

WORLD WAR II
FROM THE LIFE STORY
OF
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CHAPTER 4

In the spring of 1940 there began to be serious talk of our active involvement in the war in Europe, and the United States began to step up its mobilization of a military force and to accelerate its industrial production of basic metals. This meant more copper and zinc which the smelter increased its efforts to produce. As a result I was offered a full time job as a member of a civil engineering crew hired to lay out and build a zinc plant.

This marked a change in pace for America and was the first real turning point in my life. The whole country was suddenly shaken out of the deep economic rut it had been confined in during the depression, and I was tossed far afield by the upheaval.

In October of 1941 I was drafted into the Army at Ft. Douglas, Utah. At the completion of my physical examinations, I was summoned before the Commanding Officer of the induction station who told me that I met the physical and educational requirements for the Army Air Corps and asked if I would consider applying for training. I had no special preference for service so with their help I submitted the necessary application papers. The general feeling was that I would be out of uniform and back at work in Tooele before the application could be processed. For the next few days I learned the rudiments of drill, went through the disconcerting process of having my hair cut Army style, of learning to make my bed, and how to pack a foot locker for inspection. I couldn't quite understand why it was necessary to make my bed with a dust cover until I discovered that Ft. Douglas with its lawns, shrubs, grass, and trees was not quite typical of an Army Post. Army Posts, I soon found out, were new and remote in their settings. Except for brief patches of concrete or asphalt, they were dressed with a ground cover of mud or dust depending on the weather.

All my life it had been drummed into me at home, at school and at church to use my head before I blundered ahead with something. Think before you act, I was told. I now found that continued admonition had spawned a deliberateness in my actions that the Army found unacceptable. I had to be brainwashed into obeying an order without question. I was supposed to learn to act in proper Army fashion on impulse without thinking. This

meant reducing every phase of Army life to habit and doing it in such a way that my former ingrained habits would be superseded. Army training was, however, geared to such a task and accomplished it in a standard way. Discipline, they called it. Each day began with a formation for reveille and a chewing out by the platoon corporal. This was followed by one formation after another until five o'clock retreat. Everything was done in formation and by the numbers. When there was nothing else to do, which was about 50% of the time, we had close order drill up and down the parade ground. We marched to breakfast, lunch and dinner. We marched to classes, to the playing field for calisthenics and to the dispensary for shots. Wherever two or more men went on the post, they marched. Hup, tup, huree, hoar, in cadence count became a shriek in our ears and the song of the day. Forward march, to the rear march, by the right flank march, by the left flank march, by the right oblique march, by the left oblique march, company halt. By the numbers present arms, right shoulder arms, left shoulder arms, order arms. One, two, three, four. At least I was learning to count to four without thinking. This non-thinking habit forming routine gradually worked until it began to be obvious in our thoughts, talk, and actions.

Two weeks after I signed the draft papers, I was sent by troop train to Camp Roberts, California. At Camp Roberts there was often a break of a whole day when I didn't march or stand a formation. This day started at 3:00 a.m. and ended at 9: p.m. It was summarily called K.P. (kitchen police). I also took my turn standing guard or walking guard post. I was so engaged the night of December 7, 1941 in the company motor pool. It was cold, there was a tenseness in the air caused by the news from Pearl Harbor and the creaking doors of the maintenance sheds in the motor pool after midnight made the vigil an eerie one.

I learned an important lesson at Camp Roberts: "Never volunteer for anything."

After a month at Camp Roberts, I was transferred from the Field Artillery to the Signal Corps at Camp Hahn, Riverside, California. There I attended radar school, one of the first such schools in the country. I placed top man in the course which I considered to be quire a simple review of basic physics, and because of this I was selected to continue training as a radar specialist at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey. However, before I took this new assignment, my flying cadet application, which by now I had forgotten, caught up with me and I was given a choice of Fort Monmouth or flying school. I pondered both opportunities. Fort Monmouth would give me a technical sergeant's rating and flying school would result in a commission in the Army Air Corps. I guess the uniform of a commissioned officer turned my head. I chose the Air Corps and navigation training. I often wonder where I would be today if I had made the other choice.

From Camp Hahn I joined the cadet corps at Santa Ana, California, and after a few weeks of intensive basic training moved to Mather Field, Sacramento, California, where I completed advanced flight training.

I was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Army Air Corps on September 22, 1942 and was assigned to a B-17 heavy bomber combat training base at Gowen Field, Boise, Idaho. I spent a few days at home enroute to my new assignment and used the opportunity to show off my new officer's uniform and sport my newly won wings. I was a little chagrined when some of my mother's friends complimented me on my "lovely costume."

At Gowen Field I was assigned to the newly organized 100th Bombardment Group Heavy, 350th Squadron, and met the crew that I was to live and fly with until the end of the war.

I am six feet four inches tall and Benny Demarco, the pilot of our crew, was five feet six inches tall. I had to frequently bend over to walk or stand in the B-17 whereas Benny had to sit on two regulation size cushions and place one at his back in order to comfortably reach and operate the controls of the plane. His size didn't detract from his ability to fly the aircraft. He was refined, very intelligent, and had a super abundance of self confidence. We had many of the same qualities which, like our sizes, were revealed in opposite ways. My self confidence was hidden by shyness and was not at all obvious in the presence of others, whereas Benny shone forth best in company and completely masked the deep seated humility that I later found him to possess. He expressed himself best in oral conversation and argument; my thoughts flow best when I am alone and I find it easier to write them than to speak them. I always think today of the repartee I should have made in yesterday's conversation.

We were placed on a rigid flying schedule which, under the guise of training, was aimed solely at gaining a brigadier general's star for the Base Commander. On paper we were to become the best trained bomb group in the Air Corps. The Air Corps measured the training efficiency of a base by the amount of flying hours accrued per month on each aircraft. A large number of hours per plane signified not only a maximum of air crew training but also a high proficiency on the part of the ground maintenance crews who were responsible for keeping the planes in commission. This measure, like most yardsticks based on statistics, is subject to all sorts of manipulations and becomes a mockery of its true purpose in the hand of an ambitious director such as ours. A cutthroat competition was fostered between the flight crews and the ground crews. The flight crews stretched every point to have the plane declared out of commission whenever it was on the ground which added to their score of flying hours but at the same time subtracted from the efficiency of the ground crews. The ground crews, on the other hand, wanted the aircraft in commission even if it meant a

relaxation of safety. We were placed on a twenty-four hour a day, six day a week schedule of six hours on duty and six hours off. The six hours on meant six hours in the air. The six hours off included time to sleep, eat, file reports, take care of our personal needs and attend ground school. When we landed, we were required to keep the two outboard engines running while we changed flight crews. In this way there was no loss of flight time in the transition. The plane was considered airborne when taxiing and as long as two engines were running. If the plane was out of commission for an engine change or other repairs during our scheduled time to fly, we were required to stand by the flight line for the full six hours in case the plane should be made ready, even if it meant only enough time to start the engines and taxi out to the runway and back before the next crew took over. Efficiency really ran rampant and it was not uncommon for a plane to show a recorded flying time totaled from the individual reports of the pilots of more than twenty-four hours a day. We were restricted to flying within a twenty-five mile radius of Boise which precluded any possibility of a forced landing at any other base than Gowen Field and the subsequent loss of flying time that such an event would bring about. On paper my flying time was mounting rapidly and as far as the Air Corps knew I was becoming a proficient navigator. I was. I could recognize the lights of Boise and the city's profile from any point of the compass. My training was made even more ludicrous by the lack of navigation equipment. There was not a single sextant on the base that I could use to practice celestial navigation. I bought a fifteen cent protractor and pencil compass from Woolworths which I substituted for a Weems plotter and dividers and with which I made a pretense of practicing my dead reckoning procedures.

Although my navigation training at Gowen Field was a bust, my social life, on the few days I had off, was a huge success. I met Miss Jean Huff, who, after the war, became my wife.

From Gowen Field we moved as a group to Wendover, Utah where our combat training took on a more realistic approach. My navigation training didn't improve; but we spent many hours dropping 50-pound practice bombs, firing our guns at ground and air targets, and flying simple cross-country daytime navigation missions. My most memorable experience at Wendover occurred on Christmas day of 1942. We had almost completed a scheduled six-hour bombing and air-to-ground gunnery mission when we were directed to land immediately because of an approaching snow storm. We were about twenty minutes from the field when we received the order so by the time we had entered the landing pattern, the storm was threatening to close us out. As we turned on our final approach, snow flurries blocked our vision but the visibility was still adequate for landing. We were within a half-minute of less from touchdown when the blinding force of the

snow storm struck. All objects on the ground and in the air disappeared. Even the wings were blurred to my vision. Benny immediately put the plane into a steep climb and banked sharply in a direction away from the mountains. We reported our condition to the tower and were advised to climb on course toward Salt Lake City. Five minutes later an advisory from the tower indicated that Cheyenne, Wyoming was the nearest open field. Our predicament was now precarious. Cheyenne was almost four hours away over one of the highest and most rugged portions of the rocky mountains and we had less than two hours of fuel remaining. Benny called for a course heading to Salt Lake City which I had already computed and was able to give him immediately. However, giving him an estimated time of arrival was something else again due the severity of the storm. The falling snow was so dense that our wing tips were not visible from my window. I bowed my head and said a prayer for our safety. I tried to maintain an estimate of our course and position although I knew it would be unreliable because of the turbulence of the storm and our rapid climb. We broke out on top at 31,000 feet, which was above the ceiling altitude for a B-17. A sea of clouds lay about us in all directions as far as the eye could see. I estimated our position and gave it to Benny as being near Salt Lake City. We circled a couple of times and talked over the interphone of what we should do. Our prerogatives were to bail out or try to stretch our limited gas supply to reach Cheyenne. The first presented the hazard of descending by parachute through the 30,000 feet of snow storm to an uncertain landing that might well be in the mountains. It also meant being without sufficient oxygen for at least 20,000 to 25,000 feet of that fall. The second, by using our high altitude to advantage and leaning out our carburetor mixture offered an almost equally remote chance of reaching Cheyenne. Neither prerogative was worth much. We were still debating when I spotted what appeared to be an opening in the clouds some distance to our right. I described its position to Benny and he turned the plane to investigate. It was an opening in that vast sea of clouds and as we flew over it, we looked down at, of all things, the runways of an airport. A miracle had been performed for us and I thought of my prayer and I knew that it had been answered. We spiralled 30,000 feet down through the opening to the Salt Lake City airport below and as we descended, the clouds above closed over us. When we landed, the sky was again an unbroken overcast. Our waist gunners kissed old Terra Firma and we all agreed with their comment, "the more firma the less terra." We ate Christmas dinner in the dining room of the Hotel Utah, unshaven and dressed in our flying suits.

During the next few months we moved through combat training phases at Sioux City, Iowa; Kearney and Scottsbluff, Nebraska; and Casper, Wyoming.

In May of 1943 we were alerted for overseas duty with the Eighth Air Force in England, and I started to prepare for the

long overwater flight. Although we as a crew had received a great deal of combat training, my navigation training had continued to suffer. Basic navigation instruments and tables, especially those required for celestial navigation, had not been available. We were finally outfitted in Kearney, Nebraska, a few days before our scheduled overseas departure. For the first time I was issued a sextant, master chronometer, hack watch, a set of navigation tables, an almanac, star charts, Weems plotter, and E6-B computer, and a new instrument still in its packing case called an Astro Compass. We were told that we would positively make a trans-ocean flight at night so that we could use celestial navigation to steer our course and periodically compute our position. Thus was my expectation and I started a concentrated review of celestial navigation procedures. I attempted each night to perfect my technique for identifying the proper stars, shooting with the sextant and computing two- and three-star fixes. My experience with celestial navigation had been rather brief and concentrated in flying school and had thoroughly rusted for six months. I had a lot to relearn and not much time to do it.

