

LONG JOURNEY INTO HELL
by Robert Lee Pugh

Chapter One
The Journey Begins

It had been a long and discouraging fight from Marseille, France up to the Vosge Mountains, the foothills of the Alps.

My first horrifying recollection was when we green troops were preparing to relieve the men on the lines. We saw the infantrymen coming down the hill. Their eyes were glazed over from fatigue. Jeeps preceded them with cold, stiff bodies stacked like cordwood and tied on back, their eyes staring sightlessly at the sky. These were young men in their late teens and early twenties who had given an offering of their lives for the people of the United States.

I often think of this when I see many of today's young people. Would they go willingly to their country's defense or would they flee to some foreign country until it was safe? I wonder.

As we fought our way through the mountains, we encountered a young corporal. We asked him where his platoon leader was. He responded that he and two others were all that were left of the platoon. All the rest were dead and he had taken over command!

One night as we were stalled attacking the high ground, we received heavy artillery fire. We immediately dug in. Suddenly, water started seeping into our foxholes until we were waist deep in water. We spent the night that way. This was in November. During the night, one of our men in an adjoining foxhole heard someone creeping toward him. He threw a grenade and when it exploded, we heard a German shriek with pain.

All that night we heard him crying and moaning and calling, "Mutter, Mutter, hilf mir" or Mother, Mother, help me."

The next day Berkowitz was as white as a sheet (for it was he who had thrown the grenade). He found this dead soldier about ten feet from him with a grenade clutched in his hand.

The next day we paused at a farm house and built a fire to dry our clothes. We slept that night in the hay. I found a warm spot and slept the sleep of exhaustion. The next morning when I arose I discovered why I had slept so warmly. I had snuggled up to a sleeping OX! Thank goodness he didn't turn over!

Our next objective was to take a town called St. Die. After fierce house to house fighting, we managed to take the town. The villagers were ecstatic to finally see their German oppressors gone. To this day there is a granite monument erected in the village square commemorating their liberation by the 103rd Division.

As we marched out of town and reached the outskirts, church bells began to chime. We supposed it was to celebrate our victory but shells from "eighty-eight" Jerry artillery began to rain down on us. Little did we know that Jerry observers had zeroed in on that area to fire the minute we arrived. The church bells were the signal.

Immediately we dived into the ditches on either side of the road. They were filled with ice-cold running water. God watched over me because the man in front of me and the man in back of me were wounded by shrapnel. We had enjoyed at least a few hours of dry clothing before we were once again drenched to the skin.

That night we dug in after setting up a field of fire for our machine guns in case Jerry decided to visit us in the night. We were set up on the crest of a hill and could see a small village in the valley below. It looked so peaceful and serene, like a painting, except it was heavily populated with Germans. We could see their command cars and horse-drawn wagons which they used to carry their supplies.

Just before dawn we were quietly awakened. Several batteries of our artillery opened up with 105 Howitzers and pandemonium reigned below. Horses were screaming, men were running around in confusion, and command cars were taking off as though the devil was after them. And indeed we were! We moved in quickly. It must have seemed quite a contrast to our new prisoners, who were clean shaven and neatly dressed, to see wet, dirty, bearded scraggly looking Americans who spent their nights in the ground. And we were taking them prisoners!

For the next two days we fought our way through what had been beautiful pine forests which looked eerily like Christmas trees. Most were shattered by incessant artillery fire by both sides. They were covered with tinsel. Later I learned that these were shreds of aluminum foil dropped by the U. S. Air Force to confuse the enemy's radar.

For the next two days we began to wonder if we had been declared orphans for we were running low on ammo. We were also running out of rations. We began to loot knapsacks of dead Jerrys. We found little packs of Norwegian cheese and hard-tack. And we found some half frozen turnips and rutabagas. This helped.

Thanksgiving Day arrived and we were cheered when the rumor came through that we were going to receive a hot meal of turkey, dressing and the works. But the day passed with nothing to eat.

The next day the mess crew showed up. They apologized for the delay, but they had been ambushed and had to fight off the enemy until reinforcements arrived. Our "hot" meal was not hot, but the mood we were in we would have eaten that turkey with the feathers on!

It's strange, but in combat you become a little schizophrenic. A part of you feels and emotes as a normal person, and your sense of humor becomes sort of macabre, as though half of your sensibilities become dead and you have no normal emotions or feelings. Your only goal is to kill, or be killed.

One day we came across an American position. The gunner was slumped over his gun dead and his assistant lay by him with half his head blown off. Strewn all over were photographs of the young man, his wife and their baby. Germans had been looting his backpack for food. I cried.

To contrast this, we were lying by the road later watching as a dying German cried out in pain. We sat there eating a "D-bar" (a concentrated chocolate bar ration), as one of our tanks came down the road and crushed his head where he lay. We laughed as if this were the funniest thing that we had ever seen.

One day as I was sitting on a log in the snow eating my ration, I noticed something protruding from the snow. It was a human hand. I had been sitting on a dead Jerry! It aroused in me no emotion at all. Killing the enemy was like stepping on a bug. But to see a dead or wounded American hit you hard.

Chapter Two
Cornered With No Way Out

On the last day of November 1944, we received orders that we were to engage and take a town in Alsace-Lorraine named Selestat. We were told that there was a small force of Germans holed up there and we were to cover the main escape route. Our artillery was to blanket it with our 155 artillery fire.

My unit, the 409th Infantry, attacked in strength and over-ran and secured the main road. Our intelligence and communications were very poor, however, and too late we learned that there were 15,000 troops in the town and a large contingent of Tiger tanks.

Sergeant Del Campo and I were detailed to a side wine cellar to guard some German prisoners until the M. P.'s could take them away. Some of our men were upstairs resting and trying to get dry. Ollerton M. George, who was a Pima Indian from Arizona, was on a light machine gun covering the railroad tracks which ran by our building. (His real name was an Indian name which no one could pronounce, so he adopted this crazy name.) The last I saw of him he was engaged in a machine gun duel with Jerry and laughing his head off! He was the bravest man I ever knew. He was a big man, and in civilian life, he told us that he was a professional wrestler.

As we settled in to guard our prisoners, we heard a sound that was hard to mistake - the squeaking and clanking of tank treads! I knew then that we were in trouble. We heard the roar of tank artillery hitting the building overhead. Then we heard shouting and running footsteps overhead and the building collapsing. Outside our door we heard voices shouting "Komme Heraus!" Our prisoners started shouting and this probably was what saved us and

our lives. Del Campo grabbed his carbine and yelled, "Let's shoot our way out!" Our prisoners immediately began to shout more loudly. I opened the door a crack and found myself looking into the barrel of an "eighty-eight" cannon. If it hadn't been for our prisoners, we would have been hamburger! We immediately handed our rifles over to our captors and put our hands over our heads in a sign of submission. Our former fortress had been reduced to a pile of rubble and our buddies were standing in the snow disarmed and awaiting their fate. Our journey into hell had begun.

It was late at night and we were searched. I had forgotten that I had a P38 pistol stuck in my belt. We had been told that if the Germans caught us with any of their equipment that we would be shot. When I was searched, the Jerry just took the pistol and said "danke" or thank you and let me keep the packet of Norwegian cheese which I had confiscated from one of our prisoners! We were then taken into the city.

