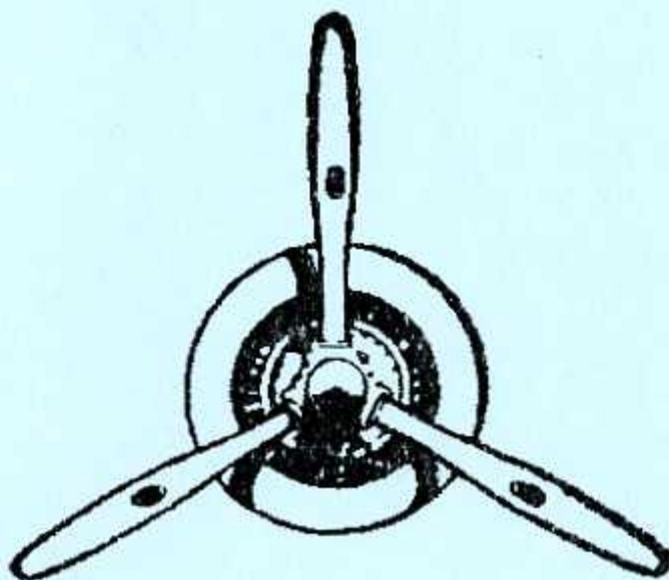


WORLD WAR II
(ENLISTMENT TO DISCHARGE)



MAYNARD "DOC" UNGER

FORMER PRISONER OF WAR
STALAG XVII-B

WW II

MILITARY HISTORY

by

MAYNARD WESLEY "DOC" UNGER

(FORMER PRISONER OF WAR)

My military story starts sometime in September, 1941. I don't know for sure what prompted me to decide to join the Army, but I suspect that it was because my brother, Howard, had already been called to active duty with the Ohio National Guard in 1940. My opinion that anything my brother could do, I could do. I was also probably aware that the world in general was upset with the happenings in Europe. The fact that I wasn't going to college was not a factor. I hardly knew what college attendance meant.

All of my friends knew I was going into the Army, and a classmate friend, Richard Robson, was going with me on October 1st. Harold Frederick was to drive us to Cleveland. I sold my 1940 Chevrolet to my father. My stepmother, Dorothy, kept telling me that just because I had told everyone I was going, that I could still change my mind. I was living at home with my parents at the time, 87 East College Street, Oberlin, Ohio.

On the morning of October 1st, Hal, in his Ford roaster, picked me up and we headed for Elyria to pick up Dick. When we pulled into the driveway, his mother came to the door before we got there. She said, "Richard is not going to the Army."

I probably had second thoughts but we continued on into Cleveland. I checked in at Army Recruiting to clear there and be told when a bus would take me to Columbus,. Where I would actually be sworn in. Hal and I killed time mostly around East 9th Street and St. Clair Avenue, where there was a kind of amusement arcade. Outside there was generally an organ grinder with a monkey selling chestnuts. Hal left me to get the bus and I didn't see him again until after the war. He ended up in the Marines. It wasn't until 1994, that I saw Dick Robson at our 55th High School reunion. He ended up in the Army after all.

My first night was spent at Fort Hays in Columbus following the bus trip down there. It wasn't until October 3rd that I was officially sworn in. **PRIVATE MAYNARD WESLEY UNGER, 15070525**. I was officially tested, given my immunization shots, issued uniforms,

etc. I remember that my pant size was 30" x 29" and my shoe size was 6 E. The thing I was afraid of most was looking forward to getting those shots. It was all in my head. They were harmless. There was a small tavern across from the main gate and I recall a talking Juke box. If no one was playing music, a voice from somewhere would say "What's the matter with you boys at For Hayes?"

I scored high enough on the tests to qualify for the Air Corps, so that was my choice. Next, a group of us boarded a train for Ellington Field, Texas, 12 miles outside of Houston and only 28 miles from the Gulf of Mexico. We traveled first class in a pullman car and ate our meals in the dining car. The trip took 47 hours. There was a lot of building going on which included 40 new barracks and two churches.