The first leg of our overseas journey was to Bangor, Maine. From there our route was planned to take us to Newfoundland where we would take off on a direct flight to Prestwick, Scotland. All of the navigators were keyed up with anticipation. Overwater navigation was more difficult and left much more to the judgement of the navigator than it does today. There were no Loran, absolute altimeters or dead reckoning devices. Our plane had an aperiodic compass which was quite sensitive to local magnetic influences and was quite unaccommodating in the far northern regions where it was affected by magnetic dip. The plane also had a drift meter which was useful for determining wind direction and velocity and to correct a compass heading to a true heading. The drift meter, however, depended on the presence of white caps on the ocean or some stationary object on the ground as a point of reference. It also depended on the cooperative good temper of the pilot to fly a special off-course pattern called a double drift when you wanted him to. For dead reckoning we were equipped with a set of maps and charts (Mercator), a Weems plotter, dividers for scaling distance, and an E6-B computer. For celestial navigation I had a sextant (octant), an accurate watch, a master chronometer, an almanac, star charts and a set of HO-218 tables. Celestial navigation was by far the most accurate method of navigation but unfortunately was useful only on a clear night when the stars were visible. It could be used with the sun to find a course or speed line which were often handy to have. At Bangor it was reported to us by the maintenance crew that our ball turret window was broken and could not be prepared in time for us to depart with the rest of the group. This was disappointing because somehow or other there is comfort in being with the rest. Although the job is no harder, the responsibility rests a little heavier when you are alone. We

said goodbye to the rest and told them that we would join them again in Newfoundland. This was not to be, however. We were held over in Bangor longer than expected and by the time our repairs had been made, the rest of the group had gone on to England. By the time we were ready to depart, the weather had turned bad over the route the rest had taken and we were routed over a more northerly course. This meant we would spend one day flying north to Goose Bay, Labrador, one day from Labrador to Iceland, and a third day from Iceland to Scotland.

The time year was early June and the country side around Bangor still had a pleasant air of spring. This was changed, however, on our flight path to Labrador which carried us the entire distance over barren Arctic wasteland which in more homely terms could be described as just plain nothing. We arrived over Goose Bay at 11 p.m., just before midnight. To my utter dismay the Arctic sun was shining high in the sky. Where were the stars that I had become so obsessed with during the past two weeks? When we landed we were told to go to the BOQ, eat, sleep for two hours, and then report back to Flight Operations for takeoff about 3:00 a.m. These instructions just didn't fit the impressions that I had received at flying school. The instructors at Mather Field had assured us that a trans-ocean flight was of such difficulty that we would be given perhaps two weeks to check our instruments, precompute positions, and lay out our flight plans.

The mess hall at Goose Bay reminded me of the one in Grizzly Canyon. It was situated among the pine trees and served us a breakfast of bacon and eggs in keeping with its campfire-like atmosphere. There is nothing like the smell of pine trees to whet a breakfast appetite.

I was tired and our BOQ was blacked out with heavy draperies hung on the windows, but the tenseness of the situation made it impossible for me to sleep. I closed my eyes and tried to steer my mind away from the business ahead of me; but in the midst of counting sheep, I found myself rationalizing, "surely it will be dark by 3:00 a.m. and a celestial flight will still be possible." My heart skipped a beat when I thought of directing that plane across the Atlantic Ocean without a star in the sky. Other troubles kept flitting through my mind. I remembered from school that we would have plenty of time to prepare a flight plan and get our equipment ready. Now this time was being compressed into four hours, three of which we were told to sleep. Also troubling my mind was an observation I had made as we circled Goose Bay prior to landing. We were so near the north pole that the north seeking tip of the compass needle, rather than being pulled around to a northerly direction, was being pulled downward with such a force that it would take ten or more minutes to return to its proper heading after we had made a twenty or thirty degree turn. This phenomena is called "compass dip" and renders an aperiodic compass such as mine almost useless in high latitudes.

If I had to dead reckon my course, this compass was bread and meat and man and wife to me and I would have to dead reckon if that fool sun didn't go down pretty soon and the stars come out. I also recalled that there was at mid ocean a point of no return after which the sole responsibility for our safety depended on my skill as a navigator and four droning engines. I knew I would be offered chocolate bars, free movies, and other goodwill gestures by the crew when we approached the point of no return, but that didn't help me sleep now. Finally, there was a twenty-three degree compass deviation due to magnetic influences in the area of Goose Bay that had to be applied to my compass heading and the possibility of a mistake in adding this large figure when it should be subtracted, or vice versa, was enough to keep me wide awake. They say great men can force troubles from their minds and sleep in spite of them. Under this test for greatness I find myself far down the list. The excitement of something about to happen incites my subconscious to do battle with any conscious efforts I may make to subdue it in sleep. We got up at 3:00 a.m., each avowing to the others that he had had a pleasant rest.

As I stepped outside in the wee morning hours, I observed the sun to be still high in the sky. It had made a slight circle around the horizon but had never gone down. Now all of my adverse factors had to be reckoned with. At Flight Operations I laid out the proper route maps and plotted a course to Iceland. I decided under the circumstances, to tie it into the tip of Greenland which was about half way and would give me at least one check point along the way. It was a little off a direct course, but not enough to make it an impractical thing to do.

I was more cocksure of myself in those days and not nearly as wise as I am today. Now I wouldn't think of undertaking such an uncertain task without first seeking God's help, but I know he understood and gave his help anyway.

The entire flight turned out to be quite pleasant. Once we were on course and I had explained the magnetic variation in our compass heading to Benny, I had time to unpack the Astro Compass and read the operating instructions. Following the instruction sheet, I mounted it in the plane's astrodome and by a simple periodic setting on the sun it gave me a proper heading. It proved to be the most valuable tool I had and I used it to check our course about every fifteen minutes. I also acquired an appreciation for the automatic pilot which held the plane on the correct heading and didn't grumble about my requests for an occasional five degree change in course. True to my ETA, we passed over the southern tip of Greenland and went to a lower altitude for a better look at an iceberg and the beautiful fjords. We also made contact with BW-1, a communication station in central Greenland and reported our position and destination.

I indulged in a sigh of relief and with a bit more confidence gave Benny a new heading for Iceland.

The sky was clear and blue except for a few fleecy clouds overhead and around the horizon. However, as we approached Iceland, we found ourselves flying in an overcast. We tried to stay below it as much as possible, but as its ceiling lowered we were forced to fly either in or above it so I couldn't be sure of our arrival time or position over Iceland. Nothing is so uncertain for a navigator as flying in an overcast. I let my ETA run out then told Benny that we should be there. I think he may have been testing me because he had been monitoring the Keflevic range station for some time with the command radio so he knew better than I where we were and was able to make an instrument let down to the air base without my help. We stayed in Iceland for three days. I visited the small fishing village of Keflevic and the capital city, Rekavic. I picked up some kroner for my short snorter. We would get a dollar bill equivalent in each foreign country that we visited and fasten them end-to-end with scotch tape. This strip of bills constituted a short snorter. We all carried one and added to it whenever we could. It was sort of a status symbol of our travel and experience.

Iceland is a welcome landmark and haven in the middle of the bleak North Atlantic Ocean but, apart from its geographic location, it has little to recommend it. To me it appeared to be nothing but a desolate rock floating on the sea. Nothing grows there but moss, Shetland ponies and people. The cities are drab and smell like big, stale fish markets.

Our flight from Iceland to Scotland was uneventful but singular in its beauty. In contrast to the Arctic tundra and scrub evergreen trees of Labrador and the barren rocks of Iceland, Scotland from the time we first sighted land was one of the most beautiful countries I have ever seen. Rolling green hills dotted with woods and lakes and streams appeared beneath us until I became utterly transfixed and lost in trying to keep track of our position on a map.

During the many hours of training I had spent most of them riding and looking at the ground far below through the plexiglass nose of our B-17. As a result, I gained most proficiency in a method of navigation called "pilotage." This is simply the process of identifying a position or area on a map with its counterpart on the ground. One soon learns the landmarks that are important in transposing from the ground to the map. In the United States these are rivers, highways, railroads, cities and mountain ranges. In England these same landmarks lead to utter confusion. The rivers, roads and railroads look alike in their profusion. None have unique characteristics such as one finds in the United States. The British landmarks that are important are the coastlines, inlets, and, oddly enough, the wooded areas. These are well defined and accurately duplicated in imagery on

the aeronautical maps.

It was no surprise to the British that I got lost and requested help. As a regular daily duty they sent a RAF plane to meet us and escort us to the proper air field.

We landed at Prestwick where we stayed for a few days, then move on to Northampton. The Air Base at Northampton was occupied by the Royal Air Force and was only a temporary stopover for us.

Our permanent base was situated adjacent to the small country village of Thorpe Abbott. Thorpe Abbott was located about an hour by train from Norwich, and two hours from London. Its distinctive features were a pub where the beer was served warm, a bicycle shop for which we created an unprecedented prosperity, and thatched roof houses.

Thomas Grey's "Elegy" (written in a country church yard) that I had read with strained boredom in high school literature suddenly came to life as I stood in the evening shadow at the edge of Thorpe Abbott. "The curfew tolls the knell of parting day, the lowing herd winds slowly o'er the lea, the plowman homeward plods his weary way, and leaves the world to darkness and to me." A lump came to my throat as I remembered the lines and they suddenly became beautiful to me as I watched an almost identical scene unfold before my eyes.

We spent most of our leave in Norwich or London. Norwich had a large public dance hall and was handier for a short, one-day leave. London was London and I spent many hours of each leave seeing the sights of Buckingham Palace, Hyde Park, Westminster Abbey, etc. We usually wound up during the evening at Piccadilly Circus.

We called our plane, a B-17F, "Our Baby," which we represented by an insignia of a bomb in a diaper carried by a stork. Benny Demarco from Chicago was pilot, Skip Thayer from Ohio was co-pilot, I was navigator and was usually referred to by the crew as "Utah Downs", Francis Harper from Fairbanks, Alaska was bombardier, B.J. Barr from Houston, Texas was flight engineer and top turret gunner, Thornton Stringfellow from Culpepper, Virginia was radio operator. We also had two waist gunners, a tail gunner and a ball turret gunner.

I had two guns in the nose compartment, one over my navigation table and one in the opposite window just at my back. The bombardier had a gun in the nose ahead of the bomb sight. All of the guns were flexible, 50 calibre machine guns except for the top turret and the ball turret, which had computing sights.

All of our crew served with distinction and, as far as I know, are all alive today. We each had our personality quirks

and withstood the rigors of combat in our own ways. Typical of this was our little ball turret gunner, Frietas, who would invariably wet his pants when we were attacked by fighters. At the low temperatures at our flight altitudes he would then freeze to his seat. He was hospitalized several times for this and I know he suffered a great deal after each mission with frostbite on his behind, but he never lost his courage to fly.

The first scheduled combat mission for our group was to bomb the submarine pens at Bremen, Germany. Our crew wasn't scheduled to fly this mission, but the navigator of one of the other crews in the squadron was ill so I was asked to substitute. The pilot of the other crew was a good friend of mine, Ronald Hollenbeck, of Burbank, California. At the pre-mission briefing I found that our flight path was to climb out over the North Sea to bombing altitude then turn south opposite Bremen for our target run. We were to return by the same route. In this way we would be out over the water most of the time and hence less vulnerable to flak and fighters. The lead plane was to fly at an indicated air speed of 150 MPH and the rest of us were to do whatever was required to maintain our position in the formation. We soon found this was easier said than done. If we were on the inside of the formation and the lead plane turned to the right, we were required to throttle back to almost stalling speed to keep from overrunning the planes ahead. If the lead plane turned left, we were on the outside of a whip-the-whip and full power was required to maintain position. Our pilots were truly throttle jockeys and were usually worn to frazzle by the continuous physical effort to stay in tight formation hour after hour.

We were told at pre-mission briefing that the lead navigator would navigate and that my primary duty was to man my guns and keep a sharp lookout for enemy fighters. We took off about 4:00 a.m. and circled over a splasher beacon near Thorpe Abbott until the formation was gathered then started our ascent to bombing altitude. As we climbed and extended our course over the North Sea we approached a cloud layer. The lead pilot, not realizing the full significance of his action on the planes behind, penetrated the clouds with the entire formation. Almost immediately all of the planes around us disappeared from sight. Even those at our wing tips. We were in a very hazardous position and a decision was necessary. Holly, the pilot decided to pull up and away from the formation and hope that we didn't run into someone. We were lucky and broke out on top of the cloud layer alone. I had been following the instructions to forget the navigation and man my guns, so when Holly called me on the interphone and said, "where are we?" and "what is our heading back to England?" I was stumped and had to admit that I didn't know. I reckoned at this point that he wished he had his own navigator along. There was a coastline off to the south which I assumed to be Germany so I decided that our best course of action was to fly north until I could orient us with a coded beacon from

England. This I was able to do and we got back safely. I had learned an important lesson. Never again did I neglect my navigation for any but the most stringent reasons. Three of our planes and crews were lost in the North Sea that day.