One of our guys, Walter Burnett, whispered to me that he was going to make a break for it. I told him not to try it, that he didn't have a chance. But he tried it and didn't get more than ten yards, and they cut him down with their "burp" guns. We called them that because when fired they sounded like a staccato burp.

Suddenly, we were interrupted by the rushing sound of incoming artillery, which only an infantryman can understand. We immediately hit the ditches, prisoner and Germans alike, head to toe. As the 155s and 105s poured it to us, we were not enemies, but simply comrades in arms. (At this point I would like to explain some of the provisions of the "Geneva Convention" rules of war.)

This agreement was originally enacted in 1864, and was amended in 1929 to include humane provisions for prisoners of war. Until we were officially registered with Geneva and the International Red Cross, we were simply regarded as MIA. Which meant that we had no status at all and the enemy could torture, shoot or do anything they wished with us.

An example of this was the massacre at Malmedy, which later became famous throughout the Infantry. One hundred Americans were taken prisoners there. They were told to remove their uniforms and to stand at attention in the snow. They were then brutally shot in cold blood! For several days thereafter there were no Germans taken alive.

The next day, they sat us on the ground and we were interrogated by a surly officer. To all questions we responded with simply name, rank and serial number. He then began to amaze us with the intelligence, our division name, our regiment number, our Company Commander's full name and complete accurate details of our movements from our embarkment from Camp Shanks, New Jersey through the Vosge Mountains to Selestat!

This was a "fishing expedition" to see if their information was accurate. We, of course, gave no hint as to their correctness.

Then, contrary to Convention rules, they gave us shovels and tried to force us to dig machine emplacements to be used against our advancing troops. We refused, and suddenly found ourselves looking down the barrels of "burp" guns. We began to dig, but somehow we didn't understand the orders and we were doing a terrible job - about one shovelful every ten minutes in the hard ground. So they finally gave up on that.

From there we were marched for two days toward the Rhine River, the gateway to the "Fatherland". When I saw it for the first time, I was amazed at how wide it was.

The Germans were indeed an ingenious people. They had built a wooden bridge over the river, but they had arranged it so that it appeared from the air that it had been bombed out. It was in actuality like a ferry! They had run a system of cables underwater to the other side with a motor and pulleys. A hundred feet or so of the so-called bridge was anchored on each shore. Fitting to a jagged edge was another section which, when you get on and when activated, was pulled to the opposite side. When this was fitted to the jagged edge of the bridge, somewhat like a jigsaw puzzle it left a giant gap in the center. Looking from the air it looked as though the bridge had been destroyed!

We were beginning to be very cold and hungry, as no food had been offered. This was a condition that we would become accustomed to in the months ahead.

As we were marched down the road, it began to rain and sleet. We came to a deserted barn and were herded into a barbed-wire enclosure where, from the stench, it became apparent that pigs had been kept. We stood knee-deep in this muck all night with two spotlights shining on us and rain pouring down.

The following morning, we were given a thick slice of black bread apiece and then marched about five miles to a crossing. There awaiting us were a string of boxcars which they called "forty and eights". This designation meant that they were designed in peace time to transport either forty men or eight horses. Evidently, the Jerry didn't understand the rules or didn't care. They stuffed us in one hundred men to a car! In some ways being crammed

in like this didn't bother us because we could snuggle up to each other to keep from freezing. We discovered later, however, that we were to be the most miserable of men.

Diarrhea was taking its toll and they had given us two five gallon buckets for waste and urine. Halfway through the second day, the train came to a jolting stop and the contents of those buckets spilled over the floor and covered half of the boxcar. To avoid this mess, we spent the remainder of our sad Odyssey crammed in a human lump trying to stay clear of it.

For eight days we were confined to that mobile deep-freeze. We had nothing to eat and practically no water. There was one small window with bars on it and icicles would sometimes form and we would eat those. Unfortunately only those nearest the window were able to get these. No sharing. Whenever another train would come along, we would be shunted off to a siding. We began to wonder if this was to be our group coffin.

There was a crack under the boxcar door about two inches wide. We used that to relieve ourselves. This left an ice border along the door. On arrival at our destination of Limburg, or as we came to know Stalag Xii-A, the door swung open and with much shouting as Jerry was prone to do, one English speaking guard announced that we were now going to be fed. They had loaves of detestable black bread on a cart. They announced that we were allotted ten loaves per car. For a hundred men? They were going to throw it to us and we prepared to catch it. Instead, they deliberately, despite our protests, slid it through that foul mess of ice at the boxcar door. We ate it. The guards must have enjoyed the spectacle. They were laughing hysterically.

Just as an aside, the front line soldiers were not vicious like the home front guards. Most of them were young like we were, and had a job not of their choosing. But it had to be done.

The home guards, on the other hand, were older people, some of World War 1 vintage, who would have rather been at home by the fireside with their grandchildren. The other class of guards were the "Death's Head" or S.S. troops, who were the classical Nazi fanatics commonly portrayed in the movies. All in all, not a very friendly group of people on which your very existence depended!

It was a scenario not at all like "Hogan's Heros", a ridiculous program which all ex-prisoners of war despise.

We were saddened to learn of the death of one of our "B" Company men, Pfc. Carleton Neumeister, who was a second generation German-American, who spoke fluent German. He had what he thought was a good idea. With this knowledge, he might make life a little better for all of us by serving as an interpreter. As it turned out, however, the Jerry had a different perspective. He could escape and blend into the general population or he might help us to escape in some way! When his talent became apparent, one of the guards shot him "accidentally" while he was cleaning his rifle. Carleton was a hero, but a dead one.

Chapter Three
Kriegsgefangenerlager Stalag XII-A

Our next destination was XII-A, a transit lager or camp from which prisoners were dispersed to various camps all over Germany, and in some cases Poland. Officers were sent to separate camps as were the Air Force captives. Infantrymen, Artillerymen, and other ground troops were generally kept together. The meticulousness of the Aryan mind, I suppose.

The set-up for Stalag XII was cleverly arranged. On one side of the railroad tracks was a German air base. On the other was the Kriegsgefangerlager or P.O.W. compound. The camp was a military prison consisting of several buildings, each as large as a gymnasium. Out-numbered and overrun, U. S. and Allied forces had been cut off from their comrades or their planes shot down. They had been captured and sent to Stalag XII-A, the disbursement center. Our building was a former stable with cobble stone floors and a small pot-bellied stove in the center. Temperatures at all times were below freezing.

We were so crowded that we couldn't lie down on the floor without our bodies criss-crossing. We could only reach the latrine by crawling over the bodies of one another. It did little good, however, because when we reached it, we found that the sewer pipes were either clogged or frozen. The feces and residue flowed into our area of confinement. There was little or no light since there were wooden shutters over the window.

We "dogfaces" of the infantry were not all that familiar with the tactics of our Air Force or the Allied Air Force. But to our horror, we received our indoctrination the twenty-third of December - two days before

Christmas! We were sitting as close as we could get to the little stove. It was about eleven o'clock at night when we heard the sound of bombers overhead. Then all hell broke loose!

Bombs began falling, shutters began flapping open and shut from the concussion and the guards began yelling and firing wildly at the shutters thinking that we were trying to escape. We were crouched low, trying to protect ourselves. Huge blocks of granite dislodged from the building and came rumbling across the floor like bowling balls. Several men were wounded or killed by these.

