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PREFACE TO KRIEGEFANGENEN

This is just a few words about my army life before Sept 9, 1943. I grew up in the country four miles outside the small town of Old Fort, in the mountains of western North Carolina.
I was drafted into the U S Army June 18, 1942. I was inducted in Columbia, South Carolina. Had basic training at Keesler Field at Biloxi, Mississippi, moved from tents to barracks for Airplane Mechanics School and went by troop trane to Seattle Washing for a special school on B-17 Bombers. We spent about two weeks in Salt Lake City an then six weeks of gunnery school in Las Vegas. Then on to Boise, Idaho where after working as a mechanic for two or three weeks I was assigned to a crew as a Fright Engineer on a B-17 bomber. All crew members were very young and had just finished preliminary training. We flew as a crew four weeks at Boise, four weeks at Wendover Field, Utah and four weeks at Sioux City, Iowa. At last we had a five day furlough. Two days on a train, two days at home and two days bach, one day late but no punishment. Each crew was sent to Kansas City to pick up a brand new B-17 and after a few days a few days we flew to Bangor, Maine Which was our point of embarkation. We flew our own plane to England by way of Canada, Iceland and Scotland. This was almost exactly one year I had been in the army.

Our base of operation was a new airfield near Thetford, England at a village called Knedershall. We flew a few training missions in flying formations. Our first bombing mission was to a target in Holland and we had no troubles. Our second mission was to bomb a rubber factory in Hanover, Germany on July 26, 1943. At that time in the war we had no Fighter support any further than the coast of Europe. As we flew in formation toward the target, the enemy fighters started attacking us at the coast and continued to the target. Over the target there were no enemy aircraft but the anti-aircraft bombardment was heavy. We took several almost direct hits and lost two of our four engines over the target. We were in a formation of bombers and could not keep up with only two engines so we left the formation and went into a shallow dive to pick up speed. We went out over the North Sea very low in the

area of the Fresian Islands. After a very short time the third engine stopped and we were forced to ditch. Our pilot made a good landing, but when landing in the water the airplane goes from about one hundred miles per to zero at the snap of a finger. No-one was injured seriously. We had two rubber dingies that when released, inflated at once. We released them and everyone got out of the plane and into the dingie. The water was very cold. They tell us that very few people ever survive in this area even in the summertime. We were lucky as a British air-Sea rescue boat found us and carried us back to England. Later that night one of our Groups picked us up and flew us to our base.

For about two weeks we were not assigned a new plane but the crew members were used as replacements for other crews who had sick or injured. I was a luckey Guy. One morning i was assigned to fly as a replacement and we went out to the plane, cleaned the guns and did whatever had to be done to prepare for takeoff. Minutes before takeoff a Jeep came rushing up with a replacement for me because the higher-ups had decided to give my entire a three pass. The new replacement was one of my best friends. They flew to a target just over the English Channel, had no trouble over the target and were on their way back when another plane collided with the one I had been assigned to. Both planes went down into the channel and no bodies were found.

Another story about my luck---After we were assigned another plane and had flown several missions on Sept 6, 1943 were on a large bombing air raid to Stutgart Germany. Many Groups. My group had 21 planes and we had no trouble over the target but on our way back we ran into many German Fighters. Only 10 out of 21 planes in our group got back to England. Our plane did not have a single bullet hole, even though we were in the middle of the fight.

Three days later on Sept 9, 1943, the entire Eighth Air Force lost only two planes and ours was one of them. Details in the story.

ADDENDUM

This addendum has nothing to do with my days in POW camp. It is a sort of addendum to the Preface.

In May of 1994 I received a phone call from someone I didn't know existed. He first asked if my name was John Moffitt, I said yes and he said that he was not trying to sell anything but wanted to ask some questions, He wanted to know if I was in the Eighth Air Force in World War II and if my plane had ditched in the North Sea. After my "yes" answers hesaid "My name is Leonard Alsford and my brother Steve was the man who pulled you out of the North Sea." Steve was not in good health but wanted to have the names of the people his boat had saved. Leonard had been too young to be in the service during the war. Now he promised Steve that he would find out some names. I gave him names and addreses of the members of my crew. Two weeks he wrote me a letter and said that he had talked with all of the surviving crew members. Leonard was telling Steve every thing that was being done. I got Steve's Telephone number from Leonard and called him. I told him who I was and said that I was calling to thank him for saving my life in the North Sea. Steve said "Oh, we were just passing by, saw all of you and thought it would be a good thing to do". He said that he is sure we would not have survived a night in the North Sea. He said it was getting dark and they were preparing to leave the area but decided to make one last sweep. Then they found us, gave us some dry clothes, and headed for their base which was at the mouth of the Hull River. I have kept in touch with both Steve and Leonard.

I am writin this on April 11, 1996. Leonard and his wife are coming to the United States for a visit April 22, 1996. My wife and I will meet them at Dulles Airport and help to make their visit a happy one.

KRIEGSGEFANGENEN

Kriegsgefangenen is the German word for Prisoner of War and this book is the story of the 603 days I spent as a prisoner of war in Germany during World War II.

This account is being written in 1985 which is 40 years since our liberation from Stalag XVII B in Austria. Sometimes memory plays tricks or fails to function properly after 40 years, but I have put things down on paper the way I remember them without exaggeration on either the good or the bad side.

When I bailed out of our damaged B-17 heavy bomber on September 9, 1943, we were over Paris, France on what was supposed to be a routine "milk-run", but for us it was not a milk run.

We had taken off from our air base in England about 5:45 that morning and were over the target around 8:30 a.m., flying at about 25,000 feet elevation. The clouds below us almost completely concealed the target and in addition, we were flying under another layer of clouds.

As we approached the target, German fighter planes dived through the clouds above, fired on us and kept going into the clouds below. On one of the passes they got a direct hit on our left wing. We had a gaping hole near one of the engines and we could see that either the wing or one of the engines was on fire.

The bomb bay doors were already open, so the pilot gave orders to release the bombs and then to bail out. Several of us, including me, went out through the bomb bay. It was a big step. This was the first parachute jump for all of us and it was not easy to look down at the ground nearly five miles below and jump. However, we had no choice—our Commanding Officer had said "Jump". While I was at my gun position, I could not wear the parachute. I wore the harness and had a parachute which clipped on the front when I needed it. Now I needed it.

We had been told many times what to do and how to do it. We were supposed to get as close to the ground as possible before opening the parachute. This made us a lesser target if someone decided to shoot at us and also, it got us down out of the extremely cold atmosphere very quickly.

I fell for what seemed a long time. At last it looked to me as if the ground was getting very close so I pulled the handle of my rip cord and my parachute opened with a jolt. I looked up at the chute to say thanks and discovered that one panel of the chute was ripped open and there were several holes in other panels. The only reason I could think of to account for this was that the chute had been hit by flak or projectiles from the enemy aircraft.