A tour of combat duty at this stage of the war consisted of twenty-five unescorted missions. After each five missions we were awarded the Air Medal and after twenty-five the Distinguished Flying Cross and an assignment back home. As it turned out, those who completed twenty-five missions were a rarity.

Our targets were varied and took us to such places as Trondheim, Norway; LaPalice, St. Nazaire, Paris, and Bordeaux, France; Bremen, Kiel, Leipzig, Regensburg, Cassel, and other German cities. They were usually occasioned by fighter attack enroute to the target and back and anti-aircraft fire (flak) over the target. We usually lost two or three planes from our group each time. Losing our friends was something we came to expect and managed to harden our feelings toward it.

Toward the middle of September 1943 Benny was called to a closed briefing for a forthcoming mission. It was unusual for a special briefing such as this to be held, so we knew the discussion was to be an extraordinary one. He was told that two targets of major importance to the German war effort must be destroyed. These were the ballbearing works at Schweinfurt, and the Messerschmidt Aircraft factory at Regensburg. It had also been determined that the importance of the two targets might well be worth the loss of seventy-five percent of our bomber force. The value of ballbearings had been stumbled upon quite by accident. A German night raider had inadvertently bombed a British ballbearing works and the loss of this precision industry dealt a catastrophic blow to their war effort. A similar blow to the German industry, it was believed, was worth a major sacrifice or, as they called it a "maximum effort."

Both of the targets were heavily fortified and situated deep in the heart of Germany. They were far beyond the range capability of our best fighter escort, so it was to be a struggle for survival between the Luft Waffe and several groups of unescorted B-17's. Our Group was selected to bomb the factory at Regensburg. The route was to take us across German territory for approximately two hours to the target, then south across the Alps and the Mediterranean Sea to North Africa. To retrace our track across Germany to England was fortunately considered to be a foolish waste of men and aircraft.

A combat wing formation usually consisted of three Groups of eighteen planes, each stacked in altitude and trail, one slightly behind the other. Sometimes for a maximum effort an extra flight would be added to the Group making twenty-one planes. The lead

group was ahead and held the highest position in the formation; the last group trailed behind with the lowest altitude. The Germans had studied our formations and set their attack strategy accordingly. Rather than dive through the entire Wing from top to bottom, they would concentrate on the low squadron of the low trailing group, chipping them off a plane at a time as they worked their way up through the formation from the bottom to the top. In this way they were exposed to a minimum of our fire power. The low flight of the low squadron of the low group was thus in a very vulnerable position and was generally quite realistically referred to "coffin corner." I don't know how crews were picked for coffin corner and its environs; but if it was by flip of a coin, whoever flipped for us sure picked the wrong day to be unlucky. This was to be, without question, the most hazardous undertaking of the air war over Europe. Judging from my luck at gambling since that time, however, I must confess that our assignment to coffin corner for the Regensburg raid was true to form. The only time I ever remember winning was once at an officer's club bingo game. This particular game was reversed so that the prize went to the last man to bingo rather the first. I never did bingo and won a prize that I couldn't use, a cigarette lighter.

On the morning of our takeoff for Regensburg, we assembled in formation as usual over splasher beacon number seven. As we crossed the English Channel, we were picked up almost immediately by a German fighter escort at the French coast that was obviously instructed, in spite of our close secrecy, by an intelligent knowledge of our destination and purpose. The attacking fighters first appeared in trail of six planes at three o'clock level and we all turned our guns to fire as they one by one flashed through our formation. No sooner had they passed than the top turret gunner called our attention to a similar attack underway from nine o'clock high. This was followed by a head-on attack and then one from six o'clock. It soon became useless to try to notify the gunners of the position of the attackers. The intensity of the attack became so frenzied that I often didn't have time to swing around from one gun to the other before the next flight of fighters from the opposite direction was upon us. Our wing men were almost immediately shot away. One exploded and the other (Hollenbeck) pulled out of formation with his engines on fire. We moved into a vacant spot in the flight up ahead and tucked our plane into the formation as tightly as possible. The sky was literally full of 50 calibre bullets from our B-17 formations and destroyed one or two enemy fighters on each pass. Likewise, the blinking 20 millimeter cannons from the attackers took a similar toll from us. Usually fighter attack lasted three to five minutes and applied an exhausting emotional strain. This day we were under constant attack for the full two hours of our flight to the target. The Luftwaffe was determined to stop us and engaged the full tactical strength of its air defense in the attempt. At the forefront of the attack were their newest Folk

Wolf and Messerschmitt fighters armed with 20 millimeter cannon and 30 calibre machine guns. These were supplemented by transport and training planes flying alongside to shoot rockets or flying overhead to drop long steel cables through our formation. Casualties were heavy on both sides. I saw many fighter planes and all too many bombers burst into flames and explode into fiery fragments that fell away below us. Several times we had to pull up sharply to avoid direct head-on collisions with German fighter planes. As one Folk Wolf passed beneath my navigation window, I could see the pilot slumped over his control stick obviously unconscious or dead. My friend Holly's plane with its engines smoking pulled out of formation and gradually disappeared from view. A wide band of flames suddenly spurted from the cockpit of the bomber ahead and we could see the co-pilot crawl through his side window to escape. His entire body was enveloped in flames as it bounced against the wing of his plane and disappeared. One by one we were being picked off. By the time we reached the target, we were one of only two planes left in our group of twenty-one. Neither our plane nor our crew had been hurt significantly, but I had fired over 5,000 rounds of ammunition which completely ruined the barrels of the two guns I had used. The other plane piloted by Major Cleven, our Squadron Commander, was so badly damaged that it took the best of his skills to land it. A 20 millimeter cannon shell had exploded in the nose, ripping out the bombsight and sending the bombardier crashing back against the navigator. They both ended up on the floor by the lower hatch unhurt. The radio operator was killed by another 20 millimeter explosion in his compartment. The co-pilot went berserk from the emotional strain and had to be forcibly held in check for the remainder of the flight. Quite ironically, the bombardier practiced his role in this adventure. During his flight from Newfoundland to Scotland, his plane ran into a duck which crashed through the plexiglass nose, splattered itself against his chest, and knocked him crashing back against the navigator. The duck, of course, soon smelled to high heaven as did the bombardier who suffered not only the humiliation of having to use his coat to plug up the hole in the nose of the plane, but was also ostracized for the remainder of the trip because of his ripe odor. The type of incident seemed to be earmarked for him.

Although I was uninjured, I never again want to experience the furious activity and mental tension that spurred my actions during the hours of that mission.

I favor giving credit for our safety to a conversation I had with Skip Thayer, our co-pilot, and Benny the night before on the merits of evasive action. Fighter planes, in those days, had fixed guns in the nose and wings so in order to aim the guns, they had to aim the plane. We reasoned that if we moved our plane sharply up and down when we were under attack, the attacking plane would have a difficult time leveling its guns at

us for an accurate hit. I don't think we could have converted anyone else to our idea, but we tried it out and it seemed to work for us.

The remnant of our Wing was a sad looking lot as the planes broke formation and straggled individually across the Mediterranean Sea. We circled for some time over the landing field in North Africa to allow those with crippled planes and injured aboard to land first.

We spent several days in Algeria where the wounded were evacuated to hospitals and an inventory was taken of our losses. Our group had suffered a ninety-five percent loss of its planes and personnel. Major's Cleven's crew were sent to the "flak house" when they returned to England and, except for Major Cleven, never flew again in combat. Their plane was so badly damaged that it was junked in the African desert. Our plane was quite able to fly so we were assigned to a composite group and flew a bombing mission to Bordeaux, France on our return flight to England. As it turned out, Bordeaux was weathered in so we successfully bombed the submarine pens at St. Nazaire as a target of opportunity.

The Regensburg raid was a mortal blow to our group. All but two or three of the original, well trained crews who came with us from the USA were gone. Our crew was now favored because of its experience and reserved for those missions where we were designated to be lead or co-lead of the Air Division. The 100th Bomb Group was now made up almost entirely of new replacements, many straight from flying school. The only consolation was that the factory at Regensburg was destroyed.

Each mission held some new crisis. If we went to France, we were confronted with high head winds on our return trip which slowed our ground speed almost to a snails pace. This made us fair game for Goering's famed yellow nosed squadron which was equipped with the latest German fighters and assigned to the channel area. If we went to Germany, the long distances unescorted over enemy territory always took a heavy toll.

War, except for those who fight and for those who suffer, is a very impersonal thing. When hundreds are being killed, the consignment of a few more to their deaths is of little concern. Men and aircraft are simply pins on a planning board. A city with people and the hustle and bustle of life is only a target. People don't harm people. Aircraft with bombs just neutralize targets.

Early on the 9th of October 1943, a newspaper caught by the wind rolled across the road and onto the lawn of our home in Orem, Utah. My mother picked it up and an intuition struck her as she saw the headline, "Eighth Air Force strikes target in

Bremen." Two days later she was notified that I was missing in action.

The early morning of October 8th was clear and crisp and cold as we circled the English countryside to pick up our formation. Our mission, "Bomb Bremen." We were glad when the plane's heater started to work. This was our eighteenth mission. We were on the downhill grade and our chances of reaching twenty-five looked good. Our flight plan this time was not over the North Sea as before but took us across the English Channel to the Belgian coast then straight overland to Bremen. As we crossed into enemy territory. I could see the city of Antwerp ahead being blanketed by smoke. This was a common practice of many cities for protection. They could quite successfully conceal a large part of a city in a short time with a smoke screen so dense that the aiming point for any target within the city was obliterated. Another common practice was to blanket a city with anti-aircraft fire or flak placed at our flight altitude. They didn't shoot at us but just placed it overhead to discourage us from flying over the city. We were always willing to take the hint and cooperate by giving such cities a wide berth. We came to look upon flak enroute to a target as a nuisance rather than a hazard. Flak over the target, however, was a different matter. We had to fly through it on our bomb runs. Generally a bomb run took from three to five minutes. During this time, for accuracy, we had to maintain constant speed and altitude and an unwavering course. Anti-aircraft gunners couldn't ask for anything more, especially for their computing sights, and they took full advantage of it. Flak was always ominous because we couldn't fight back and one direct hit could completely destroy a B-17. At Antwerp the usual fighter attack began to pester us. This time, however, we were in a lead plane and not quite so vulnerable. As we neared Bremen we were confronted by a noticeably increased display of flak. Bremen was a coastal city and it was common for the Germans, if they had prior knowledge of our intended target, to increase the flak armor of such cities by bringing in large numbers of anti-aircraft guns by rail, or on canal, river and ocean barges. It was obvious from the flashes from the ground and the flak in the sky ahead that Bremen was bristling with guns and I knew we had a hot reception awaiting us. Again the German intelligence .. proved itself superior to our security system.

We had no more than poked our nose into the flak area when the lead plane was hit. It dived sharply downward out of formation and disappeared behind us with two engines smoking. We later heard that this plane had successfully returned with its crew to England. We now had to assume the role of leader which meant an unwavering concentration on the bomb run by the pilot and bombardier. The planes behind us would salvo their bombs when they saw ours leave the bomb bays. So the accuracy of the entire mission depended on our bombsight and the cool headed skill of our bombardier and pilot.

The accuracy of the anti-aircraft was awesome and made the next few minutes some of the longest and positively the most terrifying I have ever lived or ever hope to live. One by one our planes were shot out of the sky, most of them exploding in a violent burst of fire and fragments that drifted about or plummeted end over end out of sight below and behind us. I tried to record our losses in my log as I saw them or as the crew reported them to me, but the loss rate soon became so rapid that I couldn't keep up. This was indeed a greater concentration of violent destruction than I had heretofore witnessed. It is a great credit to Francis and Benny that they were able to hold their composure under the circumstances long enough to drop our bombs. This was the closest I have ever been to being killed. Oddly enough, however, I felt composed, my mind worked clearly, and I hadn't the least fear or panic. Perhaps we just fear death or pain from a distance. I have heard others speak much the same way, that when death was most imminent they had no fear.