The next morning we learned that the barracks next to ours, about fifty feet away, had sustained a direct hit. We were called out and given shovels and wheelbarrows and were ordered to clean out the bodies. This was, we learned, an American officers barracks. That night the R.A.F. had mistakenly killed forty-seven of our officers. The body parts were hardly recognizable.

Under the watchful eyes of our guards and snarling Doberman Pinschers, we were forced to clean up the remains. When we received double rations (two slices of black bread), we weren't able to eat.

The next morning we were roused out after we had had our so-called coffee. This was a bucket of insipid tasting stuff which was made out of scorched barley. This was to become our daily staple. We always looked forward to it. At least it was hot and helped to take the chill out of our bones. We also found it useful for shaving or minor bathing.

That day we were to meet with representatives of the International Red Cross and be registered. We were then issued German dogtags and became official prisoners of war! I thought that's what we were already. Their dog

tags were two perforated pieces of metal which could be broken in half. In case of death, one piece was to remain with the corpse and the other would be sent to the Red Cross.

That day was Christmas Eve day, but there was little Christmas spirit noticeable. Only a spirit of bewilderment and despair settled on our compound. As I walked toward the corner of our building for our daily ration of watery turnip soup, I noticed a limb which had been broken from a dead tree and placed in a tub of dirt. Hung from barren outstretched branches were strands of aluminum we had used in the Vosge to deflect radar. They looked like the icicles we used back home. It was someone's simple reminder of Christmas Eve back home.

Then from an adjacent compound drifted the faint strains of hymns sung by American soldiers and airmen. The most memorable one of all, "Silent Night, Holy Night". I wondered would I ever see my home again? Suddenly, to our surprise we heard Germans singing "Schweigend Nacht, Heilige Nacht"! Same carol, same lyrics but in German. Did we worship the same God?

The next day we were loaded on trucks to be taken to Mutterholz, our next destination. This journey was to take one day. We were in a convoy of trucks. The backs were covered with camouflaged canvas and a guard sitting on the tailgate of each truck. Without warning, our truck slammed on the brakes. Our guard yelled "Bleiben Sie" or "stay there", and ran for cover. Suddenly like bats out of hell came two P-38 fighter planes zooming in on our convoy with guns blazing. We had no intention of remaining in those burning trucks and being shot to death or cremated! We piled out like apples out of a barrel and dived into the nearest doorway and down into a basement. Fortunately

the guards were too preoccupied with saving themselves to bother with shooting us. All trucks were left exploding and in flames. Some of the men and guards weren't able to get out in time and were either killed outright or burnt up. After being bombed, strafed and shelled by our own forces, I began to wonder who was the enemy. This is what is referred to in the military as "friendly fire".

There was one bright moment in all this, however. It turned out that in the basement where we had sought shelter they had stored apples. We quickly assessed the situation, and began stuffing our shirts with these beautiful fruit. When our captors finally found us and forced us out, we all looked as though we were in the ninth month of pregnancy! We then made the rest of our journey on foot toward our next destination - Luckenwalde.

Chapter Four
Our New Home, Luckenwalde

As we approached our new home, Luckenwalde, we could see the guards waiting for us. They had guardtowers with machine guns and search lights strategically placed, and the barbed wire fences were obviously electrified. Guards with Doberman Pinschers met us as we marched in.

We were made to stand at attention and were introduced to the Camp Commandant. He was a swaggering officer who, with excellent English and and great sarcasm, welcomed us to our new home. We were told that we must undergo delousing. This surprised us slightly since we weren't aware that we had this problem. Little did we know.

We were taken to a building marked "Enlausung" and told to remove all our clothes and pile them in neat piles. We could pick them up when we got done. We were given a small bar of soap apiece. We didn't know at the time, but were told later by a smirking guard that the soap was made from the rendered fat of dead Jews!

When we exited the showers, we were lined up naked in the bitter cold and given shots in the shoulder for typhus. We thought they were concerned for our welfare. Not so. They were fearful of a deadly epidemic spreading through the camps and affecting their people. When we went to retrieve our uniforms, they had disappeared. Along with what pitiful possessions we had been allowed to keep. In their place were sweat pants, sweatshirts and long woolen Polish army overcoats. Stenciled on the back were the letters "KFG", signifying Kriegsgefangeners or P.O.W.'s.

For footwear we were given the option of either Dutch wooden shoes or wooden shower shoes. Right or wrong, I chose the shower shoes. They knew it would be impossible

to escape or move very fast in those. Gone were our warm American jackets, woolen shirts and trousers, heavy socks and shoe pack boots. This in the dead of winter, the coldest in recorded history we would find out later.

As an aside, we learned after the war that the Germans infiltrated the American lines during the "Battle of the Bulge", wearing American uniforms. We had unknowingly helped them do this. The saddest thing to me was that I had a Bible with a brass cover engraved with my initials. Many times I wished that I could have had that.

We were then shown to our lodgings. These were long wooden barrack-type buildings with no heating facilities. Our "bunks" consisted of two tiers of wooden planks and a mattress filled with straw. To our chagrin we found that these were alive with body lice! Our mess kits were taken from us also and we were issued small quart buckets for liquids and what we laughingly referred to as "soup".

I found out early on that you had to try to retain a sense of humor. I remembered an Hispanic soldier. I never knew his name. He was really beaten down by circumstances, withdrew into depression, and ended up hanging himself.

Our daily routine was to be rousted out with much shouting for roll call. It seemed that the Germans were unable to speak in normal tones. They always shouted. Maybe this was to intimidate us. Or maybe their hearing was destroyed by artillery or bombings. I don't know, but it was upsetting. You always wondered if they were getting ready to shoot you or not. After our roll call, we lined up for our bucket of Ersatz coffee. Then we were allowed to return to our barracks.

Our daily diet consisted of Ersatz coffee made from roasted barley, no sugar or cream. That was breakfast.

Lunch was simply "soup" composed of hot water with some cabbage leaves or turnips thrown in. And, sometimes with a little luck, you got a tiny piece of spoiled meat thrown in. I will discuss this later.

Supper was our "heavy" meal. One loaf of the despised, but eagerly looked forward to, loaf of black bread. The flour was mixed with sawdust. We were allotted one loaf to every eight men. We were issued one threadbare blanket per man. When we received our bread ration, we spread out a blanket and sliced the bread on that. We all sat around and watched closely to see that there was no cheating. We designed wooden balances to ensure equitable shares. Then we weighed the crumbs meticulously and divided the crumbs equally. A mouse could have starved to death in our barracks. Or more probably it would have been eaten by us!

The Germans were running short of laborers. We were called out one morning and loaded on trucks, with much shouting and brandishing of weapons. Now what? We were taken into a nearby town, name unknown, and unceremoniously unloaded near a large cathedral. As we were prodded around to one side, we saw a huge crater which was partially floored with large, square clay blocks. These were to be placed on the floor of this crater and then tamped down with wooden blocks with a wooden handle inserted in them.

This evidently was to be their water supply or reservoir. Their other supply had been destroyed by Allied bombers. It had been located by this huge cathedral in hopes their Christian enemies would not repeat their evil deed.

