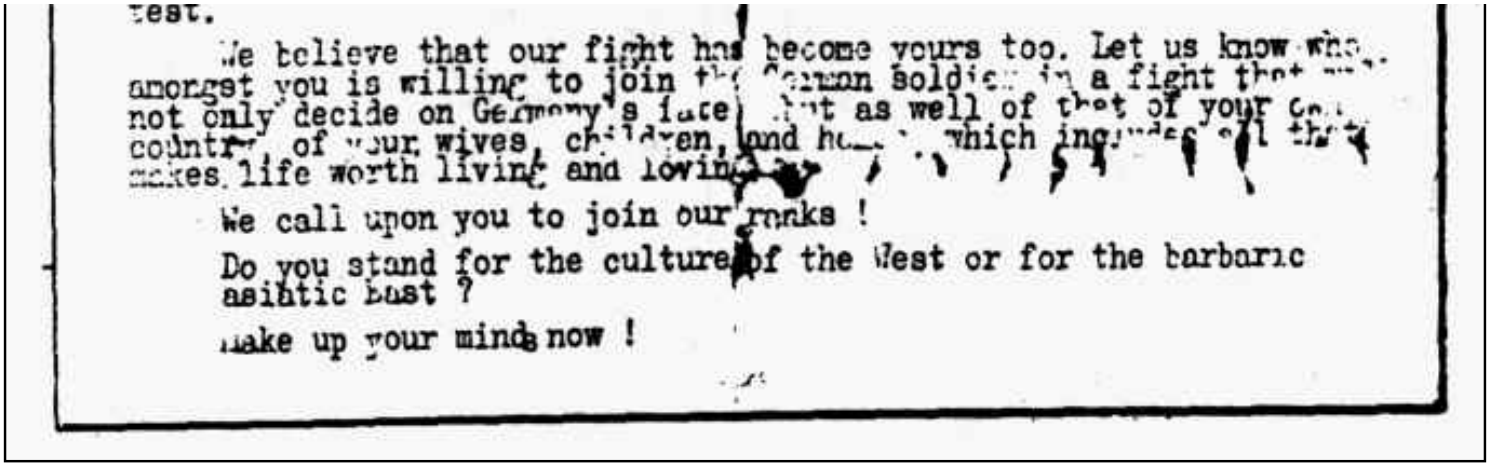
The Soviet-Union has been endeavouring for a long time to enlarge her political and economical extent in China. Here, too, American and Soviet interests are already crossing the geographic situation of the Soviet-Union to this country being very favourable. Another political theatre, where already nowadays Soviet Russia and the United States have got into conflict, may be seen in the middle states of South and Central America, first of all in Mexico. Here Bolshevism under the pressure of the actual political constellations not only forms centres for penetrating these countries, but also starting bases to get into the very heart of the United States for their future bolshevistic undermining. In reality the government and public opinion of the U.S.A. have been mistrusting Bolshevism, which is proved by the fact of agitation for communism and the founding of a communist party having, hitherto, been forbidden in spite of the instantaneous alliance between the two states. After all America exactly understands - in spite of all contrarious assurances at present - that even a democracy so proud of the rights of free opinion and the immunity of her social institutions cannot possibly compromise with Bolshevism in her own country without causing her own ruin.

Soldiers ! Germany, at this critical moment, gives you a chance for taking part in fighting Bolshevism, but it will not accept your help without any equivalent. Those amongst you who volunteer during the Soviet great-offensive for being engaged at the front or behind the line will be repatriated via Switzerland immediately after the bolshevik offensive having been battered.

Towards their own governments these volunteers will remain P.o.W., not losing any rights dating from captivity.

There have been hundreds of thousands of active combatants against Bolshevism hitherto won out of the ranks of P.o.W. who stood the test.

We believe that our fight has become yours too. Let us know who...



test.

We believe that our fight has become yours too. Let us know who amongst you is willing to join the German soldiers in a fight that will not only decide on Germany's fate but as well of that of your own country, of your wives, children, and homes, which includes all that makes life worth living and loving.

We call upon you to join our ranks !

Do you stand for the culture of the West or for the barbaric asiatic East ?

Make up your minds now !

At roll call on April 13, 1945, Unterofficer Herr Feldmann informed us that our president Franklin D. Roosevelt had died. Believe it or not, this man was really shook up. He was serious when he asked: "Who is this man Truman?" We took advantage of the situation and painted Truman as a tyrant, a man of action and a person who would do anything to end the war. One of the P.O.W.'s told Herr Feldmann that Truman had a secret weapon that could blow Germany off the map if he decided to push the button, Feldmann laughed nervously and said that we would be destroyed along with Germany if he did. We replied that our sacrifice would be "for God and Country."

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Our work assignments tapered off. We knew something was up. Even the son-of-a-bitch Herr Feldmann started treating us nicer. We had several make-work. jobs that didn't tax our energy. It was early April 1945 when this change of attitude became apparent. And having received the news that Franklin D. Roosevelt had died did have some effect on Herr Feldmann and a number of German officials.

Roosevelt was elected for a fourth term in November 1944. He died on April 12, 1945 and we learned about it on April 13th. If you missed the headline for the unprecedented fourth term, you can see it now. Also, the headline reporting his death and his successor appear in this cluster.

HOME EDITION

The South Bend Tribune.

F.D.R. WINS FOURTH TERM

Grant In; Capehart Leads; Congress Democratic

GATES IS AHEAD IN RACE FOR GOVERNORSHIP

Chicago Daily Tribune

FINAL

ROOSEVELT IS DEAD!

Truman Sworn In, Pledges War Success

NEW EXECUTIVE SAYS HE PLANS NO CHANGES

THE 31ST AND 33D PRESIDENTS OF THE UNITED STATES

STROKE FATAL AS HE VISITS WARM SPRINGS

TRUMAN FACING WAR, PEACE AND DOMESTIC TESTS

Mrs. Roosevelt Gets News of Death at Club

ROOSEVELT FUNERAL SET FOR 4 TOMORROW; BURIAL AT HYDE PARK

Roosevelt's Health Failed Steadily Since Late in '43

JOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOE

Krause, the 80-yeax old guard, had always been friendlier than Feldmann. We called him "Pop." He became more talkative and even asked where we lived in the States. His knowledge of the United States was minimal, but he was aware of our industrial and economic system. One day he pulled a picture out of his wallet and informed us that he had a brother who lived in Ohio. He said he was a businessman. We passed the picture around. His brother was standing in front of a Sunoco station.

After the Dresden bombing, he was gone for a week since several members

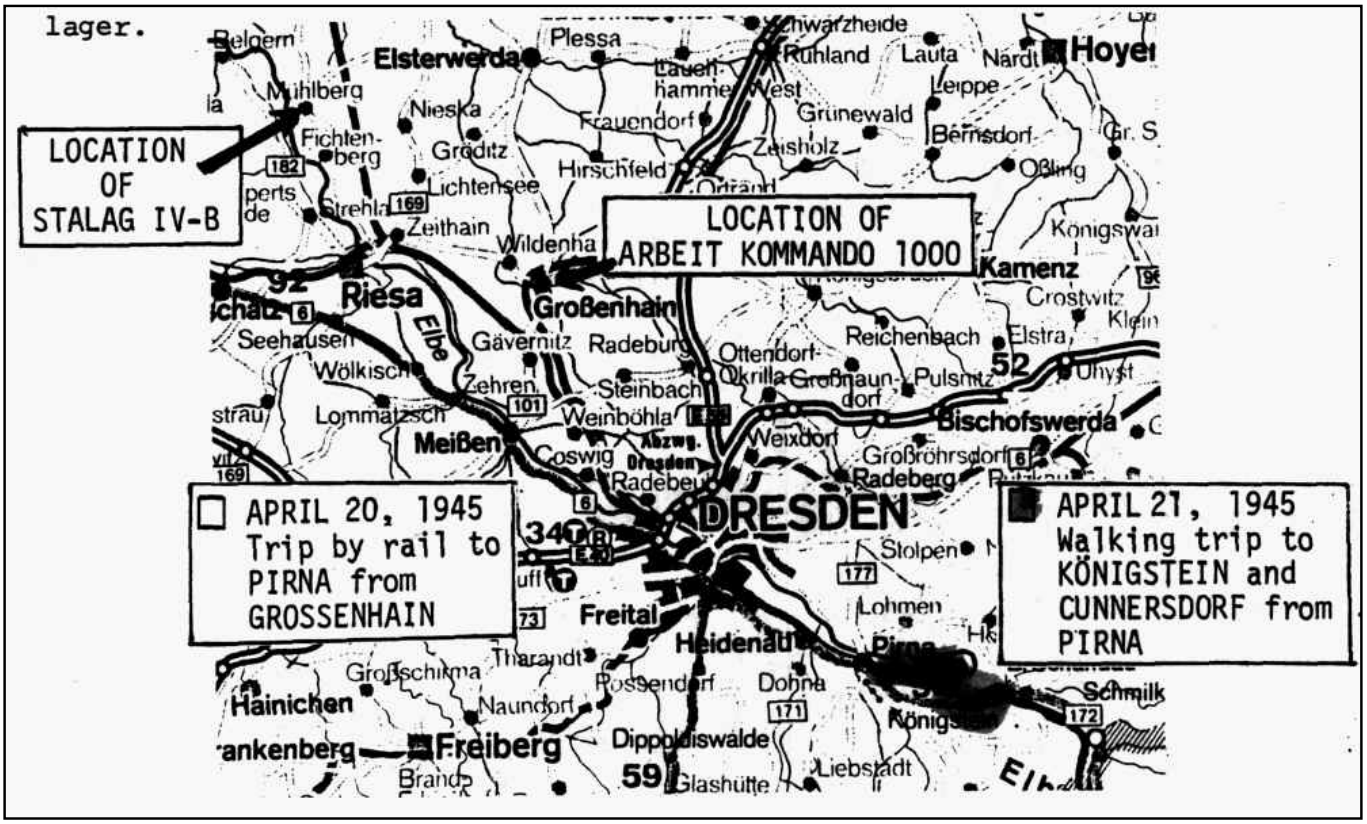
of his family living in Dresden had been killed. We were sure he would be very bitter and mean to us when he returned, but that was not the case. He very quietly said "My family was killed, but that's war." We could feel his loss as he didn't talk to us or say anything for a few days. But when he did start talking, he went on to say "We must schloss or toten Der Fuhrer!" We interpreted that to mean "Kill Hitler!" Now, people didn't talk that way in Germany and I remember some of us trying to quiet him down.