Here is where the real Army starts, basic training. I was assigned to Company S Recruiting Detachment. We short guys were in the "Feather Merchant Platoon". I became good friends with Vincent "Buss" Beeson from Vandalia, Ohio, as he too was in the same platoon. Buss's serial number and mine were only one number apart. Two other new acquaintances were Delbert Lesh from Canton and Tom Ward from Cambridge. I forgot to mention that Buss Beeson's birth date was the same as mine, October 19th.

As you might imagine, we marched, marched, and marched some more. One day we had a real downpour and water flooded our area. Believe it or not, we marched to the dining hall in formation with the water nearly waist high. Along with the marching, we stood a lot of inspections. It was while at Ellington Field that I celebrated my 20th birthday receiving six presents, 12 cards and a telegram.

We were all anxious to get basic training over with and find out where we would be stationed next. In a letter home I wrote, "I don't care where I go just so I can learn to fly." My application is going in next week. If I don't get it, I will become an airplane mechanic." We were quarantined almost throughout training and I got more shots now making the total six. I was afraid then, too.

We were told in early November that we would be shipping out the following week. I was to be assigned along with some others and that would include Buss Beeson. I remember that I saw a parade in Houston before I left. It was in all likelihood an Armistice

Day Parade. Now called Veteran's Day. I mentioned in a letter home that I had attended Church and had a swell time.

En route again first class on the train, our group headed for Bangor, Maine. We were on the "Flying Yankee" and it came through Cleveland and stopped briefly at the Terminal tower train Station. I had alerted my parents and they picked up Alice Tarry and brought her along. We got to visit for 5-10 minutes. This was on November 14th. I mailed some post cards from here to surprise people. Just before leaving Texas, I received a couple of letters from my brother, Howard. He had been home on leave from Biloxi, Mississippi.

Most of our group was in the same barracks and our barracks chief was Archibaldo Gonzales, who had been one of our drill instructors in Texas. I remember that we gave him a hard time with practical jokes and such. I was now a member of the 13th Reconnaissance Squadron.

Again we were restricted to the post, this time for 14 days. It covered the period over Thanksgiving. Uncle, Dr. Warren Unger, stopped by to see me and I had to meet him at the main gate. He was on his way home to Presque Isle from a meeting in Portland. We apparently used a lot of telegrams in those days. Dave Huffman who was in college in Norwich Military Academy in Vermont, sent me one asking if it's OK to come up. I said OK but he changed his mind and didn't make it.

Bangor in the winter is a cold, cold, place with lots of snow. This is the background for the events leading up to December 7th. We now had passes to go and come in our free time. Bangor was becoming a familiar haunt for us. On December 7th, Buss and I were in a movie theater. When we came out a Military Policeman stopped us and told us Pearl Harbor had been bombed and we would have to return to the base. He stepped into the roadway, stopped the next car coming and directed them to take us to the Air Base which was just out on the edge of town. We were restricted again for the third time.

My duties during this, the first of my Bangor assignments, included working as an apprentice mechanic assigned to a B-18 crew, guarding the runway, guarding the Norden bomb site, and fire guard which included stoking the coal furnace fires in our barracks area. Originally, I was scheduled for Las Vegas Aerial Gunnery School but was delayed. In a letter I report that , "I weigh 155 lbs., all muscle."

On December 19th, I sent a telegram home announcing that I was leaving on Monday, the 22nd for either Newark, N.J. or Philadelphia. This too was cancelled because I failed the eye examination for pilot training. My right was 2 degrees to the right. Things kept moving fast in those days. I did pass the physical exam for Aerial Gunnery School and following a sad Christmas (work day for all) I found myself back on one of those First Class pullman cars headed for Las Vegas, Nevada and Gunnery School. I was there for New Year's Eve 1941. I remember we celebrated for all of the time zones, including the one in Las Vegas.

As I remember it, Gunnery School included breaking down, firing and cleaning different kinds of guns, mostly the 50 calibre machine gun, foreign and US aircraft identification, target practice from stationary and moving targets. A lot of time was spent firing the 50 calibre and also shoot guns on the skeet range, Aerial practice was done from an AT-6 firing at targets being towed behind other aircraft. We used tracer bullets so we could tell if we were hitting the target.

My most important memory while in Las Vegas involved the airplane crash in the mountains nearby when Carol Lombard, Clark Gable's wife, was killed. Also, there were so many slot machines in town that they even had them chained to lamp posts outside of the casinos.