When we had completed our bomb run and had emerged from the flak area, we were all alone. For our group, the holocaust had been complete. Twenty of our B-17's had been shot out of the sky. We circled twice and fired some recognition flares to see if anyone else might possibly be around and able to join us. One other B-17 appeared but it was not coming in answer to our signals. It was diving directly toward us from a higher altitude with all of its engines on fire. It was obviously out of control and exploded seconds before it seemed ready to collide with us.

We later learned that , apart from the plane that returned to England, only one man of the other 190 men in our group escaped death. He was bombardier on a plane that received a direct hit and exploded. When he regained his senses, he found himself falling through the air with his unopened parachute on. He pulled the rip cord and floated down through the maze of anti-aircraft fire coming up from below and the bombs going down from above. His parachute caught on a third floor window awning of a large building in Bremen where he remained suspended while the bombs burst around him. After the bombing he was saved from the angry German populace by the Luftwaffe who removed him from his precarious perch and sent him off to our prisoner of war camp.

Our B-17 was still in good condition and none of the crew had been injured, but we were all alone at 24,000 feet altitude and deep in the heart of Germany. Our best strategy was to get down near the ground as soon as possible to avoid fighter attack from above, then head out over the North Sea and as far away from Germany as possible. We had, however, no sooner started our descent when sergeant Barr sighted two fighters approaching us from ten o'clock high. The first to attack was a Folk Wolfe 190. Its 20 millimeter cannon was blinking at us and our 50 calibre tracers were converging on him. Our fire power proved to be

more formidable because he exploded in a burst of fire, smoke and rubble. The second fighter a MB-109, made a wide sweep around us then turned in to attack at three o'clock level. We weren't quite recovered from the excitement of the first encounter which no doubt diluted the effectiveness of our fire power against him. Our turret guns began to chatter which caused a friendly vibration almost like a shudder to pass through the old B-17. I adjusted the cross bar of my gun sight on his spinning propeller, pressed the trigger, and held it down. Skip was standing behind me taking pictures with the plane's camera. He had recorded the destruction of the first fighter and was all set for this one too. Many things happened during the next few seconds which provided problems requiring our complete occupation and attention for some time afterward. Suddenly something struck me and I was thrown back against Skip with a force that knocked us both to the floor. I felt a sharp twinge in my upper leg and the sensation of warm, sticky blood as it soaked my pants and trickled down my leg, filtered through my sock and into my shoe where it oozed like warm mud between my toes. I looked up at my window and saw a neat slantwise row of bullet holes. A burst of 30 calibres from the wing guns of the fighter had penetrated my window, sprayed down across my flak vest and one had hit me in the leg at a point where my flak vest ended. Somehow I felt relieved. Now I could go to the hospital for a rest and respite from this crazy war. A flak suit was a steel plated apron shaped a little like a baseball umpire's chest pad except that it covered the back also. It weighed about 25 pounds and would stop a 30 calibre, non-armor piercing bullet or a piece of anti-aircraft shrapnel. It had a rip cord which by one jerk separated the vest at the shoulders and allowed it to fall off. There were two such suits in the Eighth Air Force being tried out on this mission and I had one of them. It saved my life but under some circumstances it could have been a mill stone around my neck because it could not be worn with a parachute. Harp helped me to my feet and we began to make a damage inventory. We also listened on the interphone to the central scene of activity that was going on in the cockpit.

A well aimed round of 20 millimeter cannon shells had been placed along our wings. How they missed the cockpit was a marvel of misjudgment for which we were thankful. Even so, the damage to our plane was lethal. Number four engine was completely shot away as was about ten feet of the right wing. The controls were shot away in numbers one and three. Benny reported that only number two engine was maintaining full power. Number two engine was just outside of my navigation window and as I watched a pool of oil spread over its surface and built out in a big black blob over the prop hub. Its minutes of operation were also numbered. Another 20 millimeter had exploded in the vertical stabilizer splitting the high tail piece wide open and creating a severe funnel-like source of drag on our one lone, oil soaked engine. Our plane was damaged so badly that it was

difficult to control. I wondered how it flew at all. The first order from the pilot was to throw everything overboard to lighten the load, so out went our ammunition, my navigation equipment, and everything that could easily be wrenched loose from its mountings. Major Cleven ordered Skip to jettison the ball turret; but Skip couldn't figure out how to do it, so in a frenzied moment we found him hacking at the large steel turret anchor post with the fire axe. Sparks were flying in all directions. The futility of the scene depicted our furious drive to get things done.

At this point I rid myself of the heavy flak suit and snapped on my parachute which was a chest pack. Benny and Major Cleven were struggling furiously with "Our Baby" but it was losing altitude rapidly and was determined to go into a spin. Benny called and said to bail out. I was very hesitant because it hardly seemed possible that this could be happening to me. I glanced at the altimeter which said 22,000 feet and at my watch which said 1500 hours. Harp pulled the emergency red handle and jettisoned the lower escape hatch. I kneeled down, leaned over to look at the green checkerboard of farm land far below, and Skip pushed me out. I zipped along under the left wing and my first recollection after clearing the plane was that of lying on my back spinning round and round like a top. Everything that was not buttoned into my pockets flew out. I lost my pen, notebook, sun glasses, and one of my flying boots. I had not as yet pulled the rip cord on my parachute and decided against it until I could stop spinning. I didn't relish getting my injured leg tangled up in the shroud lines. It seemed several minutes before I stopped the spinning quite accidentally by stretching out my legs and crossing them, which at the same time rolled me over so that I was lying on my stomach falling face downward. I soon found that if I uncrossed my legs, I would turn over onto my back and as long as I held my legs out straight, I did not spin. Out of curiosity and knowing that I had plenty of altitude, I repeated the process several times. When I drew in my legs, I started to spin; When I stretched them out I stopped; when I crossed my legs, I turned onto my stomach; and when I uncrossed them I rolled over onto my back. I saw the parachutes of several of the other crew members blossom out ahead and above me and as I was about to pull my own rip cord when I spotted two German fighters approaching so I waited until they had gone by. I was trying all the time to judge my height above the ground and when I could distinguish trees and other objects quite distinctly, I opened my parachute. I supposed that I had fallen about 15,000 feet. I will never forget the wonderful calm and silence that I experienced when my parachute opened and I was able to look about me. I could see and hear for a hundred miles or so it seemed.

My leg pained a little. It had bled quite profusely, soaking my pants and sock and shoe and was quite stiff. I

wondered if it was broken. It is remarkable how clearly one thinks under such circumstances. I decided that I should land on my good leg just in case the other one was broken. I even spotted a large tree in my landing area which had the appearance of a weeping willow tree. I reasoned that if I could guide myself into one of the large branches, it might break my fall and I could land on one leg without danger. It did work out pretty much as I had planned. I don't remember just how much the tree broke my fall, but I did land on one foot which immediately buckled under me, and I fell with a thud to the ground. I had landed in the pasture of a small farm on the outer edge of a small village. Several old men with pitchforks and a group of women and children were watching me from a distance. They were dressed for the most part in pantaloons and wooden shoes. Their appearance was more Dutch than Deutch and I wondered if I had misjudged my position at the time we bailed out. Perhaps I was in Holland not Germany. One woman picked up my parachute and carried it into a house. Another woman and several teenagers who spoke broken English approached and asked me questions about myself and America. They were especially desirous to know if I was a gangster from Chicago or if I had been to Hollywood. Gangsters and movie stars seemed to be America's image in Germany. The English speaking school teacher asked me to follow her to the village. I thought at this point that they might hide me and perhaps help me to escape back to England. They soon observed that I couldn't walk so they brought a bicycle for me to lean on. Thus I made my way as part of a parade through the villager to the town hall. I was honored with the foremost position in front and the entire village fell in behind. It was a slow, painful trek and I had to struggle to get up the front steps of the town building. As I came into the entrance hall, my gaze fell upon the Nazi flag which covered the entire wall. I wasn't in Holland. I was offered a wooden chair and a kind old lady gave me an apple which I ate with relish. It had been a long, hard miserable day and I was tired and hungry. My leg hurt and although I was thankful to be alive, I was depressed and more than a little scared and very lonely.

I sat in the wooden chair and waited for about four hours, sort of like a cowering dog in a corner, until two SS officers in natty black uniforms came for me. They were young and cocky and rude to me, but then I was a luft gangster and the glamour of my uniform had disappeared. I was really too tired and miserable to care or show any emotion when they cuffed me with their fancy gloves and let me know they were of the master race. I was taken outside and ordered to get into the back of a station wagon-like truck that had heavy mesh wire for windows and slatted wooden benches for seats. The next three hours we made a sideshow tour of the German countryside. We would travel for while until we came to a certain farmhouse where the people who lived there would come out to stare at the luft gangster for a few minutes while the SS men went into the house for a drink of cognac. Then

we would be off to another house. I think we must have visited all of their friends and relatives. Finally, well into the night, we entered a military base and I was taken to a large wooden building and placed in an empty room. A soldier with a rifle came in to guard me. He didn't say a word and I was so exhausted that I fell into a sound sleep on the floor.

The next morning I lay and mused for awhile over the previous days events. I was having adventure but had to conclude that adventure has high price in misery. I recounted each step of my parachute jump which qualified me to become a member of the Caterpillar Club. Membership in this Club is reserved for those who save their lives by parachute. The Club symbol is a gold caterpillar with red ruby eyes.

One of the bombardiers of our outfit was a former college football star. He was big and boisterous and let everyone know that he was to be respected for his courage. It took a parachute to call his bluff. The Group was returning from one of those so called milk runs to France when it encountered the Yellow Nosed Squadron. The plane in which he was riding was hit and seriously damaged so that the pilot alerted the crew for possible bailout. A critical moment had come for the bombardier. He looked around for his parachute only to suddenly remember that he had left it back in his barracks. Now his true sportsmanship began to shine forth. He snatched the navigator's parachute announced in firm tones, "the days of chivalry are over." Fortunately they returned to England safely. The bombardier was grounded and not allowed to fly again. He was disgraced temporarily but was, perhaps, lucky after all because his entire crew was killed a few days later. He had traded his reputation for his life and surely must have forgotten the parachute incident by now.

I was joggled out of my reverie by a German soldier who brought me a bowl of barley cereal. After I had eaten he took me before an interrogation officer to be questioned. Of course, I had been instructed to divulge only my name, rank, and serial number, which made a silly answer to most of the questions that he asked. He told that they had accounted for all of my crew and left me with the impression that I was the only one left. What really puzzled the German intelligence was the fact that they had captured eleven men when only ten were normal in a B-17 crew. The truth was that we were a lead plane on the mission so our Squadron Commander, Major Cleven, had gone with us as command pilot. Skip, our regular copilot, had simply gone along as an extra gunner. The German's would never believe even if we told them, which we didn't, that anyone would be foolish enough to take such a risk without a special reason. Why were their eleven men? At any rate my interrogation was quite severe because of the puzzlement in this regard. At the end of the morning of grilling, I was taken to another large room where I found the

rest of the crew safe and sound and wondering what had happened to me. We were given a bowl of barley cereal and spent the afternoon telling each other of our experiences after we left the plane. Major Cleven had the most interesting story. He was the last to leave the plane and did so from an altitude of about 1,000 feet. You will recall that I had jumped from 21,000 feet, so the plane was going down pretty fast. He made a few swings back and forth in his parachute the last of which propelled him through the open door of a farm house and he landed with a thud before the startled eyes of the house wife who was peeling onions. I was the only one injured so we were, we thought, lucky after all.

CHAPTER 5

The second morning after our capture, we were marched in a group to the railroad station. This was an ordeal for me because of the pain and stiffness in my leg. We boarded a well guarded day coach and began a journey down through the Ruhr Valley to Frankfurt. For the first time I had a view of the devastation caused by the Allied bombing of Germany. The cities along the Ruhr seemed to be destroyed. Buildings along both sides of the tracks as far as one could see were gutted with only the empty shells standing. It was an amazing sight to see factories which had been rebuilt standing among the ruins with smoke pouring from their high stacks as though nothing had happened to them. This was most ironic because the factories were the prime targets and the reason for the saturation bombing of the Ruhr. What I saw was only a token of what was yet to come to Germany.