Then there was a rather humorous incident regarding Pop. A few weeks after the bombing, we were getting ready to board the train to Grossenhain after working the day in Dresden. The train was ready to pull out, but Pop was not with us. Then, we could see him, very drunk, staggering toward us some hundred yards away. I remember very distinctly, three of our guys ran out to help him on the train. One under each arm and one of the fellows carrying his rifle! This happened shortly before we left Arbeit Kornmando 1000 for Pirna and Czechoslovakia.

Pop was the kind of person who had to serve his country as we served ours but a person whose heart and soul was never in the assigned task. In our off-the-record talks, he said he could never understand why we two countries wire fighting one another. We had so much in common.

Our time in Grossenhain was short.

We had our last look at the railroads we worked so diligently on when we traveled through Dresden on our way to Pirna. We left Grossenhain early in the morning of April 20th and arrived in Pirna around noon. Our working days in both Dresden and Grossenhain will live in our memories forever. And there would be no more working days. From now on, it was a matter of moving us South away from the oncoming Russians. We left Pirna on the 21st for Konigstein and on to Cunnersdorf where we spent the night in a lager.



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We hoofed it from this point on. No more train rides. It was like the blind leading the blind. We lost our Grossenhain guards long ago. Each time we are joined with another group, a new numbskull appeared. We didn't get wise to this for quite some time. They bought our confidence when they actually found a place for us to stay. We called it "The Barn."

But first, I want to tell you about our long hike to "The Barn" from Cunnersdorf. I think we saw a multitude of diversified scenes. We saw our first jet plane. A P-38 was chasing the German jet and there was no contest for the P-38. In the same sky, we saw German bombers carrying fighter planes piggy-back. When the bombers reached their target area, the planes were released to perform escort duty. There were dogfights before our eyes and we saw an American plane blasted out of the sky. It landed off in the distance with billowing smoke pointing out the location of the crash.

We saw castles high atop mountains. These castles were built years ago. How did they get all of the stone work up to the high places? When you see the same area landmarks more than once, you can conclude that someone at the helm is unsure of where they are leading us. If. the second try hadn't worked, I think we would have been on our way. Not yet, Art and Joe

They (the leaders) found the right tine in the fork in the road! We moved into a town named Reinhardtsdorf. It was about the size of its name. Just outside the town, our straggling group was halted. The leaders met with a man that I would call a farmer. My conclusion was based on the fact that there was a small house, a large barn and an enclosure. We were direc-ted onto the property and told that this would be our lodging for awhile. It was cold during the day and the nights would be colder. All eighty of us would have to find shelter and warmth in this barn.

Food! We actually received a bread ration and some hot ersatz coffee. We were favored with fine crowded sleeping quarters complete with the latest in straw sans boxcar manure. After a long day of hiking' in circles, we were ready for the bread and coffee. Joe' and I found a spot where we could relax and stretch out. It was great to get off our feet. Some of the stronger members of our new family climbed a wooden ladder to the hayloft. They had the thicker mattresses of straw. It was amazing to see that the entire group fit into the barn and each person had elbow room.

The compound was nothing more than a barn with a hog fence around the grounds. There were gates and we had the freedom to walk around inside and outside. We even had a fire in the fenced enclosure during the day. There were other farms nearby and -

some of us went out begging for food. Our best prospect was potato peelings. It was possible to determine who had bad eyesight by the thickness of the peelings in the package we received. Again, they didn't know that we were P.O.W.'s. Probably they thought we were other starving Germans.

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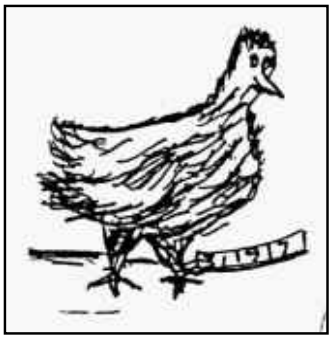
After our morning ersatz coffee was served, you had a choice of what to do. You could either lay around in boredom all day, or walk around the barnyard for exercise and boredom. A detail dug a slit trench for our latrine. Water was available from a hand pump near the barn. We still had the three basics—-air, water and some form of nourishment.



There was a ruckus in the barnyard one day. The owner of the barn and farm came unglued. He was screaming at the top of his voice. When he came down, he told us that one of our criminals had killed one of his hens and ate it. He found the evidence near one of the fire locations in the yard. He was more concerned about the tag that was on the leg of the hen. All producing hens were registered with the German government. Whoever stole the chicken probably ate the tag, too.

In our proximity to others in our huddled sleeping arrangement, we did hear a voice we could understand. We started talking to an English P.o.W. He was A. Percy Nicholls. He was a very religious person and said several prayers for us. He sought the approval for holding a religious service the first Sunday after we arrived at the Barn. We had many interesting conversations.

Percy had been a P.O.W. for over two years. He lived in Ilford, Essex in England. His career objective was to be a missionary. He noticed our beard and asked us if we would like to shave. He wasn't being critical about the beards, he must have wanted to see what we really looked like. He lent us his dull Gem razor. Remember, no shaving cream cans, shaving soap or a brush were available. We used hot ersatz coffee for the lubricant. It does work. Our other choice was cold water. I used ersatz coffee to brush my teeth and for a mouth rinse. Joe and I convinced one another that we looked better. We didn't have a mirror to use in checking for ourselves. Percy was soft spoken, but a very interesting person. We exchanged addresses and planned on contacting all parties once we had returned to our respective countries. ***(I did correspond with Percy and mailed some items that were hard to obtain in England. In his last communiqué, he stated that he was going to Africa as a missionary. I never heard from him after that. I will include part of one of his letters that refers to the "old barn" near Reinhardtsdorf and that he could "still picture you and Joe Kleven quite well.")***

Our stay in the Barn lasted much longer than anticipated. We spent from april 21st to May 6th in this location outside of Reinhardtsdorf. Our food ration was getting smaller and smaller. At one time, we were receiving an eighth of a loaf of bread plus three small potatoes. Coffee was available in the morning and in the evening. We weren't burning too many calories except for our time out looking for food.

The chief guard approached Joe and I about doing some work for food. He had seen us go in and out of the enclosure and deducted that we knew our way around the area. We accepted the offer immediately. He handed us what we would call a requisition. It was handwritten and signed by Lisbeth Hengelouer. He had me print our names and P.O.W. numbers on the note. He placed his signature of approval on it. Although the request was for the following Monday, we moved it up to "right now." We were hungry!

wife of a German Army officer. To see the inside of a German home was worth the trip. Everything was in apple pie order and quaint. Joe pointed out pictures on the wall with a young man in uniform. And to think, we sat at his dining room table and ate his food.

Ironically, we went back to the same house the next morning begging for food. She didn't even recognize us. We did find some thick potato peelings at one of her neighbor's house.

We had a long chat with Percy about our plan. Yes, we planned on leaving this group at the first opportunity. He more or less told us that if we have the desire, we needed the faith in ourselves and one another. Percy said: "I know you will make it. You have my address. Write me when you get back in the United States."

We had no problem finding the Hengelouer residence because we were familiar with the area. Our potato peeling reconnoitering trips took us past their garbage~ can several times before. She could have said "You fellows look familiar..." but she didn't Lizbeth Hengelouer was cordial and instructed us in what she wanted done.

Joe and I took turns chopping and piling the wood. Her time estimate of thirty minutes was on target. After we- finished, we were invited into the house and into her dining room. Joe and I differ on what we had to eat. He said we had a bowl of oatmeal with a pat of margarine on it. I swear we had roast pox and German sauerkraut with some mashed potatoes and gravy. It was very tasty——whatever it was.

Joe estimated that she was in her early thirties, had a two or three-year-old child and was the

Reinhardtsdorf, a 5.5.45

Für morgen Montag benötige ich zwei Mann zum arbeiten, bei Hengelbauer Siedlung 30↓.

Lisbeth Hengelbauer

WILFRED A. KUESPERT 311829
JOSEPH KLEVEN 311917

genehmigt
Brümmer, Ogru.

Doesn't it seem ages ago that
we were in that old barn Art?
I suppose a lot of things have
happened to you since then. I can
still picture you & Joe Kleven quite
well, tho' I should like a photo
of you & your wife when you are
writing. (All I seem to be doing is
asking for things in this letter!) If
there's anything you want from me
do let me know. There's nothing
much I can send materially, I
suppose, Art, but if I can help you
at all spiritually, in the things that
will outlast this poor old world, I shall
be only too delighted.
With every good wish Art to you & your wife.
Yours very sincerely
[illegible] Nichols

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It was obvious that our guards were confused about what to do with us. We were told that we would be merging with other P.O.W. groups and would be fed upon arrival. Arrival? Where? We left the "barn" on May 7, 1945, being led to an unknown destination. The guards were concerned that the Russians were closing in on Eastern front and didn't want to meet them. The guards thought the Americans were nearby. The truth is that we were in a pocket in which neither side was represented by armies.

As we trudged, along a hard—surfaced road, we were joined by others. This time our new friends were political prisoners, civilians and mixed groups of P.o .W. 's. If anyone asked about food, the guards shrugged their shoulders and said "kein essen." According to Joe's self-winding watch, it was 9:30 in the morning. Were we going to spend the day with this wandering column of humanity? Our wheels started spinning--Joe came up with the idea that we should make a "pit stop." We drifted off into the woods and rested. With the sun as our compass, we knew we were heading South. We confirmed the direction with a lonely civilian who was heading back to his farm in Sudetenland. We could still see the column in the distance and delayed our hiking until they were out of sight.