At the end of six weeks we were graduated, received our wings, and were ready to head back to Bangor, but with a different unit. We were delayed several days as our former unit had shipped overseas. The five of us, which included my friend Buss Beeson, were all from areas near train stations on the way back east. We decided to each get off the train for exactly 24 hours catching the next day's train. This we did. One day at home was the result. We were really AWOL but didn't get caught.

My new unit was the 92nd Reconnaissance Squadron Bangor Air Base. I am not a pilot but an aerial gunner flying submarine patrol in A-29 and B-34 Lockheed Hudson aircraft. In a letter I wrote home on March of 1942, I made mention of an aircraft sinking a submarine. (not ours) Also, that same month I experienced my first emergency landing. We lost an engine over the Atlantic. First we had to salvo our bomb load in the water. We then came into land with the fire trucks, ambulances etc. all standing by. NO PROBLEM, the pilot made a great landing. Was I scared? You bet!

My stint on submarine patrol was really exciting. Not only did it seem like we were always moving. We were as a matter of fact. We were at Mitchell Field, Long Island, N.Y. on temporary duty when our whole outfit moved to Mitchell Field. I never got back to Bangor, someone else had to pack my personal belongings. We lived in one of the base hangers. I played a lot of cards and at least once I won money enough to purchase a gold watch from downtown NY. I also purchased a Samsonite suitcase while at Mitchell Field. I still have both, but neither is any good now. It was while I was stationed here that I saw my first television at the Airman's Club. On April 6th, 1942, I wrote my first FREE letter. The government gave all servicemen the free franking privilege for our mail. I visited the Stage Door Canteen also in NYC. We spent a lot of time drinking pitchers of beer at the Airman's Club. I met a girl at one of the USO dances. She was from Hempsted. These dances were held on the base. This girl, who's name I do not now recall, corresponded with my parents throughout the war.

As was earlier mentioned, the submarine threat along the east coast was responsible for our mission. Soon I found myself flying out of Langley Field, Virginia, located in the area of Norfolk which was a large Navy town. Langley Field, as was Mitchell Field, were old established military bases. While I was there I was able to get a 3 day pass which I used to visit my brother who was stationed at Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania. I traveled by both train and bus. It was at the train in Washington, D.C. that I became aware of the separate rest rooms for black and white. This was a real revelation for a Yankee. It was in the middle of the night when I arrived at Indiantown Gap. The Charge of Quarters took me to Howard's barracks and to his bunk. We had to use flashlights to locate him so as not to disturb the whole barracks. I woke him and shined the flashlight on myself. He sat right up and said, "Well for Jesus Christ". The bunk next to him was empty since that man was on a pass. Howard's unit had to fall out for formation in the morning so I slept in, only to be awakened by an officer thinking I was to be outside with the rest of them. Howard gave me an Eisenhower Jacket blouse with a Private First Class strip already sewed on. This was because I had just been promoted to my first stripe. I remember having one other pass while there. This one was to go to Newport News with the bombardier on my crew. His name was James Rawley from Boston.

In early July, 1942, I found myself operating out of Opa-Locka Naval Air Station, Florida. I remember we wore our blue denim fatigue trousers and white tee shirts. This was so we could look like the Navy. Dressed as such I happened to sit down during dinner one day across from a boy from my hometown, Elyria. He wouldn't believe that I was in the Army Air Corps AND stationed there. I recall we lived a good life and have some pictures in my belongings that were taken there. The pictures also have my friend Buss in them. We swam a lot and visited the sites in that part of Florida. Yes, we were still doing our part almost daily looking for submarines.

I'M GOING TO EDITORIALIZE A LITTLE RIGHT HERE. The submarines were raising havoc with our shipping. It seemed as though every time we were flying we would see evidence of burning and sinking ships. We, as patrollers, followed a path that always seemed to be behind where the destruction had taken place. Radar detection was not as sophisticated as it is today.