After the chute opened, it still seemed an eternity before I hit the ground. When I got close to the ground, I could see soldiers running toward the spot where I would land and realized that I was landing in a German army camp.

I hit the ground pretty hard; perhaps because of the holes in my chute and also because I had no skill in parachute jumping. I was greeted by several German soldiers with rifles and fixed bayonets. They took me to an underground office where they had already taken my radio operator who landed near me. We were questioned, but not very extensively. The German officer yelled at us a lot because we would tell them nothing but our name, rank, and serial number. He claimed they didn't know what army we were from, and we wouldn't even tell them that.

While we were in the underground office, some Germans were questioning a middle-aged woman whom we assumed was French. They yelled at her a lot more than at us. Since all of this was in German or French, we never found out what it was all about. It appeared that it concerned us but we never knew why.

Before noon we were taken to another office, this one above ground. Apparently, they were waiting for instructions. At noon someone came in with a large bowl of soup for us. We thought this was our entire meal so we both ate all we could, but then they brought us some meat and vegetables. We had a pretty good meal.

After that, we were taken to another part of the city which must have been near the railroad station. Here they were holding our assistant radio operator, bombadier, cameraman, and a young man in an English uniform. We didn't know the Englishman and later we wondered if he was a German in disguise trying to pick up what information we might have.

I think I should say a few words about the cameraman. He was not a regular crew member and this was his first mission. He had been sent along with a new camera and was supposed to be in the plane flying in the safest position. He was airsick from the time we took off, and when it was time to bail out, he didn't care whether he went out or not, so someone had to push him.

At suppertime, they gave us a loaf of brown bread and a large sausage which was very salty. We all ate heartily except the cameraman who was still too sick to eat.

After dark, we were put on a passenger train, under guard, to start our tour of Germany. We were in a small compartment with wooden benches. There were our five crewmen, the Englishman, two guards and the rear entrance door of our B-17 which had been found by some Germans and sent along. There were also guards outside the compartment. My back was hurting from the parachute landing and I slept very little. There was no drinking water and before morning, we all regretted eating that salty sausage for supper.

We rode all night and next morning arrived in Frankfort on the Main River in Germany and were taken to an interrogation center called Dulag - Luft. We were told that most everyone was questioned for three days, but since the Eighth Air Force had experienced heavy loss of aircraft and men just three days before we were shot down, they were overloaded. I was only questioned part of one day. My interrogator was very skilled in his trade, but I don't think I told him anything. He started out by telling me my name and offering me a cigarette. After I told him my name, rank, and serial number, he said I must be from the south because of my accent. He said he spoke such good English because he was a leather goods salesman in Cleveland before the war.

Then he proceeded to tell me who was on my crew. He told me where the two pilots went to school for their flying training and asked me to verify this. I told him nothing in words, but my reaction to some of this statements might have verified things he already knew.

After eating supper, we were put in a cell for the night. The small cells were supposed to be for solitary confinement and only had one cot but since there were so many people to take care of, there were four of us in one cell, including the Englishman. Three of us slept on the floor and the other on the narrow cot, which was not much better than the floor.

The next morning we were taken to a holding barracks which was part of the Dulag-Luft complex. We would be there until they accumulated enough men to take to the next station. At Dulag-Luft we had fair beds and pretty good food. We behaved fairly well because we were all pretty scared.

After approximately 3 days, we were taken to the railroad yards and loaded on boxcars. These were old French boxcars used in the first World War to hold 40 men and 8 horses. I believe we had more that 40 men in each car but not horses. The guards padlocked the doors from the outside and we were on our way to Bavaria. Our only toilet facility was a metal can about like a 30 gallon drum with no lid. It was quickly filled to a point where it sloshed over and we had no way to empty it.

There was a little straw in one end of the car for men to lay on. After we left Frankfort, it started to rain. The roof leaked and the straw got wet. We literally slept in piles. We rode all night except when we were pulled to a siding for other trains to go by.

We arrived in Munich in the morning and were shifted to a siding. The doors were opened. Our necessary can was emptied and a group of 4 or 5 were selected to go for food. I was on the kitchen detail. We were taken across several tracks to a kitchen and told to carry a wooden tub of hot artificial tea and several loaves of bread back to the train. Several times on our way, we had to crawl under other trains. One

train started to move just as we were under it, but we got out with our food before it got us. I don't remember what we ate with that morning but we must have been given tin pans and spoons before we left Dulag-Luft.

Later that day our train moved on and before dark we arrived at Stalag VII-A located at Mooseburg--several miles northeast of Munich. We were unloaded and marched to a barracks. There were more men than beds so the men who were more alert got the beds and the rest slept on straw mattresses placed on the floor.

The straw mattresses were not really straw. The outside was woven from a coarse fiber and looked a lot like potato sacking. The "straw" was thin wood shavings--what we call excelsior in this country. There were a few old magazines and newspapers mixed with the shavings. The mattress, called a pailasse, was fairly comfortable but before the first night was over the "straw" had packed down some and it was about like sleeping on a piece of plywood from then on.

At Stalag VII-A we were processed. Our picture was taken for the records and we were given a dog tag with our number on it. These pictures and numbers would be our identification for the remainder of our stay in P.O.W. camps.

There were soldiers from many different countries at VII-A but the Americans were not allowed to mix with any of them. On one side of our compound there was a single woven wire fence, so we could talk and trade a little with the Italians who were in the next compound. This was after Italy had surrendered and the Germans had taken a lot of Italians as prisoners.

We were given Red Cross food parcels when we arrived. We used some of the items in them for trading material. The regular food from the German kitchen was a mixture of cabbage and unpeeled potatoes cooked together in a huge pressure cooker. The cabbage was cooked to a mush and the potatoes were half raw. We had not been in prison camps long enough to get really hungry so we didn't eat much of the German soup at first. We tried to give some of it to the Russian prisoners, who didn't get as much to eat as we did, but the guards would not allow it. We began to lose some of our excess body fat at Stalag VII-A.

At Stalag VII-A when we had roll call, we had to line up with very straight lines. We didn't do this because of our military training but because as we lined up, one guard walked in front and one in back of us leading a German Shepherd dog on a leash.

We were only 25 or 30 miles from Munich and one night we saw an air raid on that city. It was a clear night and it was like a fireworks show except it was for real. We could see the anti-aircraft tracers, shells, and bombs exploding and sometimes, the results of dogfights when planes would blow up. After the bombing started, we made so much noise that the guards made us go inside and close the shutters. When we continued to make a lot of noise, they turned the dogs loose in the barracks. You never saw so many people get on top of a bunk so fast in your life.

As far as Americans were concerned, Stalag VII-A must have been a staging area. After we had been there for about three weeks, they sorted out the Army-Air Force enlisted men, Air Force Officers, regular Army enlisted men, and regular Army officers, and sent them to different camps.