As we were lugging these wet clay blocks, we looked up and smiling at us was a large man in an S. S. officer's

uniform. We were stunned when he introduced himself as Max Schmelling, former heavy weight champion of the world.

He asked how we were doing and unable to control my mouth I blurted out "Better than you when Joe Louis beat you down". With that the guard struck me in the face with his rifle butt. I was knocked down and beaten severely with some kind of board severely damaging my spine. Schmelling didn't say anything. He just turned and walked away.

I was thrown onto the truck where I lay until evening and some feeling was beginning to return by the time we got back to camp. I wish later that it hadn't because after that the pain was unbearable.

For those familiar with boxing history, Joe Louis defeated Max Schmelling, Hitler's fair haired boy in the 1930's, much to the shame of the "super race". For a black man to do this was a racial crime.

After this our days degenerated into deadly boredom, and our thoughts were constantly on food. Second to that was our dreams of being freed and wondering how the war was going. After the war ended I learned that in some camps prisoners had radios and had access to information. We were denied many of the luxuries of those who had been in camps for some time. Most of us were captured in the last six months of the war, and the Germans were becoming desperate for food. We were at the bottom of the "food chain". There was very little left for us.

Since we were being slowly starved to death, we developed this pathetic habit of making up menus of things which we were going to have dear old Mom cook for us when we got home. Also we developed this habit of lying to each other about how much and what kind of goodies we commonly ate for breakfast etc.

My buddy, Clifford Panches, who was from Rhinelander, Wisconsin, had a superb imagination. He was a true artist at describing his typical breakfast menu. I enjoyed listening to him and would visualize it as he spoke. One dozen pancakes, and between each would be a thick slice of Virginia ham bathed thickly in Vermont maple syrup, a tall cool glass of creamy country milk, a dozen scrambled eggs, several cups of coffee with whole cream, several heaping spoons of sugar, and topping that off with a dozen iced doughnuts!

This probably sounds ludicrous to well-fed healthy Americans. But when you realize that you are slowly being starved to death and there are no grocery stores or McDonald's just down the street, food takes on a whole different perspective. Interestingly, the two things that your body seems to crave at this point are meat and sweets of any kind.

To add to the misery were our new-found friends, the body lice, which we were to have with us until death do us part or liberation day - whichever came first. They did not bother us too much in the daytime, either because they were nocturnal beasts or we were too preoccupied with trying to stay warm that we didn't notice. At night, the scenario drastically changed. When we tried to sleep they started to crawl. There were so many that it felt like water flowing over our bodies.

They left the lights burning all night but during air raids they would go off. At this time the Germans were taking a terrible beating from the Allies. The Americans would do precision bombing in the daylight hours, and the British would take over at night distributing bombs apparently indiscriminately.

When the lights came on, everyone would get up and

start picking them off. You would see these human skeletons sitting on the edge of their bunks cracking lice between their thumbnails. This was our only defense against them.

I was horrified and disgusted to find open pus-filled sores on my legs. Lice would be crawling around them drinking pus and blood like animals at a watering hole.

Chaper Five
Crime and Punishment

One night when the lights went back on, we heard screaming and cursing. It turned out that one of our number had gone to sleep with his head on his most prized possession - a half loaf of bread he had managed to scrounge while on a work detail. When he awoke he found that some thief had somehow managed to slide the bread out from under his head and substituted a brick.

In this camp we had elected a committee to achieve a modicum of civilized behavior. Our prime commandment was, "Thou shalt not steal food from your buddy". This was rigidly enforced. Stealing food was in many cases like a death sentence for these men. We immediately had a "shake down" or a concentrated search. This did not take long as our hiding places were very few. The standard punishment for this crime was what we called "latrining". To explain, our latrine at this camp consisted of a trench about two feet deep and about ten feet long. Over this was a long pole held at each end by two forked two-by-fours. This was filled with liquid waste. The perpetrator was allowed to remove his outer garments and was thrown bodily into this mess. Not only was this a terrible penalty, but due to the deadly cold there were no facilities for cleaning oneself up.

Unbeknownst to us, the Germans had poured lye in the previous day. The soldier who had in desperation stolen the bread, went blind and died the following day. My depression grew greater that day, and I began to wonder how much more these men could take. This form of punishment was immediately abolished. I saw no more incidents of bread theft.

The weather grew increasingly colder so we instituted what we called "spooning". We lay together to keep from freezing. This way at least one side of you was warm while the other side chilled.

The younger Jerrys were off fighting on the Western front or the Eastern front where the Russian army was rapidly advancing. They dragged the elderly Germans away from their fireplaces to do duty as camp guards. They were surly and hateful and took delight in abusing us and venting their spleen on us.

They were ably assisted by the S. S. or death-head guards, so called because of the skull and crossbones insignia on their caps. These were Hitler's especially trained fanatics who seemed to really enjoy their work. Even the regular guards were afraid of them.

As the days dragged on, we became even more discouraged and desperate because we had no news of the war and we realized that we were being slowly starved to death. I found a piece of comb and ran it through my hair. I couldn't believe it when it came out in clumps and had a reddish tinge instead of the normal brown. My teeth were becoming loose and wobbly and I had the feeling that I could have pulled them out with my fingers. Needless to say, I didn't try. My stomach was grossly swollen. When liberated, it had expanded to 42 inches!

Occasionally some of the rear guard officers would come through the camp for inspection. For what I had no idea. However, one day a German general with his staff came riding into camp on bicycles. After a cursory inspection, they were preparing to leave when the general discovered that his mess gear was missing. He, of course, suspected that one of our miserable group had stolen it.

It was bitterly cold and snowing, but we were ordered to fall out and line up. We were to stand at attention until one of us confessed to the crime. Since no one knew anything about it, we stood there in our shower shoes or Dutch wooden shoes for over an hour until someone discovered his gear strapped to the back of one of his aide's bicycle. Several of the men suffered severe frost bite, including me, as a result of this. Some of the men came down with pneumonia and later died as a result of this treatment.

The International Red Cross was supposed to be allowed to deliver via Switzerland, one parcel of food a week to each prisoner. These would have given us the much needed nourishment. Each parcel contained one highly fortified chocolate bar, one tin of powdered milk, one pack of cigarettes, one package of raisins, one package of sugar, some powdered coffee, tea and other nourishing items which would have sustained life fairly easily. The sad thing was that the guards were stealing them when they came in. In all of six months we only received this shipment once, and then only one package for every eight men.

We divided our "bonanza" as follows: one teaspoon of coffee, two cigarettes each, one large spoon of powdered milk, and so on. We did pool our milk, sugar, etc. and made what some called an "icebox cake". This was a great thrill, although eating it took only about three heavenly mouthfulls.

Cigarettes were as good as gold for trading purposes so not too many were smoked. Smoking one of them would be like smoking a hundred dollar bill today. My buddy, Cliff, was a fool. He would trade his daily ration of

watery soup for one cigarette. Cabbage was usually the soup du jour. His lip was stained brown and calloused from smoking them right down to the end. He would now and then offer me a drag. One day I decided to smoke a treasured cigarette. I lit it carefully, took a deep drag and passed out cold. I guess it's true that "the mind remembers, but the body forgets". I came to a few seconds later and someone helped me up and said, "Here, I protected your cigarette for you. Can I have a drag?" I magnanimously told him that he could have ONE drag only.