We found a stream near our lounging area. The water was clear so we cupped our hands and drank some of this drink of the Gods. That was our "morning coffee." After an hour or so, we hit the road.

Courageous or stupid? We were on our own. Since we are no longer under the control of the German government, let's dispense with the barbed-wire enclosure.

This was no heroic move. It was realistic. We told our friend at the "barn" that if there was no promise of food, we would strike out on our own and live off the land. Percy planned to stay with the group and, offer spiritual assistance to those who needed it.

We commended him for this.

Joe made me laugh when he tapped me on the shoulder like Oliver Hardy did to Stan Laurel and said; "What a mess you got me in!" come to think of it, it was a mess. We didn't have a map, we had no compass and we had no provisions. All we had was intestinal fortitude. While we were contemplating our next move, we kept our feet moving. Each time we saw a vehicle coming down the road, we would take cover. We saw several German army vehicles and staff cars. The occupants weren't looking for stray P.O.W.'s, they were running from the Russians. If they could have seen us, they would have one helluva time trying to figure out what we were. We had these shaggy overcoats on--Joe's Polish overcoat and my French overcoat. All of a sudden it dawned on us that we looked like civilians and weren't wearing American soldier gear. This erased any fear of being hunted.

We walked and talked while looking for that first road that led Westward. We came to several intersections that didn't look promising because the roads that forked of f became too narrow to lead to any distance of consequence. We walked for miles without seeing a living thing. We felt like we were the last people on earth.

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Our Southward course took us past some of the most beautiful scenery. We established our location being several miles from the Czechoslovakian border. There was evidence of a planned reforestation and it was con-firmed by plaques that were placed on fences. The year of planting was etched on the metal panel. The plats of trees extended to infinity in all directions.

The road we were on made several turns, but always returned to the true South alignment. We saw several junctions, but the trails led to high mountains. We deducted that we would not see an East-West road until we crossed the border into Czechoslovakia. Even with our breaks, we averaged almost three miles an hour. It was cool and crisp and by walking at this pace, we could be in Czechoslovakia before dark. And the probability of begging some food would be in order.

Walking keeps one in shape, but our shapes didn't need much walking. We talked about the first car we had earned the use of. We had a 1934 Dodge in 1941 and my brothers and I kept that gem very clean and full of gas until the war rationing started.

When you are hungry, you talk about food. When you are walking, you talk about cars.

Joe didn't get a chance to tell me about his car experience, because We came upon another junction. We surveyed the situation. The road headed in the right direction, but didn't show any promise that it could get through the distant mountain. We didn't have our AAA cards with us, so we couldn't get a map. Our decision was to continue on the same road.

We were in Sudetenland. This is where it started. Hitler appropriated Sudetenland for Germany. It is the land along the Northern border of Czechoslovakia between the Elbe and Oder rivers extending some 186 miles. The land rises to 5,258 feet in the Riesengebirge Mountain Range. The area was rich in mineral deposits, especially iron and coal. There were mineral spring resorts. The people who lived along the border of both countries were called "Sudete Germans." Hitler gained control of this area after the Munich Pact of 1938, but was relieved of this real estate when it reverted back to Czechoslovakia in l945-—several months after we passed through this area.

In addition to seeing more quadrangles of systematically planted and dated trees, we saw huge blocks of concrete that were similar to those in the Maginot Line. They were staggered to prevent tanks from passing through. There were more tree projects past the concrete barriers, so we knew we were still in Germany.

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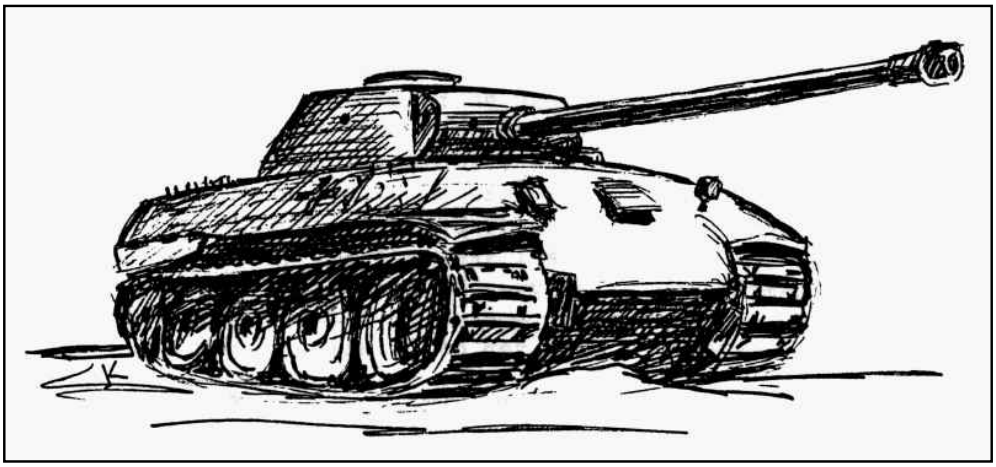

While walking at a comfortable pace, we would pick a group of trees, a hill or any identifiable landmark as an objective. We took turns guessing how long it would take to reach this point. Joe had his watch, so he was elected to be the official timer. Our estimates were placed in the mental file. This was one of several things we did to distract from the uncertainty. We were anxious to see some evidence that we were in Czechoslovakia or nearly there.

In retrospect, we learned that if we conversed about a subject that had depth, this made our minds work harder and at the same time made us oblivious to the fact that we were two stray ex—P.O.W.'s and American soldiers blindly working our way toward American or Allied lines. Soon we would be entering a new country. Although the miles were piling up slowly, we were gaining ground.

After not seeing a soul for miles, we observed a collection of military vehicles in the distance. As we walked closer, we learned that they were scattered and in no combative arrangement. We saw trucks, half-tracks, a tank and men milling around the area. We were apprehensive at first., but made up our minds that we would walk on by as unconcerned as possible. There was nothing hostile about what we saw. And if this group is going about their business, they won't even see these two bums walking along the road.

As we walked closer, we saw the famous German plus (+). We didn't have time to react, because a German-type officer approached us waving in a friendly manner. We waved back and the distance between the two factions grew shorter. Once we were face to face, he identified himself as a medical officer with the Panzer Unit that was out of service. We identified ourselves by showing our American dog tags. The officer assumed that we were American scouts, *(In these shaggy costumes? O.K. by us, Mr. Officer)* and that we knew where we were and where the Americans were. The officer explained that they had word that the fighting was over and that they had withdrawn from combat and were waiting for the war to be ended. He related how he feared being surrendered to the Russians and what they would do to them.

He hoped that we could be of some assistance to them. We told him that we hoped he had some water and food for us. We were hungry and thirsty. He led us to a provision wagon (a food or commissary vehicle) and prepared two mugs for making coffee. He placed two discs that looked like hockey pucks in the mug and poured water from a vesicle into the mugs. He

stirred the contents until the "hockey pucks" dissolved. We had coffee with cream and sugar. He was proud to show us one of the pucks before dunking it. It was a combination of ersatz coffee, dry milk and sugar compressed into one disc. The water he used was luke warm and the brew did taste like coffee--bad coffee. It did satisfy our thirst.

The officer's kindness and generosity was overwhelming. After our coffee was downed, we were led to an area where a potpourri of items was strewn along the ground. "Take anything you want" was the command. I retrieved a pocket diary for the year 1945, some pin-on badges that represented the different branches of service in the German army, a bottle of aspirins and a bottle of orange juice tablets. After letting us dig through the pile, he wanted to get down to business.

Our new friend presented his plan to us. It involved our being "tagged" as battle casualties therefore qualifying us for an ambulance ride. We were to inform anyone who stopped us during the ride, that this medical officer was searching for the Allied lines to make sure we received immediate medical treatment. He was thorough in filling out the "Verwundete" tags for both of us. ***(Time has obliterated the detailed information on the tag, but my name is sane-what discernible in the adjacent copy of both sides of the tag)***

Joe was having stomach problems and up- chucking. This was a break for us but could be a bit tricky if we met the Russians first. We agreed to follow through and concluded that we would reach our destination a bit sooner. As long as they believed we knew where the Allied or American lines were, we ran with the pitch.

The medical officer was the kind of person you wouldn't mind knowing in civilian life. He was very considerate of Joe's stomach problem and gave him something that seemed to help. If I were to describe the man, I would say that he was of Mr. Peeper's build and a Wendy's Dave Thomas look and disposition. We theorized that the top brass of this Panzer Unit had abandoned ship and left the medical officer in charge. And now he was doing the same---riding off in the Company ambulance with two expert scouts to guide him to the American lines. He had his driver fill the ambulance with petrol before we left. Joe said "one more time" and used an empty German helmet. He said he felt better, now.

Joe convinced, the officer that American troops were in Czechoslovakia and our best chance to meet them was to continue driving South until we hit a main East-West highway. The officer instructed the driver to follow Joe's instructions. We knew we were in a pocket of undisturbed farms and buildings as there was no evidence of bombings or military vehicle tracks. We didn't care how long we rode in a vehicle, because Joe and I were getting some rest for our poor tired feet. Our shoes needed a retread, too.

