

ONE MAN'S STORY BY

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My part in the battle was short and sweet. Six days on the front then Hell broke loose. We were called a “calculated risk”, a “green Division spread thin on a “quiet” sector; a sector where the Inf. could get combat training for the big push that was coming. The Heinies made a last chance drive and we were in the middle.

Von Rundstedt picked the soft spot and threw everything but his guns at us. We were roused by “calling cards” mailed by 88’s Saturday morning. We were “green” and so, shrugging our shoulders, said “What the hell, this happens ever so often”, and off to chow we went.

Chow was good as chow always is to guys who are in good shape, and the gang was full of laughs about the close calls that had dropped in on us. The heavy firing to the East didn’t register, so the talk was about Christmas and the mail that was just starting to come in. We didn’t think it strange that all the German civilians were up and in their basements long before the shelling started. We were “green”, not for long.

The third platoon had a couple of jobs to finish up front, so we loaded up and off we went. The same old horse play went on, the KPs got the every day razzing as we rode by the kitchen, and everyone was in fine spirit. We dropped off the third and second squads and my squad vent up farther to finish a corduroy road we had started the day before.

The front was quiet, the shells were going over and beyond, and we felt safer there than in our little village. We felt safer until we noticed the worried looks on the faces of the officers. A Major walked by with a 45 in his fist, so we woke up and drove a round home. No work on the road that day, so back to our village we started. We never got there.

We were stopped at Regiment Hg. near AUW, and told we were cut off. From the little village Regiment Hg. was in, we could see our village and Germans in between. ~ men in Regiment Hg. had been taking a pasting f rout the German Art, and some of their nervousness got into us. A Buzz bomb went clattering over rather low and the boys bolted from the truck.

We deployed by instinct on the outskirts of the village. No one had to yell “Go here”, or “Do this”, we did the right thing automatically. A rock pile here, a depression, a

ditch, or a manure pile there, were picked and made use of. The village was ripe for the Germans to pick. One platoon of T & S men, a group of Medics, a few radio men, and a small assortment of men and officers from Regiment Headquarters., plus my platoon of Engineers were in the village. A jeep with a 50 cal. mounted on it and the rifles the men carried were all we had to hold the village.

It was about 10 o'clock when we spread out around the village. We laid for about 4 hours and watched our little village, a mile away get pounded by artillery fire from both sides. Later we learned that the rest of my company had held the Germans off that long before they had to retreat.

A Lt. was in a hurry to get a German so he jumped in the jeep and opened up with the 50 at a moving spot about 1000 yards away. One shot was all the gun would fire at a time. "We've been yelling for a replacement for that gun for a week," the Supply Officer yelled at him. The Lt. gave up in disgust. The regular gunner grabbed the gun and the first shot stopped the spot. It never moved again.

L and Cannon Co. were brought back from the front and with L going over the hill and Cannon Co. going up a draw to the right, they made a counter attack to retake our Engineers' little village. Our artillery's timed fire was doing a beautiful job on the Heinies, but our boys couldn't push them back.

My platoon of Engineers was called on to unload a load of ammunition for a platoon of TDS that had pulled in. The Heinies spotted us and threw 88's into us. Thank God, a number of them were duds: After the first five or six shells landed, we could judge where they were hitting. We were getting battle wise fast.

The Heinies had missed the boat when they didn't smack us that morning. The

Infantry Companies fell back from their attack and set up a line on the out-skirts of the village. The Tank Destroyers set up to command the fields and roads and we settled down to stick as long as possible.

The Engineers were called on Co work with the T & S platoon as a guard for Regiment Headquarters. They asked for Bazooka men, and since I had training with a bazooka, I stepped out. Four of us went out of the village on the road between the Heinies and Regiment Headquarters and dug in. We had one bazooka and seven rounds, plus our rifles. By the time we finished digging in, it was pitch black and getting windier and colder by the minute.

About midnight two of us decided we had had enough freezing. We had field jackets, no overcoats, so we left the other two there as the bazooka team and went back into the village. After being stopped for the counter sign a number of times, we got to the Headquarters. The Medics had just gotten their blankets, so we had to hunt up another source of supply. We finally, found the Signal Corps officer and I guess we looked tough, because he took one glance and said, "Give those men blankets." While blankets were being hunted up for us we had a chance to clean our rifles - they were coated inside and out with mud. I doubt if they would have fired.

The Captain told us the Mess Hall - a big shed-like building up ~ he road - was serving chow all the time, so we got some stew and coffee and headed back with our blankets.

About four o'clock, the other two boys went into the village and after much explaining - no one seemed to know there was a bazooka outpost - got us some relief.

We headed for the first building in the village, broke in, and fell asleep. We were dead for about two hours and then two of us went back to the bazookas. The boys who had relieved us hadn't had much sleep before they took over, so back we went. The other two headed back to find the rest of the Engineers. That was the longest night I've ever spent.

When daylight came we took a look around. We had been told the Infantry was all around us when we went out the night before. Three hundred yards BEHIND us we spotted the Infantry. We pulled out and back about two hundred yards, found an old foxhole, and crawled in. We were on top of a little knoll and could command the road and fields from there very well.

The Heinies spotted a Company of Infantry that had moved into position during the night on a hill behind us. Zing I yanked in my head and did some worrying. Zap Damn those 88's~ The Infantry on the hill behind was catching hell, but the shells sounded as if they were skinning my helmet on the way over.

After a couple more went over, I figured I wasn't the only target the Heinies had to shoot at so I crawled out and looked around. Two guys yelled at me, "You the bazooka man?" "Ya, damn it." "We're supposed to relieve you and move back to the Infantry line."

Happy day We headed back to the village and the rest of the Engineers. We found one of them guarding about thirteen prisoners. The Heinies were in two rows, standing back to back, getting a shakedown. We learned our gang was up the Street in the third house. We got just past the Germans when a sound like the patter of children's feet running across the floor, moved us. A machine pistol behind us The Heinies broke and headed behind the house. We rounded them up and put them in the barn. One of our boys got it in the ankle and a Heinie prisoner in the leg. We never did find the sniper. He made it tough for us from there on in. He was between our house and the chow house. A man had to be hungry to go eat.

It was about ten o'clock Sunday morning when we got with the rest of the Engineers. I went upstairs and found an empty spot and laid down. Wham That shell landed next door, too close for us to be upstairs, so down we went. The Heinies fired shells back and forth across the town the rest of the day. I missed about two hours of it, because I found a spot on the floor downstairs and went to sleep.. Somebody accidentally stepped on my stomach and woke me. The step on the stomach reminded me that I was hungry, so two of us went up to the mess hall to eat. While I was up there, the Air Corps showed up and burned hell out of a couple of convoys some miles away and knocked down three Germans in about three minutes. The weather clouded over

again and that was the first and last time we saw the Air Corps.

The T & S platoon Sgt. was given the job of posting the guard. His platoon was made up of the 'Bolos', or sad sacks of the regiment, so he was pleased to get a bunch of Engineers to depend upon. He put one T & S man and one Engineer on post together. Smart man: The sad sacks from his platoon would sleep, while the Engineer had to do the best he could. Our Lt., damn his soul, had a close call Saturday. He was so scared after it that he spent his time sleeping or in the basement of our house. So, we pulled guard and got the dirty end of the stick. My post was on the back porch of a house. A road went by one side of the house and a little stream went down "88 Draw" on the other side. Things were quiet most of the night. A couple of our patrols tried to go up the "draw" but were heard, so they had to come back double time. 88's gave them a merry chase all the way. During one such action, I counted four out of five shells that were duds. Four out of five chances of being scared to death, instead of being blown to hell. Weather was cold and we were ex-pecting an attack, so even when we were trying to rest, we had trouble relaxing.

About two o'clock Monday afternoon, we got orders to abandon the town and try for a break. Two Battalions of Infantry were fighting to break us out and we all left the village expecting to get out. We pulled out under a protecting barrage of smoke and timed fire laid down by our artillery.

Our line of retreat was east to the front and South. We moved slowly and in short jumps because no one knew what was ahead of us. At one stop, we found a pile of bed roll, duff le bags, overcoats and the like, left by the Infantry. Those of us who didn't have coats and rolls picked them up. Five cartons of smokes were found by one of the gang, so everyone had cigarettes to last for awhile. We each had been issued a D bar, so I ate mine labeling the three pieces of it - breakfast, dinner, and supper. I found a can of frozen meat balls and spaghetti, and that made up my eating for Monday.

Our convoy got moving again and it was headed into the middle of a terrific fire fight, or so it seemed. However, we turned parallel to it about a half mile before we got to where the tracers were coming from. Ones thoughts at a time like that are pretty much of a jumble. I happened to be up front in the truck facing the front and could see more than the rest of the gang, so between prayers I re-ported what was going on in whispers.

"Looks like the road goes right into that fight - - Those 30's are getting out-talked. Christ, they are throwing a lot of stuff up there - - Watch out for that low wire."

When we turned parallel to the firing, we all breathed a sigh of relief and whispers about turkey for Christmas started bouncing back and forth across the truck. We were all disappointed and plenty scared when the vehicles pulled into a patch of woods and the orders came to "de-truck."

The Engineers pulled guard that night. Officers were having a tough time finding their men and getting things in some kind of order. It was pitch black and muttered curses could be heard all over the place. "Get the Hell out in the open. A tree burst would kill

you as sure as Christ.” “Dig in you damn fool.”

I pulled my watch from twelve to two and then decided to dig in. I found an open spot in the field and went to work. While doing that, one guy in my platoon asked to borrow my rifle because someone had stolen his. I let him have it and rolled out my roll and flopped down. I didn't get into it because it would have caused trouble if I needed to get out in a hurry. I fell asleep with little trouble and slept soundly. Twice, however, some damn fool leaned against the horn of a jeep and woke all of us up. My hip boots were like ice boxes and the next day my feet gave me plenty of trouble.

About four o'clock a patrol got to us and started shooting the place up. Tracers were flying up and down the field I was stretched out in. The firing jarred me awake and scared the sin out of me. I glanced into my prone shelter and cursed myself for a damn fool. It was about half full of water I was scared but I couldn't see myself in mud and water up to my neck, so I picked a mound of dirt and scrambled for it. I sprawled out behind it and bounced for about three minutes with fright. 'tings quieted down so I went looking for the guy with my rifle. I used to. cuss that rifle up and down during training, but I sure wanted it then. I finally found the guy with my rifle and with some argument, he gave it to me. He felt lost without a rifle, so promptly swiped one from our Lt. The Lt. had picked it up somewhere and he missed it right away. He raved and threatened, so later in the day the kid "gave" the rifle back when the Lt. wasn't looking.

After the excitement, everybody was up and around so we talked about home, our situation, and cursed the cold weather while we waited until it was light enough to smoke a cigarette. When daylight did come, we took a look at our positions and didn't like it. Our trucks were bumper to bumper on the edge of a small woods which covered a little hill. We drove the trucks into the woods, camouflaged them, and started to dig in to fight it out.

What a mess. Men dug beautiful two men foxholes, but everyone seemed to crave companionship and the holes were too close together. Men would be firing over the shoulders of men in front of them, and if the Germans started throwing heavy stuff in, it would have been a bloody hill. One officer, the one who tried to get the German with the single shot 50, started raising hell. He was about the only officer worth anything as far as I could see. We were all dead tired and digging a new fox-hole didn't sit so well, but most of us could see what would happen, so we started to spread out and dig in again.

Five Engineers were needed to fill in a crater hole in the road. They wanted men with hip boots because of the mud, so I ended up as one of the five. We found a pile of gravel and loaded a jeep trailer with it and left the woods. The road was a mud hole, a truck and two kitchen trailers were stuck hub deep in it. None of us had eaten much for some time so first thing we did was raid the kitchen trailers.

D bars and fruit juices were about all we could find that we could eat without cooking, but, we sure couldn't complain about that. Finally we settled down to fill in the hole. We didn't have enough gravel so we drained out the water and did the best we could.

Suddenly, out of the woods, trucks and men came bursting forth. What a scramble. Men all over the trucks hanging any place they could. "We're getting out - pile on a truck" Sure sounded good but first we raided the kitchen trailers again. More D bars were what we wanted. I got a carton and started hailing a truck. A grenade I had hooked on the button hole of my jacket fell off, and when it hit the ground, the pin fell out. The handle didn't kick off because of the weight of the grenade. The boys around me broke and ran, all but one. He reached down, picked up the darn thing, walked about five yards with it, and threw it into the field. Surprising thing about that is that the kid who used his head was the one everyone thought would be the first crack.

When the grenade went off, the convoy stopped dead and men sprawled all over the place. That gave me a chance to pile into a truck. I scrambled into the one nearest me which happened to have a 37 on behind. As we started out, it became apparent that we couldn't keep up with the race with the gun trailing behind. The driver stopped and one of the guys in the truck jumped out and unhooked the thing. Usually it takes two men to heave one off, but this kid practically threw it off. We lost our place in convoy but since there were no umpires around like there were on maneuvers, we crowded back in the line.

We were moving at a good pace until the lead jeep started out of a little village we were going through. Wham The convoy stopped and started turning a-round. A Royal Tiger tank was raising hell with the front of the convoy. That road was blocked, so we had one more chance.