Sometimes we were allowed a ration of boiled potatoes with the skins on. The coveted potato transportation detail was given to three men and myself. We took a blanket to the kitchen. The four of us carried them back with one man holding each corner of the blanket. As we staggered back with this appallingly heavy load, we relieved the problem by stuffing as many as we could into our shirts for later consumption.

That night, under cover of darkness and under the blanket, Cliff and I managed to consume five or six potatoes apiece. We were later to discover the devastating results. Our stomachs became so distended and bloated that we couldn't move or turn over! As I lay there, I alternated between thinking that I was going to die and hoping that I would. Fortunately, after a night of agony, neither alternative occurred and nature took its course.

We had forgotten that our stomachs had shrunk due to starvation and we could have died. I never volunteered for potato duty again.

According to Geneva Convention rules, we were to receive so many ounces of proteins, carbohydrates etc. a day. I don't know whether it was Jerry's weird sense of humor or what, but one day they told us to fall out for

rations, which we did eagerly. We were given ONE heaping tablespoon of cottage cheese, which I found incredibly delicious. As a civilian, I despised cottage cheese, but I gulped this down and licked the spoon. I thought when I get home I've got this problem whipped. I'll probably spend days doing nothing but eating cottage cheese. Sadly, when I returned home, my former loathing of it returned and to this day I still can't stand to look at it.

One day, I again got lucky and was allowed to go to the German mess hall for K.P. All day long we sat in a dank, dark shed with carrots heaped around us. Our task was to scrape and slice them. It was cold and miserable and a very boring job. But at the end of the day, we had our shirts stuffed with carrot tops and muddy scrapings - scraps to take with us to make soup.

We were then ordered to clean up the scrapings and to dump them outside. I wondered at the time why we were accompanied by guards with fixed bayonets. I was soon to find out! We loaded up our wheelbarrows and headed out. Suddenly we found ourselves surrounded by hollow eyed skeletons in ragged clothing watching us closely. They were too near for us to empty our wheelbarrows, so the guards began beating them back with their rifle butts and holding them off with fixed bayonets. When we managed to dump our loads, they all dived into that mess headfirst, kicking and scuffling, piling on top of each other, even their mouths with carrot scrapings in order to ensure that they would at least get that much. One man had a broken leg, and several had broken arms, ending up in the hospital. Some of the other soldiers were standing on the sidelines shouting "Soo Pig". So much for brotherly love.

Chapter Five
A Most Generous Offer

The Germans were evidently beginning to see the beginning of the end, because one day the camp commandant came around with one of his orderlies and passed out leaflets. They read:

"Attention American soldiers! Join the German Army and help fight the Bolshevik Menace! You will receive warm German Army uniforms and regular Army rations and when we have defeated them, you will be repatriated via Switzerland with no loss of prestige to your own government!"

I know of no one who even considered accepting their generous offer, but we were grateful for the paper. Although a bit harsh, it was quickly utilized as toilet tissue.

Shortly thereafter we were issued one razor blade per man. For what I don't know since no one had a razor. Also we were paid some money in German marks which they were forced to do. We had nothing to spend them on, so they went the way of the propaganda leaflets.

Each day we would line up for our daily ration of watery soup. As an experienced Kriegie, I would always fall to the back of the line. I quickly found out that as the soup got lower and lower, you could get the goodies at the bottom. The two things that we longed for most desperately were sweets and meat. Our bodies craved these. If you were given potatoes, no matter how many you ate, you were never satisfied.

One day as I neared the soup cauldron in the chow line, I could see the chopping block through the window. On it was a peeled horse's head. It looked like we would get meat in our soup that day! When I finally got my ration, I was thrilled to see a piece of meat floating on top. It was about the size of a silver dollar and about a quarter inch thick. The thought of wolfing it down seemed almost like sacrilege. I carefully wrapped it in my "treasured" ten mark note and slipped it in my pocket. I carried it around for almost a week. I noticed that it was starting to have a peculiar scent, so I decided that that night would be sandwich night. When the lights went out, I stealthily pulled my blanket over my head and pretended to go to sleep. I took a little piece of black bread which I had been hoarding and made a delightful (?) sandwich. I did this in self defense, because I was fearful that someone might take it from me.

The bread which the Jerrys gave us had sawdust liberally mixed with flour, which I'm sure was the cause of the constant diarrhea which everyone suffered, and caused dehydration as well. We did discover, however, that if you could build a fire and burn the bread and eat the charcoal, that it would alleviate it somewhat.

In our prison camp, we had a "lazaret" or hospital, which was a building that had some heat, and TWO blankets per patient. Also, there were not so many lice. So whenever possible, we would find some pretext to become patients. The doctor would make his daily rounds with his aide or nurse who would give his diagnosis. He would stop at each bed and the aide would intone the word "durchfahl" which meant diarrhea. He would say this word monotonously as he passed down the aisle. The particular malady and dehydration was to kill many of our men. Not a very heroic way for a soldier to die.

It struck me as curious that the men who had been prisoners for a year or longer were in much better condition than the prisoners of six months or less. The "old-timers" had been registered with the Red Cross longer and had been receiving food parcels on a regular basis. They also received warm clothing from the Salvation Army and other sources. They also had American cigarettes, which were like gold for trading purposes. Our group, however, seemed to have fallen between the cracks. The Germans were losing the war on both fronts and were becoming rather desperate for supplies and food themselves. We were just a burden and a nuisance to them.

There were two schools of thought in camp. Exercise and try to keep your body in the best shape possible for what lay ahead or lay in your bunk and try to conserve what little strength you had. I was of the latter school of thought. I thought it was stupid to be marching around in the snow as though it were an army drill.

As I lay there trying to keep warm, I realized, as though it was of no particular importance, that I had a choice. I could live or I could deliberately will myself to die. I seriously debated with myself. All I had to do was to let go, shut my eyes and go to sleep. I would be at rest with no more constant pain. But I was worried about my family at home. I had received no mail, and although we were given postcards periodically which we could send out, I had serious doubts that they were ever sent. I didn't know whether my MIA status would kill my parents or not. So I decided to go on praying and believing that God would save me.

One morning in February the guards came in and started calling off names such as Levi, Greenfield, Barenbaum etc. These men were herded onto a waiting horse-drawn wagon and taken away. We didn't think we'd ever see them

again. And not knowing at that time of the concentration camps, we didn't understand this action. All we knew was that they were Jewish and they were gone.

One morning we were called out and told to line up for a work detail. The word they used for this was called "ArbeitsKommando". It fell my lot to go with a group which was to work in a lumber yard to stack and sort lumber. We were taken there by truck, since I guess they figured we didn't have enough energy to walk and work too.

When we arrived, I saw my chance and I ducked behind a tall stack of lumber and hid until they were gone. The snow was melting, and to my delight I discovered that I was in a large mass of dandelions. To most people this would have no significance, but to a Kriegie it was a bonanza! I spent most of the rest of the day picking these little beauties and stuffing them in my shirt. I began furtively snooping around to see what I could discover. I was rewarded when I came across a shed where the guards kept some of their equipment. To my delight, I found a paper bag with a pound of oleo in it. The Germans at that time were making Ersatz butter out of coal oil - oleomargarine. It didn't have a bad flavor, although when heated it turned into mostly water.