Our first stop of any importance was Cologne. Cologne is near the southern end of the Ruhr and the closest place to France and Belgium along our route. Because of its proximity to the French underground, it was the most attractive place to make an escape attempt if the opportunity presented itself. It was almost useless for me to think of trying to escape because of my game leg, but I agreed to help cover for any other members of the crew who might want to try. Major Cleven was especially anxious to try. As it turned out, the Germans were also aware of the opportunities offered by Cologne and had already arranged to have our guard tripled and have us moved into a newer, more escape proof car. Major Cleven wanted to jump through a window if a good opportunity could be arranged. I remembered from my earlier experience in Elko, Nevada the real danger of jumping from even a slowly moving railroad car, so I advised against any such means of escape at the speed we were traveling. In fact, with the double track running alongside, I felt it would have been suicide.

The train ride to Frankfurt was a pleasant interlude. Some of the soreness had gone out of my leg and I was able to rest more comfortably and enjoy the scenery. I have described this as an interlude because it filled a short gap in time between the crisis just past and the new crisis about to begin.

At Frankfurt we were taken to a small, bleak prison compound on the outskirts of the city which we later dubbed the snake pit. It was a place designed to break our spirits and depress us to the point where we would talk. They hadn't answered the puzzle of that extra man on our crew. The bleakness of the spot was made bleaker by the brown autumn day and the cold that begins to pervade Germany at that time of year. I was taken to a large, empty, unheated room, stripped of my clothing and searched inside and out for concealed objects. This was uncomfortable but it did give me my first opportunity to look at my bullet wound. It was

caked with blood and still quite red and angry looking but it didn't appear to be infected. At least German bullets seemed to be clean. I was then given back my summer flying suit, shoes and socks, and taken down the hallway to a small empty cubicle. The room had no heat and was bare except for a small, dirty wooden table. The window opening had no glass but was covered with several layers of barbed wire. Outside and about six feet from the building was a high barbed wire fence and beyond that about four feet another and beyond that still another. Barbed wire entanglements were piled high in the intervening spaces between the fences. The cold autumn day hinted of winter and added its measure to the forbidding mien of the place. I wondered what my fate would be. If this and the past week were typical, I felt sure that I wouldn't last until the end of the war, at least as a sane person.

It would be convenient at a time like this if our bodily processes could be turned off. Such things as eating and relieving oneself became paramount problems nagging at ones mind until they almost take possession of it. Later in the day they brought in another prisoner. He was young and more ill clad and dirty than I was. He also claimed to be an American flyer and we spent considerable time discussing our predicament which to my dismay he considered to be quite favorable. He said he had been shot down over France, near Paris. He had made contact with the French underground which had provided him with civilian clothes and directions to escape. However, somewhere along his escape route to Spain, he had been picked up by the Germans, identified as a foreigner, and charged with being a spy. Since he had no proof that he was an American flyer or that he should be treated as a prisoner of war, he was classified as a political prisoner and thrown into a Paris dungeon. There in a damp, dark hole he existed for six months on fish heads and garbage scraps tossed periodically into his cell. He didn't know what had prompted his release, but he was grateful that his situation had improved so much. During our conversation a guard came with a boiled potato or two which he ground into the dirty table top with his gloved hand. He announced that this was our food for the day then left again. We each ate our share of the potatoes then my cell mate proceeded to clean the rest out of the cracks in the table with his fingernails and ate that also. During the afternoon I was taken to the Commandant for interrogation. He gave me to understand that my condition would worsen unless I gave him answers to his questions. When the interrogation was over I was taken to another room almost identical to the previous one. This time my room mate was a Norwegian who had escaped to England and joined the RAF. He was well educated, pleasant to talk to, and optimistically considered his situation simply as a fortune of war. Of course, all of our conversation had to be guarded because neither of us knew but what the other was a German plant seeking information from a careless slip of the tongue. I have thought since that both of these men could have been and probably

were German. You know it is easy to spout off your troubles to people who also have troubles, and I am sure that the krouts took full advantage of this. I was taken before the interrogation officer for fifteen minutes or so each day for three days and as he promised the situation worsened each day. This worsening was due mostly to lack of food and water and the additive effect of the cold. The nights reserved a special misery for my shivering body.

After the three days, I was again taken to the large room where I had been searched. There I was again joined by the other officers of the crew and in a group escorted from the camp. By this time we were a dirty, unshaven, unkempt, bedraggled lot.

We were taken to Dulog Luft, a prison camp in the center of Frankfurt. Dulog Luft was a Stammlager or central reception center for prisoners of the air war. The International Red Cross had a permanent contingent of workers there and the Germans took special pains because of this to maintain the camp as a model. To us the necessities of life had become a luxury and Dulog Luft provided them for a brief spell. The Red Cross gave me some wool GI pants, a wool GI shirt, some underwear, socks, towel, soap, razor, toothbrush, and toothpaste. We forget how precious these ordinary things are to us. I had developed a craving for many of the things that in my younger days I had to be asked and sometimes forced to do. I was allowed to take a hot shower, shaved off a week's growth of beard, and put on the clean clothes. Next we were taken to a real mess hall and given a hot meal. It is odd that I have forgotten what it was we ate, but I still remember how wonderful it made me feel. After we ate we went to a large barracks and were given a clean bed in a twelve man room. Even the bedding was clean and the room heated. I discovered that a large part of our enjoyment in life is given to us by our sense of smell. The smell of food when you are hungry, or of clean sheets when you are tired, or of clean clothes after a hot bath are truly luxurious. The Red Cross maintained a first aid dispensary where I reported and had a cool, clean dressing put on my leg and I felt good because of the clean, antiseptic smell that permeated the entire room.

Always be generous to the Red Cross. Their very existence during war or disaster makes living bearable when nothing but life is left. Without it there would have been no Dulog Luft. We all hoped that this was not just another interlude and that we would get to stay here for the rest of the war. However, as I think back, I suspect that this was also part of the German interrogation system. The buildings must surely have been bugged to pick up our conversations which were no doubt often carelessly revealing.

We never saw our enlisted men again after Dulog Luft. They were taken to a different part of Germany. This action was

dictated in part by the terms of the Geneva Convention, but mostly the Germans were afraid of the influence the officers would have on the enlisted men. The enlisted men were placed in work camps and given considerably more freedom than the officers. They were usually put to work in the factories or on farms. We were, on the other hand, confined to a fenced-in compound the entire time. Work is a blessing even under these circumstances and one which we were not allowed to have except for make work of our own devising.

We were told at Dulog Luft that for us the war was over and that we were about to leave for a permanent camp. The officer in charge described it in glowing terms and I naively thought of another Dulog Luft. The Red Cross gave us each a food parcel and the Germans gave us a loaf of bread as provisions for the trip.

Our transport was to be by rail in a French Forty-or-Eight car. A Forty-or-Eight car is a puny sized box car with the words printed on the side, "Forty Homme or Eight Cheveaux" (Forty men or Eight Horses). This car was glamorized during World War I as a troop transport and I recognized it from Armistice Day parades I had seen back home. Our car was certainly old enough to be of World War I vintage. It had an opening at each end for a window, which was covered by a generous interlacing of barbed wire. About a fourth of the car near the sliding door was taken up by a platform for the two guards and their guns and equipment. Eighty of us Hommes divided the rest of the room as best we could. For once in my life my height stood me in good stead. The other bodies kept me warm and my long legs kept me above the smell. I had a wiseacre answer that I can't repeat here for those in the group who might say to me, "Hi, Shorty, how's the weather up there?", but no one did. It was too crowded for all of us to sit down at once, so we established shifts for this purpose. Even with this arrangement I became uncomfortable when I tried to sit down. My legs were either tucked up under my chin or else folded under me. Either way I got cramps in my knees after a few minutes. I have always been this way. Some people can squat like an Indian for hours but not me, my legs would break off or else go to sleep. One night I was so weary that I dropped asleep standing in the corner of the car. When I awoke it was morning. I had slept the entire night in that position and rested quite well. I recalled the incident to mind later on when an argument started in our prison block as to whether a horse sleeps standing up or lying down. The argument was never settled either way. I sided with the group who favored standing up. We often waged silly arguments. One I remember was whether or not prunes were dried plums. Of course I knew from experience the answer to this, but I still didn't win the argument. Hearsay and rumor are always stronger evidence to many than the truth, even if the truth is substantiated by facts and witnesses.

Our guards were Soldats, one grade lower than a private.

Some of our fellows teased them . Once when they both dozed off they tied their shoe laces together in hard knots, and another time filled their gun barrels with raisins from their Red Cross parcels and small stones from the floor of the car. We speculated what would happen if they ever tried to fire them or if the Commandant inspected their equipment.

We relieved our bladders or vomited when we got sick by leaning our of the open door of the moving train. At certain stops the guards would get out and allow a small group from each car to get out also and relieve their bowels alongside the tracks. The long row of bare butts shining in the sun made quite a ridiculous sight until of course it was my turn.

The distance we traveled was not too great but it took us two weeks to get to our destination. We would travel twenty miles or so then stop for a while or spend hours switching back and forth in and out of a railroad yard. There was a certain contentment in the motion of the train. At least we felt we were getting somewhere but the long hours of just sitting and waiting became trying on our nerves.

Our new camp was called Stalag Luft III. It was located in East Germany near the small town of Sagan and not too far from the Oder River that separates Germany from Poland. The camp was operated by the Luftwaffe and was occupied almost entirely by American and British officers. Several compounds, separated by large wooded areas, so that one compound was not visible from the others, made up the camp. Each compound was a separate unit surrounded by two high barbed wire fences with the usual barbed wire entanglements in between. A high guard tower called as postern box and containing machine guns and search lights was located on each corner and in the middle of the longer side fences. Twenty feet inside of the barbed wire fence was a wooden rail beyond which we were not allowed to go. If we did we were told, we would be shot from the guard tower without warning.

The center of the compound, to which we were assigned, was built in the form of a rectangle on about five acres of land. the living quarters were single story wooden buildings called blocks. There were four such buildings each having a capacity, at high density loading, of about 150 men. In addition, there was a cook house, a laundry house, and a latrine. The cook house was not for our use but for the use of the Germans when they, on rare occasions, prepared soup for us. These occasions were usually just before an inspection by an International Red Cross Team. The laundry house contained three rows of wooden benches and a cold water faucet where we could lay out our clothes and scrub them with a brush. This also provided a place for us to take a cold water bucket bath. At night the buildings were all locked at 10 p.m. and large police dogs were turned into the compound to keep us from prowling about outside.

The German word for prisoner of war is Kriegeres Gefangenen. Since this was too long for American conversation we shortened it to Kriegie.

As we approached the last barbed wire gate separating us from the inner compound, we were greeted by the entire camp contingent. They were peering at us through the fence, eager to see a familiar face. I recognized many of the old group who were on the Regensburg raid. It seemed like old homecoming week. I suspect if there is a reunion of old friends and relatives as we pass into the next life, it will be something like our meeting on this day. They were anxious to hear the latest news from their old home and we were just as eager to hear about our new home and of their experiences in getting there. In a war where so many things are happening every day, there are bound to be some extraordinary and almost miraculous events among them. I talked with several of my friends who were blown out of their planes into the air by the explosions that destroyed their aircraft. They were able to save themselves because they happened to be wearing their parachutes. One member of our group was blown from his plane and was knocked unconscious in the process. When he regained his senses, he was lying on the ground in an open field with his unopened parachute still fastened to his chest. He had apparently fallen 20,000 feet without any more serious injury than a badly strained muscle in his back.

A Colonel in our compound had been flying a P-47 Thunderbolt which crashed from a power dive into the beach near La Havre, France. The plane was almost completely buried in the sand. The Germans dug him out, put his broken neck in a cast, nursed him for a few months, then sent him on to prison camp.