"Sure doesn't sound like we're getting out." "Throw me that peanut butter." Wish I had a spoon. It's kind of messy this way. . . . "Christ sake, don't be particular. Give me that damn stuff."

We were still catering to our stomachs. As we spun around and started out of the village, our last chance blew up when the lead jeep hit a land mine in front of us. We were stopped. Trapped Beaten without a good fight.

The order came down the line to throw up our hands. We destroyed our weapons, cussed and cried, and felt empty and lonely inside. Our fighting was over. We were beat, tired, hungry and cold, but we were still soldiers and Americans and expected treatment as such.

We were P.W.'s. When we started for Europe and the war, we talked and thought about being killed or wounded but never about being captured; yet here we were. The fight was over for us but we were still in danger. We were still in the battlezone and could be killed as easily as not. Tread lightly soldier, these Germans are kind of cocky and plenty nervous.

We were a sad and silent group when they rounded us all up together. Each of us had his own private thoughts - most of them bitter ones. We all had a feeling of being "sold out". It hurt to have to throw up our hands to the Heinies. It hurt inside. I pulled out my wallet and looked at the pictures I carried in it; pictures of home and the folks that were there. Their smiles danced before my eyes as I tore the pictures

up. I didn't want any Germans leering at the pictures so I tore them up. I pulled out a 1,000 Franc note I had in the wallet, admired the beautiful work done on it, and tore it up. Then I threw my wallet away and watched it get trampled in the mud. No German will ever carry that I thought grimly to myself. The men around me were doing about the same as I, and when each man had paid his respects to "home", he shook himself and started looking for his buddies.

After much milling around, our Engineer platoon got together in a group. Those of us with food passed it around. Our officers told us to throw everything away. "Get rid of your helmets." "Throw your knives away." "Leave your canteens here." Some of the boys hung on to their helmets and put them to many uses in the days to come.

We stood for about two hours after surrendering while we waited for orders. Finally, we were motioned to start walking. Down the hill we went - double time. Men tumbled head over heels after hitting a slippery spot and got up cursing, but still running. We went down that hill like sheep.

I made the run down the hill okay but the stream at the bottom of it stopped me. I made a running jump at it but my hip boots dragged on me too much and I fell in waist deep. My boots filled up with ice cold water. I didn't have a chance to empty them, so I half walked and half swam the march. We hiked for about an hour, and all along the road lay American equipment. It is a sad sight to see weapons that were captured because there was nothing to put in them.

The Germans walked us into the square of a small village, and there we stood until it started to get dark. The Germans were too busy to bother with us. They were learning to drive our trucks and eat our chow. The gear shift on our trucks puzzled some of them, so we had a few laughs. One kraut got a jeep going in reverse and couldn't shift it into forward. Another had gotten a truck into second gear and seemed to think that was the way it should run. It was funny to see but it hurt to have to watch it. We should have burned our vehicles.

When it started getting dark, we were herded into a courtyard. In the yard were a few apple trees and on the ground some frozen apples. I was lucky and got one of the apples. "You will spend the night here. This is where your latrine will be." A corner of the highest spot in the court was designated. "If anyone tries to escape - all will be shot", we were told. Then with a few guards to watch us, we were left alone.

The court was small and every inch of space was being used by tired men. The men directly below the latrine were cussing all night because of the law of gravity.

For a time we sang. Christmas was just a few days off, so Christmas carols filled our minds with thoughts of home. We sang until the Germans complained that it kept them awake and that we must stop or be shot.

We lay next to and on top of each other to keep warm. It drizzled all night long and we were soaked to the skin by morning. None of us slept much that night even though we were all dead tired.

About six the next morning we were lined up four abreast, in groups of one hundred and told we would get a break at the end of 18 kilometers. Since we had some walking to do, I cut my boots down a little below the knee.

We started out. My platoon all managed to get in the same group and we were set for anything. The officers were put in one group - that is, all but one. He was a captain, but when we surrendered he removed all insignia and looked like a plain, tired, dirty G.I. His idea was to get a group of men together and make a break.

The walking early in the day didn't bother most of us. However, there were two men from the air corps captured with us and they were hurting. They had gotten passes to come to the quiet sector to visit a brother of one of the boys. I don't know if they found the boy or not because the Germans got excited the day they got to the front and kept everyone busy.

About noon, after steady walking, we stopped in a village full of a Panzer Grenadier outfit. We were supposed to get food and water there. Instead, we got stripped of the overshoes we had and about six spuds were thrown out of a window to better than one thousand men. The men fought for the spuds and the Germans laughed.

All of us were thirsty so I gathered a couple of canteens and two helmets and let some guards know I wanted "Wasser". I was lucky and picked a Polish guard. He gathered about six other guys who were looking for water and took us up the street to the house he was billeted in. While we were filling our containers, he brought in a bucket of boiled spuds and motioned that we should fill our pockets for our "comrades". I had my overcoat on so I loaded both pockets to the rim. When we got back to the rest of the men, I had enough spuds to give two to each man in my platoon. That helped some.

After an hour we lined up again and after much counting off, we started out.

From then on the going was tough. The stop gave our muscles a chance to tighten up and our feet were bothering most of us. Our stomachs were empty and we were dead-tired and still we walked.

As time went by we grew more and more thirsty, so everytime we got a break in the hike, we looked for water in the ditches. It was dirty and frozen over, but we were thirsty so we broke the ice and took our fill. As we walked along we ate the ice. Not the best thing for our stomachs but when you're thirsty, and a prisoner, you take what you can get.

Once we passed a group of Frenchmen with a potato wagon, and they darn near emptied it throwing us spuds. Raw spuds were something I used to pass by but a bite from one then sure helped.

We walked through Prum about four o'clock that afternoon. (We learned later that this place was where we were to spend the night but for some reason we didn't.) The city was empty of civilians and for a good reason. Our Air Forces had been working

the town over. The railyards were bombed and strafed off the map and nearly every building we saw had holes in it and no windows. The only thing not badly damaged was the cathedral in the center of the city. We all got a big bang out of seeing the beating that town had taken.

By nightfall the march was beginning to take effect on us. Boys were stumbling now and then and the column began getting strung out on the road. The general attitude of all of us was that if the German guards could make it we could. That didn't work so well, however, because they kept changing guards and relaying us along.

About seven o'clock everyone decided it was about time to stop for the night but all we could get out of the guards was that we had only six more kilometers to go.

After walking a good six kilometers, we got the same answer to the question of how much farther. "Six kilometers". It was a stall because the guards didn't know any more about it than we did.

As it became later and we became more tired, we tried singing to keep up our spirits. It didn't last long because most of us needed all our breath to "pick 'em up and lay 'em down again."

About 11 o'clock some of the guys started having trouble walking in a straight line, so we'd team up and with a guy on each side steer them along. One of the gang passed out so we had to carry him. We worked in relief's doing that because none of us had the strength to do it long.

I went ranging up and down the line trying to get to the group of officers in the front to see if they couldn't talk some of the Germans into getting rides for the guys too bad off. I got so I could go from one group to another okay but I couldn't work my way past the guards to the officers.

While I was ranging up and down the line, I lost my bunch of engineers. I fell in with a strange bunch and managed to find a guy who needed some help so we hooked arms. All he needed was someone to steer him, so we got along easily. Before long we ran into another guy having trouble, so he hooked on to my other arm and we stuck together for about eight kilometers. We split my last piece of D bar three ways and walked and talked about home.

We stopped in a village that had a hospital unit and the Germans said that all men who couldn't keep going could spend the night there. The first fellow I had started helping decided he'd drop out and the second fellow found a buddy to help him, so I started looking for my gang.

I found them. They were debating whether or not to leave the few guys from our bunch at the hospital or help them along the rest of the way. We decided to help

em along so we could all stick together. Shortly after that the report came along that no one could stay at the hospital, there wasn't room. I still wonder how the guy I was

helping made the rest of the trip. I hope he found some one else to steer him.

After a short delay there, the guards poked us to our feet and we started out again. From that point on, no one took much interest in anything. Just pick 'em up and lay 'em down, then do it all over again. Men were shouting for water and a rest. We didn't get either, instead we got promises. Hot food and beds at the end of the march . . "just 6 kilometers more". We walked 6 - then 6 more. Men were passing out and the men that were helping them weren't much better off. It was plod, plod, plod, up and down, stumble and cuss, and plod some more.

About 1:30 or 2 o'clock we got to the rail head. The hot food and beds were just something to dream about. It was pitch black, cold, drizzling wet, and no place to sleep. We were dead on our feet so we curled up in little patches of men and slept fitfully.

About four in the morning, I untangled myself from the ball of men I had been sleeping with and started looking for water. I stumbled up the road tripping over feet and heads and slipping in the mud towards a pulsating light. It turned out to be a Polish guard with a little hand generator flashlight. He was getting water for anyone who had a container. I was out of luck, no container and no one was going to share a drop of their water with someone other than an old buddy. My mind was getting the best of me and all I could think about was water. I thought I could never be more thirsty - I learned different later.

I couldn't get any water so I bumped my way back to my former sleeping place and worked my way into the pile. When daylight came, we discovered we were only a few yards from a little stream. The guards were touchy and wouldn't let us gee to it and our officers warned us away from it because it was beyond a doubt polluted.

"Food" "The guys up ahead are getting fed". "Get in seven columns and you'll be fed." So with a lot of grumbling and cussing we lined up. "Back it up . . move it back", was shouted down the line. From the end of the line, a yell was started up to the front. "The damn guards won't let us move back any farther." There we were and there we stayed. We sat down and said "to hell with it", or the G.I. version of the words. Finally things started moving ahead and food was being passed out.

During the time nothing was happening one of the guys in our gang gave me his canteen, so I made about six trips to the stream. We had Halazone tablets so we threw them in the canteen. The directions said to shake well and let settle for one half hour. We shook well and then drank the stuff. We were thirsty and we wanted and needed water then - not one half hour from then.

On one of the trips to the stream a guy that had just gotten his "food" gave me a sample. It was a cracker - hard tack style. It took a good jaw to crack it let alone chew it, but it let my insides know my throat hadn't been cut.

About 11 o'clock the row of seven men I was in got to the chow line. Two bags of the hard tack per man and a can of "cheese" for seven men. We got the can open and

started dividing it. We had a G.I. spoon and I divided . . I gouged out seven portions and we ate. The cheese and hard tack was filling if not very good. Some of the seven didn't eat all of their cheese so they gave it to me. I wrapped it in one of the bags the crackers came in and jammed it in my pocket. I managed to save acme of my crackers in case we weren't to get fed again for awhile.

After our feast, I drifted around in the milling men. I spotted a guy from "B" Co. of my battalion and yelled at him. "Where's Ben?" (one of my best buddies) He

hook his head and yelled, "I think he got it." That jolted me more than any of the shells that had been falling around me during the battle. Ben, dead: The best buddy a guy could ever have - dead: If I had had a brother, I would have wanted him to be Ben, and the dirty bastards got him. That brought the war home to me. Sure, I'd seen guys get it, I'd seen dead bodies frozen in the stiff attitude of the dead and I'd smelled their stink. I'd been shot at - I'd been scared until I wanted to run and hide my head and cry but I didn't know what war meant until then.

I struggled over to him and got the story. "Ben got a letter from his girl the night before the battle - engagement broken - burp gun chasing him over the hill - saw him fall. He was pretty much torn up when he got the letter. I read it. I think he went out and got himself shot. He got some of the bastards before he went, though."

We were torn apart by a group of men marching out to the railyards, and I was aft alone with a red rage in my head and my heart all shriveled up in me. In a crowd of 1000 men, I was alone, lost and beaten. Time went by while my memory ran wild. Thoughts of times Ben and I had gotten drunk together, been cold together, and dreamed out loud to each other. He was going to be best man at my wedding and I at his, and now he was dead - the guy saw him fall. The guy saw him fall !! Other guys have fallen when lead sings around them - I had - I'm still all right. It will take a better army than the German army to get Ben, so I saluted him with a little prayer, shook myself mentally, and went looking for my outfit.

I found them without much trouble and we got ourselves squared away ready for the next move. Shortly after we all got together, we were hustled into columns of four and marched out to the road leading into the middle of town, and the railway yards. We were in front of a group of homes and the civilians were watching us from their windows. Somehow we made it known that we were thirsty and an old man and his wife started giving us water. Those old souls worked themselves like horses hauling water for us until the guards stopped them. Those people were helping us as best they could because they were built that way. We were their enemies - they might even have lost a son in the war - but they were helping us. They weren't doing it because they knew that Germany was going to be beaten; they were doing it because they were people, not puppets. Germany as a nation is rotten but its people are human beings with hearts and minds open to good things.

I had met WAR face to face a short while ago and now I was seeing something else. I don't know what to call it but it wasn't WAR - it was something just the opposite. "Brotherly Love" might be a good name for it. But Ben as far as I knew, and thousands like him, were dead not because of what people wanted but because of

what a few individuals wanted. It was rotten, but too late to do anything about it this time. I think a lot of us saw the something in the form of two old people, German people, enemies that day. Maybe not right then and there but after awhile when our minds had a chance to operate at a normal pace.