There were quite a large number of Air Force enlisted men so we were loaded in box cars and taken over the mountains to Austria. This was probably in October as I remember it was very cold.

While we were at Stalag VII-A, I had traded Red Cross cigarettes for a rather large pocket knife and my radio operator had traded for a small pocket knife. When we were preparing to leave for Stalag 17 B, I hid my knife in a false bottom of a small cardboard box and my radio man had his knife in his shoe. As we stood in line to be searched, we could see the front of each line and realized that the guards were making everyone undress including their shoes. I remembered the story we read in high school about "The Purloined Letter" and suggested to the radio operater that he remove the knife from his shoe and simply hold it in his fist as he went through the search. He did, and the knife was not discovered. He repeated the same thing when we arrived at our destination. The guards didn't find my knife, either. These days, with all of the electronic equipment that is used, I am sure they would have found both of them.

This trip was much like our first boxcar trip except that it was much colder because of the higher altitude and it being later in the fall. After riding what seemed like forever, we arrived in Krems, Austria. We were unloaded from the boxcars, searched again with no clothes on, in freezing weather, and marched to our new home at Stalag XVII-B. It was now October 13, 1943. There were quite a few American enlisted flyers there. They all rushed out to talk to us and ask questions about what was going on back home and what was going on in the war. Everyone wanted to know how much longer it would last. Most of us were very optimistic about how soon the war would end but it turned out that we were wrong.

Stalag XVII-B was in the country outside of Krems, Austria. There were no other buildings in sight--just fields and woods. We could not even see any roads other than those leading to the camp.

The camp had a central street with about twenty barracks on each side, divided into compounds of four barracks each. Behind each group of four barracks was a large latrine. The entire camp was surrounded by two fences (about 8 feet apart and 8 feet high) with a coiled barbed wire between the fences. Each fence was woven from barbed wire about one foot horizontally and six inches vertically. A single fence like this ran up each side of the central street and also separated the compounds. Americans were not allowed to mix with any other nationality so the dividing fence between our compounds and the rest of the camp was treated as an outside fence.

In addition to the high fence, a single strand of barbed wire was stretched about 25 feet inside and parallel to the outside fences. This was called a warning wire and prisoners were not allowed to cross it. If anyone crossed the warning wire, he was subject to being shot without any further warning. I saw an Italian prisioner test this rule one day in the compound next to one of ours. The guards meant what they said and afterwards, they left the dead man to lie for several hours where he fell to teach everyone else a lesson.

At each corner of the outside fence and halfway between each corner, there was a guard tower. These were about eight feet square and twenty feet high. Two men manned each tower with machine guns and flood lights.

Our barracks was a long, one-story frame building with a washroom in the center. Each end had a little room which housed a small latrine for use when we were not allowed outside. This was also the entrance so that the outside door could be closed before the inside one opened. Each barracks housed about 300 men, 150 in each end. The bunks were built in groups that were two bunks wide, two bunks long and two bunks high. These bunk racks were arranged along each side of the barracks with an aisle down the center and smaller aisles between the groups of bunks. These were wide enough to allow each man to get on and off his bed.

Our bunks had a plywood bottom and a mattress of thin wood shavings which very quickly got as hard as the plywood. I had one of the top bunks which was to be my home for over a year. On this 3 x 6 foot space I slept, ate, read, played cards, and everything else I could do.

Our camp was made up almost entirely of Army Air Force enlised men who were sergeants of one rank or another. One of the rules of the Geneva Convention for Treatment of Prisoners of Was is that officers cannot be forced to work. Since we were non-commissioned officers we came under this rule. We did little work except to keep our barracks clean enough to get in and out, and carry our own food from the kitchen. Prisoners in the other end of the camp who were of many other nationalities were mostly privates and were required to work. They were sent out to work on farms and other non-military jobs. This gave them the opportunity to accumulate such things as onions and garlic which they could barter with. We bartered with the cigarettes from our Red Cross packages. This usually entailed throwing things across the fence and the two warning wires which separated us, and sometimes you could lose your bartering material. Once in a while some of these men would come into our compound on work detail and we could trade with them.

The latrine which was located in each compound was designed very much like the early American necessary house except that instead of being a one-holer, it was a sixty-four holer. There was no heat in the building and the pit underneath was well ventilated. If the wind was blowing the latrine was a cold place in the winter time.

There were a lot of stories about rats that would jump and bite you as you sat so you usually kept swinging your legs and banging your feet against the seat support to scare the rats away, just in case the stories were true.

The pit under the latrine was made of concrete and when it filled up, the Germans brought in a crew of Russian P.O.W's to clean it out. They flooded the pit with water, stirred it up with long poles and dipped it out with buckets and poured it into a small concrete ditch which ran out of the camp into a sugar beet field. This was the fertilizer for the crops. In some compounds the buckets were emptied into a tank mounted on a wagon and the fertilizer was hauled to the fields by horses.

Back of the latrine was an open area used for roll call and exercise. There was room for all 1050 men in our compound to line up. Near the back was a concrete pond which held emergency water for fires. Our compound was the only one with a fire pond so we didn't have as much open space as the other compounds. The water was so filthy that you couldn't see how deep the pond was or what was in it. Each spring some sort of frogs or toads would come back to the fire pond to lay their eggs. The eggs looked like a long clear ribbon and in a few days they would become thousands of tadpoles. They soon developed legs and started coming out of the pond, and for about two days the ground would be so covered with little toads that you couldn't walk without stepping on them. Two days later they would have grown a little and hopped on out of the camp.

Along one side of the open area behind the latrine, there were air raid trenches. These were about two feet wide, five feet deep, several feet long, and in a zig-zag pattern. I don't believe I ever got in them for protection from an air raid. Some of the men played a wide game called "Hully-Gully". They ran up and down, in and out of the trenches and often ran into each other. It was a sort of cops and robbers game. It took too much energy for me.

There were about 4200 American P.O.W.'s in Stalag XVII-B. All were enlisted men except two dentists, one medical doctor, and one chaplain. The doctors and chaplain were officers but did not function as officers in respect to command.

Everyone paid a lot of respect to them but they were just the dentist, the doctor, and the chaplain.

We elected our own leaders in a democratic election. Each barracks elected a leader and the entire camp voted for a leader who served as contact with the Germans and who kept us more of less organized.

Our barracks had a barracks chief, an interpreter, a chow king, a garment king, and possibly others. The chow king appointed the detail to carry the food from the kitchen to the barracks and saw that it was divided equally. If someone needed an item of clothes, it was the garment king's job to try to get it. The leaders in our barracks always did the negotiating through the camp leaders if there was any problem.

The German commander of the camp was a captain and he had an enlisted man for each barracks. As long as everything was going smoothly, they had very little contact with us except to organize the roll calls. There were two guards in each guard tower and at night there were patrols who went around the outside and once in a while came inside the camp.