Some of our choices of roads were bad. We circled the same area on one occasion. When we

doubled back one time, we saw remnants of the Panzer Unit

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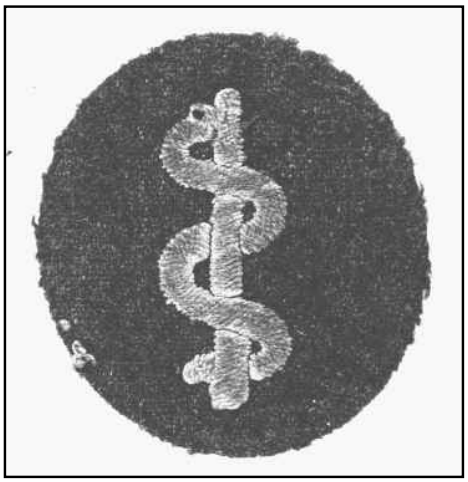
trying to keep up with us. The peaceful ride suddenly changed to one of fear for our lives. Russian planes were strafing the Panzer unit off in the distance. Joe and I prayed that there was a big red cross on the roof of the ambulance. We even wished they had neon on it. The planes flew over us, but didn't fire a shot. Our driver informed us that we were in Aussig.

The keen eyes of Joe Kleven caught a glimpse of a hospital sign. He told the driver to turn around, because he was feeling very ill. We got out and said "this is it" and Joe said he would go inside and that I should inform them that we can't go on any further. It was my duty to stay with Joe through this emergency. This ploy worked. If ever I thanked anyone for doing something for me, I did a excellent job with the medical officer. I even told him that he was a genuine person and that we both valued him as a friend, not an enemy. He was flattered and more or less said the same thing about Joe and I. He offered to wait for us. We didn't want this, because as soon as we would see the ambulance go out of sight, we would be on the road again. I noticed a map in a door pocket. I asked him if it covered the area we were in. The officer opened it. Across the top it read: "Navigation-karte." It was in German. He did point to the town of Aussig and said that we were there. I noticed a main road that ran from Aussig to Eger, Czechoslovakia....and we were on it! It took a bit longer to say "goodbye" as he thought Joe was coming out. I told him that Joe was checking in to stay. With that information, he instructed the driver that they were leaving. The officer reached for his shoulder and ripped his medical patch off. He handed it to me and said he wanted me to have it in remembrance of our brief friendship. I thanked him for it.



Joe saw the ambulance leave and came out of the hospital with a scowl on his face. He was upset because it took so long to say goodbye to someone you met seven hours ago. After I explained that I saw a map and could now chart a course that will lead us to our troops. We confirmed that we were in Aussig.

We walked Westward to the edge of town. We came upon a pile of discarded weapons. It was unbelievable that mirage was real. The Germans had stripped people of their ammunition rendering their weapons useless. The inventory was unlimited except for a few models. Pistols, revolvers and automatics composed the waist-high pile. Joe searched the pile for a Luger, but couldn't find one. I settled for a Belgian 9mm piece and a P-38. Joe found a Walther 7.65 pistol and also retrieved a P-38. Some of the automatics had the clips removed. Some of the pieces had holsters, but we didn't take any with our newly-acquired souvenirs.

What we didn't take into consideration was the extra weight we would be carrying with our guns. We were fragile and underweight. For example, I

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weighed 180 pounds when we left the United States. The marches, the lack of food and the heavy work during our brief career as railroad men reduced my weight to 134 pounds. We did build a little muscle on the job. So, seven pounds of weapons made a slight difference especially when there was no substantial amount of food to build a body. It was a case of mind over matter-—we wanted these souvenirs.

It was pathetic to see people of all ages and conditions on the main Northern road in Czechoslovakia. The road was jammed with people carrying their personal belongings on their backs, push carts, pull carts, baby carriages, wheelbarrows and several people being carried on stretchers. Some were heading back to their homes hoping they would still be there. There was no humility. If you had to go, you walked off to the side of the road and did your business. We plodded along with them. Every time a truck would go by, we moved to the road side of the mass of humanity and tried to flag it down. We were heading for Karisbad which was many miles or kilometers away. Thanks to the medical officer, we were on the right road. After seeing his map. it was a direct road to Karisbad.

JOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOE

I remember our attempt at bicycling through Europe - all two miles of it. We commandeered bicycles from two elderly people with full inten-tions of peddling our way back to the Western Front. I don't think we realized how weak we were. (Our frail bodies and lack of energy forced us to abandon the steeds of steel and return to walking and hitch-hiking.

After the short trip on bicycles, we were thirsty. Art saw a lady dusting off her stepping stone sidewalk with a crude looking implement. It was a bundle of branches off a bush. He asked her for some "trink-yasser." She was more than willing, to drop what she was doing and fetch some water for us. She removed a dipper off a post and opened a cistern near her rainwater downspout. She dipped the water out of the cistern and handed it to Art. He drank it and she did the same for me. We gulped it down because it was wet. It was rainwater and tasted like distilled water. There were no minerals in it or something was missing. We thanked her and resumed our walking. We eventually reached the column of people Art was describing.

It was still daylight around ten o'clock at night and the column moved on. We didn't. When we found a knoll that was relatively clear and with trees for protection, we left the mass and collapsed. From the time we left the Barn on May 7th, we traveled over sixty miles--some of it in circles. Earlier today, May 8th, we crossed the border into Czechoslo-vakia, rode in a German ambulance, walked, rode bicycles, drank water from a cistern and I forgot to mention that we thought we had an auto-mobile to drive back to the West. It had petrol, but one thing kept us from using the aged Fiat. The gears were stripped. We deserved some rest.

During the day, the temperatures were usually in the high sixties this time of year. The nights were cold as we experienced during the six hours we slept. There was a stream nearby and we did get some water. Water is water when you are thirsty. If there were any contaminates, too bad! We hit the road again and it was just beginning to get light. Either we became disoriented, or we were persuaded by the wider road. Somehow, we lost the main road. In a matter of a mile or so, we saw a sign that read Karisbad. We were working our way back to the main road.

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Two hours after we saw the sign that read Karisbad, we were on the main road again. Wasting strength and time under these conditions was sinful. We ceased chiding ourselves for the error when we saw a stake truck loaded with people coming down the road. Please, driver, have room for two more! We raised our thumbs in unison. The driver slowed down but rolled past us and we had to run to where the truck finally stopped. The driver was considerate of his standing passengers.

The only space left was in the cab.. .and we got to sit down, too. I sat next to the driver who was a large heavy German. He didn't ask what stop we wanted or anything like that. He made sure our door was closed and started in low gear to get us rolling.

Shortly after that, we were stopped by Russians who the driver tried to bribe with a bottle of wine. It didn't work. A Russian non-com grabbed the German driver, threw him out of the truck and then made a point to show the difference between the fat German and us by holding up my thin arms and commenting on our physical appearance.

We now had a Russian soldier for a driver. There was a problem--he didn't know how to shift gears. He tried to put it in gear without using the clutch. He made the gears grind to sound every note on the scale. I pointed to myself and then to the gearshift. He must have understood my pantomime conversation, because he sat back and observed each step of my instructions. I claimed to be an expert 6 x 6 driver. This was my first experience in teaching a Russian driver how to go from one gear to another without stripping all of the teeth off the gears.

Art got his plug in for the truck. It was a Studebaker truck. It was built in South Bend, Indiana (Art's hometown). It originally went to Russia through the Lend-Lease Program. The Germans became the new owners of the truck when they captured Russian soldiers and, their equipment - earlier in the war. And we witnessed the Russian driver tossing the German owner out on his ear. What a round robin! After a few dry runs, the Russian driver graduated. We were on the move again.

We drove past a line of Russian soldiers and one of them threw a slab of bacon at us. This was a large slab and I can't remember what happened to it.

Our first meeting with the Russian soldiers wasn't very pleasant. The ones we came in contact with were from 14 to 18 years old and real smart asses. The 14-year-old "Tommy Gun Kid" would have shot us without hesitation had it not been for one of their officers. The creeps were entertaining themselves with a most inhumane act. They were firing rifle grenades in the air within range of the horse and wagon combinations. The loud explosion scared the hell out of the horses and they would gallop off with their wagons bouncing like toys over the rough terrain. They roared with laughter at this act of cruelty. This soured our opinion of our so-called Allies.

JOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJ

You know, Art, I think the last few days we spent in Germany and

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Czechoslovakia were probably the most hectic and dangerous for us. I wonder what would have happened if we had stayed with that German mechanized unit. If the Russians had found us with this German outfit, I'm not sure we could have convinced them that we were Americans. The German soldiers in this tank unit very likely ended up in Siberia. We could have gone along! Next, we met up with that trigger-happy 14-year old Russian kid who grabbed your pistol and threw it over a hedge. I'm not sure that he wouldn't have liked to shoot both of us! By dangling our dog tags and yelling "Amerikana," we managed to attract the attention of the Russian officer. And you got your gun back.

Once we had established that we were Americans and on their side, they were buddy-buddy. They wanted us to drink with them. Who knows what they had to drink? We gestured that we were ill by rubbing our stomachs. They interpreted that to mean that we were really ill and made arrangements to take us to a P.O.W. hospital in Bilin (or Bilina), Czechoslovakia. This was an English P.0.W. hospital. I think they took us there in a Russian command car.

The English doctor reluctantly agreed to let us stay, but "for only one night." We didn't get a reason for his attitude toward us. After all, we did look like bums that no country would claim. The person in charge of linens and hygienic items was very courteous. We were assigned beds on the second floor. After we were settled, we took showers and shaved. Then we had something to eat and drink.

We chatted with the English P.O.W.'s who had found a home in this hospital. We tried to tell them that the war was over and they could leave. Some of them were excited about "butchering a pig." They were pretty rum-dum and are probably still there.

This tops all! After being cautious and looking out for one another during our odyssey, I tried to do Joe in at this hospital. I was playing with my P-38 German pistol. I remarked to Joe: "This is a well-balanced piece." I pulled the pistol down slowly and after drawing a bead on a speck on the wall, I pulled the trigger squeezing the. shot off as we were instructed to do in training. Well, to OUR surprise, there was a loud BANG!. a hole in the wall and silence. The silence was broken by a terse remark by Joe: DAMN IT, ART! I DON'T WANT TO DIE NOW! I was electrified by what happened. I didn't follow the cardinal rule of checking to see if there was anything in the chamber. Joe was standing by my side and if he would have been any closer, he would have received powder burns. Joe forgave me long before I stopped asking him to do so.