When the detail came back I fell in with them and we were returned to camp. With all those dandelion greens in my shirt, I looked like I had gained several pounds that day. That night I was barracks hero. We built a little fire and gorged on greens and coal margarine. Delicious!

Chapter Six
International Diplomacy German Style

We prisoners were divided into different compounds which were separated by barbed wire into nationalities. The Russians were on one side of us and the French were on the other side. We were in bad shape but the Russians were in worse condition if it were possible.

The Russian government was not a party to the Geneva Convention, so the Germans felt no fear of retaliation. So they did whatever they wanted to them, even as they did to the Jews in the concentration camps. The Jerrys regarded them as what they called "untermensch" or sub-human. They regarded themselves, of course, as "ubermensch" or super-men. I guess we Americans must have been classified as somewhere in between.

The Russians were between a rock and a hard place. They told us that when they returned home they would be shot as traitors. They were supposed to die fighting and never surrender. Many of them acted like caged animals.

One day we heard a commotion in their compound. We discovered to our horror that they had knocked one of their number down and were in the process of kicking him to death. Evidently, he had stolen food and was being punished. I wondered if we were any better than they were when the chips were down.

The Russians were served their soup ration by sitting in a circle. The guards would go around the circle and ladle it out. One of their number starved to death. They propped him up and when the guards were gone, they would divide up the dead comrade's food. The cold evidently kept him for a week, and then they had to give him up.

We had some Polish GIs in our group who could speak and understand Russian, so we could sometimes trade our pitiful possessions with them for food. One of the Russians worked in a bakery. When he was making bread he would pinch off a piece of dough before putting it in the oven. When he had enough for a complete loaf, he would bake it and sneak it into camp in his shirt. If he had been caught, it would have been an automatic death penalty.

Once we offered a pack of American cigarettes for a loaf of bread and they agreed. We took an empty cigarette pack, filled it with sticks and then sealed it up. Over the barbed wire fence went the "cigarettes" and in came the bread. We discovered that we had been tricked. The bread had been hollowed out and stuffed with straw. I guess we deserved each other. We had been reduced to animals too.

Suddenly we were ordered outside with the guards screaming the usual "Heraus Mit!" Now what, we wondered. After we had scrambled out, it was announced by the camp commandant that some of us might be repatriated. Anyone who suspected that they might have tuberculosis was to be taken to a makeshift hospital to be X-rayed. We had it. Definitely. Every one of us noticed a propensity to cough uncontrollably! I thought, why not? Maybe I could get lucky and escape this hell-hole.

About thirty of us were marched out of the camp and down the road about three miles to a makeshift hospital. There we waited for several hours in line. In the process they forgot to feed us. We were told finally that they were closing the lab for the day. As it was growing dark we would have to spend the night there. Then they removed us to a strange compound nearby. I never did understand

what nationality our new hosts were, but I believe that they were Slavic.

To our dismay and outrage, we discovered that they were well stocked with all manner of goodies courtesy of the International Red Cross. They had cheese, powdered milk, chocolate bars, American cigarettes, canned meat etc. This is no reflection on the Red Cross. I'm sure they had no idea what was going on. The Germans had been systematically looting our parcels from the very beginning. What puzzled us was how these people managed to get their food parcel intact.

We begged them for something, but they just laughed. Our beloved allies. One insolent fellow lit a cigarette and blew smoke in my face. I asked in sign language for a drag from his cigarette. He smiled, took a deep drag and crushed it on the floor. That night we slept on the bare floor without even a blanket. Three of our number died that night. The next day we were X-rayed and found to be in "good health". We healthy soldiers were then returned to our barracks.

Things began to move rather swiftly after that. Unbeknownst to us the war was winding down. Shortly after that we were ordered to collect our belongings and fall outside again. Belongings? What a joke. One threadbare moth-eaten blanket and one small tin bucket for "soup".

The guards were very antsy and had fixed bayonets, so we knew that something was up. We just didn't know how big.

We had no idea where we were going, that bitterly cold day in late March 1945. We only knew that we were heading in a northeasterly direction. The guards were becoming more and more excitable, which was a very bad

sign. In this state they were capable of being very vicious and downright dangerous. We found out just how dangerous later that day.

We began our slow, tedious march which was to continue until nightfall. Every hour we received a ten minute break. We stopped for the first break at the side of a dirt road. We all sat down. When the break was over, we tried to stand up. When the order to march came, a number of the prisoners had great difficulty rising. One of the guards began beating a soldier with his rifle until he was dead.

That was lesson enough for me and most of the others. From then on we would lean on a tree if available or lean on each other. This went on until nightfall. We thought it would never come.

We arrived at a farmhouse. It was very different than an American farm. The house was a two-story affair. It was shaped like a matchbox with the barn on the side, like our carpports. There was a six foot stone fence around the perimeter, which made it like an enclosed courtyard. We were put up for the night on the floor of the barn which had the luxury of a straw-covered floor! We were given a bowl of cabbage soup and the usual slice of black bread.

On inspecting out surroundings, we found fifty pound bags of some strange looking red material which turned out to be dried shredded beets. The German farmers fed this to their cattle. We tasted it and found that it was not good to eat. You could chew it and spit out the fiber and get a lot of sugar out of it. We stuffed as much as we could into our shirts and it sustained us for several days.

The following night, and from then on, there was no

where to billet us. We were forced to sleep on the bare ground in the fields. This was to be our lot from then on.

Since we each had one blanket apiece, we devised a plan. We would put two blankets on the ground and one on top of the three of us and "spoon" together, changing positions often. Since the temperature was around 30 degrees or less most of the time, the ground was frozen. Needless to say, little sleep was had.

One day as we were being herded down the road, a horse-drawn wagon passed us. Unbelievably, it was filled with our Jewish GI buddies. We had written them off. We just assumed that the SS had killed them. We discovered that the reason they were being transported in this manner was their diet. They were evidently being sadistically punished for being Jewish. The Germans had put them on a bread and water diet, stupidly giving them a WHOLE loaf of bread a day. This would have been a whole week's supply for us.

Consequently, they all had diarrhea and couldn't walk. This wasn't the type of punishment the Germans had anticipated. I realize now they figured that they were going to lose the war and to leave a group of dead Jewish soldiers behind would make them look even worse than they were.

One day we came upon a small village which had been bombed the day before. We encountered angry townspeople who began cursing and stoning us. Some tried to kill us with clubs and pitchforks. The guards had to fend them off with fixed bayonets until we could get by them. Some of our men were killed before the guards could stop them.

This dreary procession dragged on for days, stretching into weeks. God alone knows what kept us alive. I

learned one thing, however, that I never forgot. I learned how to pray. I worried about my parents and what effect my MIA status would have on them.

One happy incident occurred before it was over. It began snowing just as we came to a camp which had been occupied by Russian prisoners. We were told that we could stay here for three days. When we entered our assigned barracks, we were horrified to see piles of dead bed bugs down the center of the aisle between the wooden board bunk beds. There was one small potbellied stove in the room. The Germans had burned chunks of sulfur, which had killed most but not all of these evil vermin. They left some for us! That night we gave thanks to God that we were out of the cold, but a NEW horror awaited us. As we tried to sleep, these little beasts began to attack in force. I had a brilliant idea. There was a table in the center of the room. I scrounged four cans from the trash and put water in them. We then submerged each table leg in a can. The bed bugs couldn't get up the table legs but I looked up to find the resourceful little creatures had climbed up on the ceiling and were dropping down on us.