Then there were the moles. In some camps they were called ferrets but we called them moles. They crawled under the barracks looking for tunnels and eavesdropping. They also hunted for clandestine radios, large caches of food and any other thing that we were not supposed to have. Often they would search the barracks while we were outside having roll call. We were not allowed to accumulate food because they were afraid it might be used in an escape attempt.

There were many tunnels dug, but as far as I know, no one ever escaped through a tunnel. I never helped dig a tunnel, in fact, only once in a while did I know when one was being dug. The fewer people who knew about a project of any kind the better off you were. My barracks was second from the fence and had quite a few tunnels started under the floor.

When I tell about tunnels, someone always wants to know what happened to the dirt that was dug up. Some of it was spread thinly back under the barracks. Some was washed down the drain in the wash room. Some was dropped through holes in pockets as the diggers walked about the compound. A lot of it went out to the "Hully-Gully" game this way.

Barracks No. 40 was next to the outside fence and so many tunnels were started under it that the Germans finally took all of the men out and used the building for something else. One story was told of a very ingenious tunnel which was started under the washroom stove in Barracks 40. We had no fuel so that stove was never used. The tunnel went straight down about six feet and then started horizontally. The main tunnel had boards which had been taken from the structural timbers of the barracks. There was a sump at the bottom of the entrance in case there was a little water. This tunnel was discovered after it was under the fence but before the end reached the surface. Before the tunnel was filled up, the camp commander brought one of his superiors in to show what the P.O.W.'s could do. At the urging of the commandant, the visiting officer jumped down in the tunnel to see it better. It turned out that the Americans had done without their tub of soup that day and dumped it down the sump. At the time he jumped, all of the Americans had drifted out of sight so that they would not be near the excitement.

When building 40 was closed as a barracks, the front half was used as a storeroom and we were allowed to use the back half as a chapel. The chaplain was the advisor on this project and since he was a Catholic, the chapel was decorated as a Catholic church. Men of all faiths pitched in to do what they could with very little to work with. We were given some whitewash to paint the inside and cardboard to use for a lot of the decorating.

Many of the mine timbers for tunnels had been taken from under the floor of the room which later became the chapel. On Easter, so many men went to the church service that the weakened floor fell in. After that we were not allowed to use the

building, but later they gave us as a chapel another small building which had been erected in the next compound.

The Chaplain conducted Protestant and Catholic services at different times and they were attended by quite a number of men. The sermon had to be censored and there was always an English speaking guard present to make sure of this.

Roll call seemed to be the most important thing in camp. Hot weather, cold weather, sun, rain, or snow we usually had at least two roll calls each day. We had to go outside the barracks, line up, and be counted by the German corporal in charge. If the count was correct, and it usually was, we were allowed to disperse as soon as the German barracks chief reported to the commandant.

Once in a while the count would not come out correct. If it was a nice day, sometimes the men in the back row would move or stand so close behind another man that the counter could not get a good check. Sometimes someone would be visiting another compound and couldn't get back so he would hide and mess up the count.

If the number wasn't correct after several counts, we would have a name and number check. All of the men in two compounds would be put in one compound and guards would be put at all gates. Other guards would bring our records, set up a table near the gates, and start calling numbers. We would file by the table as our number was called and give our name. The guard would check our picture to be sure we were that person and then we would cross over to the other compound. Name and number check took a long time but it wasn't bad in good weather because we weren't going any place anyway. In bad weather it was terrible.

Once in the winter, the Germans captured an airman who had either escaped from another camp or had evaded capture when he was shot down. They were taking him somewhere other than our camp but they stopped overnight at Stalag XVII B. He was allowed to sleep in one of our barracks. The next morning when it was time to leave he couldn't be found. So they had an early roll call to determine where he was and also had a name and number check. Still, he could not be found. We had to bring

all of our belongings outside and go through the entire routine again, while guards went over, under, and through our barracks. This went on until dark and finally we were sent inside. The next morning, at sunrise, we were brought out again and a different set of guards checked and searched until dark with the same result.

On the third day, we had the same type of search except that some S. S. troops had been sent in. The result was the same. I never heard where the man was hidden. No one asked—if you didn't know you couldn't be forced to tell. We were happy to have put up with all the trouble if we could help one American, even though the weather was cold and we were having a light rain part of the time. Later there was a rumor that one of the S. S. officers couldn't find his bicycle. I never heard what happened to that either.

The Germans considered roll call very important, but most of the prisoners thought food was the most important. We were given enough food to survive but the quality was not what most of us were used to at home or in the U. S. Army. A detail of men from each barracks was taken to the kitchen three times a day. This group carried the food back and it was distributed under the supervision of the chow king. At breakfast, we were given a wooden tub of artificial tea--not very good but hot. Some of the men used it to shave with. At this trip we were also given bread for the day. At lunch the chow detail brought us the same wood tub full of soup. I suppose you could call it soup-du-jour. It was made from whatever happened to be in season or whatever they had on hand. We had sugar beet soup, pumpkin soup, rutabaga soup, and many other kinds; all of it made by boiling the vegetable in a pressure cooker with little or no seasoning. Once in a while there was a little chunk of meat. I remember the rutabaga soup the most because I liked it the least.

Another interesting soup was made from dried green vegetables which came to the camp in a bale, like hay. When the soup was brought to the barracks, there were always a few green worms about 1 1/2 inches long floating about. We always stirred it to release any other worms and to bring all the worms to the top, then dipped them out and disposed of them before we served the soup.

For our supper, we usually got half cooked boiled potatoes, meat and bread. The amount of food we got was never enough to divide among all of the men, so in our barracks, we were divided into seven groups. Each day one group would get all of the meat and the next day another group. This way we each had a small piece of meat once a week. The potatoes were handled the same way.

Sometimes we got a little variety in food. I remember the large round crackers. We were told that they had been captured when the Germans pulled out of Italy. They had little holes in them and before eating you banged them on your bed so the weevils would fly out.

We did get Red Cross food parcels once in a while to supplement our regular fare. Red Coss parcels were designed to feed one man for one week but we didn't get them nearly that often. We averaged less than one parcel each month. Each parcel contained the following:

Powdered milk (klim)	16 oz.
Processed cheese	8 oz.
Oleo margarine	16 oz.
Corned Beef	12 oz.
Luncheon meat (Spam)	12 oz.
Liver paste	6 oz.
Salmon	15 oz.
Prunes or raisins	15 oz.
K-rations (graham crackers)	7 oz.
Chocolate bar (unsweetened)	8 oz.
Instant coffee (Nescafe)	2 oz.
Salt and Pepper	1 oz.
Jam or concentrated orange juice	6 oz.
Lump sugar	8 oz.
Soap	4 oz.
Cigarettes	3 to 5 packs

We had to open the boxes with the Germans watching and they punctured all of the cans with their bayonets so we couldn't keep them very long.