New orders; This time we are flying out of Brookley Air Force Base, Mobile, Alabama. We lived in tarpaper shacks very close to the water edge of Mobile Bay. In August, one of our planes crashed in the Bay killing all crew members. One young man (Paulson) was from Genoa, Ohio and because I was from Ohio, I was given the assignment of escorting his body home. It was a sad occasion, but on the bright side for me, I got to visit at home for parts of several days. This young man had also taken basic training with Buss Beeson and me. I mentioned in one of my letters home that I rode in a truck to Camp Shelby. This is in Mississippi and is a base where brother Howard had once been stationed.

We used to go down to a little pier and fish taking scraps from the mess hall for bait. It was here that I caught the 36 inch alligator-gar fish of which I have the picture. Most activity on the base required picture identification badges. I had mine at home and recently gave it to the local Airman's Preservation Society.

Once I started flying, all of my moves were by plane until the move from Brookley Field to Galveston, Texas in the month of September. We lived in temporary quarters at Camp Crockett. Camp Crockett was located a short distance from where the aircraft were located. This was at a civilian field that had been taken over by the military. It was here, when I was on guard duty at the main gate, I fell asleep. I was lucky, as I had flown that

day and should not have been guarding in the first place. None the less, I was given 30 days KP (kitchen police) duty, restricted to the base for 30 days, and grounded for 30 days. As it turned out, my pilot complained about my hours. So then I worked three days and then had a day off for the 30 days. My grounding didn't affect my flight pay and there were a lot of things to do on the post, such as movies, etc. I could have gotten a prison sentence for such a serious error. I also remember that we had to walk through a grave yard to get to the local hangout. This was the period that "You Are My Sunshine" blared from the juke boxes.

Despite my problems, I was promoted to the rank of Corporal. I seem to remember that we went swimming almost every night. The mosquitoes and the drinking water were both bad. I don't remember much about the town.

It wasn't very long before I was promoted to Sergeant. It must have had something to do with a change in regulations. I know that a change in the Air Corps regulations now required all gunner observers to attend a second school.

I have no remembrance of having been tested beforehand. It must have been taken from earlier aptitude tests. For whatever reason I was shipped out to Radio Operators School in Salt Lake City, Utah.

My friend Buss Beeson and another old friend, Joe Raymond, headed for a new career adventure. This school had recently been established. Very few people that I have ever met attended that school. The time frame I was here must have been November – December, 1942. I remember visiting the Mormon Tabernacle and being in a bar with Joe Raymond. He was a good singer and would sing for free drinks. I also remember watching a fellow student build a few pennies into a sizeable sum of money by tossing pennies in competition to the edge of a wall. Another remembrance is fellows drinking Aqua Velva shave lotion. Learning the morse code was easy for me but Buss didn't make it. It was here in November, 1942 that we parted. This was only a four-week course, and, believe it or not, I was an honor graduate. Now that I had been graduated from two technical schools, I was promoted to Staff Sergeant, December 6, 1942. One year of war.

After laying around for a couple of weeks my new orders were for Blythe, California assigned to the 534th Squadron, 381st Bomb Group, on Lt Reinhart M. Kings crew. This is

the same crew that I trained with, went to combat with, and was shot down with. My first airborne trip in a B-17, I wasn't very successful in my radio communications. I would have needed a rock to reach the ground. Details of our groups' entire training period and battle record can be found in publication. The Mighty 381st and the Anthology of the 381st. Both copies are a part of my personal military holdings.

We were in California for Christmas. I recall taking a bus trip to Los Angeles with one of our waist gunners, Robert Dwyer. We visited some relative of mine (Purcells) and also visited the Hollywood Stagedoor Canteen. Here we met Betty Grabel, Anne Shirley and Dinah Shore. We visited a radio broadcast and saw Red Skelton and Harry James.

Once the crews were all formed, the entire unit moved to Rattlesnake Air Base in Pyote, Texas. I flew bag and baggage on February 1st. It was a new base only three weeks old. Helen and I have been by there a couple of time and there is only a roadside marker to indicate the Air Base and a monument noting that the 381st was the first bomb group to train there.