In front of God and anyone who reads this account, I apologize again for my carelessness, Joe.

We left the hospital the next morning. Three other American P.O.W.'s had been patients in this hospital and were surprised that we were on our own. They had no idea as to when they would leave or how they would leave. We talked them into leaving with us. This contingent headed for the Western edge of town.

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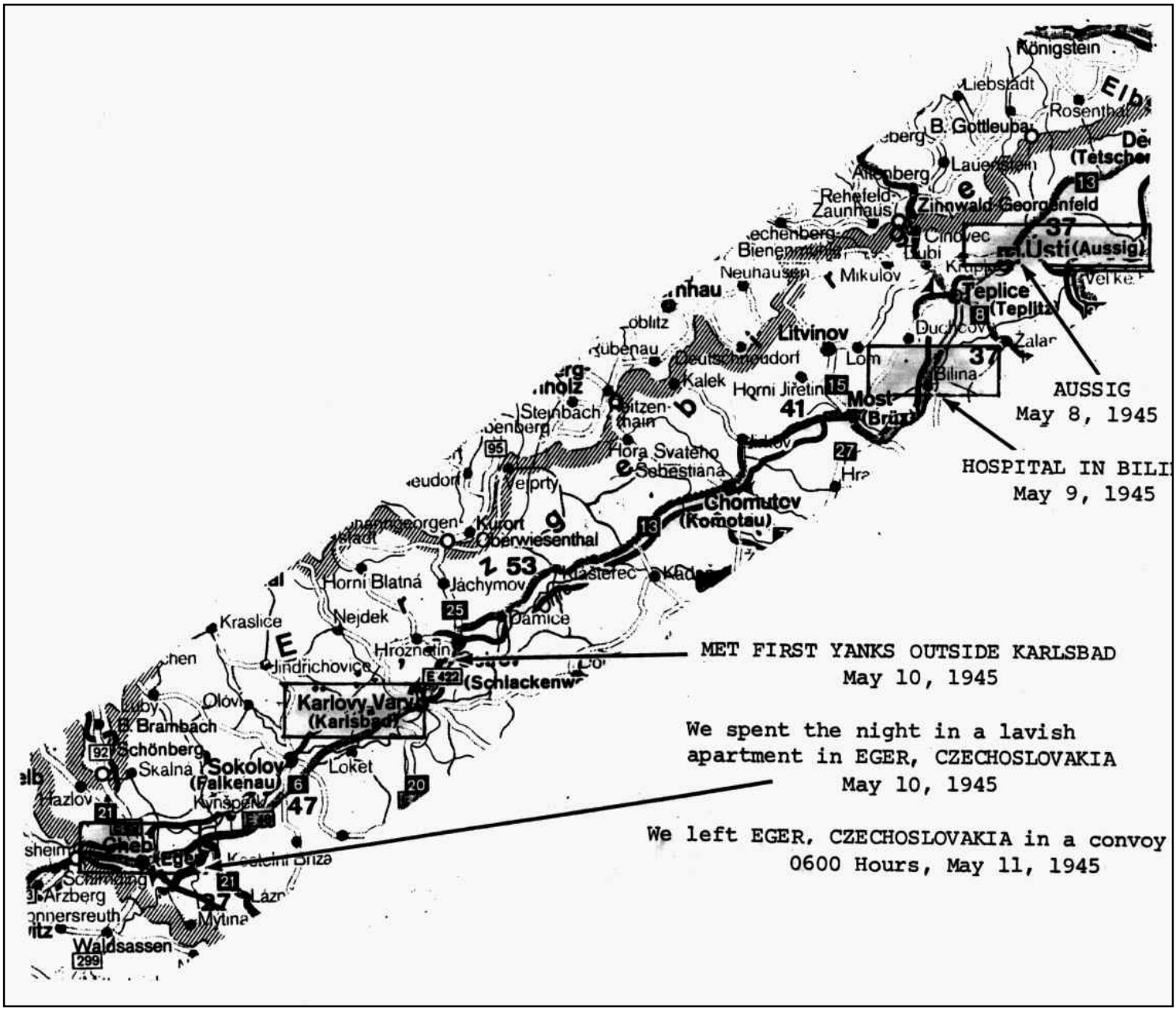
We met our first Yanks near Karlsbad, Czechoslovakia on May 10, 1945. The first thing Joe asked for was a D-ration bar. They didn't have any but did give us some K-Rations. Anything that resembled food was good enough for us. They were members of the 9th Armored Division who were moving into the pocket between the Russians and the Americans. We had just left a truck that was turning off the main road. We must have walked two miles before we saw the American jeep We were the first P.O.W.'s they had seen. What other P.O.W.'s would do what we did?



The non-com and his driver drove us to Karlsbad on May 10, 1945. We asked what provisions were made for checking in Americans who had been in prison camps in Germany. We were the first ones they had encountered and were expecting some instructions from headquarters. They did know about a receiving station for both P.O.W.'s and political prisoners that was located in Eger, Czechoslovakia.

We did get a break after reaching a command post in Karisbad. A captain from a liaison unit offered to take us to Eger in exchange for our assistance. We accepted his offer rather than ride in a convoy that was to leave Karisbad the next morning. The captain and his driver were searching the area for information about Prisoner-of-War camps, kommandos and field hospitals in Russian territory. By agreement, American officials were allowed to enter Russian territory to seek them out.

Joe and I thought about how far the German medical officer would have to travel to surrender to the Americans. Also, Joe and I were satisfied with our progress thus far. It was looking better every minute. We still have a long way to go.

JOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOE

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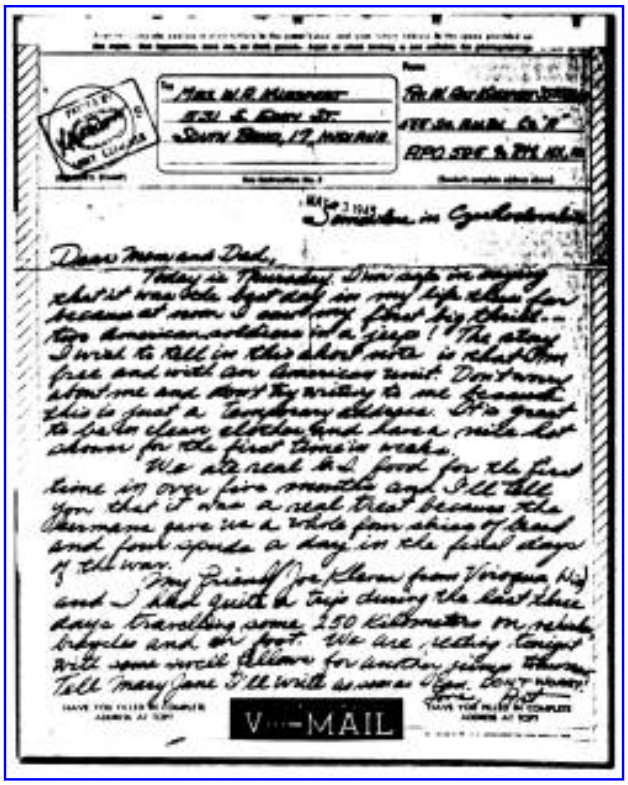
We arrived in Eger, Czechoslovakia late in the afternoon. The liaison officer dropped us off at an American field unit. It was mealtime arid it was our lucky day. We received a warm welcome from the non-corns in charge. Art and I recall what we had to eat in our first "American" meal. We had fried salmon patties, fried potatoes, peas and butterscotch pudding. To this day, I am not fond of butterscotch pudding. I ate everything and boy was I sick! My poor stomach couldn't take all of that fried stuff after what we had been fed.

The non-coms in charge set up two of the famous folding Army cots for us to relax on while they finished out the day. They said they lived in town and we would be taken there for the night. We were curious. We were happy with the cots and a chance to relax without any pressures. The non-corn who seemed to be the top man turned the command over to a PFC and we loaded into two jeeps and headed for downtown Eger.

Our trip ended in front of a greystone building similar to our condos of today. Our driver said "We're here!" We unloaded a few items and entered the building. We had to walk up three flights of stairs and this was a test of agility for Art and I. Everything in the hallways seemed so orderly and had class. When the door to their "apartment" was opened, we were shocked to see a grand piano sitting in a large living room. How many G.I.'s do we know who live like this?

The non-cans told us the story. The original tenants were evicted by the Germans when they took over the area. They had to leave everything they couldn't carry. The Germans gave them fifteen minutes to get out of the place. When the Americans regained the area, the Germans had to leave. Neither occupant disturbed anything. It was used for lodging.

Our friends gave us V-Mail forms so we could write our families and let them know we were away from German control. Art's mother saved the V-Mail for him and it appears on this page. Please note that he mentions my name in the last paragraph.



What a luxury apartment! Much to our surprise, we were told to look around and if there was anything we wanted, we could take it. Art was interested in some

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picture postcards. He took several of them for both the pictures on them and the Czech stamps. I found two Nazi red armbands and gave one to Art. We took turns showering and shaving. While one of us was in the bathroom, the other was searching through the rooms.

Our minds were not attuned to collecting souvenirs at this time and the token amount of items taken confirmed this. And a subconscious feeling of guilt prevented any whole-sale haul of items that you know were accumulated as a result of someone's labor.

Here, I received a toothbrush and for the first time in five months, I was able to brush my teeth. Art had a half toothbrush with him during all of our travels. He even had a small can of Dr. Lyons Tooth Powder until it went dry. Art, too, was the proud owner of a new toothbrush. Alter our showers and shaves, we didn't look like the same people.We were given a complete wardrobe of fatigues, underwear and sox. It was a pleasure to dis-card our filthy field jackets, ragged shorts, A-shirts and our shredded sox. We felt like new people. The hosts really treated us like royalty. They were interested in our P.O.W. experience and when we told them we worked in Dresden, they asked how we got out of there alive. I told them about my experience with an SS trooper and how he hit Art on the chin with the butt of his rifle. The non-corns asked many questions and we were happy to be able to answer them. All of this was taking place while I was sorting through a drawer full of trinkets and Art was in the bathroom trimming his hair with a pair of scissors he found.