An hour passed after the guards stopped the old couple from giving us water when we started to move. We started again towards the railroad yards and this time we didn't stop.

As we walked through the town to the train station, we caused a little excitement. I guess the German morale was lifted some to see such a large group of enemy troops in their hands. The fact that we were causing a commotion didn't bother us much because we were too tired to care. There was no ill treatment by the German civilians to any of us - no jeering or shouting of any kind.

The closer we got to the railyards, the more beaten up the town appeared. Our Air Force had been causing trouble; it was quite evident. There was one sign we noticed and got quite a kick out of. It was in words to this effect - "Show the enemy that we're not afraid of their bombs. Don't move away from the railroads." The people didn't pay much attention to the sign because most of the homes near the yards were vacant.

After about an hours wait on the platform, an engine came into the yard pulling a load of box cars. The cars were full of straw and had just been emptied of horses but not of what the horses had left in the car. Each car had a little closet built on it to accommodate a man. I presume that the closets were where the tenders of the horses rode. In our case, guards were put in a few of them.

The German boxcar is somewhat smaller than ours and too damn small for 60 men. However, we were the vanquished so we were herded into the cars, 60 men to a car. With some jockeying around, the Engineers had managed to stick together and we all got in the same car.

I managed to get in one corner; one with some straw along with what the horses had left behind, and settled down. It was about 3 o'clock when we got in the cars, and after some delay and switching around in the yards, we rolled out. There were no vents in the car that we could see, and soon the air became too hot and sticky for comfort. Some of the men became panic-stricken because of stories they had read about death trains and such. However, we reasoned that if horses could be carried in the car, there must be some means of ventilation so we started looking. After stumbling around and feeling the walls, we discovered, two windows about 2 feet long and 8 inches high, and opened them. One of the windows was in my corner of the car, so I got plenty of fresh air and a look at Germany.

The, warm air created by our body heat and breathing caused my feet to start thawing out. I took my boots off after quite a struggle and a great deal of pain.

That helped some but it was about 24 hours before I could bear to have anything

touch them, and many a guy got cussed plenty for bumping them accidentally.

The fact that I was near the window had its drawbacks however. It was cold weather even though we were packed in so tight that we couldn't move, and I also had to serve as helmet man. The little bit of and the kind of food we had eaten, the water we had had to drink on the hike, and the fact that we were dead on our feet brought on dysentery or the "G.I.'s" as we called them. I'd be dozing and suddenly a voice would yell for "the helmet". "Christ sake - hurry:" Then after a short time, the helmet would come back to me out of the darkness of the car and I'd throw the contents out of the window. The same process was carried out when we had to urinate, only instead of the helmet we used one of the cheese cans, and the cry for it wasn't as pressing as the cry for the helmet usually was.

The hours passed by somehow. There were times we just sat in some yard; then here were others where we'd move along at a good clip for a couple of hours and then stop and back up about half the distance traveled in those hours. We slept on and off and tried to work out some way where each mart would have room to sit in, but it couldn't be done. There just wasn't room. Quite often during the ride a voice would wake us yelling "get that damn foot off my face." Sometimes it would be my voice.

By the 22nd, we were getting hungry and thirsty. Some of the boys were taking a beating from dysentery, and occasionally going out of their heads. Everytime we stopped, we'd holler "wasser" or "essen" at the guards but they'd shrug their shoulders and walk up and down along side of the train.

Water became our main want. There wasn't any talk about lack of water because everyone knew that everyone else was needing it, and talking about it wouldn't help. Food wasn't needed nearly as much as water on the trip. One of the boys still had some of their hard tacks left and passed them along the Engineers. He did that until acne guy offered him 2 smokes for 6 crackers - from then on he traded crackers for smokes. Cigarettes were to be the rate of exchange for the duration of our lives as P.W. s.

We talked about the way P.W.s in the U. S. were treated, and we got some grim laughs out of the way we were traveling compared to the way P.W.'s in the U. S. traveled. We talked about working on a farm for some Germans after resting up in a P.W. camp. We kind of pictured our lives as P.W.'s like the lives of the P.W.'s in the states. All the way we were disillusioned.

On the 23rd we went through Koblenz and got our first look at the Rhine River. About 2 o'clock that afternoon, we pulled into the railway yards near the P.W. camp at Limburg. About an hour later another train load of P.W.'s pulled alongside us a few tracks over. We could see their patches. They were from the 28th Division. They had been hit about as hard as we had, I guess.

That night as we lay in the yards, the air raid siren sounded. An engine that was pulling alongside us stopped abruptly and the Eng4neer and Fireman jumped out and ran. We could hear the heavy drone of a flight of planes and we sat there and sweated. I watched out the window and saw my Christmas tree. The lead plane

dropped a flare. It burst about 200 feet in the air and took the shape of a pine tree. The burning lights were red, purple, orange and yellow, and actually looked like the lights on a Christmas tree. I exclaimed about it - more to ease my insides than to make conversation - then things started to happen.

WHUMP..... The first one hit and jarred us around. The engine on the track next to us kept blowing off steam like a giant hippopotamus, and we prayed. I watched out of the window and each time a bomb hit, I dropped to the floor. Guys were yelling and everyone was feeling pretty scared. "Crawl out the window." "If this damn train ever gets hit and starts burning - -". I couldn't get out the window and wasn't going to try. I couldn't see myself half in and half out. when one of those babies hit nearby. Down at the other end of the car, the same sort of show was going on. How-ever, dawn there they had better results with the 'helmet' man and he crawled out the window. As he crawled out the guard spotted him, and lying in a ditch scared to death, he said in a pleading voice, "Good soldier, don't run." He paid no attention to the guard and crawled under the car and unwired the door, and we scrambled out. As we opened the doors of the cars near us, other men were doing the same along the train. Then we started looking for water. The bombs scared us plenty, but right then we needed water and that was our chance to get it.

We found a ditch frozen over and managed to get our fill from it. By then the bombing had stopped. The guards were getting worked up and shooting now and then, we worked our way back to the train. The weather was freezing cold that night and we were glad to get out of it even if it was just a boxcar that gave us our shelter.

Several times during that night the air raid siren sounded but none of the planes that caused the alarm gave us a visit. We spent that night waiting for another attack and cussing each other up and down for getting panicky. We learned months later that eight men were killed and 36 wounded in the bombing that night.

On the 24th we were still in the yards. German officers and men came around and checked each car to see that there were 60 men to a car. The car I was in had a full 60 men so I can't say for sure if any men took off but I don't doubt that some did. A couple of hours after the count was taken a German officer came to the window in each car and asked, "What outfit are the men in your car from?" I was at the window and played dumb. I said, "Just what outfits did you capture?" His answer was polite and spoken with authority, "The 106th and the 28th Divisions." I shut up and he moved on to the next one.

We got food on the 24th of December and we were also allowed to get out of the cars and go to the stream we found the night before and get water. The food was 1/12th of a loaf of German black bread and a daub of jam. It was more than we could handle in our weakened condition. The taste and texture was something new to us and we didn't like it. A few of the boys were too sick to even bite it. The rest of us ate some and either threw the rest away or jammed it in our pockets.

The day wore on and still we stayed in the yards. Two of our chaplains came up to the car and told us to hold on - that bombers had wrecked the track up ahead and it had to be fixed before we could move. Then they wished us a Merry Christmas and them,

and they moved on to the next car.

When night came we were still in the yards, and worried about being bombed again. "They won't bomb on Christmas Eve." "Hell they won't~ They're out to win this war - fast. Christmas won't be celebrated this year." And so we waited: Somewhere along the line of cars a Christmas carol was being sung. Back and forth the carols went; first from our train, then from the other train. 'Little Town of Bethlehem', 'Silent Night', 'Deck the Halls with Boughs of Holly', and the rest of the favorites. That lasted for an hour or so, then the Catholic boys in our car said their Rosary while the rest of us were silent with our own separate kinds of prayers, and we settled down to sleep and wait. The air raid siren sounded once that night but we weren't bothered by bombers again.

Christmas morning found us still in the same yard and more thirsty than ever. The water we had gotten the day before just teased us. One kid had a celluloid envelope he carried his pay book in and was using it to scrape and catch the little drops water that formed on the ceiling of the car. Anything to get water Sometime during the morning we started moving and our spirits picked up. As we moved through the yards we could see the damage the bombers had caused and we thanked our lucky stars that we were still alive.

It was around 2 o'clock Christmas afternoon when we stopped again; this time in the city of Frankfurt. It was a bright sunny day - civilians were only wearing sweaters. An old man from a house across the tracks started carrying water from his house to our train. Here again was that strange 'something'. He made about 12 trips with buckets of water then gave up. He couldn't stand the work. He had to walk about 100 yards each trip and it was too much for an old man. Our car was lucky enough to get two helmets full of water before he gave up.

We left Frankfurt about 3 o'clock and stopped this time for good in a little village called Bad Orb. It was the end of the line - all out for who knows what.

We gathered our coats and whatever else we had and got ready to get out of the cars. After a lot of talking among a group of German officers and troops, we were let out. We were lined up in columns of fours and then we waited. Civilians gathered around the ring of guards and just looked. I couldn't see any expression in any of their faces except perhaps pity in a few. We drew ourselves up and tried our best to look like U. S. soldiers and we did right well if you ask me, considering the condition our clothes and bodies were in. We got a glance at a newspaper; the headlines read, "35,000 Americans Captured". We knew that there had been a lot less than 35,000 captured so we muttered 'Merry Christmas' to ourselves and stood waiting.

It was getting cold fast and my feet started bothering me again. Finally we got started. We headed out of town and up the mountains. 'Three kilometers', the guards told us. I guess it was about three kilometers but it was a tough climb.

As we reached the top, we got a glimpse of our new home through the woods - - [Stalag IX B](#). We were marched to the entrance, then lead around the camp to the rear. There was snow there so I dropped out of line to get some water in any form was

what I wanted. I got a handful and started back into line but a guard grabbed me and knocked it out of my hand. "Nicht Gut", he said, and motioned to his stomach. He was right but I was thirsty so when he wasn't looking I got another handful, and it helped to quench my thirst.

The column came to a halt and the gates opened up. We walked in prisoners.

Christmas Day . . and the gates of freedom closed behind us. Merry Christmas? We thought so. After the battle . . the march . . and the train ride . . this was a place to rest.

As we walked in, faces peered out of barbed wire windows. They were smiling and yelling "Ruskies Ruskies." Russian troops - allies - greeted us. We smiled and feebly waved as we marched by.

We were herded into a quadrangle in the center of what was to be our 'home' -and separated. Non-cons, T/5 and up were moved of E first. They emptied their pockets for inspection by German guards, then lined up and marched to their barracks. After the non-cons, the rest of us went through the same process. Again my group of Engineers managed to stick together and we all were put in the same building.

The barracks we were led to was a huge barn-like building about 100' long and 40' wide. Along each side of the room were triple-decker wooden bunks. The bunks were placed in groups of four and five along the walls with a narrow aisle way between the groups. On the bunks was excelsior to be used as mattresses. The windows were about 10' apart and laced over with barbed wire. In the middle of the room was a long pine board table and a couple of benches. There were also two brick ovens which we soon discovered were of little use in heating the huge room. The place was dark and dreary but it was better than being in the freezing wind outside.

We picked our bunks, climbed into them, and laid there and waited for the next move. Our barracks guard came in and introduced himself to us. He was a sergeant and I should judge about 50 years old. He explained to us through one of our men who could speak and understand German, the rules and regulations of the camp. We could not use the inside toilet during the day or when the barracks were unlocked. We were not to lay on the bunks with our shoes on. We were to salute all German officers, stand count twice a day, and many other minor rules. After he had his say, he left us to ourselves.

A line was forming for the inside latrine so I went out and looked for the out-door one. It was, plainly speaking, outdoors. It was a huge hole with an ingenious seat arrangement. You propped yourself over one log and leaned your back out over the pit against another. It worked but it was a bit drafty and rather shaky. For paper I used a letter I had in my pocket. At first I had a few qualms about putting

link from home to such use, but after a few minutes with my behind in the cold wind arid no relief in sight, I used the letter and beat it back to the barracks.

Shortly after I arrived there, the guard came in and yelled "Essen" and out we bolted. He lined us up in columns of four and counted us off. Some of the men were missing, so after much counting and shuffling, we started for chow. We walked across the parade grounds, down a little slope around the back of the building, and halted. Up ahead around the corner of the building, there was a rattling of tin and exclama-tions. As my turn to round the corner came, a rusty tin can with a wire handle on it was shoved at me and I had my mess gear. The can was about the size of a coffee can; it was dirty and rusty but it was all I had to eat from, so I used it. A guard pointed down the street to where the kitchen was. I moved along and stuck my bucket in a steaming window and watched a huge Russian dip his leter-ladle into a barrel of

~ up and dump it into the bucket in my outstretched hands. Then I headed for the bar-racks. Very few if any of us had ever eaten anything quite like the soup we were given. It was made up of something green. There was much talk about what the green stuff was, turnip greens, grass or what. For lack of anything better to call it, we labeled it "Greens", and from then on whenever we had that mixture for our dinner, we called it "Greens" with a few decorative phrases tacked on.