Pyote was a dry, hot, dusty airfield. We lived in tents and much of the time had to wear dust masks while near the flight line. As a crew we each practiced our individual skills. As a radio operator, I was responsible for monitoring ground to air and air to ground messages. Before one could send a message we would have to release a trailing antenna. It was on a power winch and could be adjusted to different lengths. At each length the transmitter had to be retuned. For me, this tuning was the most difficult of all my duties. Listening to and sending code messages for me was easy. To make sure a radio man was doing his job, messages were randomly sent out from the ground in secret codes. One had to receive the message, decode it and reply. There was a set of "Z" signals and "Q" signals to use which helped in shortening the messages. This, of course, was in the "Olden Days" Modern technology has eliminated the need for such a person on board now.

Our training consisted of flying very tight formations, shooting landings and takeoffs, both day and night. Frequently we would go to another base and remain overnight (RON). These trips were primarily for the benefit of pilot training and navigation We flew many practice bombing missions. All crew members attended a lot of ground school classes: aircraft identification, emergency procedures of all kinds. In addition to our individual

special skills, everyone had to know how to breakdown and clean 50 calibre machine guns that were aboard. We also flew missions where we fired at towed targets in the air.

In a letter home I mentioned meeting the crew members from the B-17 "Suzie Q". they had finished flying 25 missions in Europe and were touring the country.

At Rattlesnake, our original tail gunner, Sgt. Zak, become ill and had to be replaced. Joe Lyons of Philadelphia became the new tail gunner. Another happening worth mentioning happened while we were RON at March Field, California. Engineer Cecil Floura and I were shooting Jack Rabbits with 45 Calibre pistols on the airbase. We were arrested by the Military Police. For this senseless act, we both got a good dress down from Colonel Nazzaro, the group commander, when we returned home.

We finished our training in Pyote in early April and then flew to Pueblo, Colorado for another phase. The flying and training were intense. I don't remember too much about Pueblo except that a few times we "fraternized" with the officers on our crew at local night clubs. By this time we were a pretty close family. Lt. King's wife, Mary Lou, followed us to every base as did some of the other officers' wives.

The next station was Salina, Kansas. Here we continued training but the emphasis was more on getting us properly equipped both mentally and physically for going overseas. (combat) I mentioned in a letter home that if I lasted long enough, I would get out of the Dry country and to some place nice. Pueblo was it.

Salina was the final phase of our training. There were 9 crews to each squadron. My squadron as mentioned earlier was the 534th. So the 381st bomb Group (H) had 36 crews trained and ready to go overseas. Our bomb Group simulated missions many times. One of these was to drop war bond leaflets in California. I think it was San Diego. Everyone was given a furlough (6 days). We were told to get our hair cut to 2 inches. Get rid of all extra baggage so that when we returned, we were ready to leave. While at Salina, we flew to Colorado Springs to pick up our brand new B-17 F. I flew all but one of my missions in this plane, and it is the one we were flying when we were shot down.

I started to grow a mustache right after my furlough. This was at the end of May. A close look with a magnifying glass three months later one night see it. (look at the picture taken when I was captured).

Our first stop enroute to overseas was Selfridge Field, Michigan. We had some minor engine problems which kept us there for a couple of days. I think it was to give our pilot's wife an opportunity to come and see us. It was here that his wife, Mary Lou, took the photos of my crew that are in the scrap book. After we were shot down, she mailed a set of pictures to every family. The last stop before leaving the US was at my old stamping ground, Dow Field, Bangor, Maine. It was here at Bangor that our navigator remembers that the nose art was painted on HELL'S ANGEL.

We stopped in Gander, Newfoundland for refueling and the weather socked us in for a couple of days. All I remember about Gander was we spent a lot of time walking to and from the barracks to the mess hall. Our entertainment was in using our sheath-knives, throwing them at the telephone poles to see who was the best at making them stick. The next stop was Prestwick, Scotland. It was a large base. We refueled and had an opportunity to look around, visit the gift shop and to realize we were a long way from home. The crew was briefed on our flight to Ridgewell which was to be our home base.

As a radio operator, I was always busy in the air when flying in England. There were so many areas of balloon barrages and code messages necessary for friendly identification. Peaceful as it was most of the time, I was slow to adjust that we were in a war zone. There were still blackouts every night and some V2 Rockets being launched by the Germans.

The air crews all flew their own aircraft from the states. The bomb Group Commander and Squadron Commanders were aboard aircraft as well. Supporting personnel and equipment came over by boat. The only ones on our plane was the crew.