We used every single part of the food parcel. The cardboard box was used for fuel to cook special things. The steel band around the box was used for making handles on cans for cups and also for making saws. The cans were used for making cups, pans,

and other sheet metal apparatus. Margarine was used for oil in our make-shift lamps. Matches were very scarce so we always kept a small margarine lamp burning for people who smoked. It also served as a night light. If you didn't smoke or take baths, the cigarettes and soap made good trading material, but we ate the food.

We ate some of the Red Cross food as it came from the cans, but sometimes we combined it with the German food. Little squares of Spam or corned beef improved the soup. One of my favorite dishes was made by recooking the potatoes, adding powdered milk, margarine and salt to make good mashed potatoes. Sometimes we added pieces of Spam to the potatoes. Other times instead of meat, we mixed in grated chocolate bar. Most people probably have never eaten chocolate potatoes. I haven't tried it myself since P.O.W. days.

On special occasions such as birthdays, Thanksgiving, and Christmas, we made fruitcake. The recipe was something like this: Take some ground, dry, brown bread and K-rations (graham crackers). Mix in a little sugar, dried milk, margarine, and chocolate, with enough water to make it moist. Stir in chopped raisins and prunes, and in place of nuts, the kernals of prune seeds and pumpkin seeds when available. Pack this into a loaf pan and bake over a cardboard fire for a short time. Serve with a sauce made of dried milk, water, sugar, and grated chocolate. This was really special!

Another source of special food was a parcel from home. Our folks back home were allowed to sent a parcel every two months. The packages could contain food, clothing, or tobacco. If they sent tobacco, it had to be shipped directly from the factory. Packages had a limit on weight and on size. The Red Cross advised parents of prisoners what to include and how to pack them.

My parcels from home were always very well planned and usually contained, among other things, a quantity of tea leaves. They didn't add a lot of weight but were a welcome addition to our drab diet. I received the second parcel my parents sent on March 29, 1944 and received the first one they had sent on April 25, 1944. I am sure several of the packages from home were lost in transit.

We had enough clothes to get by. Most of us were allowed to keep the clothes we were wearing when we were captured unless they were fleece-lined leather flying suits. The Germans confiscated any leather clothing. We were given an overcoat and one blanket furnished by the U. S. Government through the International Red Cross and U. S. Army shoes, when we needed them, and were issued wooden clogs to wear inside. We usually had enough clothes to keep warm but not many extras. I believe we usually had one extra set of socks and underwear unless we received some in a parcel from home. The German guards checked each man's parcel so they knew what we received.

Since we didn't work, we had a lot of time on our hands. We played cards, read books, walked some for exercise, and talked. We didn't have many decks of cards so we never threw them away. I had one deck which had the spots re-inked three or four times. The edges were so fuzzy that the only way to shuffle them was to put them in a hat or box and shake them around. We played many different card games, sometimes all day long except during roll call. I believe that Bridge was the most popular game. The men who played poker and other gambling games wagered soap or cigarettes instead of money.

We had a library but the number of books was very small considering the number of men. We could check out books for a limited time as there was usually a waiting list for the good books. I read over three hundred books at Stalag XVII B. Some were very short but some were large. I remember I only had three days to read "Gone With the Wind".

We had a school which some of the prisoners had organized. I signed up for classes from time to time. We didn't have proper textbooks and most of the instructors were not trained teachers, so it was hard to stay interested.

The Salvation Army sent some band instruments and sports equipment. Some of the men played softball but the fields were small and if a ball was hit over the warning

wire the game was stopped. There were several sets of boxing gloves and quite a few of the men boxed in makeshift rings. I watched a few matches but never took part. I had never been a boxer.

We had a pretty good band. A lot of the boys had played in high school bands so they were pretty good. I believe there were only about 14 instruments so it was not a large group. They put on a concert once in a while. The theater where they played, was our school during the day, and our theater in the evening until "lights out". It was small, and only a few people filled it, so you had to go early to get a seat. We also had a group who put on plays and variety shows. They were quite good, so the line was always long to get a seat. I never took part in the acting but I did attend several of the shows.

And, of course, we talked. We told each other many times about our homes and families and what we did before the war. We also made plans for after the war. A favorite topic was our experience in the war. I think that I know how every man in the barracks got shot down. I don't remember all of the stories now but a lot of them started, "There we were at 25,000 feet, the flak so thick you could walk on it..."

Mail call was always a happy day for some people and, of course, a very depressing day for those who didn't get a letter. Mail didn't come regularly. Sometimes you would go a couple of months without mail and then you would get 3 or 4 letters at one time.

I received my first letter in P.O.W. camp (from my aunt) on March 12, 1944. I received the first from my Mother and Dad on April 8. On June 21, 1944, I got a letter from home telling about killing hogs (which is always done as soon as real cold weather sets in), and about Christmas with lists of what everyone got. In November I received a letter written the June before. These were not the only letters I received, but most of them were quite old by the time I got them.

Writing letters didn't take a lot of time. We were given forms each month for letters and post cards. I think we were allowed two of each of these. While I was in P.O.W. camp, I didn't have a wife or girlfriend so I wrote most of my letters to my

mother and father and two sisters. They received twenty-eight letters in twenty months. Some must have been lost in transit. My mother kept all of my letters and I have them now. I wrote my cards to other people. It is very difficult to write letters when you can say so very little. All of the letters we sent or received were censored by the U. S. and Germans. No other means of communications was allowed. We could not sent telegrams and, of course, telephone calls were out of the question.

Some of us had hobbies which we could pursue to a certain extent. I had always liked to make things from wood and other materials so I collected a few tools and made things for myself and others. If I made something for others, they usually paid me with cigarettes so I could trade for something else. This is my list of tools and how I acquired them.

1. A large pocket knife with a broken blade (my basic tool) which I had traded cigarettes for at Stalag VII-A and carried with me when we went to XVII-B. I could sharpen it on a stone or the concrete floor by the wash room and I used it to make most of my other tools.

2. Wooden Mallett - Whittled from two pieces of wood removed from either the barracks wall or my bed.

3. Ball Peen Hammer - Made it from half of a heavy hinge which I found on the ground in the compound. The handle was a piece of wood attached with nails and wire.

4. An inertia-type drill made from scraps of wood whittled to the proper shape, and a piece of shoe string. My drill held different size bits which were made from nails or wire sharpened on the concrete floor.

5. Saw - made from a flattened tin can. A strip of metal was cut and folded over on one side to give it rigidity and notches were cut in the other edge. Naturally, I could only cut soft wood.

6. Wood chisel - a very narrow chisel made from the backspring of a knife. I found the backspring in the dirt of the compound. I put a small wooden handle on it, sharpened it by rubbing it for hours on the washroom floor.