Alter we had "clean everything--bodies, hair, teeth and clothes," we lounged around talking to our hosts. They made us feel great and this really helped our morale. One of the guys checked with a transportation unit that was hauling political prisoners and P.O.W.'s from several countries to Bayreuth, Germany. The next convoy departure was scheduled for 0600 the next day, May 11, 1945. This was great! We were instructed to report earlier to assure being loaded in time for the 0600 departure. With that detail out of the way, we sat down in the plush soft chairs and talked about our escapade. How embarrassing--Joe and I fell asleep while talking to our hosts. They understood. All they said was "We'll see you at 0500 tomorrow morning." We didn't move—-we slept in the nice soft chairs.

JOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOE

All of the occupants of our "Eger Hotel" were up at 0500. We had coffee before our jeep ride to the convoy boarding point. We were there in plenty of time. During our coffee session, we thanked our hosts for the fine treatment we received. They gave us a supply of K-Rations to take with us in our lootsacks. We were ready to face a new day.

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At 0600 on this day of May 11, 1945, a convoy of twenty trucks loaded with at least forty men on each truck left Eger, Czechoslovakia. Art and I stood behind the cab where there was something to grip for support. We were all standees. Art and I were the only Americans on our truck and all we heard was chatter we couldn't understand. The only information we had was that our convoy was heading to a city in Germany for processing and the only name we heard was Bayreuth when we boarded the truck.

We crossed the border into Germany. Our routing took us through several villages that were untouched by war. As long as the road was straight, we didn't mind the speed that our convoy was traveling. As we were climbing up the mountainside and seeing more curves——sharp curves——we became concerned with the carelessness of the drivers. They

seemed to be racing one another. We pounded on the top of the cab to no avail. We didn't need to have any problems after coming this far.

As we neared Gebenbach, the second truck ahead of us was going too fast to make the curve. The truck shot over the bank and overturned. Bodies were flying through the air, guys were scream ing and so were we. Our driver would have gone on had it not been for one of the passengers beating on the roof of the cab with both fists. The driver eased the truck to a stop. All of the trucks behind us had to stop, too. The road was narrow at this point and prevented the other trucks from passing us.

Art and I jumped off and joined others who were rushing to the scene to offer assistance. The truck was on its back and one of the front wheels was spinning. There were bodies strewn along the truck's off-the-road path and bodies under the truck. Two of the men were decapitated. Watching a head turn black is no thrilli We helped move men out of the truck area in the event the gas would be ignited or the truck would roll over. Within minutes, townspeople who witnessed the accident came to help. Others brought pans of water and cloths. Many of the injured were suffering from shock and thanks to those who brought blankets to cover them. A very sad note, this truck had mostly British soldiers who had been prisoners for years and were on their way home. Four of them didn't make it.

By luck, an ambulance driver happened on the scene and offered his assistance and equipment. The town ambulance was used to carry the more serious injuries to the local hospital. Doctors and nurses were brought to the scene on a return trip. They were useless as they didn't want to get their hands dirty. Passengers from other trucks did a better job. Art and I could only offer help to those in shock. Eventually the scene was under control. The final report was that eleven men were killed --six Frenchmen, four British and one American.

When the situation was under control and our help was no longer needed, we were ready to move on. The span of time was over two hours. To our amazement, there was no convoy! They moved on! What in hell do we do now????

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We had no regrets for spending time trying to help the injured in the accident. And we did not condemn the drivers of the convoy for moving on. They had a lot of human cargo to get to a prefixed destination. Both of us said silent prayers of thanks for not having met the fate our convoy passengers did. And now we had to continue our journey.

Smarty Joe came up with a good answer when I asked him "What do we do now?" He said: "Drop back ten yards and punt!" It brought a laugh to my beleaguered face. I told him that~ I was so weak that I couldn't kick a marshmallow. Gebenbach was about one mile from the scene of the truck accident. That was the "straight line" mileage. We had to walk the big horseshoe of road which took at least an hour. As we walked through town, we saw a bakery *("bakeri" in German)* and decided to beg something to eat.

To our surprise, the nice lady running the bakery handed us several dark bread rolls. Did we look that bad? We said "Danke" and she said "Guten Tag!" *("Have a Nice Day!" hadn't been invented yet)* We chewed and walked the rest of the way through the small town. We reached a junction--like the proverbial fork in the road. There was no point in starting to walk in any direction like a professional hitch-hiker would do. We asked some citizens if they noticed which road the convoy took. We couldn't find anyone who know what the word "convoy" meant.

If you tried to predict what was going to happen next, you would never come up with the correct event. Who would expect to see an American jeep with an officer and a driver on the same mission as the ones who hauled us into Karisbad? After waiting over an hour at the junction outside Gebenbach, a jeep with an officer and a driver pulled up to us. They almost drove on until Joe and I waved and showed them our dog tags.

They listened to our story and told us to hop in. We didn't let on that we had been given a lift the day before by one of their other teams. Joe and I hunched our backs so we would fit on the side seats. The major took up a good part of the back seat. We told them about our being left behind after the truck accident, seeing our first Yanks yesterday and anything to make conversation. Neither of them seemed as thrilled as we were. After that, we zipped up our mouths.

This is a rank question; Why was the major sitting on the back seat while the driver and a captain (who didn't say much during the trip) sat in the front seat? Who cares? When they said they were headed for the airfield in Bayreuth, that's all we wanted to hear. After traveling several miles, the black driver noticed that one of the tires was low. He stopped and started to change the tire. As he reached for the spare, Joe stepped in front of him and said that he would change the tire. It would have been a shame to see his spotless uniform get dirty while we had

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fatigues on and a little dirt wouldn't change their appearance. He was most appreciative of Joe's services. I kept the officers entertained with anecdotes about P.O.W. life. We arrived in Bayreuth around noon.

Another shocker! The temporary field had been closed as far as transporting American P.O.W.'s out of Bayreuth. We were taken to a complement of men stationed in Bayreuth for

occupation control. The officers told the sergeant in charge to feed us because we looked hungry. Good old K-Rations again. While eating, we told the Top Sergeant that we wanted to get back to American control somehow. He said he was ready, willing and able to help us. This was a surprise because he had that grumpy top-kick look. He wasted no time in filling the jeep with gas. He told us to hop in and that "We'll find the place you are looking for come Hell or high water!"

The sergeant told his charges that he would be back later. He planned to take us to Nuremberg to First Army Headquarters. At one time on the road, a German civilian stopped us. He claimed he was a doctor. He wanted some gas for his motorcycle, but he was refused. Later, this nice sergeant tried to bully a couple of English P.O.W.'s to give him a pair of binoculars they had picked up. In his frustration, he turned onto a road he thought was the route to Nuremberg. Instead, we ended up in Erlangen. With a few twists and turns, we finally made it to Nuremberg. He took us directly to the Luitspoldhain stadium where we joined masses of people who were being catalogued for shipment somewhere.

It was a sight to behold! Thousands of Prisoners-of-War and political prisoners in this huge stadium, The Luitspoldhain. Each nationality and category was zoned and we were Immediately shuffled to the American Section. Joe and I were late arrivals since we had been out sight—seeing. Our wait from processing lasted over two hours.

The Allies didn't waste any time in blasting the huge swastika of f its base at this stadium. We arrived in time to see the last pieces of concrete removed. It had been blasted off the base earlier in the day.

For the first time in ages,, we were classified in a special category. Not since grade school did anyone call us by a coined title. We became RAMPs. "RAMP" is the abbreviation for Retrieved Allied Military Personnel. We RAMPs were shuttled down to Regensburg and given food and lodging for the night.