After two more miserable days of this, we awoke one morning at daybreak to hear a sound like thunder to the east. The guards were becoming even more nasty and jumpy. They began shouting for us to fall out immediately. One of them pointed to the east and said "Russki nicht gut" and to the west, "Amerikanisch gut".

Our column then did an about face and we began to head back to the west. At least we had three vermin filled days of relative warmth. The following day we were awakened at dawn by the sound of heavy artillery from the west. It was Americans! We began to feel a glimmer of hope. Maybe we would survive. But our spirits sagged.

The guards started us eastward again. They tried their best to hurry us, but there wasn't much hurry left in us. We were like walking dead.

About noon we arrived at a place called Annaberg. There was a hospital building there. It must have been a prison enclosure because it was surrounded by barbed wire. That night we were out of the weather and enjoying real heat. The guards were especially beneficent. We actually were given hot, thick soup with barley and vegetables in it. We were given an extra blanket and allowed to sleep in real beds.

Chapter Seven
Liberation At Last!

The next morning I went out and was surprised to see the guards throwing stuff into a truck. Then they piled in and departed. One of them tossed me a small bag of candy and away they went!

To my amazement, I saw a woman Russian soldier on horseback chasing a German soldier down the street. She fired at him and killed him. She continued on as though she had just stepped on a bug.

There seemed to be no restraints on us so I wandered out on the streets in search of my primary objective - food. To my consternation, I found myself face to face with two Russian soldiers and looking into the barrel of their automatic weapons. My first thought was, "Has it come to this? To have gone through all this hell to be shot down by our own allies?"

I must have been a strange looking apparition. I was wearing a Polish army overcoat, wooden shower clogs and flannel sweat pants. Immediately they began to interrogate me by shouting, "Polski, Franzoish, Deutsch?" I straightened up as best I could, trying to appear nonchalant, and shouted back at them, "Amerikansky!" At that they lowered their weapons and began to smile and hug and kiss me saying, "Da Amerikansky!"

I rubbed my stomach and pointed to my mouth to indicate that I was hungry - my primary concern at the time. Then smiling they led me down the street to a house. Shooting the lock off the door they gestured for me to enter. The occupant of the house was a young woman. She screamed and one of the soldiers asked if I wanted her. Totally embarrassed and disgusted, I again went through

the universal hunger pantomime. Brushing her aside, we entered the cellar. There was an ample supply of home canned fruits and vegetables. I shoved three jars of fruit into the pockets of my great-coat. I was preparing to leave when one of the soldiers sprayed her canned goods with bullets. He destroyed what must have been her food supply for the year. They were going to kill her too, but I managed through sign language to restrain them. They let me eat a little, which was all my stomach could handle. Then they led me to what turned out to be a former German Officers barracks. This was evidently an impromptu processing center for POWs.

I was greeted by a pretty blonde woman doctor who was to give me a physical. I was stripped and weighed. I weighed 90 pounds. When captured I weighed 145. I saw tears in the doctor's eyes.

Our stay with the Russians was only about a month, but it was very boring and we couldn't get any information as to when we would be returned to American hands. We were fed a lot of soup, which was fine. We were starting to regain some of our stamina and strength.

One day a soldier came up to visit. He wanted to see the strange Amerikanskis. This one young lad only one arm. He lost it during the fighting. For some reason, he took a liking to me. He spoke reasonably good English and told me he was Stalin's nephew. I didn't quite believe him, so I jokingly told him that I was Roosevelt's cousin.

At that moment I realized that I had made a lifelong friend because he kissed me on the mouth per Russian custom and disappeared. He returned with two water glasses and a bottle of vodka. He poured each one to the brim and handed me one. He downed his with one long swallow as a toast, and indicated that I should do the

same. I knew that to do so would abruptly end my army career and my life simultaneously. I declined vigorously.

My buddies were observing this exchange with great amusement and promptly dubbed this friendly Russki "the kissing bandit". From then on when anyone saw him coming, they would warn me. I would hide in the latrine until he left.

For recreation we would play cards or wander the streets. We were not allowed to leave Russian jurisdiction. We had no desire to walk long distances again. Also, there were diehard German snipers about who fired at anything or anyone that moved.

The first day the Russians took this town, they made a "show of strength" parade down the center of town. I must admit they were impressive. They had fixed bayonets marched with a peculiar stiffed-legged gait. Their column seemed endless. Every German building displayed an improvised white flag of surrender. German women were watching this show and were crying uncontrollably. They knew they had reason to be afraid.

One morning around the middle of May, we were ordered to fall out of the barracks and to form ranks. We wondered what was happening. Then we saw a long line of American trucks and jeeps. A great cheer went up as we realized that freedom was near!

The commanding Russian officer ordered us to stand at attention as he met the American Colonel in charge. With much hugging and kissing he formally returned us to American hands. There were about one hundred of us and we were each presented with a box of cigars. (Cuban, of course!)

We were entrucked and driven to an American army air

field and loaded on C-47 cargo planes. There were plain benches on each side of the plane, but to me it was the most luxurious plane I had ever seen! There were several empty buckets on the floor. I asked what they were for. I was told that they had been transporting what were known as "Displaced Persons" or D. P.'s back to Poland and other Eastern European countries. Many of them were peasants and had never been on a plane before and became violently ill.

We were flown directly to LeHavre, France to a camp known as "Camp Lucky Strike". I was told that there were a number of these camps and they were given names of current cigarette brands.

On arrival we were taken immediately to field hospitals and all body hair was unceremoniously shaved and we were dusted with what I KNOW NOW WAS DDT powder. WE were then allowed to take hot showers. What a thrill. The first in six months! They almost had to drag us out. We were issued new uniforms and told to line up for chow. The first line was for eggnog. We filled our canteen cups up, and headed back to the end of the line for "seconds", sipping voraciously as we went. The line of men was a city block long and we thought we were being clever. They knew what we were doing as it gave our digestive systems time to get over the shock of being full for the first time in six months.

We were then returned to our tents for about two hours. After this we were called out again and told to line up again in the chow line. This time we were given a helping of chicken white meat. That night I slept like a baby. No more nightly air raids, no more lice crawling over me, no more dreams of doughnuts, pies and home cooked meals. No more sleeping on boards until my very bones

ached. No more sleeping under a threadbare blanket in a heatless barracks. I thought I could spend the rest of of my life at good old Camp Lucky Strike.

At the mess hall the next day we enjoyed a delicious meal of vegetable soup and what I honestly thought was cake. It was thick slices of white bread. I surreptitiously slipped several slices into my shirt. Just in case. An orderly told me, "You don't have to do that, soldier. You can have all you want."

Two days later we were told to fall out and prepare to ship out. Even today, over half a century later, I can still remember the thrill of hearing those words. We returned on what was known as a Liberty ship - a converted cargo ship. We made a fairly swift trip home since we didn't have to zig and zag as we did going across in order to evade enemy submarines.