Once in Ridgewell, the officers and enlisted personnel were housed in separate areas. Also, the air crews were separated from the ground support people. Two enlisted crews from the 534th Squadron filled the quonset hut we were housed in, making a total of 12 men to a hut. (All 12 of us were shot down on the same day.)

There was no rest period as we continued our flight training – both in the air and on the ground. Now ere were getting ready for the real thing. Some training included emergency procedures such as bailing out of the aircraft or having to ditch the plain in the English Channel. There was both enemy and friendly aircraft identification, stripping down, cleaning, and reassembling our 50 calibre machine guns. The radio operator was also a

gunner and had an open hatch with one gun. We were schooled on what to do or expect in the event we were on the ground in enemy territory, and what to do or say if we were captured. I knew all about the German Air Force Interrogation Camp before I got there.

Finally, the 381st bomb Group at Ridgewell was deemed ready and was part of the First Air Division. The bomb Group flew our first mission on June 22, 1943. The target was Antwerp, Belgium. Our bomb group lost two aircraft. Reality set in. then the next morning, before we had flown our second mission there was a terrible explosion on the apron where the aircraft were parked from the 533rd Squadron. While bombs were being loaded, there was an explosion that killed 23 men. Some were crew members, most were ground personnel. This was June 23, 1943. Details of this accident and all missions flown by the 381st BG are recorded in the book, 'MIGHTY MEN OF THE 381st HEROES ALL'. A copy of this book is in my military memories. I flew my first mission the afternoon of the accident. How do you think I felt? Crew members had no knowledge of when and where missions would be flown. If one was on duty, they could expect to be scheduled, sometimes as a fill in on another crew. I personally always was with my own crew at all times. Crews did not go on all missions. My scrap book has a listing of all my flight time in a B-17 except for the month of August, 1943, the month I was shot down.

Crews would be awakened when they were scheduled to fly at ungodly hours in the morning to be told the time and where they were to report to operation headquarters. Everyone went to the Airmen's Mess. (This was different from the base mess) for breakfast. The mess hall was always prepared to feed crews at any hour. Once at operations, the pilots, navigators, and radio operators gathered for the briefing. Other crew members went to the plane to prepare the guns, check the aircraft etc. The briefing room contained a very large map of Europe. At the beginning it was always covered with huge curtains. Once the Group Commander would enter, everyone would be called to attention. Colonel Joseph J. Nazarro was the commander during all of my time in the 381st.

Col. Nazarro would welcome us, tell us where the target was. The curtain was pulled back where we could see ribbons stretching along the proposed flying route. He would then turn the meeting over to the briefing officers from intelligence. We were told where and why we would be going to wherever it was. The intelligence team would brief

on expected opposition from flack, fighters etc. Once the briefings were finished, pilots, navigators and bombardiers were additionally briefed in separate groups. When finished this group was all transported to their respective aircraft where information was relayed to other crew members. All aircraft would then wait until the flare signal to get airborne. Sometimes this wait was hours long, as it was on the day of my last mission.

Once airborne the group would get into formation of 24-26 planes. A couple of spare crews were in the air as well in case someone had to abort. Our group formation would join other group formations making up the 1st Air Division. Crews and bomb groups always dreaded the fact that they might be the lower element in the formation as they were the most vulnerable.

I flew 12 missions prior to being shot down on August 17th, 1943.

June 23, 1943	St. Martin/Bernay, France
June 25, 1943	Hamburg, Germany
June 26, 1943	Billacoublat, France
June 28, 1943	St.Nazaire, France
July 4, 1953	LeMans, France
July 10, 1943	Villacoublay, France
July 14, 1943	Amiens/Glisy, France
July 17, 1943	Hanover, Germany
July 25, 1943	Hamburg, Germany
July 26, 1943	Hamburg, Germany
July 28, 1953	Gelsenkirchen, Germany
August 12, 1943	Gelsenkirchen, Germany
August 17, 1943	Schweinfurt, Germany

Details of all of these missions are outlined in the book "Mighty Men of the 381st, Heroes All". As mentioned earlier, this book is in my personal memories.