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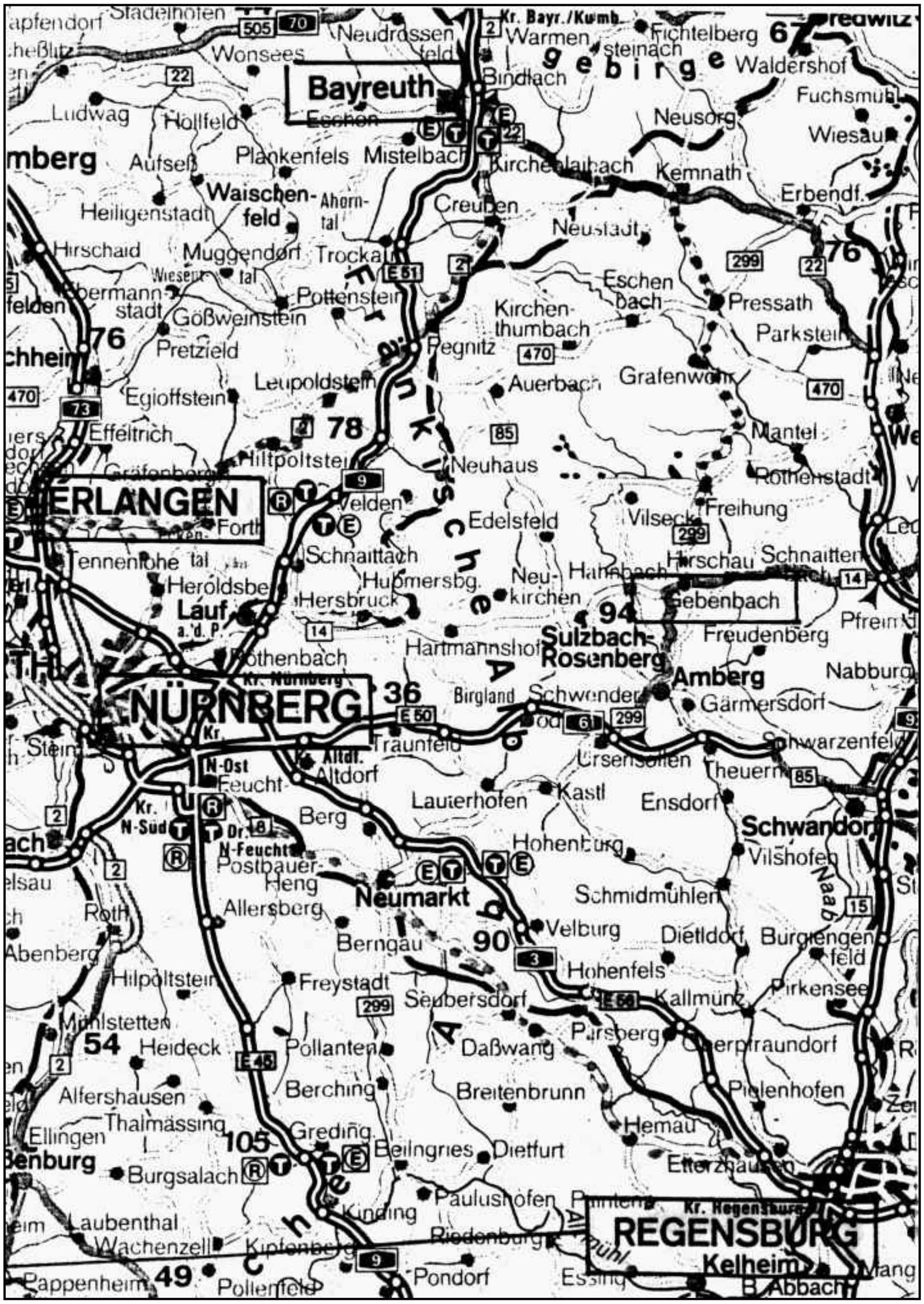
So near and yet so far! As they say, this Odyssey was starting to taste of the keg. We've cane a long way and we are getting a little bit anxious to get back home. We are certain that we will be leaving this City of Regensburg on May 13th. That's tomorrow! We talked to a number of other P.O.W.'s and didn't run across anyone we knew.

An MP approached us and asked about our P.O.W. life. When we told him "our story," he was all "Gee's" and "Goshes." While talking, he came up with the idea that was almost unreal. He asked if we would like to take a ride around the area in his jeep and see some of the damage that was inflicted by the constant raids by Allied planes. Most of the trip was a rehearsal for when we did get back home. Our tour guide was sincere when asking questions on how we were treated by our captors, where we started our "hiking," and how we survived.



The MP informed us that the only experience he had with P.O.W.'s was with the groups from compounds that they had retrieved. He was surprised to learn that we were a group of two. We were considered stragglers.

The question that our new friend asked triggered a review of the day. He asked: “How did you get here in Regensburg?” Our answer was: “The long way.” We told him about the acci-dent in Gebenbach and our trip to Bayreuth. Next, we let him know how much we appreciated a top-kick who in good faith was heading for Nuremberg and hit the wrong road and ended up in Erlanger. And the last leg of our trip from Nuremberg was a positive one.

We saw parts of Regensburg on our trip that were untouched by any wartime action. It was like a ghost town--every building ~n: the area was abandoned. From this tranquility, we went to the airfield on the edge of town. This was a differ-ent story. Mass destruction of buildings and equipment greeted our eyes. The first thing I thought of was the amount of dollars that all of this debris cost. It takes a lot of money to fight a war. There wasn’t one plane that wasn’t totally destroyed.

The burned hulks of planes were all that remained. We went further up the road to a small town. He pointed to a post office that had been abandoned. I asked if we could go inside and look around. He saw nothing wrong with my request. It was a weird feeling. Everything was intact. I went to the stamp file and started piling up several sheets of each denomination of the Hitler issue. My stack was at least two inches thick when I finished scavenging. What I didn’t realize was that gummed stock is heavy. I added another five pounds or so to my lootsack. Well, the tied bundle of stamps did not fit in my lootsack and I had to carry them separately. Our one-hour sortie was profitable. The MP took us directly to

the Operation where we would eventually board a C-47 for Camp Lucky Strike in France.

JOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOEJOE

I was tired and felt lousy. It had rained the night before and there was a thin layer of mud. This added to the din and confusion of trying to get on a plane. They were flying in and out of the area, but our turn never came. What we didn't see around the corner of the building was a pushy crowd that ignored the queue we were in. Since Art was the travel agent, I delegated him to go and complain. While he was gone, I dozed off in sight of the boarding point. After some discussion, we did see an improvement in the system. Men were counted off in lots and given a number. Someone had to bring order out of the chaos. Art came back with our number. As he approached me, he was smiling, but the closer he came to me, I could see that he was first "excited," and next "furious!" I'll let him tell you why.

When I left Joe leaning against a building, my mission was to check on when we would be able to board the aircraft bound for France. I told him to keep an eye on my bundle of stamps. I had placed them on top of my lootsack. After all the work I went through making sure that I had complete sets of the famous Hitler issue, I wanted the stamps to be safe from harm. My personal recommendation for handling the boarding of P.O.W.' along with sane expletives helped change the boarding method immediately. We were in the group that would board the next available aircraft.

I was happy and couldn't wait to tell Joe. When I arrived back at the building where Joe was waiting, I found him fast asleep. He was tired and deserved to rest. I saw something fluttering in the air. Golly, sheets of stamps flying through the air! That was odd. Did someone else have stamps, too? The stamps I saw were MY stamps. I was angry! I had called out to him, because I was so excited about our leaving. His eyes opened slowly and caught the change of expression on my face. I carried on for awhile. I tried to conceal my displeasure, but Joe could read me like a book. Joe felt bad about the situation and apologized for being careless. At that time, our flight was called. To hell with the stamps, Joe! Let's go home! What stamps????

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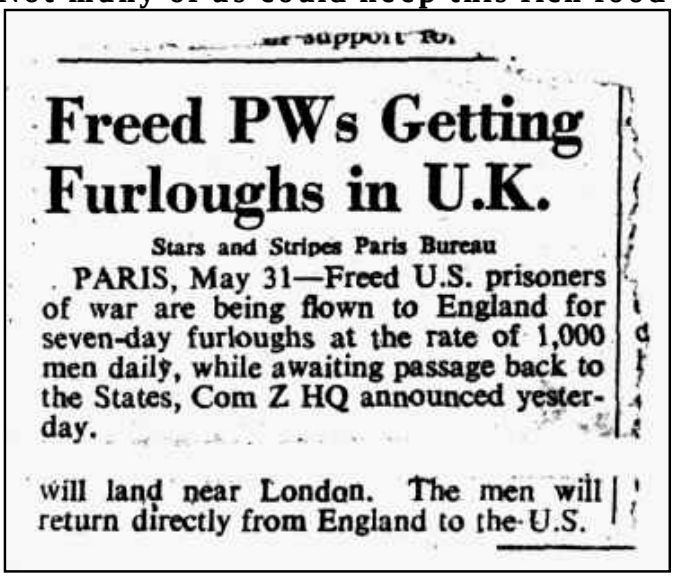
We boarded the C-47. There were no First Class seats. There were no peasant seats. There were NO seats. We had to sit on the deck and attach ourselves to what they called a retainer. Another item missing was a row of windows on each side of the aircraft. None of us complained about the missing elements. We were just happy that we were making one more jump to the West. We arrived at Camp Lucky Strike. We landed on a metal runway. Engineers constructed many of these runways through the course of the war.

Lucky Strike was just one of the repatriation camps bearing the name of a brand of cigarettes. This was a tent city. There were company streets with pyramidal tents on both sides. Latrines and washrooms were strategically located. There were many latrines, because practically every P.0W. had dysentery. There were several mess halls in our tent city.

One of the features of the day was the sound of a voice over the P.A. system saying: "The Eggnog Line is now forming." In addition to the rich food that was served, the experts added to our caloric count with cold delicious eggnog. Lining up for eggnog could be hazardous to your health. On one occasion, a P.O.W. was blasted away and died over a place in line. All of us had souvenir guns but never thought of using them. After the incident, the commanding officer of Camp Lucky Strike issued an order that restricted carrying souvenir guns in the eggnog line.

The main reason the Army kept us at Camp Lucky Strike so long was to fatten us up to look like we did when we were home on furlough. We all had soup bellies and had suffered a great loss of weight. They served very rich food and attempted to accelerate our recovery. Not many of us could keep this rich food on our stomachs for any length of time.



Freed PWs Getting Furloughs in U.K.

Stars and Stripes Paris Bureau

PARIS, May 31—Freed U.S. prisoners of war are being flown to England for seven-day furloughs at the rate of 1,000 men daily, while awaiting passage back to the States, Com Z HQ announced yesterday.

will land near London. The men will return directly from England to the U.S.

On May 31, 1945, Corn Z HQ announced that freed U. S. Prisoners-of-War could get furloughs to the United Kingdom while awaiting passage back to the United States. I took advantage of this offer and spent fifteen days in England. Most of this time was spent in London. I visited all of the historic sites plus I rode every line of the London Underground railroad.

Joe and I said our "goodbyes" on June 1, 1945 at Camp Lucky Strike. I left for England on that date. Our next meeting was on July 11, 1945 at Ye Olde Cellar in Chicago. We met again in Fort Myers, Florida on April 3, 1993. We are looking forward to meeting at the 106th Infantry Division reunion in Orlando, Florida on September 7, 8 and 9, 1995.

Joe, we said we could do it, didn't we?