One day I met a young Scottish airman who looked as though he had been in fist fight. His eyes were bloodshot, his nose was swollen, and he had a small gash on his forehead. I asked him what had happened to him and he related his story to me. He was a tail gunner on a British Blenheim bomber that had been caught at night in the search lights and the withering anti-aircraft fire from the German defense over Cassel. The British flew their bombing missions alone and at night while the Americans flew daylight missions in formation. The British bomber was literally severed in two pieces just aft of the wing. The Scottish tail gunner had no way of knowing this, however, although he suspected something was wrong from the way the plane acted and the funny sound. He rode the severed tail section 24,000 feet down to a crash landing, if one could call it a landing. On impact with the ground he was thrown clear of the wreckage which immediately exploded into flames. He was conscious and his main concern was for his buddy, the waist gunner who he thought was still trapped in the plane. So he went back to see. A second explosion again sent him sprawling

and it was this last encounter that caused his face and head injuries. Many strange stories were told of similar fantastic incidents, but these were three of which I received firsthand accounts.

The Germans allowed us to conduct our own internal affairs so the camp was organized in such a way as to make confined living as orderly and free from strife as possible. The senior American officer, Colonel Spivey, and later General Vanaman, acted as our camp commander and they appointed supervising officers for each block. I was assigned to Block 44 and Major Cleven was assigned as Block Commander.

We lived in family groups of from six to twelve men. These family groups were called "Combines." Our combines were physically set apart from each other by arranging our double or triple bunked beds in a square. The enclosed space then became our private domain where we talked, ate, slept, prepared our food, and carried out all of our daily tasks. Within each combine a man's bunk was his castle. In fact, it even had some primitive medieval characteristics. The beds were made of wood and bunked either two or three high. Each one was provided with four or five narrow bed slats and a thin, straw pad which sagged between the slats and required some getting used to in order to sleep on.

Our combine started out with six men, as did most of the others, and we lived as a unit. We pooled our food, scheduled our household chores, ate together, and in all respects lived as a family. Each Block had a small charcoal fired cooking stove, and each combine had a turn for its use at least once during the day. We adopted, as experience dictated, certain rules of conduct and cleanliness which we agreed to abide by. It is a curious circumstance how some men, even those made officer gentlemen by an act of Congress, will never shave, bathe, wash or clean their clothes, especially if it has to be done with cold water. We did have plenty of soap because it, along with cigarettes, was used to pack into the loose chinks of each Red Cross food parcel.

The one utensil provided us by the Germans was a lead pitcher for carrying wash water, called a Kine Trinkwasser (not for drinking water). Benny and one of the other POW's melted down our Kine Trinkwasser and, using a sand mold, made a flat iron. It was somewhat crude but ironed our shirts and trousers quite well. For washing clothes I found the best gadget was a plunger made from two cans, one larger than the other. One can was placed open end down inside the other and fastened to a stick. The finished tool looked like a metal toilet plunger and was used in much the same fashion in washing my clothes.

Each two prisoners were issued, at first, a ration of one

Red Cross food parcel every two weeks which diminished as the war progressed and more prisoners arrived. These parcels contained some concentrated crackers, a D-bar, some cheese, a can of powdered whole milk (KLIM), tooth powder, a can of SPAM, coffee, a bar of soap, some cigarettes. The Germans sometimes supplemented this with a small ration of potatoes, kolrabis, barley cereal, "goon" bread, ersatz jam, blood sausage, and occasionally soup made from dog or horse meat. On still other occasions we were given a small amount of cheese and sauerkraut. I could eat everything except the blood sausage which I passed on to those with more continental tastes.

Goon bread was brownish green in color. It had no leavening and was made of a mixture of wheat flour and sawdust. It had a flat, sour taste but was quite palatable when it was toasted and buttered. The Germans brought it into camp in a truck or wagon and handled it much like a load of bricks which it resembled in size and consistency.

The Germans, at first, refused to give us tin cans, but finally conceded to do so after they had punctured them so that they couldn't be stored for escape purposes. One member of the combine was quite adept at metal working and with only the crudest of tools he fashioned tin cans into plates, cooking pans, and drinking cups. He also made a cracker grinder which we used to make a rough type of flour.

As a combine we had all of our food supplies in common and used them to prepare family type meals. With the cracker flour, powdered milk, and D-bars we could make a passable chocolate pie which we served with whipped cream made from powdered milk, margarine, and a little water whipped together. We also made jelly tarts and sometimes a cake. Our tooth powder from the Red Cross parcel turned out to be baking soda which, when mixed with an ascorbic acid pill (Vitamin C), also from the Red Cross parcel, provided a leavening agent for our cakes and pastries. For our first Thanksgiving we molded and baked a SPAM turkey.

Usually two of us handled the cooking for a week at a time and we could use our imaginations in preparing the food in any way we wished. The cooks were also charged with the responsibility of serving the food in equal portions, which was important because our rations were always lean. This became more important as our pot bellies and our food supplies grew smaller. Nothing was wasted that could be eaten. Every crevice of a cooking pan or plate was cleaned out with a fingernail or tongue. Washing the dishes was necessary only to sterilize them. I took my turn as cook, dishwasher, and housekeeper.

Our biggest cooking fiasco was a fruit cake we planned in advance of our 1944 Christmas dinner. We saved raisins, and prunes and crackers and other ingredients for over three months

until we had accumulated enough to meet the requirements of the recipe. We weren't the first to do this. Other Combines had made delicious fruit cakes by a steaming process. The batter was put in a pan which was set in a second pan containing a little water. A third pan was put over the top and the whole combination heated on the top of the stove for about three hours. A beautiful cake always resulted. So, armed with the best of advice we prepared our batter and steaming equipment and proceeded to cook the cake in the prescribed manner. After three hours we examined the cake and found that it hadn't cooked at all. It was still nothing but gooey batter and looked worse than when we had started. It was a sad disappointment and no one knew why. We needed that fruit cake so we decided to look for more fuel for the fire, reserve the stove for the night and try baking it in the oven. We found our source of fuel in the floor of the building, which on examination we found to be two board layers thick. So, one at a time, as we needed more fuel, we carefully removed one of the underneath floor boards. We baked the cake from about midnight until morning, but it just wouldn't bake. Even after five hours it was still a sticky, gooey mess. However, our investment was too great to throw away, so we ate fruit pudding for Christmas dessert. We later discovered that we had made a mistake in soaking our dried fruit ingredients for two days before we made the cake batter; dried fruit is to be used as is for fruit cake. Try our way for a real flop.

The trucks used by the Germans were equipped to manufacture their own gasoline as they traveled. This fuel a low grade benzene, was synthesized in an apparatus attached to the truck and was piped directly to the regular fuel system of the truck. It appeared the same as any other truck except it had what appeared to be a large hot water heater mounted behind the cab and several burlap bags full of wood chips in the back. By some process, using the wood chips, water, and heat from a fire under the tank, the components were converted to a low grade benzene. The Germans also had a small attachment for a touring car that used charcoal instead of wood chips and was fastened to the rear bumper. These cars and trucks did not have the power they would have by using gasoline, so more frequent shifting of gears was necessary. Imagine, however, traveling to your heart's content with only a bag of charcoal, a can of water, and a small fire for fuel.

Our life around camp soon evolved into pretty much of a routine. As I said the Germans left the internal running of the compound to us as long as there was no serious trouble. They did require us to stand Atten (roll call) each morning and evening, which was our one formal military formation at which a German officer officiated.

We spent our free time walking around the perimeter of the compound, talking, reading, and playing chess or bridge. A

fairly good library had been provided by the Salvation Army and I spent a great part of my spare time reading. "The Forsythe Saga," or a 2,000 page trilogy was not too big to tackle in those days. The camp organized a drama group which put on several good plays. One of the best was "Arsenic and Old Lace." Our conversations were mostly about flying and women in that order. Later as the food dwindled and we got hungrier, food started to enter the competition with women as a topic and finally even preempted flying in our daily discussions. Some of the fellows prepared detailed menus for three years of eating after they got home. The meals I thought most about were bacon and eggs for breakfast and the big spread of food in the mess hall at Grizzly Canyon.

Ironically, at times when food was scarcest and we were most in need of it, food eating contests would be held between members of some combines. Usually the contest would last until their food supplies ran out or until all were sick from eating. These foolish acts were brought about by the continuous psychological preoccupation with food that we were all experiencing. It reminded me of the book, "I Promessi Sposi," in which Manzoni describes an early Florentine village during a famine. Villagers urged on by the hunger broke into the mills and bakery shops and wasted the few remaining supplies by thoughtlessly eating a little and dumping the rest in the streets.

The British occupied a compound not too far through the woods from ours. They were a crazy bunch but most of them spoke German and they understood the krauts much better than we did. Some of them had also prepared for several months for the Christmas season. They started by putting everything that would lend itself to fermentation in a wooden crock. This consisted of raisins, potato peels, goon bread, barley, dried fruit, etc. In the meantime, they devised a still from an old trombone they had borrowed from the Germans, and by Christmas time each contributor to the brew pot had his measured portion of the grog. We could hear the revelry from our compound and some of them even climbed over the barbed wire fence into our camp to spread the celebration. I am sure the German guards were aware of what was going on and allowed it. We heard later that some of the British went temporarily blind from the effects of the liquor and their senior officers ordered the trombone to be dismantled.

We were always planning some form of escape or else helping someone else with his plans. All escape plans had to be approved by our senior officer and his advisors. Several men were successful in getting out of camp but none were successful in getting out of Germany. One fellow from our block climbed onto the roof of the barracks one night and went hand-over-hand along the electric light wires leading into camp. He passed undetected over the fences and dropped safely outside the compound. He made

his way to the Balkan countries by traveling at night; but when he finally had to ask for help, he was sold back to the Germans for the bounty on his head. He was brought back to camp, placed in solitary confinement on bread and water for ten days and returned to the compound somewhat discouraged. The Germans made life miserable for all of us when someone would break out. They would bring machine guns and dogs into the camp and we would be required to stand in ranks all day and night being counted over and over again until everyone was accounted for. We didn't complain about this, however, because we knew that this was in some small way acting our parts and doing our duties as soldiers. The krauts had planted seismographs by all of the fences so it was virtually impossible to tunnel under them without being detected. Even so, many attempts were made to do this.

We also knew that there were others in Germany much worse off than we were. Two of the kregies had been captured in civilian clothes trying to escape from France after they had been shot down. They were both Jews and before they could prove that they were American airmen, they were taken to Buchenwald. They told us of the gas chambers, the starvation, and horrible atrocities being perpetrated there. There were also some German Jews around camp who were always accompanied by a guard and were forced to do the menial task of cleaning out our latrines.

There were two loudspeakers in the compound with which the Germans used to propagandize. Each day at 4:00 p.m. came the announcement, Achtung, Achtung, Die Ober Commander der Wehrmacht gibt Bekannt." The announcement was generally followed by a news broadcast slanted for German consumption and had to be interpreted to understand it our way. They never spoke of retreat. It was always a "strategic withdrawal" from some position or city, but with a little thought it was always easy to translate their meaning on our map to a new line of defense. We knew how the war was going, both on the Eastern and the Western fronts. We followed with delight the D-Day landings in Normandy and with apprehension the Battle of the Bulge.

As Christmas time of 1944 approached, we could begin to hear the big guns on the Eastern front and we knew from this and the news broadcasts that the war with Russia was getting close. The Russians were throwing over a million men into some of the pushes across the Oder River and we were openly speculating about being liberated in such a push. However, even with all our speculation, our fate was still in the hands of the German Luftwaffe and the Nazi Party.

About 4:00 p.m. on the 29th of January 1945, word was circulated through the camp that the krauts were planning to move us. The rumor was confirmed about 7:00 p.m. and we were told to pack what food we could carry in a blanket roll and be ready to march by 11:00 p.m. It was a miserable winter day. Snow covered

the ground and it an uncommonly cold thirty degrees below zero. Germany was having its coldest winter in Twenty years and we were getting ready for a forced march on the coldest day of that winter.

We divided our food, which consisted of a few cans of meat, a package or two of crackers, some sugar cubes, a box of cheese, a loaf of goon bread, and some cigarettes. There was also some powdered milk and jam that we couldn't carry.

It had also been announced that the Red Cross storehouse had been opened to anyone needing clothing, so I put in an order. I got a French Army overcoat, two pair of woolen GI underdrawers, two woolen undershirts to match the drawers, a new pair of woolen GI pants, two pair of wool socks, a pair of woolen gloves, a wool cap, a balaklava, a sweater, and a new pair of size twelve GI shoes. I put all of the clothes on and with the exception of the shoes, socks, and hat didn't take them off for a month. A better planner may well have said that I overloaded myself with clothes; but I reasoned that I could always take a piece off and throw it away whereas I couldn't put clothes on that I didn't have.