Only a few men had anything to eat the stuff with, so we had to improvise some-thing. I had a 30 cal. shell in my pocket that I had "neglected" to show to the guards when they searched us so I pried the slug off from the casing. Then after some struggle, I ripped a piece of wood off the bunk and worked it down to about 1/8" thick and 2" long by 1" wide and forced the casing into it to serve as a handle.

After spooning out the "solid" greens, I drank the water that was left and was ready for more. The stuff wasn't good; I was just hungry. Some of the gang, I'll refer to my platoon as the gang from now on, couldn't eat the stuff. Of those that couldn't there were two types - those too sick to eat and those too squeamish to eat it. I was neither, so gladly helped one of the squeamish guys finish his. About the sick men I want to say this - there were two kinds. Those truly sick and those "Mother's boys" who just wanted sympathy. The sick ones we did our best for and the others we let alone. You could pick the men from the boys.

October 28, 1976

All of the preceding was written shortly after I got home from overseas in the early spring of 1945. The period of time covered was from December 16, 1944 into December 25, 1944. The hell that the Germans started raising on the morning of Decem-ber 16th has become part of the history of the U. S. Army and is known as "The Battle of the Bulge".

On Christmas Day, 1944, my division - the 106th "Golden Lion" was removed from the war map in the Pentagon. Over 7000 of the 106th were missing, killed, or wounded in this battle. We in the prison camp called ourselves "The hungry and sick division".

Jean has just returned from a trip to Germany, and as a result has stirred memories of the short I had in Germany. Since it was 30 some years ago, the memories are dim or completely gone. When the Good Lord equipped man with a brain, he blessed the

brain with the ability to wash away the bad memories and only retain the happy and joyous ones. I did keep a daily line a day diary on the back of some of the pictures I did not destroy when captured so with the help of that I will attempt to report what life was like in Stalag 9B up through our liberation on April 2nd, (the day after Easter) 1945.

Stalag Diary

January

1. Mon. Most of day in bed. Greens and litt1e meat in soup.

2. Tues. Loafed all day. Grubbed for spuds in peelings. Bean soup.

3. Wed. Snowed. Greens. Spuds soup. Thoughts of food tough. Got 3 bars of soap.

4. Thurs. Seconds in chow. Pea soup. Meat for supper. Stood hour and half in the cold. Started list of chow for home.

5. Fri. Wrote letter home today~ Greens and spuds. More food on my list.

6. Sat. Goad day. Little pea soup. 4 men to loaf of bread and cottage cheese for supper.

7. Sun. Services today. Spud soup. 5 men to a loaf. Meat for supper.

8. Mon. Greens and spuds. 6 men to a loaf. Plum and strawberry jam for supper.

9. Tues. Card to Jean. Shaved. Greens and spud soup. Officers left today.

10. Wed. Pea Soup. Slow day.

11. Thurs. Greens and spuds. Canned meat f or supper. Lecture by Jack Dunn on Sports in the Golden 20's.

12. Fri. GI cooks in kitchen. Bible class. Good greens and spuds. Ate outside. Jam for supper.

13. Sat. Pea soup. 5 men to a loaf. Section won half loaf of bread. Warm day.

14. Sun. Services good. Greens and spuds. Weak as hell, me I mean. Meat for supper. Petty fights starting.

15. Mon. Greens and spuds. Half the month gone. 300 men from the 100th came

in. News good. Jam for supper.

16. Tues. Greens and spuds. Lecture on Roaring 20's. Weather good. Took a drag on a cigarette. Month ago hell broke loose. Wrote card to Mom.

17. Wed. Pea soup. I got lots of solids, most didn't. Jam for supper. Meeting to put Reader in for Barracks Leader.

18. Thurs. Oats and spud soup damn good. Canned meat for supper. Long list of candy bars. Chinook wind during night.

19. Fri. Spuds and carrot soup. Good chow regular now. Weather warm to snow. Section Leader now.

20. Sat. Pea and spud soup. Snow. Round cheese for supper.

21. Sun. Finest service I've ever heard. Pea and spud soup. Traded supper meat for one-half portion of bread. "Suke" gave Clark and me portion of extra soup. Ten man detail brought in pot of extras. Ate like a hog. Full for first time since we got here. 280 new men coming in.

22. Mon. Inards all messed up because of the extra chow. Oats, carrots and spud soup. Five men to a loaf for supper. Snow most of the day. Up four times during the night. Starch diet bad for me I guess.

23. Tues. Carrot soup and spuds. Got seconds. Inards straight again. Weather fair. Wrote card to Ma Otto.

24. Wed. Drag on a smoke. Had bread and boiled spuds left for breakfast. Tasted good. Snow during the night. Red Cross men arrived today. Peas and spud soup.. Lost taste for bread. Tough life

25. Thurs. Non-Corns left today. Nice day. Oats and spud soup. Traded bread for canned meat. Got seconds on soup for supper because of detail. Nice day - clear moonlight night.

26. Fri. Toilet paper issued. Good to sketch on. Carrot and spud soup. Snow all day. Big helping of jam for supper.

27. Sat. Pea and spud soup - thin. Rotten spuds in soup. Nice day. Section won one-half loaf of bread.

28. Sun. Guard hit nine times in head with hatchet in kitchen last night. Were told we'd get no chow or fuel until man who made the attack was found. Attackers were found. We got meat, bread, butter and soup for supper. Traded bread for meat.

29. Mon. Pea and spud soup. Lots of spuds, but damn few peas. Traded bread for jam at chow. Cramps all night long. Sugar in tea now.

30. Tues. Bread and oats soup. Thin but damn good flavor. Weather cold. Rumor of Red Cross packages strong. Ate all my bread. Wrote letter to Jean.

31. Wed. Red Cross package. Sixteen men to a four-man box. ~ Small but good. Pea and spud soup, plus seconds. Large helping of jam. Traded smoke for prunes. Ate too damn much: Weather warm. News damn good. Card to folks.

February

1. Thurs. Weather warm. Huge piece of meat in soup. Cuts all full of gas.,

2. Fri. Heavy bombing. Weather like spring. Feel swell. Thin spud soup. Got hair cut for one smoke. Out of smokes. Jam for supper. Made raisin candy. Good. Bad cough. Slept swell however.

3. Sat. Weather like April. Made prune and raisin stew. Good: Pea soup - lousy. Rain at noon. Large helpings of cottage cheese for supper. Slept like a log.

4. Sun. Stove blew up. Couple men cut - not too badly. Weather turning cold again. Snow. Meat for supper. Fearless and Long new Barracks Leaders. Oats and spud soup. Seconds.

5. Non. Weather warm Plenty of extra chow because of details. Pea soup that was fair. War news looking better. Rumor of more Red Cross boxes. Four hundred fifty men moving out tomorrow. Jam for supper.

6. Tues. Hell broke loose !! Four planes were after a Jerry. The Jerry came low over the camp and our planes opened up. Three G.I.'s were killed. Two next to our bunk. Six men wounded in our hut all around our bed. Wahi's arm bad Mayer's hand bad: The wounded were treated. Oat soup good. Weather good. Wrote card home.

7. Wed. Weather warm. , Rain. Spud soup. Slept good. Feeling fine but weak.

8. Thurs. Weather warm. Extra chow detail. Bread soup. Seconds thick. Jam for supper. Started reading "Col. Effingham's Raid". Bad cough during night. 450 men left today.

9. Fri. Weather fair. Started helping in Recreation Hall. Shaved. Pea soup. Overloaded inards on seconds. Jam for supper. Went on sick call. Throat.

10. Sat. Weather wet. Guts bad. Four men to a loaf.

11. Sun. Services good Weather cold, windy. Funeral for five G.I.'s. Read "Range

Hawk". Rumor of Red Cross packages strong. Meat for supper. Traded seconds for meat and butter.

12. Mon. Weather wet. Pea soup with seconds. Jam for supper. Twenty-eight decks of cards and six books missing from Recreation Hall. Dunn blew his top. Tough stuff. Hopes for packages high but I have my doubts.

13. Tues. Weather damp. Spud soup. Seconds for one-half portion of bread. Letter and card home and to Mother.

14. Wed. Weather beautiful. Pea soup. Big seconds traded for one-half portion of bread. Jam for supper. Planes last night and today.

15. Thurs. Weather warm. Recreation Hall open again. Pea and barley soup. Ate seconds. Talk turns to food again. Bugs bad during night.

16. Fri. Weather nice: Bullock has his job at Recreation Hall back. Grits and pea soup. Slept on and off again.

17. Sat. Beautiful day. Huge bombing raid at Frankfurt. Barley and pea soup. Round cheese for supper. Traded seconds for bread. Detail all morning.

18. Sun. Services good. Choir wonderful. Weather foggy. Pea soup. Meat for supper. Potato Kings are getting more overbearing.

19. Mon. Weather foggy to clear. Shaved Wrote card to Ma Otto. Pea soup. Jam for supper. Beautiful night.

20. Tues. Weather chilly and damp. Worked all day. Nothing exciting.

21. Wed. Snow on ground - not for long. Worked all morning. Pea soup. Plenty of planes again. Jam for supper. Five men to a loaf.

22. Thurs. Weather fair. Spud soup. No details. Seconds for barracks.

23. Fri. Deloused today. Weather beautiful and warmer. Spud and barley soup. Jam for supper. Slept wonderful.

24. Sat. Weather crisp. Grits and spud soup. Sharpened dog tag to cut bread. Cottage cheese. Five men to a loaf for supper.

25. Sun. Choir good. All musical service today. Pea soup full of meat. Good. Met guy from South Side, Fort Wayne. Liverwurst for supper. Good but small. Two hundred new men in camp.

26. Non. Weather damp. Pea soup thin. Apricot jam for supper. Two hundred

more men in.

27. Tues. Weather warm but damp. Grit soup good. Two hundred more men in. Card to Mom. Letter to Jean.

28. Wed. Weather beautiful. Pea soup - lots of meat. Everyone looking at March to end the war. Jam for supper. Five men to a loaf. Two hundred more new men in. Total eight hundred men.

March

1. Thurs. Weather damp. Cold. Pea soup. Two hundred more men in. Total - One thousand new men.

2. Fri. Weather cold - snow. Bread soup thin - good. Cot seconds. Jam for supper.

3. Sat. Weather cold - more snow. Pea and. grits - good. Wood cutting detail all afternoon. Five men to a loaf.

4. Sun. Weather cold - snow. Services good. No salt in pea soup - poor flavor. Traded supper meat for spuds. Five men to a loaf.

5. Mon. Weather cold. Pea soup with grits - still no salt! No butter for supper. Traded seconds for one-half portion of bread.

6. Tues. Weather fair. News good. Soup flat - no salt in camp. Seconds. Jam for supper. Traded for spuds.

7. Wed. Weather wet. New kind of grits in soup - good. Jam for supper. Shaved. Card home.

8. Thurs. Weather snowy. Seconds for a Chesterfield. Damn good smoke. Soup with grits. Jam for supper. Still no butter.

9. Fri. Weather vet. Got deloused. Grit soup good - no salt. News good. Butter for supper.

10. Sat. Weather fair. Soup good. Rumors wild. Large ration of bread. Shaved, hair cut.

11. Sun. Weather fair. Pea soup. Jam and meat for supper.

12. Mon. Weather fair. Thin soup. News wonderful. Red Cross boxes coming in. Seven men to a loaf. 300 grams per man. No butter.

- 13. Tues. Weather warming up. Soup - pea - good. Still no salt. Boxes in.**
- 14. Wed. Beautiful day. Clark, Chura and I on a box. Good soup - seconds. Jam for supper.**
- 15. Thurs. Another beautiful day. Milk for thirty smokes. Thick soup. Seconds. One hundred fifty of us to leave Sat. Clark and I stick together.**
- 16. Fri. Beautiful day. Chura to be an M.P. Soup with salt - good. Jam for supper. Shipment canceled for awhile. Shaved.**
- 17. Sat. Weather cold - rain: Soup good. Seconds. Won pack of smokes and portion of bread and cheese. Cheese for supper.**
- 18. Sun. Weather cloudy. Card to Jean - letter home. Soup good. Two liters. Seconds. Meat for supper.**
- 19. Mon. Weather good: Soup thick - seconds. Sky full of planes. Jet jobs scared hell out of us. Sounded like 50's talking. Card to Ma and Pa.**
- 20. Tues. Weather cold. 3/4 liter of soup. Seconds. No water in camp. Tough.**
- 21. Wed. First day of spring. Nice day. Carried water from German barracks to kitchen for soup. Bread at noon. 210 grains. Damn small rations. Soup at 2:30. Good plus seconds for barracks. Gave Scripture reading at prayer meeting.**
- 22. Thurs. Beautiful day. Thick flour soup. News good. Quiet day.**
- 23. Fri. Beautiful day. Thick soup. News good Another quiet day.**
- 24. Sat. Beautiful day. Pea soup - thin but tasty. Clark got seconds and shared them. Bets are now G.I.'s will roll in. Another ten-day quarantine on the camp. 210 grams of bread again. Seconds for barracks. Got damn full.**
- 25. Sun. Palm Sunday. Services good. Beautiful day. Hopes high. Soup good. Meat for supper.**
- 26. Mon. Spring rain to sunshine. Thin soup - seconds - plenty. Morale up - down - up again. Red Cross boxes tomorrow. G.I.'s expected anytime.**
- 27. Tues. Chilly day. Fighters strafing all over the place. Red Cross boxes hit and burned. We had eleven men to a box. Fun while it lasted. Waiting for G.I.'s is getting much harder. Soup damn thin. No count all day.**
- 28. Wed. Weather damp to sunshine late afternoon. Soup thin and flat. Rumors all over the place. Little sleep last night. Feel punk all day. Clark's teeth**

bothering him. Seven men per loaf - night. Schotgen found piece of 50 cal. in his piece.