With these tools, I made pots and pans from flattened tin cans, handles for cans to use as cups, small wooden things such as bases for crystal radios, chess sets, and other things for anyone who furnished the wood. I made a food grinder and mounted it on the end of my bed. A center can had holes punched from the inside and was turned inside a larger can with a wooden crank. There was a slot in the top to feed the food into and a hole in the bottom for the food to come out. We were able to grind chocolate bars, K-rations, and dried bread. Other people were allowed to use my grinder at no charge, except that after grinding they could not shake or tap it. My pay was what was left in the grinder.

One of my projects I was really proud of. When we decorated the chapel, the Chaplain asked me to make the monstrance. Since I was not Catholic, I had no idea what a monstrance was but the Chaplain explained that it was a place to keep the host, so we worked on a plan to make it out of wood. Most churches have a monstance made of gold and decorated with precious gems. Ours was made from many pieces of wood held together with wooden pegs.

The washroom I have referred to several times was located at the center of the building. There were several metal troughs for washing our hands and our clothes. We had no hot water and the cold water was very cold. The water was only turned on for a short time twice each day. Most of us did very little washing, especially in the winter time. Orginally, there were several windows in the washroom, but after a short time they were only holes in the walls. The glass had been removed to replace broken panes in the living part of the barracks and the wooden part had been burned as firewood or used to make things. Next to one of these open windows was one shower head--one shower head for both ends of the barracks which held about three hundred men. A few men took showers in the summer but not many took one in the winter. There was a man in my end of the building who took a shower every day -- summer and winter. It was so cold in the winter that the water would form ice on the floor. Many times I have seen him standing on ice in front of an open window taking a shower.

Every three or four months, the Germans took us to the delousing and bath house. All the men from one barracks were marched out of the gate at our end of the camp and up the side of the camp to a separate compound near the other end. We were crowded into a waiting room. When our turn came, we removed all of our clothes and hung them on a hook. They were then taken to a gas chamber and gassed to kill any vermin in them. While this was being done, we were lined up and marched by to be inspected for fleas, crabs, and other body or head lice. If any vermin were found, the body hair was clipped off and the man was treated with a material that looked and smelled like kerosene. It burned, especially if you had been clipped or shaved a little too closely. Finally, the hair on our heads was clipped whether we had lice or not.

Then we entered the shower room in groups of about fifty and the warm water was turned on for about one minute and then turned off. We had a few minutes to soap ourselves before the water was turned on again for us to rinse off the soap. Then we went out, marched to the other side of the room and were given our clothes. The clothes reeked of the poison gas and almost everyone got a litle sick. Sometimes someone would pass out but would be revived quickly when dragged out into the open air. After we dressed, we were marched back the way we came.

Sometimes the barracks were gassed while we were gone and we had to live in the odors for a while. If the barracks weren't gassed, we had to move back into the same beds which were infested with the same vermin we had just been treated for.

One thing I always thought strange, the Germans always kept the hair on our head clipped, but they never bothered with facial hair unless they found lice. At one time, I had a full red beard about 6" long and a shaved head. When I shaved the beard off no one knew me. Several fellows who thought I was a new man just coming in, came around to ask me how the war was going and how long did I think it would last.

The weather wasn't very friendly a lot of the time. It was very hot in the summer and very cold in the winter. Sometimes when we had snow, we would have a steady wind blowing against the side of the barracks. I have seen the snow drifted up to the roof on one side of the barracks and the ground bare on the other side. As the wind continued to blow, it would continue to pick up dust and mix it with the snow and

we would have ugly brown snow. Other times, the snow would pile up evenly but usually not over six inches deep. We also had quite a bit of rain in the summer, but through it all—like the U. S. Mail—we always had to get out in the weather and have roll call.

It was difficult to overcome depression completely in the prison camps. Sometimes most of us wondered if we were keeping our sanity. However, I think there were very few who went over the edge. Different men treated the problem differently. Some tried to stay busy doing something all the time, even if it was only walking around the compound. Some tried to sleep all of the time. Two men I knew averaged 20 hours of sleep every day. We had a church service every Sunday, and a lot of the men got comfort from attending these services regularly.

We had to look on the bright side of everything as much as we possibly could. We had to try to see humor in things that would not be funny under different conditions. If there was nothing to laugh at, we developed our own humor and laughed at it.

Three men in our barracks played a little charade many times, always the same way, and we all laughed every time. One of them had a coat which looked a little like a German guard. He would go to the front of the barracks and shout "attention" in German and announce that the war was over. The other two men would race to see which one could get his belongings packed and be out of the front door first.

We played a few tricks on the guards, certainly not like you see on "Hogan's Heroes" on TV, but they seemed funny at the time. I remember once when a patrol of two guards was going through the barracks in the middle of the night and someone hit one in the head with a wooden clog. By the time the lights were turned on every man in the barracks was sound asleep and no one was missing a clog.

As punishment for this we had to stay in the barracks all day except during roll call. To see that we stayed in and kept quiet, a guard walked up and down inside our barracks with his rifle slung on his back. The gun barrel was pointing up so someone

slipped up behind him and put a carrot (complete with top) into the gun barrel. He kept walking with that carrot top waving and wondered why everyone was so happy. The sargeant came around to change the guards and saw it. He gave the guard a severe reprimand and yelled at us too, but, of course, none of us knew who did the dirty work.

Some of our tricks, we never heard of afterwards. We had heard that hair in a cigarette would make a person sick, so we decided to try it. We got some hair from the tails of horses that pulled the honey wagon and threaded it through a half-smoked cigarette. Since we were sure that the night patrol picked up all cigarettes and smoked them, we threw it out the window that night and the next morning it was gone. We never found out for sure if the hair made anyone sick but we could think that it did.

During the first part of our stay, we didn't know much about what was going on in the outside world. New prisoners were brought in from time to time and we always had a lot of questions for them. The first question was "How much longer is the war going to last." Of course, they didn't know but they usually were optimistic and this made us feel good. They would tell us all of the new songs. I remember when one group told us about the new song, "Don't Fence Me In." We were already fenced in, literally.

During the latter part of my stay, we found out more of what was happening in the world outside. Quite a few boys built crystal radio sets and listened to the news. This was not allowed and often the guards would find one and confiscate it, but they didn't find all of them. We had men who could speak most any language so we had a regular network of news gatherers. One would listen to the German news, another the Russian, and still another BBC. At a certain time, these men would get together and report what they had heard. Someone would edit everything and tour the barracks when no Germans were around and read us the daily news. Since we heard both sides, we probably knew more about the true status of the war than the people back home.

I remember D-Day well. The German newspapers and radios were telling the people that an invasion was imminent, so we were expecting it. About the middle of the morning on June 6th, I went to the latrine. As I "sat" there contemplating the state of the world, I heard an enormous roar from the barracks. I knew that only two things would produce that much noise--either the end of the war or the invasion. When I went back inside I didn't have to ask, everyone was talking about it. We got a distorted idea about how quickly we would be going home because it was to be almost a year.