We couldn't take our powdered milk because it was opened and rather impossible to carry in a rolled up blanket. Still, it was a precious item and had been saved by our strict rationing. So I decided before we left to have a good drink of milk. Naturally my hunger and depression -time thrift combined forces to unbalance my judgment and I made this final repast over rich. It didn't agree with stomach and I soon began to feel sick. I started to vomit and before I was through, I had disgorged all I had in me including a generous portion of sour stomach acid. I then continued to dry heave. Each retch turned my stomach inside out until I felt exhausted by the time we were ready to leave camp. At times I felt that it was only the biting cold air that kept me from fainting.

Rumors that the Russians were about to overtake us and might even reach us before we left camp stirred our minds in a number of ways. Just what our guards or the retreating German forces would do to us in this case was a question with many grave and unsavory answers.

We passed the outer gate of our compound (the same one I had entered almost a year and a half before) a little after midnight and formed a long, ragged column as we started down the road from Egan. I was somewhere in the middle with Holly, Mack, Guy Boyd, and Skip Thayer from the old combine. Guards were spaced at intervals and patrolled the column with dogs and submachine guns.

Deep snow covered the ground on both sides of the road, and the column made a trail through the newly fallen inches on the

road. We walked all that night and all of the next day until about 4:00 p.m. Snow fell intermittently and twice during the day a blizzard pelted us in the face as we trudged along. I was glad that I had brought the balakalava and the scarf to protect my nose, face and ears from the biting cold and the sting of the wind and snow. We nibbled occasionally on a sugar cube or a small piece of cracker and cheese which we rationed among the four of us. There was no selfishness or bickering and we felt that if anyone would make it, we would.

At 4:00 p.m. the next evening, just as dusk began to fall, we arrived at the outskirts of a small town. The order filtered down the line to halt while it was determined whether there was some place in town where such a large group could be steltered for the night.

I sank to the ground exhausted. My diaphragm ached and the rolled blanket over my shoulder weighed a ton. What a luxury it was just to sit and the urge to fall asleep was almost overpowering. Those nearer the head of the column were already discovering the value of cigarettes in bartering with the German people for food. A loaf of bread or a half-dozen eggs for a cigarette was the starting price which, of course, rapidly changed as supply and demand exerted itself. By the time we were close enough to barter, the cigarette market had crashed. It didn't matter too much anyway since I had only two packs and it was rather surprising that I had those because I didn't smoke and had consequently given my share away before we left Sagan. The idea of their value was, of course, unknown to me until now.

We were finally allowed to enter the town where a large Catholic Church had been commandeered for our use. The town itself was unique by our standards. The houses were built in neat rows along both sides of narrow cobblestone or brick streets. A community well stood in the middle of a small square and seemed to be a common meeting place for old and young alike. A number of men and women that we saw in the street were French and Russian slave laborers who served the Germans in a number of menial ways. One Frenchman pulling a small wooden homemade sled approached me and asked for a cigarette. I gave him two in exchange for his sled which proved to be of invaluable service to us.

Every inch of space in the church was occupied by tired bodies. I spent the night high up in the choir loft huddled between two rows of seats. Even the stairways, aisles and altar were pressed into use. We were inside out of the weather, but it was bitter cold and I was just too cramped and tired and miserable to sleep soundly.

The next day we packed our blankets and remaining food supplies on the small sled and took turns pulling it. The relief to me of just being rid of the blanket roll was indescribable and

did much to lift me out of the depression I had sunk into the previous day. I was feeling better and the Germans gave us each a hunk of goon bread which helped to provide energy for the twelve hour march ahead. By evening we entered a city called Muskau, pronounced much the same as the more familiar Russian Capital. We were taken directly to a large pottery factory for the night. The Germans issued us a third of a loaf of goon bread apiece and promised us some hot barley soup for breakfast. The building was old and smokey from long use and had a cover of soot on the floor, window sills, and every other flat surface. The furnaces were still going and the warmth coming from them was welcome in spite of the dirt. We spread out our blankets in the soot near one of the furnaces. I took off my shoes, balakalava and hat for the first time since we left Sagan. I felt warm and comfortable. I was soon sound asleep. When I awoke it was late afternoon of the next day. I had slept for twenty hours.

We still had no indication of our destination or fate, which was in reality much more precarious than we realized. The German nation and the Fuhrer were fighting for their existence and were in no mood to extend sympathy, hospitality or protection to several thousand prisoners of war who were now an unnecessary burden on their resources. Major Cleven came and instructed us to set up a security watch for Germans so that General Vanaman, who would be along in fifteen minutes or so, could talk to us. We stationed men at each door and window and the rest of us assembled within short hearing distance of the General as he entered. We hadn't seen him since we left Sagan. He looked visibly tired and worried. He was considerably older than we were which made the physical rigors of the march more difficult for him. In addition, he had the additional burden of fighting our battles with the German officers placed over us. He had, he said, received information from a reliable source that Hitler had ordered or soon would order us to be killed. Now, he said, was not the time to act because the Luftwaffe officers were not in favor of such an order and may not carry it out. They knew the Americans and Russians held a large number of German prisoners who would be subject to retaliative action. They also knew that the time was drawing near when they themselves might be American prisoners of war and would need a sympathetic ear. He told us to wait, bide our time, and watch. If a good opportunity arose we should try to escape. If he passed the word for action, or if the Germans made a positive or suspicious attempt against us, we were to make a break, every man for himself. This was to be a last resort to save some who might be lucky enough to get away in the confusion. This might be a dirty war, but it sure wasn't a dull one. We waited all night, our ears cocked for the slightest sound but nothing happened, just the suspense and tension of waiting and watching.

A German order hailed the rising sun with directions to march again. They also gave us a quarter of a loaf of goon bread

apiece and a tin can full of hot barley soup. Maybe the crisis had passed. Major Cleven brought us word that General Vanaman and Colonel Spivey had disappeared, and it was rumored that they had been taken to Berlin.

With the first days of February came the sun. Its presence didn't ease the cold much, but it did melt the hard packed snow on the road enough to ruin our sled run, so we abandoned the sled by the side of the road. Later on we found two wooden poles. With the poles and a blanket we made a stretcher which we substituted for the sled. It wasn't a good substitute, but still easier than individual loads.

All in all we were forced to march for about ten days. If our day's slogging brought us near a town we were likely to spend the night in a storage barn of some sort. In the country a farmer's haymow was used. I was so cold most of the time that my teeth never did stop chattering, and I vowed that if I ever got home I would live in a place where there was no winter and would never complain about the heat again.

The popular conception of Hell is one of heat and fire and brimstone, but to me a more apt description is cold, hunger, fear and loneliness. These are wedded evils that are drawn together with the coming of the night. The first rays of the morning sun expel them and assure the world that they are transient things, but he who meets with tragedy or trouble under the spell of darkness knows the fear that they impart. My memory is indelibly impressed with the uneasy fear of the remote guard post on a winter's night, the crossroads at Grizzly Canyon, the Snake Pit at Frankfurt, and now the night after night of uncertain blackness and biting cold. Dante was right when he encased the lowest depths of Hell in a mantle of ice.

There were some with flat feet, who I suppose got into the Air Force on a relaxation of physical standards. After all, it might be reasoned airmen aren't paddlefeet, they fly, not walk. If they don't walk, then I was surely having a realistic dream, so realistic in fact that it made blisters on my heels. Those with foot trouble gradually dropped back further and further in line until they were out of our sight.

Our forced march ended in Spremberg, an East German rail center. It was also a large modern military center. The city was alive with soldiers and feverish preparations were being made to block a Russian advance on the city which was expected soon. Tank traps were being set up on all the roads leading into the city, and entrenchments and barricades were erected in all of the wooded areas surrounding the city. I talked briefly with a Panzer (tank) corps officer who had been educated at Northwestern University. He was quite concerned at the attitude of the United States toward Russia. "How," he said, "can you expect to stop the Russians if we can't?" It was his opinion that the United

States and Britain should be joining forces with Germany against the Bolsheviks. I had no answer to give him. Russia might certainly be our enemy someday, but I couldn't very well explain the boastings of Hitler to him. We used to occasionally see a group of Hitler Jugend or a German military group pass our camp. Whenever they marched they sang in unison and we could hear the words, "Deutschland, Deutschland Uber Alles." It was in the minds of the German leaders to rule the world; but their action even against their own people, showed how unfit they were to rule the world or even themselves. How the people of such an advanced nation could allow themselves to fall under the complete domination of such an evil as Nazism is hard to imagine. The glory of their moment of victory turned their eyes and hearts from some of the most horrible atrocities ever committed by one people against another.

Spremberg, ironically, is only a short distance from Sagan, so apparently we had been marching around the countryside with no destination or objective in view.

When the Germans made their putsch into Poland and Russia, a large number of German peasants migrated to the newly liberated lands at the expense of the peasantry already occupying the land. Now they were vacating the land and coming back to Germany. This time, however, their trip was not a leisurely one but one of desperate flight in the dead of winter. We saw some of these people. They were a picture of abject misery. Some were lucky enough to have a wagon and a team of horses, some had a wagon and one horse, some were pulling handcarts, others trudged through the snow carrying their belongings on their backs. Entire families were represented including grandparents and small babies. They were poorly dressed and many were without shoes and wore rags bound around their feet. Their plight was also a product of misjudgment and avarice designs of the Nazis.

Spremberg was on a rail line leading to Bavaria, and a long line of Forty or Eight cars standing in the railroad yard gave us a reasonable clue as to why we were there. We were to be loaded onto the cars and taken to a prison camp near Munich. By the time we had boarded the train the cars were loaded to twice their stated capacity. At first I thought it would be pleasant to ride rather than walk for a change, but this turned out to be not so. Added to the cold and hunger which we still had with us, we were now cramped and crowded together like cattle in a chute and had to endure the frustration caused by this close confinement. In addition, many now became sick and despondent.

At this stage of the war the Allies had almost complete mastery of the air over Germany and as a result travel by train or other surface transport was hazardous. A US fighter pilot had no way of distinguishing between a German troop train, a train load of American POW's, or an ammunition train. Allied orders were to cripple the internal transportation system of Germany by

strafing and bombing everything that moved. At Chemnitz we barely escaped being bombed by our own Air Force B-17's. The train was standing in the railroad yard when the air raid alarm sounded and in the distance we could see a formation of B17's. The engineer started the train with full horsepower and we got away from the city just as the bombs began to fall on the very spot we had just vacated. In fact, some were eating up the tracks behind the last car. This was my first experience of this kind and I didn't fully realize the danger we had so narrowly escaped. I tried to jest about it to Holly and Weintraub but found it not to be a joking matter to them.

Holly and his crew had crash landed in Italy on the day of the Regensburg raid. They were captured and held in Italy for a few months and then moved to Germany by rail in much the same way that we were moving now. Enroute to Germany rail traffic had to go through the Brenner Pass which became a prime target for frequently aerial assault. The prison train was standing in the Pass when the siren alarm began to wail. The German guards locked all of the occupied cars then betook themselves full speed to the air raid shelters. The train load of Kriegies sat helplessly by while the 500 pound bombs from the US Air Force fell in their midst. The whine of the falling bombs and the dull rumble of their multiple explosions as they rocked the earth was terrorizing. Holly's car was rocked and jostled and sprayed with debris on all sides and was one of the few that withstood the entire onslaught without receiving major damage. Neither he nor his companions received any physical harm but they never forgot one bit of the terror. Every time a siren sounded in Sagan, Holly would faithfully go out in the snow or rain or black of night to a slit trench behind our barracks and wait patiently until the all-clear sounded. He always chided me if I refused to come along. One bombing raid is enough to shatter the emotional stability of anyone.