29. Thurs. Weather overcast. Dead tired all day. Soup fair. Seconds for barracks. Everyone sweating out liberation.

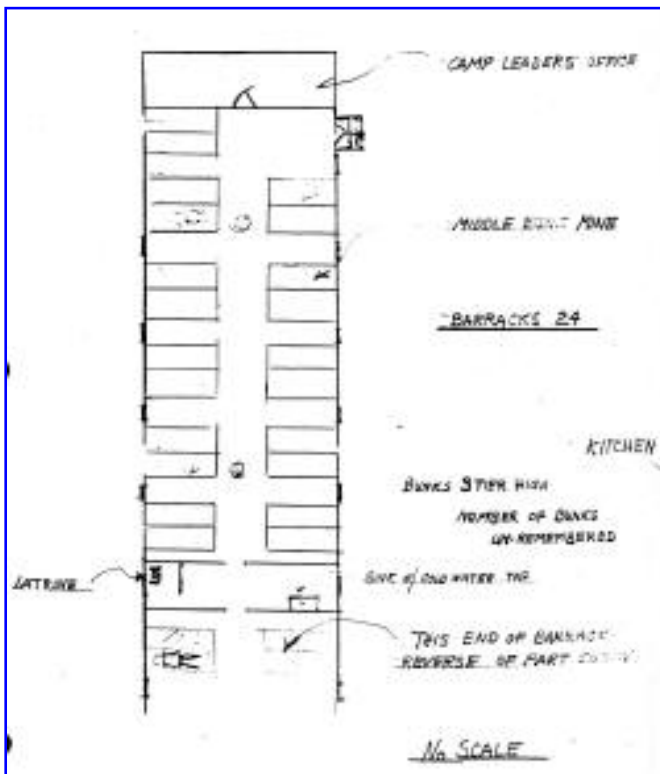
30. Fri. Weather cloudy. Fierce fighting all day long. Red Cross boxes - twenty men to a box. Nice surprise because no smokes left. Hopes higher than ever. No bread anymore supply cut off. Four boiled spuds for supper. Soup plenty thick.

31. Sat. Weather cloudy to clear. Thick flour soup twice today. Rumor that we were free set camp aflame. Were issued two packs of French smokes- lousy after American ones. Rumor of Red Cross Boxes again. Worked on spud detail again.

April

1. Sun. Easter Sunday. Windy. Not much doing. Everyone waiting for the Yanks. Fierce fighting broke out in the evening.

2. Mon. LIBERATION



As you can see, I started keeping the diary on January 1st, 1945, so my memories of the last few days of 1944 (first few days of being a P.O.W.) have faded almost completely away. I was moved into another barracks during this period of time and spent the rest of my P.O.W. time in Barracks 24.

The camp covered an area of about 50 acres and was on a hilltop surrounded by

woods near Bad Orb. Germany. It apparently had been a Youth Camp prior to its conversion to a P.O.W. camp. Some of the barracks were constructed of cement block and stucco as I recall and were rather permanent. The first barracks I was in was one of this type. Barracks 24 was constructed of wood and housed about 120 men. (Please keep in mind the areas, and numbers are mainly guesses on my part.) Barracks 24 was laid out like the sketch. My being moved into 24 was a fortunate break because it became Headquarters Barracks for the American Section of the camp. As a result, those of us were used for some of the camp labor details. This not only kept us more active than most of the other P.O.W.'s, it occasionally meant we got extra soup. "Seconds" as I call them in my diary. To my knowledge our barracks and the hospital that was set up in camp were the only ones ever to get extra soup. There were only "seconds" when the cook put too much water in the soup or did not dish out full measure' to each man when the camp was fed.

During the six days after Christmas and prior to my diary, we managed to set up a method of governing the camp and each individual barracks. When we arrived at Stalag 9B, the officers were separated from the men. The NCO's, Corporals up, were separated into their own barracks. The Pvts. and Pfc's were put into their own barracks and were left to rule themselves without benefit of any rank imposed upon them by any system. All in all, this worked to everyone's satisfaction. I think the Germans felt that about any leaders, the Pvts. and Pfc's would be easy to handle and rather cowed. We, the Pvts. and Pfc's, were not unhappy about the set-up because this method of segregation allowed us to run our barracks as we saw fit. We soon had an election for a barracks leader. His job was to act as a go between all of us in Barracks 24 and the Germans. I have forgotten the name of the man who was our first barracks leader. I do recall one of the reasons he was elected was his ability to speak and understand German.

Our barracks may have been unique in the way we broke ourselves into units of men, I doubt it however. We ended up in 6 man units for one simple reason - - food

Our daily menu was as follows: Breakfast - 1 - Can (the one handed out to us the first day in camp) of "coffee" or "tea". This was served to us in our barracks. It was dipped out of a barrel delivered to each barracks by two of the Russian prisoners, about nine o'clock in the morning. We were never sure what it was - coffee or tea -

though it was delivered each morning by two Russians and a German guard who would call out either "coffee" or "tea". We found all sorts of odd things in this part of our daily menu. The most common were pine needles and small twigs. Whatever or whichever it was, coffee or tea, most of us soon found that if you drank a pint of it, your body eliminated at least a quart of liquid. Before long the "coffee" or "tea" was used mainly to wash and shave with because it was warm when delivered.

The second meal of each day was "soup". By barracks, the men would form a mess line and proceed past a window in the Kitchen Building. Each man would thrust his dinner can in the window with some plea - "dig deep" "find that meat" "get some solids", etc. A ladle was slapped into your gear and you were on your own. On most days because of the cold weather, everyone would head for his barracks. Each man would immediately eat his soup, hunched over his can. We looked like hungry dogs

wary that someone would ~ne along and kick us away from our food.

Our last meal of the day was German black “bread”, and about every other day - a slab of jam, a slice of blood sausage or something similar or a dab of cheese, cottage or otherwise. This was served about 4 o’clock in the afternoon.

This menu was responsible for our becoming 6 man units, because the average daily ration of “bread” was six men to a loaf. The loaf was about ii” long and 4” square, and most of the time never seemed to be properly baked through. It was very heavy and usually soggy in the middle. Its main ingredient, we all swore, was sawdust and the ever present pine needles. Today I can eat and enjoy a few slices of German bread but after about three slices, I find I’d rather not have the fourth slice.

As my diary indicates food was our main interest and I will have more remarks about the food but first I want to continue with the barracks and camp set-up.

Each six man group came into being because you were bunk mates and buddies. I can’t today name any of the other five men in my section for sure. This seems rather strange to me because we were bound together by that loaf of black bread. Each day when we got our bread, we would inspect it, compare it with the one the next section got, lift it to feel the weight, and comment on our luck or bad luck. Each day a different man in the section had the responsibility of cutting the loaf into 6 pieces, 5 pieces, 7 pieces, or whatever the amount for the day was to be. The man who cut the loaf had the last choice: I venture to say there wasn’t a millimeter difference in size.

Our bunks were 3 high with two men to each layer. They were made of 2 x 4’s as uprights and cross members with rough finished boards making up the layers. Each layer had a mattress cover stuffed with straw serving as the mattress. The second day in camp each man had been issued one half of a blanket. My bunk mate and I soon found that one half blanket under us, and one half blanket and my overcoat on top of us was the warmest way to sleep.

The straw that made up our mattress was infested with lice and fleas, and every tight they would go on maneuvers. Anytime during any night, you could hear someone swearing at the lice. The lice were the worst at night because they would do their moving around then. Wherever your clothes were tight around the body, the wrists, the ankles, and under the belt was where they congregated and ate their meals. The fleas had no favorite spot - they’d bite wherever they landed. As the weather warmed up, the lice multiplied and I’m sure there are many men from Stalag 9B that carry scars around their wrists, ankles, and belt line from scratching bites. Whenever anyone near you started to scratch, it took great will power not to start scratching yourself. One day one of the men from another barracks stopped in to see a buddy in our barracks; he scratched himself constantly. We threw him out of our barracks after about 5 minutes.

If there was any humor in this infestation, it was to watch a man sneak up to his bunk, gently take hold of his blanket, fling it back, and flail frantically at the fleas as they hopped about.

We were given a hot shower and our clothes steamed about the third day we were in camp. On February 23rd, I got another shower and delousing. These were the only two times I had my clothes off while there. A major past time was searching the seams of our clothes, killing lice. As the days warmed up towards spring, you could look any-where around the camp and find groups of men searching their clothes and gossiping like a bunch of old women at a quilting bee.

Each half of barracks 24 had two cast iron wood stoves in the center aisle. Each day each stove got all the chunks of wood one man could carry away from the wood pile. This would have been an extreme hardship for the barracks furthest from the wood shed area except one man had to carry the wood only out of eye shot of the German Sgt. in charge of the wood. After our second meal of the day, one man was picked from the next "ction on the roster to carry the wood. Two other men from that section would go along "loaders". The carrier would extend his arms straight before him and the two loaders would speedily but, carefully stack firewood on his arms as high and to all the weight he could hold. With a loader on each side of the carrier holding him upright, the group would stagger for the barracks. Anything that fell off within sight of the Sgt. was left. Once out of sight of the Sgt. the carrier would collapse. After a short rest, the three men would pick up the wood and carry it to the barracks.

The stoves were the center of any social gatherings in the barracks, and at any-time of the day or night you could find at least 2 or 3 men standing around the stove talking and holding their hands out to get them warm. This was an automatic gesture or stance when near the stove, even when it was cold. The wood we got never lasted the full 24 hours but while the stove was hot, it was used to dry wet clothes, warm the near area, toast bread, heat water, and even cook on when we had odd concoctions to '~ook. Potatoes, obtained from the "Potato Kings" were roasted in it, etc.

We were counted twice each day. Once before breakfast and once before lights out. "Lights" is the wrong term as each half of the barracks had one bare light bulb hanging in the approximate center of the room. On February 4th, our stove (the one closest to my bunk - therefore the "our", was demolished by an explosion. The stove blew up while we were outside being counted. It seems that Bullock had hung his GI canteen inside the stove to heat some water. The canteen exploded and blew the stove into a number of pieces of junk. Until mangled pieces of the canteen were found, the Germans were like mad hornets. They thought we had a' grenade and were fearful we had more. Bullock was put into solitary confinement until February 16th for destroying German property and for throwing a fright into our German guards.

As a result of Bullocks getting put in solitary for blowing up the stove, I got the job he had in the Rec center. The camp Rec. center was one of the usual barracks the Germans had allowed us to use as we would. From somewhere a number of books appeared. The building was also used for the choir to practice in. In any group of men the size that were thrown into Stalag 9B many talents can be found. One of the P.W.'s was a member of the Metropolitan Opera. With the help of one of the Chaplains captured with us, he formed a choir. On Sunday, February 18th, the choir sang. We all felt it was extra good, however, they only gave the one performance that day be-cause they didn't have the strength to do more. On Sunday, February 25th, the service was all musical. I don't think the group ever sang again; they were just too

weak to exert themselves that much.

All my life I have been an avid reader and while in camp, I managed to read only two books. Hunger destroys all desire to read and ruins any ability to concentrate. There are many things I don't agree with that our Federal Government is doing but I'm all for breakfasts and lunches in schools for any of the children who want them. Its difficult to learn if your stomach is empty.

I enjoyed the job in the Rec. Building for the few hours each day that I had it. My job was to attempt to keep track of the books, librarian, if you wish. It was almost a hopeless job because along with the talents found in a group this large, there was a large number of thieves. On February 12th it was found that 28 decks of cards and 6 books were missing. As a result of this inventory, the Hall was closed for two days. On February 16th, Bullock was released from solitary and got his job back at the Rec. Hall.

The diary clearly indicates that Food was our main concern and I have used different labels for the soup. "Greens" I have described before. I think the other names are clear enough to describe the base of the soup; I am at a loss to describe it from there. Most of the time it was watery and it wasn't warm when we got back to our barracks. We were never sure what was in the soup, strange pieces of meat, roots, etc. one day after a rather noisy bombing near the camp, a truck pulled into camp and up to the kitchen. We could see one dead horse, a couple of sheep, and at least one dead dog. We were delighted because that meant we would have meat in our soup the next day.