I was never physically tortured by being beaten or anything like that. The barracks were very cold in the winter and very hot in the summer. The food wasn't good and the beds were uncomfortable, but there were no beatings with sticks or gun butts and no confinement in small cages. The torture was mental--not being able to go places or talk with your family--not being able to eat what you wanted. I like eggs and I didn't have a single egg for over twenty months.

Very often a rumor would be started and would sweep through the camp, which got everyone discouraged or depressed. One rumor that kept resurfacing was that poison gas had been used by one side or the other and we were sitting there with no gas masks. Another rumor was that the Russians had signed a separate peace treaty with the Germans. Sometimes there was a rumor that the Russians would join the Germans. The German guards kept telling us that we would have to stay in Germany after they won the war and help them rebuild all of the buildings we had bombed. Sometimes we heard good rumors which turned out to be false. These hurt worse than the bad ones.

Once in a while we were given a few copies of an English language newspaper which was supposed to be edited by an American. It was called the O. K. Kid. There was always a column about air raids in Germany. Each issue told us that the American and British planes had missed their industrial targets and hit schools and hospitals. They also reported a great number of allied bombers had been shot down but very few German fighters had been damaged.

In the O.K. Kid there was a lot of little "newsy" items from the U. S. A.--how much money draft dodgers were making in the shipyards, and how some girls who had been engaged or married to a soldier got tired of waiting and married someone else. We didn't really believe this stuff, but sometimes it made you wonder. They just kept picking at you.

I never knew of any American in our camp who got so depressed that he committed suicide. We had one man who was so mentally sick that he was taken to a hospital outside the main camp. This hospital had a fence and guards. One day this soldier somehow got out of his hospital room and started to climb the fence. He was shot and killed by the guards. Another man in the compound next to ours planned an escape. He had planned to cut through the fence in the middle of the night. He was well prepared as far as equipment went--he had wire cutters, maps, foods and everything that he needed. It snowed about one inch deep early in the night, but he decided to go anyway. He had gone no further than the middle of the compound when the search lights were turned on him and the guards started shooting. As far as I know, he was not ordered to stop or given a chance to go back. He was not supposed to be out of the barracks so they started shooting and fired nearly one hundred rounds. He didn't have a chance. It appeared that they were making an example of him. He lay where he fell until well into the daylight hours. About the middle of the morning, they allowed someone to cover him with a blanket.

Both of the men who were killed in camp were given military funerals. The cemetary was behind the low hill just outside the end of the camp so even though we could not see the actual burial, we could see the funeral procession. A group of the man's American friends were allowed to go along. The American soldiers and German guards in full uniform marched down by our barracks. The body was in a wooden casket with an American flag drapped over it and after the funeral, the German soldiers fired a volley over the grave.

These funerals were very much in contrast to the burial of Russian P. O. W.'s. Once some sort of epidemic hit the Russians and a lot of them died. When these bodies were taken behind the hill, they were carried on a stretcher covered with a piece of

brown paper. After a few minutes, the guards went back up the road with the stretcher and the paper.

From time to time the war would pass our way in the form of air raids. It was always a thrill to see planes and know that some of our buddies were still carrying on. On two occasions a large armanda of B-17's passed over the camp. Counting bombers and their fighter escorts, there must have been over a thousand planes each time. There would not be a cloud in the sky these mornings, but after the planes passed, the sky was completely covered with clouds made by the condensation trails every plane produced.

One other time some P-38's were strafing barges on the Danube River near the camp and they kept circling right over our barracks. They were so low we could see the facial features of the pilots. Several times, R. A. F. planes went over at night. We couldn't actually see them but when the German air raid sirens went off, we knew who they were. Sometimes, we were allowed to go to the air raid trenches when this happened. One night another man and I were on our way to the trenches when a plane crashed very close by. We were just next to the barracks but we got real deep into that little 6" ditch.

One night the sirens had sounded, so we were outside when the planes started coming directly overhead. They dropped large flares with a parachute, at each corner of the camp, and then directly over the middle of the camp, they dropped what we called a Christmas tree flair. It was a parachute with different colored lights on it. We were sure they thought we were some sort of military installation and were marking us as a target. No planes dropped any bombs on us, though, and after the all-clear, we had to go back inside.

If there is any one time of the year when most people want to be with family and friends, it is Christmas. I spent two Christmases in a P. O. W. camp. I had not received any letters from home by my first P. O. W. Christmas. We tried to celebrate but our hearts weren't in it. Our barracks chief asked the guards to bring us a small green tree about two feet high which we set up near the middle of the barracks. We

decorated it with little bits of tin and shaved soap. Of course, there were no gifts, but we did get a Red Cross food parcel some time near Christmas. We were allowed to keep the lights on late Christmas Eve and to have a midnight church service. However, it was not a very happy time.

By the time the second P. O. W. Christmas rolled around, we had decided we really wanted a nice holiday in spite of being prisoners. Besides, we were hearing such good news of the war we felt sure we would be home shortly. We started early preparing the decorations for the tree. The guards arranged for us to have a small tree. We started saving up our food so we could have a real feast when the day came...then we got news about the Battle of the Bulge. We were getting more German news than any other, but we were still hearing some news from BBC and the Ameicans. Every day the news got worse. It took all our spirit out of us. We stopped working on Christmas almost completely and just sat around doing nothing. I guess we were feeling sorry for ourselves, probably more sorry for ourselves than for the American men getting killed or captured in the big battle. Until then, we had been hoping to be home for Christmas, but we still weren't too concerned because we knew we would still be home a few days after Christmas. It didn't happen.

Near the end of the war, the Germans decided to move us out of our camp. I don't know the reason for this, but I think it was because we were closer to the Russian front than to the American front. The Germans in charge of us didn't want to be captured by the Russians.

On April 8, 1945, we marched out of the camp in groups of 500. We could carry anything we owned including food we had accumulated but we had to be able to keep up with our group. Most of us hadn't been taking very much exercise and were in no condition for a long march. We must have covered about 10 or 12 miles the first day. When the guards told us we were stopping for the night, most of us fell down and slept where we were.

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We were on the march for 19 days but three of these were rest days. We generally followed the Danube River as far as Linz on backwoods roads which were crooked and steep at times. We crossed the Danube at Linz and headed west toward the Inn River. Our final destination was just outside Braunow.

We crossed the river into Linz on a steel bridge which had a large explosive charge fastened at the center so that the bridge could be blown up at any time. We had stopped for the night across the river from Linz and crossed early the next morning. The guards told us to keep together and not stop while going through the city since the people were very hostile because of several earlier bombings. The people yelled insults at us and at times spit at us so we kept on marching until we were almost through the city.

As we reached the other edge of Linz, we saw where a group of Hungarian Jewish men had spent the night. We had seen them a couple of times before during our march and they were a sad looking bunch. They were guarded by S. S. Troopers who kept their bayonets on their guns at all times. As we passed their sleeping place, we saw that several of the Jewish prisioners had been unable to get up and leave with the others. Their belongings were scattered about them and there was a single bullet hole in their forehead.