Our base was Ridgewell, located in the Cambridge area. When we went off the base there wasn't a whole lot of excitement. I have recollection of a couple of local Pubs and their dart games. Transportation was either by foot or bicycle. I had bought a brand new bike just before I was shot down. I often wondered who got that. Almost always when we

were off the base, we bought fish and chips. (This was piece of fish with french fries wrapped in newspaper.) We hired an English lady living nearby to do our laundry. There were numerous things to do on the base. I do remember going to an orphanage in the area to take gifts and spend time with them. This was a base sponsored activity. It took the edge off of things we were doing. Generally speaking, it was a quiet life except for the missions.

I had two extended passes, one was to Cambridge and the other was to London. Bob Dwyer, one of our waist gunners was with me on both occasions. I remember he and I rented a boat in Cambridge. We were showing off for the benefit of a couple of girls and I fell out of the boat. We had to take a taxi to some dry cleaning place where they were able to dry my clothes. In London I remember there was a large club for American GI's, Yanks if you will. I think we were only there one night. To be sure, we checked out Picadilly Square. This is where we were told all the action was... This was my last trip to town. The next mission was the last one.

August 17, 1943 – Target was Schweinfurt Ball Bearing Factory located deep in Germany. This was the period of the war that the US Fighters did not have the fuel capacity to escort us very far into land. They generally left us at the English Channel. Schweinfurt was one of the two worst air battle of WW II. The other was also to Schweinfurt in October of 1943. Our bomb Group suffered more losses on this mission (11 aircraft) than any other bomb group on a single missions throughout the whole war.

Most crew members seemed to be aware that this was by far the biggest mission of the war to date. It was not uncommon for delays in taking off to occur. The weather frequently closed in with fog and kept planes grounded. Today was no exception except for the fact that the delay was over 5 hours. From the time we were aroused in the morning until takeoff was more than 7 hours.

Almost from the time that we crossed the Channel going over the mainland, we encountered flack. The further we went the thicker it became. I don't remember the sequence of all happenings. But one must remember that more than 200 aircraft B-17's and B-24's are in waves filling the sky. In the distance one could see all kinds of destruction going on: bombers out of formation, bombers going down, enemy fighters picking on the

stragglers and many of those going down too. At the same time enemy ME 109's were seriously picking away wherever they thought there was weakness. It was scary. Several of the planes going down were from our group. Then our attention was drawn to the B-17 on our right wing piloted by our former co-pilot Neil Wright. It was going down, out of control. I think that to a man the danger of what we were doing became real. We watched in horror trying to count chutes. We knew that many had parachuted. How many? Now WE had a problem of our own trying to defend our position. we had a long way to go yet to reach the target. It's almost impossible for me to describe. The flack was at all levels and looked almost like one could land a plane on it. Then a B-17 in the upper element ahead of us careened out of control coming right down in our path. Lt. King quickly evaded the formation to avoid a mid air collision. (It was later learned that Lt. King was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for this action). Lt.. King put the plane in the steepest turn I can ever recall in a B-17. The plane shuddered with stress. He was attempting to come around and join another wave of planes that were behind us. Now we are away from the formation and one engine, #2 is gone. Trying to get back in formation was a good idea but the fighter aircraft hit us like a swarm of bees. In this position, we now had a fire in another engine. I personally had no ammunition left. This from a gun position that doesn't get many good opportunities to fire at the enemy. I don't know what all of my thoughts were but I was really scared. We still had our bombs aboard. The decision was made to get rid of them and they were salvoed. The next time I looked forward through the bomb bay, the engineer was motioning to get out. The call went out on the intercom to get out. I didn't wear my parachute when flying but it was always nearby. I grabbed my chest pack, snapped it on and tried to get into the bomb bay as the door was still open. I couldn't get in as I had been in such a hurry that I forgot to unplug my headphones or disconnect my oxygen tube. I didn't waste much time as I was afraid the fire was going to make the plane explode.