When I started on January 1st keeping my diary we were already starving. On the morning of December 16th I had a good 0.1. breakfast. That was the last meal as we know a meal until two days after liberation, April 2nd. By January 1st our daily routine was established and the diary hits the high spots of each day. Food was the main high spot each day, as you can see.

I note that on January 2nd, "I grubbed for spuds". Behind the kitchen next to the latrine building, the daily garbage was dumped. This was mainly the dregs left in the huge kettles used to cook our soup and the potatoes too rotten to put in the soup. Men were pawing through this pile of refuse and occasionally finding something nearly edible. I tried it for a few minutes but decided I was more man than animal and never got to that low state again.

The entry for the 3rd says "Thoughts of food tough". It was about this time that we started craving certain foods. I craved breakfast foods. This was my body dictating what it needed because I have never been a fan of breakfast foods. Food was always in our thoughts. I remember dreaming of a roast beef dinner with mashed potatoes and gravy. I could actually smell the gravy but I couldn't eat it, and I woke myself up crying.

Each of us would make up elaborate meals we would have when we got home, and would try to outdo each other with our menus. One of the men said that as soon as he got home, (there was never any doubt in most of our minds about getting home; the only doubt was when), he was going to get a wash tub, bake a cake in it and smother it with ice cream and peaches, and eat it all by himself. Last summer he called me up as he was going through Baltimore and stopped by my office to see me. I asked him if he did as he said he was going to some 30 years ago. It was the first time we had seen each other since liberation. He was like most of us and did not fulfill his P.O.W. dream.

On January 4th the entry says - "Stood hour and one half in the cold." This day the Germans registered us in their records. We were marched from our barracks to a barracks-like building outside of the barbed-wire campground. The line going into the building was slow moving, so, like our army it was "hurry up and wait". The weather was biting cold and the wait was punishing. When we got in the barracks there was a long table set up with men behind it. They were, we assumed, G.I.'s. They were dressed G.I. and spoke as G.I.'s. They were asking - Name - Rank - Serial Number - Our Outfit Company - and Division. . . Our Fathers full name - Mothers full name - and our Grand-mothers and grandfathers full names - and where they were born. Our instructions before we were shipped overseas were, if taken prisoner, to give only our name, rank and serial number. Most of us objected to giving anything but name, rank and serial number. Out-'ic we went and there we stood. Every few minutes one of the guards would ask the same questions again. Those that agreed to answer were taken inside and were soon on their way back to the barracks. After some time in the cold, most of us gave up - answered the questions and were taken back to our barracks. All the questions were in direct violation of all international agreements. The questions about our parents and grand-parents were the Germans way of checking to see who among us were Jewish.

Some weeks later the Jewish men were removed from the camp, and I don't know to this day where they were taken or what became of them.

We were issued a form on January 5th that when folded properly became a letter envelope, and was delivered to the German Red Cross and was then sent to the addresses in U.S.A. I sent this first letter to my folks, knowing that as soon as they heard from me they would call Jean. My folks were living in College Park, Maryland, and Jean was in Tri. Delta Sorority going to the University of Maryland. We had become engaged before I had shipped overseas. As I remember, my letter explained where I was, how I was, (well, but not happy where I was), and from there I listed things to send in their Red Cross package. Everything I listed was something to eat, and as I remember I filled all the left over space with "peanut butter", "condensed milk", etc.

Sunday, January 7th, we had services. When we were captured, the Germans pulled in Chaplains, Doctors, Dentists, even the two Air Force men I mentioned before. We had at least one Chaplain and one M.D. in our camp. They set up a hospital and were busy from the first day the camp was in operation. The Chaplain held services every Sunday and also would have Bible Class in the barracks during the week. I would go to Sunday services mainly for something to do. Being a rather independent person, I have an agreement with God. I would serve him as I could and would not call on him

until I was in dire straits. Even today this is the way I work with him. I live by his teachings

I as yet have not been in such condition that I needed to call on him. For this fact I truly thank him. If I must call on him, I think he will be there to answer. Maybe because I feel this, this is proof of his being.

The 9th of January, the Germans moved the officers from Stalag 9B. This didn't affect the camp at all. A basic routine had been set and I believe this proves that men, any men, can govern their selves and will govern their selves.

On January 11th Jack Dunn gave a talk in one of the Golden 20's." I wasn't a great sports fan but because a than worry about himself, some of us went to this talk. May be a member of the Dunn family who I believe was and about "Sports in the man needs something to do other I don't know who Jack Dunn was, is involved with the Baltimore Orioles.

January 13th-our section of six men won one half loaf of bread. Through a mix-up our barracks was issued an extra loaf of bread. Sections numbers were put in a helmet and my sections number was drawn as winner of one half loaf for us. This was the same thing as winning \$5000.00 in today's lottery.

The days moved along in a slow dreary procession. Dreary is the word I think of that best describes the air of being in the camp. Winter isn't the best time of year to enjoy life unless you're an avid skier, and in a camp such as ours it is probably the worst way to spend it . . short, cold, foodless days. All of us were losing weight by the pound. I started out at about 145 good solid pounds. When I was liberated, I weighed about 100 lbs, and I was in better shape than a great many of the men.

Group of new P.O.W.'s were being brought in and we would listen avidly to them. We were full of questions, "When did you leave the States?" "Where were you captured?" "How is the war going?" "What did you have to eat last?" One man was 7 days out of the States and he was in a worse state of shock than we had been when we were captured. We had at least been out of the States 6 weeks: We felt like Veterans.

On Sunday, January 21st, the Chaplain used a short verse in his sermon. It was a simple thing but it impressed me. After services I asked him to recite it again so I could write it down.

"I have to live with myself and so I want to be fit for myself to know -I want to be able as days go by to look myself straight in the eye -I don't want to stand in the setting sun and hate myself for things I've done."

Memory tells me this is the way it went. I feel its a creed to live by.

My mention of "Suke" giving Clark and me a portion of extra soup on January 21st needs some explaining. Our barracks was the one from which work details were pulled as I have mentioned. One detail that never changed personnel was the "Potato

Detail”.

All other details were manned by rotation of the roster. The Potato Detail was the prize of the camp. “Suke” was a member of this detail. The ten men in this detail were soon known as the “Potato Kings.”

Potato Kings went each morning pushing a huge cart to the potato storage bin. Their job was to load the cart with potatoes and push it to the kitchen for the cooks to use in the soup. Being hungry G.I.'s, they became proficient in filling their pockets, shirts, etc. with spuds when the guard was not looking. As a result, they always had spuds to trade or sell and lived an affluent life. All of us not on the detail felt that this arrangement was unfair, undemocratic, and downright criminal. Everyone constantly harassed the German Sgt. in charge of camp work details to change the de-tail daily. He refused. I guess he felt working with known thieves was better than working each day with a different, hungrier group of unknown thieves.

A note on January 22nd states I was up 4 times during the night. The night average was 2 times for every man in the barracks. The food or lack of it kept our insides in a constant state of flux. A trip to the latrine at night was like taking a walk in a dark tunnel and arriving at an open sewer at the end of the walk.

The barracks latrine was in a small room about 4’0” x 8’0” (see sketch-of barracks). When we first moved into the barracks, the toilet was simply a hole in the floor. It wasn’t long before someone knocked together a rough framework to sit on. This arrangement worked fine, however, with the entire population living with a chronic case of the G.I.’s, this seat was in constant use and always at night someone was waiting to use it. Quite often the waiting one couldn’t wait. As a result, as the night wore on the floor of the latrine became awash with sewerage. My cut down hip boots were in constant demand by the men as bedroom slippers during the night for the many trips made to the latrine. One of our guards was always indicating he would like to trade with me for my boots. I never thought seriously about trading because I couldn’t figure how I could journey to the latrine at night without those boots.

Trading was a way of life in the camp and cigarettes were the medium of exchange. ~ ~ ne cigarette was worth \$2.00 cash money. A carton could buy the finest watch in camp.

of the men in camp soon became the dominate trader. He had a traders instinct, and .~hen we were liberated went home a rather rich man. He soon ended up wearing the fur lined, leather flight suit one of the air men was captured in. I believe he was the only man who left Stalag 9B weighing more than when he entered camp. He’s probably a wealthy used car dealer in Columbus, Ohio, now.

The International Red Cross inspectors toured the camp on the 24th. We stood at the ends of bunks at attention while the Camp Commandant led the 3 men, (Swiss - we assumed) through the barracks. They went through the camp in about 2 hours and we had great dreams of receiving more food, more heat, more everything. There were no immediate results and no important ones when they did occur.

Our daily routine was upset on Sunday, the 28th. Each morning the barracks were unlocked and the guard would come in, yelling "Raus - macht schnell". Those able would roll out of their bunks and stand at attention for the morning count. As the weather permitted, we were moved outside for the morning and evening counting. After the complete camp count was taken our "Breakfast" was served.

This morning our guard did not appear. Time wore on and our apprehension increased as it became 10 o'clock . . then 10:30. About 10:45 A.M., an S.S. troop of Germans came trotting into camp and dispersed throughout the camp setting up machine guns at each "street" intersection. The barracks were unlocked one at a time and the men were ordered out into the street. Each of us grabbed everything we owned. Our dinner can, our half blanket, our "spoon", etc. and moved out. The Combat troops were angry looking and the camp guards were in a serious mood. Barracks by barracks, the entire camp was marched to the parade grounds and lined up at attention. The parade grounds were on the hump of the hill and the January wind was blowing across it in a mean, cold manner. We stood in this freezing wind as the Germans lined us up and proceeded to count us.

I recall they made three different complete counts before the tally came out correct. We were then closely inspected... each man...hands, shirts, jackets, pants, boots, etc. Every now and then, a man was jerked out of line and marched away. We were freezing cold and scared.

After the close inspection, we were informed that the kitchen guard had been killed during the night and that we would receive no food or fuel until the man or men responsible was found and turned in. We stood for another few hours and then marched back to our barracks. While we were standing, the barracks were being searched. In one they found a bloody field jacket and some fresh meat. The men of that barracks were left standing on the parade grounds. The blood stained jacket was shown to the barracks occupants and the guilty man was soon found. We were fed our complete three meals that day about 5:30 in the afternoon.

On the 24th I could not stomach the daily ration of bread. I could not physically get it into my mouth. To eat I would trade my bread for whatever I could. This was rather a trying time because I had to give much more bread for the meat, or jam, or whatever I got in return. Fortunately, we were issued Red Cross packages on January 31st. 16 men to one box. Red Cross boxes were designed to feed one man 7 days or 7 men one day. Each box had 5 packages of cigarettes, a box of prunes, raisins, a can of powdered milk, liver pate, sugar, canned meat, crackers, and the like. Anything that could be counted, cigarettes, raisins, prunes, crackers, etc. were counted piece by piece, into 16 piles. The powdered milk, sugar, etc. was divided as evenly as possible into 16 piles. We then drew lots to see who got first choice . . then again for the next . . . and the next . . etc.

I traded some of my cigarettes for prunes. I figured I'd purge myself of what-ever it was that made it so difficult for me to eat the bread issue. The change of food, small as it was, had most of us in pain for awhile. I finally took all my raisins ,d prunes and cooked about a cup full of stew. This seemed to get my insides back to the normal lousy shape they had been in.

The Red Cross boxes contained vitamin pills and everyone was asked, and did, turn them into the camp hospital. This was about the only medicine the doctors had to work with and all kinds of illness were showing up. Malnutrition speeds up flaws in the body and about a man a day was dying. When the first man died, the body was wheeled through camp with the Chaplain and a 6 man burial detail following behind. The camp ignored the whole thing. When the next burial detail went from the hospital through the camp to the gate, the entire camp fell out and saluted the body. Each body after that was paid this respect.

I was on one of the burial details. It was one of the three times I got out of the camp gates. The camp was completely surrounded by barbed-wire to a height of about 10' ,and every 150' or so. and at every corner there was a tower with a machine gun mounted and manned 24 hours per day. About every third tower also had a spotlight. .ie camp itself was divided into compounds by the 10' high barbed-wire fence. When we arrived in camp, there were about 30 Russian P.O.W.'s. They were in what became the American Compound and were used as kitchen help. Their jobs in the kitchen allowed them to steal enough food on which to stay healthy. We were constantly amazed to see them move with a bounce in their step and carry the "tea" or "coffee" in the barrels to each barrack. The normal walk for us was a bent old man's shuffle. In the cold it was a crab-like shuttling from one windbreaker to another.

Sometime after we had been in camp, they moved 3 or 4 hundred British Troops into what became the "British Compound." Some of these men had been P.O.W.'s since Dunkirk After we were liberated we talked with them. They said the short time spent in Stalag 9B was the worst time in their history of being P.O.W.'s.

The camp cemetery was about a mile outside of camp in the woods on the slope of a hill. There were about 6 men buried there at the time I was there. The grave had already been dug by someone else. I'm sure that we would not have had the strength to do it. The Chaplain read the burial services and we covered the body and returned to camp. The walk and the shoveling wore us out for the rest of the day, and I suppose the emotional experience drained us too.

After I returned home, I was with Dad one day visiting the office of a friend of his who was a Congressman from Wisconsin. Dad mentioned I had been a P.O.W. in Germany. The Congressman asked me where, etc. He had just received a letter from one of his constituents asking if he could get any information about her son who died in a German prison camp. The man I helped bury in Stalag 9B was this woman's son: We exchanged letters and sent each other Christmas cards for many years after.