A group of German soldiers came up in a wagon pulled by one horse and one cow. The wagon stopped and two of the soldiers threw the bodies into the wagon and drove off.

Usually we didn't march in a military-like manner. The line of march kept spreading out. We marched for an hour and had ten minutes rest. Sometimes, the rear of the column would just be catching up to the group when the rest period was over. These men never got any rest.

We could have escaped almost any time during the march but we knew the war was almost over and we felt that the safest place for us was to be with our group.

Sometimes a few men would slip off in small groups to beg food from the civilians, but they always rejoined the column.

The weather was very cold most nights but in the afternoon it was usually very hot. I remember waking up one morning with about an inch of snow on my blanket. One morning we were walking in a drizzling rain and it was so cold that ice froze on my hair since I had lost my cap. Other times, it was so hot in the afternoon that we were tempted to throw away our overcoats and blankets. Fortunately, I hung onto my warm clothes.

Usually we slept outside, but several nights we were allowed to sleep in the hayloft of barns. When we slept inside, it was really crowded because it was wall to wall men. If anyone had to go outside during the night, he usually had to step on other men to get there. It was not unusual for someone to have to go outside because half of us were sick at least part of the trip. One night the man next to me got sick all over me and I had to go outside, break the ice in the horse trough, and wash up.

The Germans didn't give us more than four or five meals during the 19 day march. Most of us had a little food which we carried with us and we ate as sparingly as possible. One day we passed a farm where a farmer had just planted potatoes. My buddy and I dug up enough potatoes and wild greens to make a nice stew.

Water was a problem, too. We had no way to carry very much water and had to drink where we found it. I drank water at times which I wouldn't even wash in now.

We reached our destination in a pine forest outside Braunau on April 25, 1945. The Germans stretched a single strand of barbed wire around an area and told us that this was our new camp. They had no food to give us but we were allowed to go to the river for water. The river was almost a mile away and had a very high, steep bank. Most of our containers were open-top cans so it was a real trick to get back up the river bank with any water. I don't remember everything about the next few days, but the Germans must have given us a little food.

Two other men and I "joined forces." We cut limbs from the pine trees and piled them on the ground for a bed. We each had our overcoat and a blanket. At night, we spread one blanket on the pine branches and all three of us lay down on it. We spread another blanket over us, placed the coats on top of that and put the third blanket on top of the coats to keep them from falling off. We slept spoon fashion, but even then the man in the middle was the only one who kept warm. We took turns sleeping in the middle and if the middle man had to get up during the night, it was a major operation.

General Patton's 13th Armored Division was sweeping through the area where we were. On May 2, 1945, the German officer in charge of our camp learned that American troops were in a nearby village. He took a few of the American P. O. W's with him to find the troops and then he surrendered the camp.

An American captain riding on a tank with a few enlisted men came back to camp with the German officer and accepted the surrender. He made a little speech to us. He explained that his outfit was a very mobile unit, they had no extra food for us, there was no transportation to take us out, and he said for us to sit where we were until they could get some trucks to come for us. In the meantime, they would leave the German guards on us to protect us from civilians. This was a strange day. We were happy that we were free men, but then we weren't exactly free.

The next day, May 3, 1945, another column of the 13th Armored Division heard about the camp in the woods and they came in to rescue us. They really put on a show. They arrived with about 6 or 8 jeeps loaded with soldiers who wore full battle gear. In the lead jeep driven by a First Sergeant, was a tall Colonel in complete battle dress including a 45 on his belt and grenades hanging all over him. He jumped down and took charge. His men quickly rounded up all the guards, disarmed them and lined them up with their hands on their heads. After a while, the guards were marched off toward the river. The Colonel also made us a little speech. He told us to sit tight and he would send someone for us, then they rode off into the sunset. Even though we still had to stay where we were, we felt we were really free.

We still had another few days in the woods before we could move out or get any food from the Americans. As soon as the Colonel and his men left on May 3, some of

my friends slipped out of camp and went into the nearest town. There they stole a truck and some food and came back to camp. They invited me and my two partners to eat with them. The meal stands out in my memory as being much better than any I have had in a classy restaurant or a home-cooked Sunday dinner. I had eaten nothing but hot tea for the last three days and not much else for three weeks. That meal was mustard and butter on large slices of brown bread and milk to drink. It was really good.

Two or three days later, trucks came to take us to the nearest air field. We were flown to Nancy, France, where we were given a big meal and told to eat all we wanted. Most of us could only eat about half of what we put on our plates. After we ate, we were taken on a train to another section of France where we were deloused, had showers and haircuts, and were given new clothes. (I kept the trousers they gave me that day for several years. They were size 27 waist. Now I wear 34's but I am not overweight.

Our next stop was Camp Lucky Strike which was north of Le Harve. Here we got on our boat to go home. I don't remember when we got to Camp Lucky Strike but we were there for several days. We were on a highly nutritious but not very tasteful diet. We were fed a lot of stewed chicken and non-alcoholic eggnog. Everything had very little salt or other seasoning.

On about the 6th of June, 1945, we boarded a troop ship and sailed the next morning. We arrived in New York harbor on June 12, 1945 and unloaded on Pier 16. After a few minutes, we boarded a ferry and went to Fort Dix, New Jersey for the night and left the next morning for Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

After one night there, we were issued more clothes, paid part of the money owed us, and given a 60-day leave to our homes for purposes of recouperation.

Our arrival in the United States was very routine and nowhere did we see parades, bands playing, or large crowds cheering to have us back. We were not expecting this kind of treatment so we were not disappointed. We were just glad to be back.

Often when people find out that I was a German Prisoner of War in World War II, the first thing they ask is "How was it?" Sometimes I answer them by asking them if they want to hear the good side or the bad. They generally say "what could possibly be good about being a P. O. W.?" I tell them, "the best thing about the entire ordeal is that I am here to tell about it." I feel that I came through my stay in the camp without suffering any permanent physical or emotional damage.

There were a lot of lessons to be learned through living with a bunch of fellow Americans under conditions as restrictive as the prison. We learned to appreciate the liberties we all enjoy in the United States. We learned to work together and to make the best of whatever we had. Since there were lots of rules, we always had someone at the front of the barracks watching for guards approaching so he could warn others to stop anything they were doing which was against the rules.

We never had to hide our belongings from other prisoners. Of course, we had no locks but it wasn't necessary anyway. People had respect for your meager property. I believe that if someone had really needed something there was always someone else to share with him. When you got a package from home, you usually shared it with someone else or even with several people.

I lived for twenty months with people who had only the bare necessities and were denied the right to do the things they enjoyed most. I learned that all people think and act in different ways but most of them are basically good. You have to accept them as they are.