Our train ride lasted about a week and took us to Mooseburg, a small town near Munich and not too far from the concentration camp at Dachau. A French POW camp, Stalag VII-A, had originally been built on the outskirts of Mooseburg, but it was now occupied by French, Russian, Indian, English, and now Americans. We were at first placed in a barbed wire enclosure with about two thousand other American prisoners. The area within the enclosure contained a large dirt floor barn where we slept, one single outdoor privy, and one water faucet. One had to stand in line for five to eight hours to go to the toilet or get a drink. The barn was completely filled with bodies at night and one could get out only by stepping carefully over each body enroute to the door. If someone got sick, one could just hope that he didn't have to pass in your direction to get out to vomit. Many were plagued with upset stomachs and diarrhea. By this time we were all generally run down physically. Our food for the past three

weeks had been a very sparse ration of goon bread and barley cereal. Our condition was generally expressed by one Kriegie who said, but not quite in this same language, that he went outside to urinate, stopped to blow his nose, and messed his pants.

After a week or so we moved into the main compound where we occupied several large, single-story barrack-like buildings. They were much like those at Sagan only older and, of course, more crowded. Our beds were three decks high and four such decks or twelve bunks were built as a unit. There was room between the twelve-bunk tiers so that one could edge into his bed sideways. The other space in the building was narrow aisle down the middle between the rows of bunks lined up on either side. The building was divided at the mid point of its length by a wash room where we had a well equipped with a hand pump for water. Fortunately water was plentiful and we could, with a little effort, keep ourselves clean. I still had my Red Cross razor, towel and soap dish which I used for a mirror and I made it a point to shave every day.

Our food situation was now more acute than ever and this combined with the overcrowded barracks began to wear away at my nerves until at times I would shake uncontrollably from the tension. The International Red Cross in Switzerland heard of our plight and again came to our rescue. They dispatched a convoy of white trucks loaded with food parcels. Their mission was told to both the British and American authorities and they were requested to allow the convoy to proceed undisturbed to Mooseburg. They must have been successful because we did soon after start to receive a ration of one food parcel for each four men every two weeks. The four of us, Holly, Skip, Mac, and I who had been together since Sagan, formed a small Combine.

We were able by, by using a tin can, to construct a small stove in which we could burn rolled up bits of paper, cardboard, weeds or sticks to warm our food. We spent a good deal of time scrounging for fuel and thinking up new ways to prepare our food. Some of the combines built a more elaborate cooking device which combined an inverted tin can such as ours with a small hand turned blower also made from a can. These devices we called "Kriegie Blowers" and they became quite popular. All of the cooking had to be done out of doors so at meal times small groups could be seen all around the camp huddled around their Kriegie blowers preparing some concoction or other. Some of our favorite recipes were prune whip, liver pate spread, bread pudding and hot chocolate.

About Mooseburg I can only say that for us it was a good thing that the war was about over.

At one time, our latrine, which was in a separate building, clogged up. The Germans paid no attention to it and it gradually

filled up inside with urine then overflowed the door sills and ran into the compound. We were afraid of some kind of contagion getting started among us, and our poor physical condition prompted us to worry. We decided some action was necessary to bring the problem to the attention of the German Commandant. We felt sure that if he personally knew of the condition, he would have it corrected. Our senior officer had tried to communicate with him, but always this had to be through underlings who had no disposition to help us. Whatever action we took would have to be serious enough to get his attention and yet not serious enough to bring reprisals down on our heads. It was decided that we would refuse to assemble for Apel until those in charge reported our request to the Commandant. Of course, the Germans were quite disturbed at our refusal to cooperate. At first they simply strode through the buildings ordering us to, "Raus fur Apel." When this didn't work, it became a matter for the sergeant of the guard. Their next move was to bring two large police dogs into each building and threaten to turn them loose unless we cleared the barracks; but we stood our ground. I give great credit to the courage of those who were standing nearest to the dogs. Fortunately, they did not turn the dogs loose and apparently they were not allowed to make more drastic action than this without direction from the Commandant, so our message did get through to him and he sent an officer to investigate. The result was that the latrine was cleaned up and repaired and more attention given to the care of our facilities so the strike was worthwhile.

We knew by this time that the war was definitely running in the Allies favor, but we weren't at all sure whether this meant a better or worse situation for us. Our experience of the past month was not one conducive to optimism.

There was much speculation as to just how the war would end or, more particularly, how we would be liberated. Of course, none of our speculation remotely approached the way in which it really happened. In fact, it could best be described as coming like a thief in the night. We went to bed as captives and awoke as free men.

The evening of April 28, 1945, we stood Apel as usual and then retired for the night. In the morning the Germans were gone. As I stepped out of doors in the early morning sunlight, I could see in the distance the American flag flying from the church steeple over Mooseburg. I was moved by this sight more than any other I remember having seen in all of my life. I didn't want to shout or run to tell anyone else. I simply stood with tears in my eyes and looked. Silence, I think, would be a greater tribute than applause, at least it was in keeping with my feelings on this occasion. There was great stirring and jubilation all over camp. About 10:00 a.m. a GI sergeant with a 45 strapped to his waist came walking down the main camp road followed by a large sandbagged Sherman tank. Later in the day

General Patton with his pearl handled revolvers at his side came in to bid us well and assure us of our safety.

Some of the more adventurous of the kriegies had already been outside collecting souvenirs. They came back with Iron crosses around their necks, German officer caps, cameras, watches, and other personal booty. The front line troops were truly friendly, generous and helpful which was a sharp contrast to the occupation troops who followed. Some who came into camp told of the skirmish involved in our liberation. The retreating German Army, consisting mostly of young SS storm troopers, recognized in us a valuable hostage which they could use in the beginning as a shield to slow the American advance and later as a tool for bargaining. So they entrenched themselves around the camp and waited for Patton's tank Army to roll in from the West. For them it was a last ditch stand. They were armed only with small infantry weapons so such a stand was in a way just a delaying tactic. I think they over estimated our value as hostages. Our presence did discourage the US forces from using large artillery or tank weapons which did restrict them to the use of small weapons also, and this may have been a major handicap to an armored tank force. The battle took a more unexpected turn during the night, however, when the US Fifth Infantry Division made a sudden appearance from the North and caught the Germans by surprise. They were well manned and equipped to fight the battle and carried it out with dispatch. Most of the German force was either captured or killed.

Soon after our liberation , the front line forces moved on ahead. We could hear the shells of the big guns from our artillery as they passed high overhead in a bombardment of Munich.

We were told to stay in our camp until arrangements could be made for our orderly removal from Germany. The advance units had no transportation or supplies to give us and even though we were most anxious to do something with our new found freedom, we knew it was best to stay put. A GI truck brought in a load of white bread which they distributed in the portion of one loaf to four men.

I recalled the many times I had griped about GI bread, but goon bread had given me a new slant on things, This loaf looked so light, white and fine textured that we divided it into four layers, covered it with chocolate frosting made from powdered milk and a D-bar, and ate it as cake.

Although we were under mild orders to stay put, we knew that many of the higher ranking officers had taken off and most of the others left camp at intervals to look for food or walk into Mooseburg and back. If our health had been better, we could have risked taking off on a leisurely trip back to France. Germany was ours and the spoils war were there for the taking; a family car

could be confiscated if one wanted to drive, a bicycle if one wanted to peddle, and free food and lodging at every town and hamlet. No one in official circles knew of our whereabouts or identity. We could have spent three months getting back to France and no one would have cared or been the wiser. Skip and I did go to Mooseburg for a look. While there we were approached by an old German Minister and his wife with a request that we come and stay at their home. They explained that they were terrified of the liberated Russian Prisoners and they knew that if we as American officers were present in their home they would be safe. Their reason for alarm was real. There were several hundred Russian prisoners liberated with us from the Mooseburg prison camp. As prisoners they had been so mistreated that some of them went on an uncontrolled drinking, raping, murdering binge. Just about every German home has a well stocked wine cellar which provided the Russians with an extensive source of supply. Two Russians had forced their way into the home of the Minister's son who lived across the street and looted the house and murdered the entire family. The American forces later protected the German populace from such lawlessness but for the first week between the passage of the front line troops and the arrival of the rear echelons a no man's land existed.

We stayed at the German home for several days and they treated us cordially, but there was no doubt that we were merely the lesser of two evils to them. They were careful to tell us of their strong feelings against Hitler and the Nazi Party, but our observations disclosed several well hidden indications of their allegiance. I was given a feather bed to sleep on plus another feather tick to put over me. The first night I half roasted and half froze. I was much too long for the bedding so that part of my body covered by the feather bedding was overheated and that protruding at the lower end was chilled to the bone. The next night at my request for a bigger bed they gave me two feather ticks instead of one.

Mooseburg was a small, typically german city. It had a Kino(movie house), a one hundred and fifty year old church, and a small shopping area. At various points throughout the city small alcoves were erected to shelter small religious Icons. I found this to be common along many of the by- ways in Bavaria. At regular intervals along the main street broken guns of the captured German forces were piled or neatly stacked on both sides of the road.

On one of the street corners I saw two inmates from the concentration camp Dachau. The stronger was pulling the other in a small coaster wagon. They were both horribly emaciated, especially the helpless one on the wagon. Their faces, arms and legs were shapeless masses of bone over which was stretched wrinkled skin. I don't see how anyone in such a state of malnutrition could be nursed back to normal health again.

We stayed three days in Mooseburg then went back to camp to see how things were faring there. We found the camp deserted. Not a soul was to be seen anywhere. The barbed wire fences, the empty postern boxes, and the hollow sound of our voices in the old barracks gave on a desolate feeling of strangeness almost akin to fear. We walked down the familiar but now strange road to the main gate and turned down the narrow roadway leading back to Mooseburg. There we found an Army mess hall where we got some food and asked about the POW's. We were directed to two MP's in a jeep who told us that the camp contingent had been taken to a large air field near Munich for transport back to France. With their help we made connection with a GI truck going there and caught up with the others and none too soon. The next day we boarded a C-47 transport and were flown to a redistribution center near Reims, France. Reims was a city of note now because it had been the site chosen for the conference at which Germany had recently signed the unconditional surrender document that ended the war in Europe.

We were taken from the plane directly to a delousing station. Here I gave up every stitch of my kriegie clothing, took a long, hot shower, scrubbed myself and washed thoroughly with brown GI soap, got sprayed all over with DDT, and donned, from underwear out, a new set of clothes. We were given the free run of the camp at Reims. Free meant just that because we had no money and no one asked for any. We ate at an outdoor Army mess but were rationed to small meals supplemented by in-between egg nogs when we wanted them. This was by doctor's orders since our physical condition was not such that we could eat all we wanted. The camp had a well stocked PX where needed only to ask for what we wanted and were given it, except of course for food. I remained at this very pleasant camp just loafing around for a week.

From Reims I was taken by truck to camp Lucky Strike which was located on the French coast near LeHavre. Here I was again taken to a delousing station. I again showered, scrubbed with GI soap, sprayed with DDT and given another set of clothing, this time a new officer's uniform. I was placed on a strict diet regimen to get used to eating a full meal again and to help me gain back some of the weight I had lost. There was nothing at all to do at camp Lucky Strike and my growing anxiety to get home made my stay there rather a boring one.

About the first of June we boarded a converted Liberty ship and sailed to Liverpool, England. There we joined a British convoy headed for the USA.

I had a comfortable bunk in a cabin amidships with two other officers. The meals were excellent and life aboard ship was pleasant. We were allowed free run of the ship which I explored as much as I liked. This was my first ocean trip on a ship. The

deck from which one could watch the sea was appealing at first but I didn't spend much time there. The weather was cold and blustery and the waves high and rough, not uncommon they said for the North Atlantic in May. Often due to the rough seas, the ship's screw would come completely out of the water and spin free in the air causing a loud noise and vibration that could be heard and felt everywhere in the ship. An escort of British destroyers outlined the perimeter of our convoy to protect us from German U-boats whose crews didn't know that the war was over. About a week out of port our skipper died of a heart attack so our ship was allowed to break convoy and proceed on our own at a faster speed. Fourteen days later we arrived in New York Harbor in a shroud of fog so thick that I didn't get to see the Statue of Liberty.

Military Awards and citations:

Purple Heart, Air Medal with three Oak Leaf Clusters, Distinguished Unit Citation Emblem, American Defense Service Medal, European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal, World War II Victory Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Air Force Longevity Service Award with four bronze Oak Leaf Clusters, Armed Forces Reserve Medal, Air Force Commendation Medal, Prisoner of War Medal, Member Caterpillar Club.