On most nights we could hear flights of bombers in the sky. Some nights we could hear bombing and see a glow in the distant sky. We were south and east of Frankfort and not too far from Hanou. It was probably Frankfort getting hit. One night a lone plane went over and ditched a bomb. It hit not too far from camp and made us rather nervous about the whole idea. The Germans were rather upset the next day and removed the light bulbs from all the barracks. They thought someone had figured out a way to bypass the master light switch for the camp and had signaled the plane. We all figured it was a straggler just dumping his load to lighten his ship for the run home.

One night shortly after that some nut in the barracks couldn't sleep and whistled like a bomb falling. Every man in the building hit the floor~ Some of the men didn't even wake up until they were on the floor, scrambling for cover. If we had found out what jackass whistled, he would have ended up in the outcasts barracks.

The "outcasts barracks" was just that. Any man caught stealing was automatically put in that barracks. First he was thrown in the open latrine pit, and the men of the barracks where he was found stealing stood around the pit and urinated on him. Thieves "iat stole from their buddies were treated harshly. Stealing from the Germans was

'cepted practice as long as it didn't endanger anyone else. Others that ended up in the outcast barracks were those who were constantly fighting or had such disgusting habits that men in their barracks voted them out. The men in this barracks pulled the "Honey Dipping Detail". Their job was to dip out the latrine and haul the mess away. This punishment deterred a lot of thieves, I'm sure. The barracks had nothing in it at all. The men slept on the floor. ~ sure it was hell on earth.

On Tuesday, February 6th, about 2 o'clock, I was sitting on my bunk with the "old man". Outside not too far away, we could hear a dogfight. None of us paid much attention to it. Remarks were being made about it by some of the guys. One kid on the bunk above mine was peeling some spuds; he was on the 10 man potato detail, remarked that if it got any closer he was going to get down from the bunk. Suddenly sparks flew around the room and various explosions seemed to take place in the room. On the bunk next to mine a guy yelled "I'm hit", and his buddy dove for him crying "Sully, Sully - you all right?" The kid who made the remark about getting down from the upper bunk was holding

up his left arm looking at it and saying, "The bastards got the wrong one". He was hit in the arm and in the leg. He got it going down to the floor; the other guy on the bunk with him wasn't hit.

The entry in the diary numbers those killed and wounded in our barracks. One of the other barracks was in the line Of fire as the planes dove after the Germans and there were one or two killed in that barracks and a number wounded. "Sully" was slapped with a hot piece of shrapnel and got a bruise and burn but was not counted among the six wounded.

After that explosive few seconds everyone was plane shy, and many an anxious eye was cast skyward whenever the fighters came within earshot. That day we carried lime from the pile that was used for the latrines and spelled out in huge letters - P O W -on the parade grounds. The next day a fighter flew over and circled the camp wagging his wings and waving. This cheered us because we felt someone now knew where we were.

All through the diary I comment about the "news". Each night after our nightly count one of the Germans would give us the German version of the war news. We would eliminate what we felt was German propaganda and couple that with the bombings

we could hear, the planes we could see, and things kept looking better and better.

We were allowed two cards and one letter a week that we could send home. On January 5th I wrote the folks. On January 9th I sent a card to Jean. She got that card before the folks got the letter. The day after she got the card, the folks got a telegram from the War Department saying that PFC Philip A. Hannon, of the 81st Eng. Battalion, was missing in action. She had already given the news about my being a P.O.W. to the folks so the telegram didn't upset them.

On February 8th, 450 men were moved out of camp. We learned after liberation they were put out on farms to help work the land. Most of them survived and lived rather well with their farmer hosts. On February 25th, 200 men were marched into camp and each day through March 1st, 200 more men came in. These men had been working in the railroad yards repairing the damage done by our bombers. They were in frightful shape. They had been living in the open and about all the food they got was what they found. After their arrival in camp, our daily burial rate took a sharp increase.

Red Cross boxes were issued on Wednesday, March 14th. This time the box was split between three men and we thought we were in heaven. Clark, who I mentioned through the diary, was a rather small man from Upper Michigan. He was about 30 years old and was a member of my Engineers Platoon, He was known as "Lil Beaver" because of his energy or as "Old Man" because of his age. Before we were liberated, his hair which had been black turned completely gray, and he became an old man.

150 of us were told we were leaving the camp on Saturday, March 17th. This was bad news as far as we were concerned because the unknown is less frightening than the known. On Friday the shipment was canceled and the camp quarantined because the Doctors reported to the Germans that they had several cases of spinal meningitis in the hospital.

The Saturday that we were to leave camp, I won a pack of cigarettes and a portion of bread and cheese. With the sudden riches of the Red Cross boxes, the gamblers went into business. Lotteries were set up. A man would sell ten chances - one cigarette per chance on a pack of twenty cigarettes. I was lucky and won in two of the lotteries I bought into. I don't recall how many I bought into but it was probably only five or six. This action and carnival-like atmosphere roused one of the men who had given up, back into living again. Some of the men simply gave up, turned to the wall, and died. This always puzzled me. I always felt things couldn't get worse, so they had to get better.

On the 19th, two German jet airplanes shot over camp. We had just been served our soup when suddenly these two planes came and went. They were extremely fast and sounded like fifty caliber machine guns. Soup and men went flying; we were still plane shy. It was a good thing the Germans didn't get into full production of these jets because they could fly rings around anything we had.

I mentioned Chura two or three times in the diary, and that he was to be an H.P. He was a big, dark haired man from Chicago. All of us had saved some of the pictures we carried with us. Every now and then we'd all sit around and pass our pictures around

and tell each other who this was, etc. I think my pictures were appreciated most because I had three of four taken of Jean with three or four of her sorority sisters. Hungry men have few thoughts of sex but they can still enjoy pretty faces. Chura's favorite trick during picture passing time was to pull the one picture he had out of his pocket and pass it around. His comment was always - "This was taken of me when I was arrested" It was a picture of Chura dressed in a black business suit with an Al Capone hat pulled down over his eyes. We were never sure if he was kidding or not. I feel-kidding or not-he was a lonely man.

The M.P.'s were set up by our Camp Government to police the chow line. Their main job was to see that no one went through the line twice. They had no authority delegated to them by the Germans. They were not trustees but only a way we had set up to maintain order among ourselves.

As March wore on, the weather was improving and we were spending more time outside. The war was moving closer to us daily. Attack bombers were in sight or sound often, which cheered us greatly. The axiom was "Where there are attack bombers the foot soldiers soon follow." These bombers and fighters caused us problems, however, because they would attack anything on the roads that moved including supply trucks. For awhile there was no salt in camp. The soup was bad enough but without salt it was deadly. I can see why wars were fought for salt.

From about the 20th of March on, our morale went up and down like a yo-yo. Rumors ~re flying around camp that some of the men had been let out of camp to make contact with the G.I.'s. The Germans were less strict in taking the correct count and were not insisting on our saluting them.

We were issued Red Cross boxes - 11 men to a box. We were told there should have been more boxes but that they were burned when the trucks had been strafed. This may have been true, however, after we were liberated we found a number of empty boxes in the German barracks and nearby homes. Because of the strafing it was difficult for our bread truck to get through. One of the men - Schotgen - found a piece of a fifty caliber bullet in his piece of bread.

On the 30th we were issued Red Cross boxes again. . 20 men to a box this time. There was no bread at all that day so we were issued four potatoes each. That day one of the older German guards remarked to me - "Pretty soon" - and raised his hands in the air indicating he would soon be the prisoner.

April 1st, Easter Sunday, was a waiting day. We could hear the small arms fire and smell the smells of war, but we couldn't see the fighting. To be quite frank none of us were in a hurry to go looking for the war. We had lived this long and didn't want a stray bullet to get us now. That day most of the Germans melted away and by evening there were no Germans around.

On the morning of April 2nd, three American tanks rode over the gates of the camp and we were liberated.

Reading this I can close my eyes and picture Stalag 9B and Barracks 24 but I have trouble realizing that all this happened to me. Time dulls the memory. I do know that I have had my “testing”. A man doesn’t know what he can endure until he is tested to his limits, and then far beyond limits he never imagined.

In the camp, there were no heroes, there were no cowards, only men - each enduring.

Translation of the article of the Limburg-Diez bombing:

“Found a whole page in our paper about today 40 years ago, when bombs fell on Limburg and Diez, and especially killed American officers in the prison camp of Diez. There were 60 Americans killed, but also French, Poles and Belgians who were still in a train and one German watchman. All the other Germans only slightly blessed. Shortly after a Swiss Commission (delegation) came to inspect and control all this, and they demanded to have the Red Cross installed on the barracks of the prison camp. There also was a cemetery for all these prisoners between Diez and Limburg. But after the war most of the dead were moved to cemeteries of the allied forces. But there are still bones found in the forest.

Near Limburg station 146 people were killed, but they were German civilians.

The air-raid had been meant for Limburg station, but a storm waved the lightening ammunition (which in bitter irony we then called “Christmas trees”, toward Diez and so the bombers hit the wrong target. 162 families lost their homes in that night before Christmas Eve. So this was a day of common mourning for Germans and Americans.

From Elisabeth's letter of December 23, 1984 which included the newspaper clipping.

Phillip A. Hannon

**3rd Platoon
"A" Company
81st Combat
Engineers**



Excerpts from:

ONE MAN'S STORY by Phillip A. Hannon

"The story of a Combat Engineer

during the Battle of the Bulge and his capture by the Germans"

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One Man's Story, by PFC Phillip A. Hannon, is a 62 page detailed account of his experiences with the 106th Infantry Division during the Battle of the Bulge and his subsequent capture by the Germans. There is too much information to present here, so only highlights of the story are shown. I cannot do justice to this detailed account in so small a space.

"My part in the battle was short and sweet. Six days on the front then Hell broke loose. We were called a "calculated risk", a "green Division", spread thin on a "quiet" sector where the Infantry could get combat training for the big push that was coming. The Heinies made a last chance drive and we were in the middle."

...."The order came down the line to throw up our hands. We destroyed our weapons, cussed and cried, and felt empty and lonely inside. Our fighting was over. We were beat, tired, hungry and cold, but we were still soldiers and Americans and expected treatment as such.

We were P. W.'s! When we started for Europe and the war, we talked and thought about being killed or wounded but never about being captured; yet here we were. The fight was over for us but we were still in danger. We were still in the battlezone and could be killed as easily as not. Tread lightly soldier, these Germans are kind of cocky and nervous.

We were a sad and silent group when they rounded us all up together. Each of us had his own private thoughts - most of them bitter ones. We all had a feeling of being "sold out". It hurt to have to throw up our hands to the Heinies. It hurt inside. I pulled out my wallet and looked at the pictures I carried in it; pictures of home and my folks that were there. Their smiles danced before my eyes as I tore the pictures up. I didn't want any Germans leering at the pictures so I tore them up. I pulled out a 1,000 Franc note I had in the wallet, admired the beautiful work done on it, and tore it up. Then I threw my wallet away and watched it get trampled on in the mud. No German will ever carry that I thought to myself grimly.

The men around me were doing the same as I.

Our officers told us to throw everything away. "Get rid of your helmets." "Throw your knives away." "Leave your canteens here."

We hiked for about a half hour, and all along the road lay American equipment. It is a sad sight to see weapons that were captured because there was nothing to put in them.

**Life in Stalag 9B,
1945**

January 1 Monday

Most of day in bed. Greens and little meat in soup.

2 - Tuesday

Loafed all day. Grubbed fr spuds in peelings. Bean soup.

3 - Wednesday

Snowed. Greens. Spuds soup. Thoughts of food tough. Got 3 bars of soap.

4 - Thursday

Seconds in chow. Pea soup. Meat for supper. Stood hour and half in the cold. Started list of chow for home.

5- Friday

Wrote letter home today !! Greens and spuds. More food on my list.

6 - Saturday

Good day. Little pea soup. 4 men to loaf of bread and cottage cheese for supper.

7 - Sunday

Services today. Spud soup. 5 men to a loaf. Meat for supper.

8 - Monday

Greens and spuds. 6 men to a loaf. Plum and strawberry jam for supper.

9 - Tuesday

Card to Jean. Shaved. Greens and spud soup. Officers left today.

10 - Wednesday

Pea soup. Slow day.

11 - Thursday

Greens and spuds. Canned meat for supper. Lecture by Jack Dunn on Sports in the Golden 20's.

12 - Friday

GI cooks in kitchen. Bible class. Good greens and spuds. Ate outside. Jam for supper.

13 - Saturday

Pea soup. 5 men to a loaf. Section won half loaf of bread. Warm day.

14 - Sunday

Services good. Greens and spuds. Weak as hell, me I mean. Meat for supper. Petty fights starting.

15 - Monday

Greens and spuds. Half the month gone. 300 men from the 100th came in. News good. Jam for supper.