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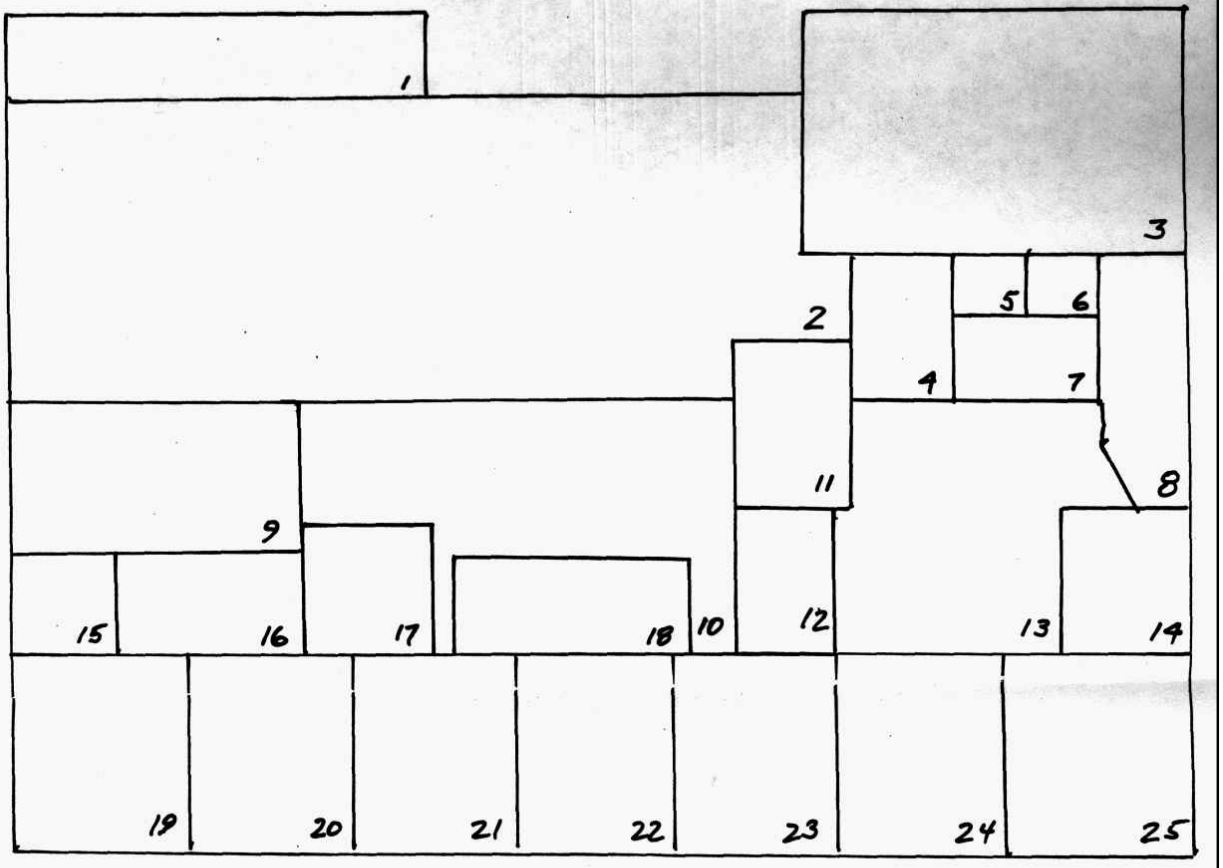
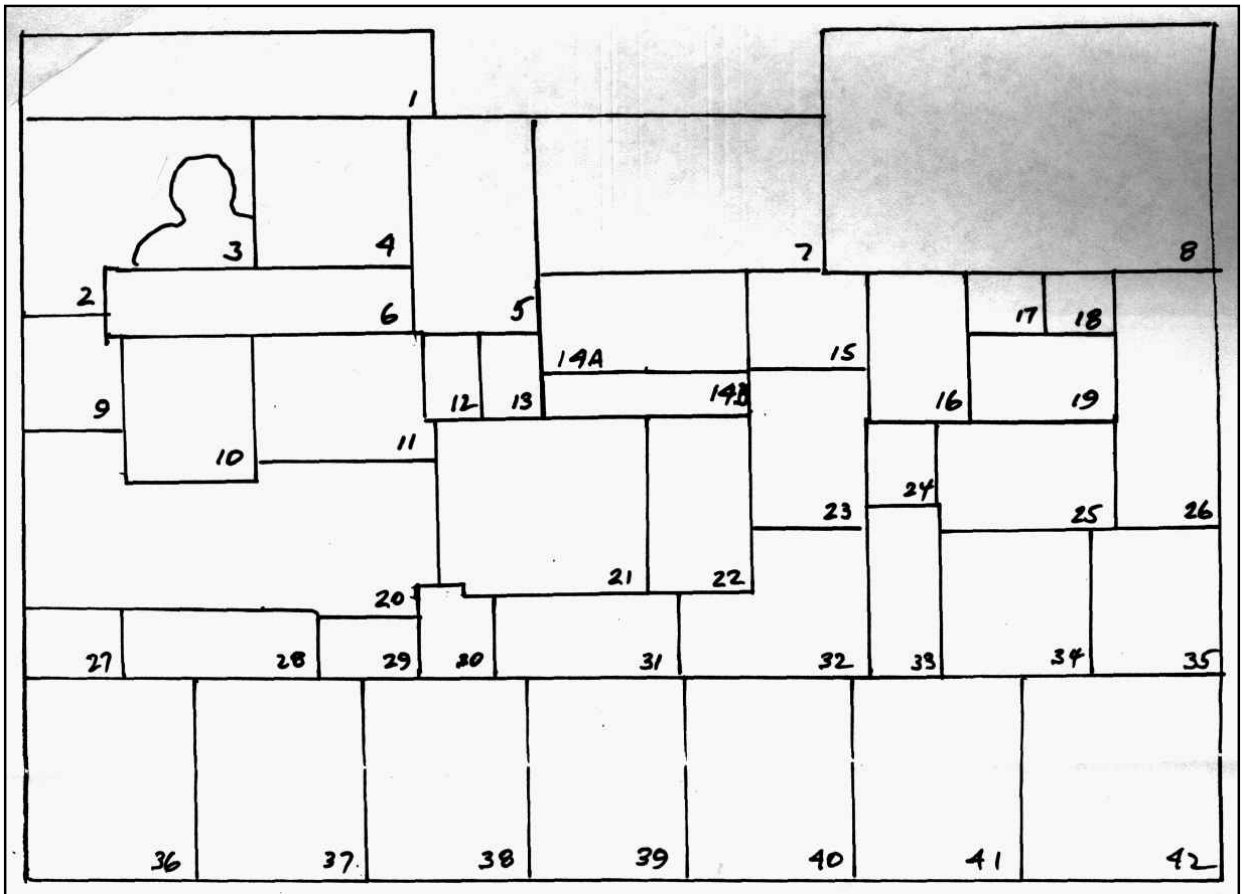
The South Bend Tribune
Joseph B. Kleven
17 142 564 P.o.W.311917
Verwundet
Yank 106th In Live But 5 Days As Nazis Hit



1. World War II headline
2. Kleven daughters and their families. Left to Right: Craig, Dan, Seth, Ann, Julia, Jill and Rick. (Craig, Julia, Jill and Rick are Kleven-Watson family. Ann, Dan and Seth are Kleven-Tsui family.)
3. German money
4. Joe Kleven in Service
5. Albert Atwood, Abt. Kdo. 1000
6. German medical patch
7. Joe, Bea Frederickson, Betty Lou Donahue, Art Kuespert at first meeting of Joe and Art after they returned from the Service.
8. Verwundete tag (German)
9. Joe's P.o.W. tag and American dog tag.
10. 1994 106th Reunion at Rapid City, SD. Company C, 423rd Regiment. Left to Right: Joe Kleven, Wallace Butterfield, Maurice Holladay, Vernon Wood and John Bladen.
11. Joe's "missing" clipping
12. 106th's "bad news"
13. The happy couple--Joe & Marge
14. 106th Division patch
15. Ruptured duck
16. Art's dog tag
17. Joe's trophy from Germans
18. Combat Infantryman's badge
19. Good Conduct medal
20. American Campaign medal
21. Victory Europe medal
22. ETO medal for Ardennes and Rhineland campaigns
23. Prisoner of War medal
24. Purple Heart
25. Bronze Star


The South Bend Tribune
Art Kuespert
35332660 P.o.W. 311829
W. A. KUESPERT HELD BY NAZIS
Hitler Wanted to Kill All PWs
Verwundete



1. World War II headline
2. Art and rifle w/80th Div.
3. Art in Sarasota
4. Missing in Action P.o.W.
5. Our Wedding Day
6. Hitler's thought
7. The happy couple
8. German money
9. World War II Headlines
10. 80th Div. patch
11. Art & Joe in Ft. Myers
12. Art in Sarasota
13. Ray Otto, Co. F, 423rd
14. Art at Ft. Jackson (A)
    Tank Hill at Jackson (B)
15. John McCrery Co. F, 423rd
16. Joe Kleven in youth
17. Albert Atwood (Abt.Kdo.1000
18. German Medical Officer's patch
19. Joe, Bea Frederickson, Betty Lou Donahue and Art at first meeting of Joe and Art after we returned home (7-11-45)
20. Jack Sulser, Earl Schmude (D), Charlie Zullig, Oliver Patton and Bill Lacy. Co. F/423rd
21. Andy Dowden Co. F/423rd
22. Art with 106th hardhat
23. Joe's "missing" clipping
24. Art on maneuvers
25. Art, sister Doris, Brother Stan
26. Verwundete tag
27. Ruptured duck pin
28. Art's dog tag
29. Joe's trophy from Germans
30. Art showing off stripes
31. Combat Infantryman's badge
32. Clem Kuespert (Navy) and Art Kuespert (Army) in front of home (with two stars in window.
33. Art in "charge" position
34. Art and "Rolling Along."
35. 106th Division patch
36. Good Conduct medal
37. American Campaign medal
38. Victory Europe medal
39. ETO medal Ardennes and Rhineland medal
40. P.o.W. medal
41. Purple Heart medal
42. Bronze Star

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