When we arrived in the U. S. we disembarked at Camp Patrick Henry, Virginia. When we disembarked my first act was to thank God for our deliverance. My second act was to bow down and KISS AMERICAN SOIL! God bless this wonderful land.

David penned my feelings to the deepest depth of my being when he wrote Psalm 142:

I cried unto the Lord with my voice; unto the Lord did I make my supplication.

I poured out my complaint before him, I shewed before him my trouble.

When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path. In the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me.

I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me; no man cared for my soul.

I cried unto thee O Lord: I said, Thou art my refuge

and my portion in the land of the living.

Attend unto my cry; for I am brought very low:
deliver me from my persecutors; for they are stronger
than I.

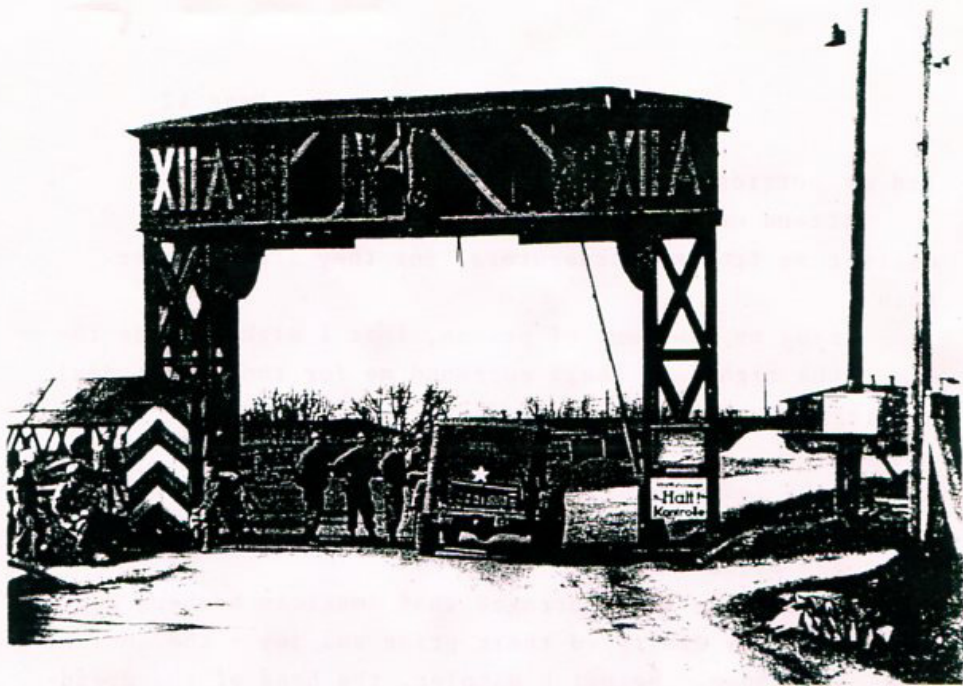
Bring my soul out of prison, that I might praise thy
name: the righteous shall surround me for thou shalt deal
bountifully with me.

Epilogue

Years later we learned of two horrible fates that
were planned for all American Prisoners of War. Ignorance
truly was bliss!

The Germans were outraged that American bombers had
almost totally destroyed their pride and joy - the ancient
city of Dresden. Heineich Himmler, the head of the dread-
ed Gestapo, had urged Hitler to avenge the city by killing
all American POWs. Fortunately, Hitler still had sense
enough to veto that.

Shortly thereafter, the Russians were infuriated that
the allies had refused to let them capture the entire city
of Berlin. In retaliation they transported the remainder
of the American prisoners (around 50,000) into Russia,
where they were never heard from again. This happened the
week after our group was repatriated.

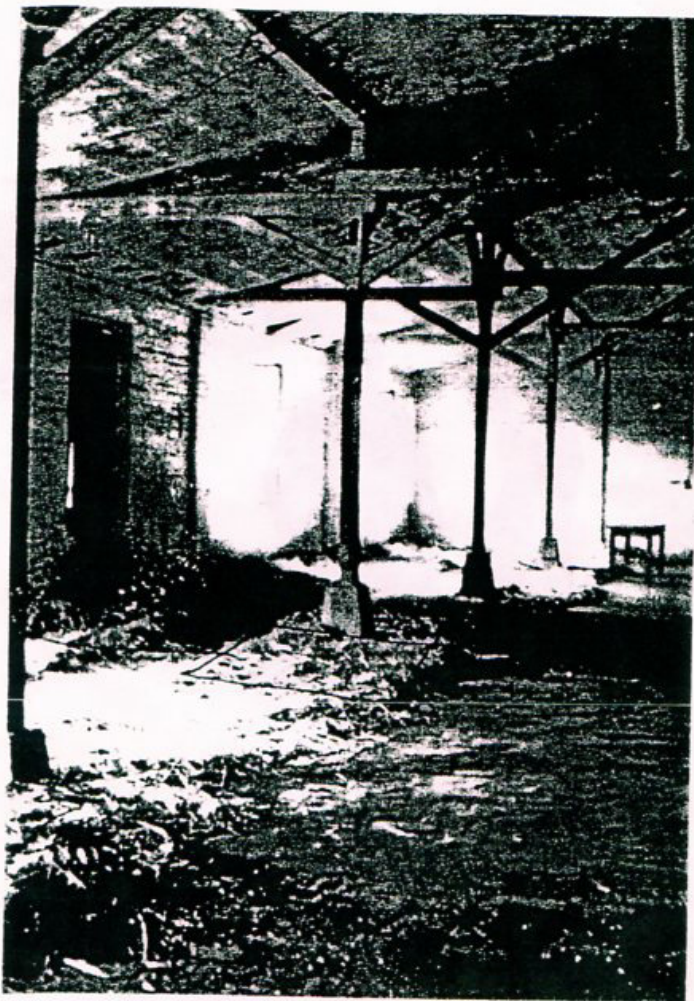


U S Troops Inspect German Prison Camp

Troops of the First U S Army are shown at the entrance to the German Prisoner-Of-War Camp at Limburg where American Russian and French prisoners were liberated Twenty miles east of the Rhine Limburg was first entered by elements of the Ninth Armored Division The next day First Army infantry units following the armored spearheads cleared the town



This is the main street of Stalag XIII A at Limburg Germany. It was divided into four compounds housing English, French, Russian/Slavic, and American POWs with gates between each compound. On March 4, 1945, an American P-47 fighter-bomber was trying to bomb the railroad alongside of the camp, and one of his bombs landed on this main street in front of the kitchen building and tore up the water main. Thus for a week afterwards the prisoners had no daily soup until an alternate source of water was found. Notice the Dutch wooden shoes the wounded POW is wearing.



This is the straw-straw floor of a barn at Naz' Stalag
MIA where hundreds of American prisoners of war were
forced to sleep. Each man had only one blanket. All the
roofs leaked, half the windows were out, and there was no
heat. The Americans were fed a bowl of thin soup and a
piece of bread a day.



American Soldiers Captured

American prisoners being loaded in box cars one hundred to a car preparatory to being transported to prison camp Notice POW is painted on top of the cars to warn off enemy bombers Many times they were bombed or strafed anyway since allied bombers thought this was a German trick Notice none of the new POWs had their helmets These were confiscated and melted down for the German War Machine