- 16 - Tuesday** Greens and spuds. Lecture on Roaring 20's. Weather good. Took a drag on a cigarette. Month ago hell broke loose. Wrote card to mom.
- 17 - Wednesday** Pea soup. I got lots of solids, most didn't. Jam for supper. Meeting to put Reader in for Barracks Leader.
- 18 - Thursday** Oats and spuds soup damn good. Canned meat for supper. Long list of candy bars. Chinook wind during night.
- 19 - Friday** Spuds and carrot soup. Good chow regular now. Weather warm to snow. Section Leader now.
- 20 - Saturday** Pea and spud soup. Snow. Round cheese for supper.
- 21 - Sunday** Finest service I've ever heard. Pea and spud soup. Traded supper meat for one-half portion of bread. "Suke" gave Clark and me portion of extra soup. Ten man detail brought in pot of extras. Ate like a hog.
- 22 - Monday** Inards all messed up because of extra chow. Oats, carrots and spud soup. 5 men to a loaf for supper. Snow most of the day. Up four times during the night. Starch diet bad for me I guess.
- 23 - Tuesday** Carrot soup and spuds. Got seconds. Inards straight again. Weather fir. Wrote card to Ma Otto.
- 24 - Wednesday** Drag on a smoke. Had bread and boiled spuds left for breakfast. Tasted good. Snow during the night. Red Cross men arrived today. Peas and spud soup. Lost taste for bread. Tough life!
- 25 - Thursday** Non-Coms left today. Nice day. Oats and spud soup. Traded bread for canned meat. Got seconds on soup for supper because of detail. Nice day - clear moonlight night.
- 26 - Friday** Toilet paper issued. Good to sketch on. Carrot and spud soup. Snow all day. Big helping of jam for supper.
- 27 - Saturday** Pea and spud soup - thin. Rotten spuds in soup. Nice day. Section won one-half loaf of bread.
- 28 - Sunday** Guard hit nine times in head with hatchet in kitchen last night. G.I.'s were told we'd get no chow or fuel until man who made the attack was found. Attackers found. We got meat, bread, butter and soup for supper. Traded bread for meat.
- 29 - Monday** Pea and spud soup. Lots of spuds, but damn few peas. Traded bread for jam at chow. Cramps all night long. Sugar in tea now.

- 30 - Tuesday** **Bread and oats soup. Thin but damn good flavor. Weather cold. Rumor of Red Cross packages strong. Ate all my bread. Wrote letter to Jean.**
- 31 - Wednesday** **Red Cross package. 16 men to a 4-man box. Small but good. Pea and spud soup, plus seconds. Large helping of jam. Traded smoke for prunes. Ate too damn much! Weather warm. News damn good. Card to folks.**
- February 1, 1945**
Thursday **Weather warm. Huge piece of meat in soup. Guts all full of gas.**
- 2 - Friday** **Heavy bombing. Weather like Spring. Feel swell. Thin spud soup. Got haircut for one smoke. Out of smokes. Jam for supper. Made raisin candy. Good. Bad cough. Slept well however.**
- 3 - Saturday** **Weather like April. Made prune and raisin stew. Good! Pea soup - lousy. Rain at noon. Large helpings of cottage cheese or supper.**
- 4 - Sunday** **Stove blew up. Couple men cut - not too badly. Weather turning cold again. Snow. Meat for supper. Fearless and Long new Barracks Leaders. Oats and spud soup. Seconds.**
- 5 - Monday** **Weather warm! Plenty of extra chow because of details. Pea soup that was fair. War news looking better. Rumor of more Red Cross boxes. 450 men moving out tomorrow. Jam for supper.**
- 6 - Tuesday** **Hell broke loose!! Four planes were after a Jerry. The Jerry came low over the camp and our planes opened up. Three G.I.s were killed. Two next to our bunk. Six men wounded in our hut all around our bed. Wahl's arm bad! Myer's hand bad! The wounded were treated. Oat soup good. Weather good. Wrote card home.**
- 7 - Wednesday** **Weather warm. Rain. Spud soup. Slept good. Feeling fine but weak.**
- 8 - Thursday** **Weather warm. Extra chow detail. Bread soup. Seconds thick. Jam for supper. Started reading "Col. Effingham's Raid". Bad cough during night. 450 men left today.**
- 9 - Friday** **Weather fair. Started helping in Recreation Hall. Shaved. Pea soup. Overloaded inards on seconds. Jam for supper. Went on sick call. Throat.**
- 10 - Saturday** **Weather wet! Guts bad ! Four men to a loaf.**

- 11 - Sunday** Services good! Weather cold, windy. Funeral for five G.I.s. Read "Range Hawk". Rumor of Red Cross packages strong. Meat for supper. Traded seconds for meat and butter.
- 12 - Monday** Weather wet. Pea soup with seconds. Jam for super. 28 decks of cards and 6 books missing from Recreation Hall. Dunn blew his top. Tough stuff. Hopes for packages high but I have my doubts.
- 13 - Tuesday** Weather damp! Spud soup. Seconds for 1/2 portion of bred. Letter and card home and to Mother.
- 14 - Wednesday** Weather beautiful. Pea soup. Big seconds traded for 1/2 portion of bread. Jam for supper. Planes last night and today.
- 15 - Thursday** Weather warm. Recreation Hall open again. Pea and barley soup. Ate seconds. Talk turns to food again. Bugs bad during night.
- 16 - Friday** Weater nice! Bullock has his job at Recreation Hall back. Grits and pea soup. Slept on and off again.
- 17 - Saturday** Beautiful day. Huge bombing raid at Frankfurt. Barley and pea soup. Round cheese for supper. Traded seconds for bread. Detail all morning.
- 18 - Sunday** Services good. Choir wonderful. Weather foggy. Pea soup. Meat for supper. Potato Kings are getting more overbearing.
- 19 - Monday** Weather foggy to clear. Shaved! Wrote card to Ma Otto. Pea soup. Jam for supper. Beautiful night.
- 20 - Tuesday** Weather chilly and damp. Worked all day. Nothing exciting.
- 21 - Wednesday** Snow on ground - not for long. Worked all morning. Pea soup. Plenty of planes again. Jam for supper. Five men to a loaf.
- 22 - Thursday** Weather fair. Spud soup. No details. Seconds for barracks.
- 23 - Friday** Deloused today. Weather beautiful and warmer. Spud and barley soup. Jam for supper. Slept wonderful.
- 24 - Saturday** Weather crisp. Grits and spud soup. Sharpened dog tag to cut bread. Cottage cheese. Five men to a loaf for supper.
- 25 - Sunday** Choir good. All musical service today. Pea soup full of meat. Good. Met guy from south side, Fort Wayne. Liverwurst for supper. Good but small. Two hundred new men in camp.
- 26 - Monday** Weather damp. Pea soup thin. Apricot jam for supper. 200 more men in.

- 27 - Tuesday** **Weather warm but damp. Grit soup good. 200 more men in. Card to Mom. Letter to Jean.**
- 28 - Wednesday** **Weather beautiful. Pea soup - lots of meat. Everyone looking at March to end war. Jam for supper. 5 men to a loaf. 200 more men in. Total 800 men.**
- March 1, 1945**
Thursday **Weather damp. Cold. Pea soup. 200 more men in. Total 1,000 new men.**
- 2 - Friday** **Weather cold - snow. Bread soup thin - good. Got seconds. Jam for supper.**
- 3 - Saturday** **Weather cold - more snow. Pea and grits - good. Wood cutting detail all afternoon. Five men to a loaf.**
- 4 - Sunday** **Weather cold - snow. Services good. No salt in pea soup - poor flavor. traded supper meat for spuds. Five men to a loaf.**
- 5 - Monday** **Weather cold. Pea soup with grits - still no salt !! No butter for supper. Traded seconds for one-half portion bread.**
- 6 - Tuesday** **Weather fair. News good. Soup flat - no salt in camp. Seconds. jam for supper. Traded for spuds.**
- 7 - Wednesday** **Weather wet. New kind of grits in soup - good. Jam for supper. Shaved. Card home.**
- 8 - Thursday** **Weather snowy. Seconds for a Chesterfield. Damn good smoke. Soup with grits. jam for supper. Still no butter.**
- 9 - Friday** **Weather wet. Got deloused. Grit soup good - no salt. News good. Butter for supper.**
- 10 - Saturday** **Weather fair. Soup good. Rumors wild. Large ration of bread. Shaved, haircut.**
- 11 - Sunday** **Weather fair. Pea soup. Jam and meat for supper.**
- 12 - Monday** **Weather fair. Thin soup. News wonderful. Red Cross boxes coming in. Seven men to a loaf. 300 grams per man. No butter.**
- 13 - Tuesday** **Weather warming up. Soup - pea - good. Still no salt. Boxes in.**
- 14 - Wednesday** **Beautiful day. Clark, Chira and I on a box. Good soup - seconds. Jam for supper.**
- 15 - Thursday** **Another beautiful day. Milk for thirty smokes. Thick soup. Seconds. 150 of us to leave Saturday. Clark and I stick together.**

- 16 - Friday** Beautiful day. Chura to be an M. P. Soup with salt - good !! Jam for supper. Shipment canceled for awhile. Shaved.
- 17 - Saturday** Weather cold - rain ! Soup good. Seconds. Won pack of smokes and portion of bread and cheese. Cheese for supper.
- 18 - Sunday** Weather cloudy. Card to Jean - letter home. Soup good. Two liters. Seconds. Meat for supper.
- 19 - Monday** Weather good ! Soup thick - seconds. Sky full of planes. Jet jobs scared hell out of us. Sounded like 50's talking. Card to Ma and Pa.
- 20 - Tuesday** Weather cold. 3/4 liter of soup. Seconds. No water in camp. Tough!!
- 21 - Wednesday** First day of spring. Nice day. Carried water from German barracks to kitchen for soup. Bread at noon. 210 grams. Damn small rations. Soup at 2:30. Good plus seconds for barracks. Gave Scripture reading at prayer meeting.
- 22 - Thursday** Beautiful day. Thick flour soup. News good. Quiet day.
- 23 - Friday** Beautiful day. Thick soup. News Good ! Another quiet day.
- 24 - Saturday** Beautiful day. Pea soup - thin but tasty. Clark got seconds and shared them. Bets are now G.I.s will roll in. Another 10-day quarantine on the camp. 210 grams of bread again. Seconds for barracks.
- 25 - Sunday** Palm Sunday. Services good. Beautiful day. Hopes high. Sou good. Meat for supper.
- 26 - Monday** Spring rain to sunshine. Thin soup - seconds - plenty. Morale - up - down - up again. Red Cross boxes tomorrow. G.I.s expected anytime.
- 27 - Tuesday** Chilly day. Fighters strafing all over the place. Red Cross boxes hit and burned. We had 11 men to a box. Fun while it lasted. Waiting for G.I.s is getting much harder. Soup damn thin. No count all day.
- 28 - Wednesday** Weather damp to sunshine late afternoon. Soup thin and flat. Rumors all over the place. Little sleep last night. Feel punk all day. Clark's teeth bothering him. Seven men per loaf - night. Schotgen found piece of 50 cal. in his piece of bread.
- 29 - Thursday** Weather overcast. Dead tired all day. Soup fair. Seconds for barracks. Everyone sweating out liberation.

30 - Friday

Weather cloudy. Fierce fighting all day long. Red Cross boxes - 20 men to a box. Nice surprise because no smokes left. Hopes higher than ever. No bread anymore - supply cut off. Four boiled spuds for supper. Soup plenty thick.

31 - Saturday

Weather clear to cloudy. Thick flour soup twice today. Rumor that we were free set camp aflame. Were issued two packs of French smokes - lousy after American ones. Rumor of Red Cross boxes again. Worked on spud detail again.

**April 1, 1945
Sunday**

Easter Sunday. Windy. Not much doing. Everyone waiting for the Yanks. Fierce fighting broke out in the evening.

2 - Monday

LIBERATION !!!!!

Some further details concerning the above diary.

There were only seconds on the soup when the German cooks put too much water in the soup or did not dish out full measure to each man when the camp was fed.

The daily menu was as follows:

Breakfast - 1 can (the one handed out to us the first day in camp) of "coffee" or "tea". This was served to us in our barracks. It was dipped out of a barrel delivered to us each morning by two of the Russian prisoners, about 9 o'clock in the morning. We were never sure what it was - coffee or tea - though it was delivered each morning by the two Russians and a German guard who would call out either "coffee" or "tea". We found all sorts of odd things in it. The most common were pine needles and small twigs. Whatever it was, most of us soon found that if you drank a pint of it, your body eliminated at least a quart of liquid. Before long, the "coffee" or "tea" was used mainly to wash or shave with because it was warm when delivered.

The second meal of the day was "soup". By barracks, the men would form a mess line and proceed past a window in the Kitchen building. Each man would thrust his dinner can in the window with some plea - "dig deep", "find that meat", "get some solids", etc. A ladle was slapped into your gear and you were own your own.

Our last meal of the day was German black "bread", and about every other day - a dab of jam, a slice of blood sausage or something similar or a dab of cheese, cottage cheese or otherwise. This was served about 4 o'clock in the afternoon. The loaf of bread was about 11" long and 4" square, and most of the time was never baked through. It was very heavy and soggy in the middle.

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