Here is one place that all of the training we had gone through came back to me as though it was on a recording tape. "When you jump, delay in pulling your rip cord to make sure you are clear of the plane." I dropped out of the bomb bay rear end first. Once having fallen a ways, another training reminder came to the front. "If you can, free fall as far as you can to get out of the flack and fighter danger." I did delay, and then one more thing,

“when the ground starts coming up to you fast, pull the rap cord.” It did seem to be coming up fast, I pulled the cord and the chute opened.. There was a terrific jerk and then it seemed so quiet that I questioned whether or not I was still alive. In the distance I could hear gunfire and I saw a B-17 crash into the side of a hill. I have no idea if it was ours or not. By then I was on the ground in the backyard area of a house. Training said, “get out of your chute and hide it.” Before I could get completely untangled, I was approached by an air raid warden. I had landed in the town of Bad Schwalbach. I couldn’t understand what the man was saying but I knew he wanted me to put my hands up when he pointed his gun at me. He had a young boy with him who was possibly 16 years old. They had me gather my parachute and walk possibly ¼ of a mile to where they had a Volkswagen parked. This was in August and it was very hot. It was a rare sight as I always wore my blue heated suit over my flight coveralls. Besides being hot, I was wearing my heated boots and they are not made for walking. After complaining enough, they finally let me stop and remove my heated suit. I still had to carry everything. We got in the car and soon we are in the center of a small grouping of buildings. The man went to make a phone call probably to announce the capture of an Americana Luftgangster. I was in the front riders side of the car while people from the village came by to rubber neck. I particularly remember two girls who came close and bent down for a better look. They stood by the car giggling.

The Air Raid Warden came back after receiving his instructions. Now we are in the car headed for what I now know was the famous Kurhaus of Wiesbaden. Enroute we had a flat tire. I was left alone in the car, and briefly entertained the idea of escape. I thought better of it and glad I did. I had no idea where I was and couldn’t speak the language.

The Kurhaus was typical of what I always pictured of German Army life as depicted in movies shown at the time. It had high ceilings of marble, marble floors with everyone with hard heels snapping their feet together and shouting “Heil Hitler”. Here I was locked in a storage room. I guess this was to await further instructions. There was a table in the room with chairs. I was offered soup but I wouldn’t eat. I don’t know why but it was perhaps because I didn’t know what was in it. Did I say I was scared? One man spoke very good English and kept coming in to quiz me. Here again the training: “name, rank, and

serial number". That is all I would say. How long it was before they decided to do something else with me. I don't recall.

I do know it was still daylight when I was taken outside, after walking through these marbled halls again with everyone saluting, "Heil Hitler". A convertible touring car with three uniformed soldiers was waiting for me. I was in the back right hand side where I had a good look at the instrument panel. Once we were underway and on the Autobahn, I became frightened as we were going 110 miles an hour. (I thought) It was really reading kilometers which I was not familiar with. I no longer had my parachute or blue flying suit with me.

I was driven to Dulag Luft, the Air Force Interrogation Camp in Frankfurt. I didn't know it at the time but this camp was located in what is the famous Palmen Garten located in the center of town. Referring back to earlier training. Dulag Luft was a familiar name as all flight crews were alerted of it. All flying crews were taken first to this camp prior to their permanent camp.

Here at Dulag Luft, all officers and enlisted men above the rank of S/Sgt. Were placed in solitary confinement. As a T/Sgt., I was one of those confined alone for 6 or 7 days. Let me insert here that I did not see any chutes from my plane or any Americans on the ground. With the purposeful delayed opening of my parachute, I was more engrossed in the ground and my landing point when I jumped. At this point I am lonely and still scared. First, I was placed in a cell for a period of time, I guess for the people in charge to get ready for me. I still had my escape materials as my pockets had not been searched. I thought I would be clever and hide these things under my straw filled mattress. Soon I was escorted to an office for formal booking, finger prints, picture etc. (My official POW record card is in my scrapbook complete with this picture). This is the picture that I mentioned earlier as I had a mustache. Look close. I was returned to my cell. It was not the same cell where I had hidden my escape materials. I was next to it. The cell as I recall it, was a bunk, a table, two chairs, overhead light and a small window too high to reach or see out of. I had to remove my heated boots and leave them outside the door. The hallway had doorways on both sides that obviously were other solitary confinement areas. There was a central toilet

near the end of the hall. Shoes of occupants were just outside of each door. I could tell that some were British and some were American when I was permitted to use the toilet.

Several times everyday I had the same English speaking interrogator came in to talk and to try and get information. This interrogator smoked and blew smoke in my face trying to urge me to talk in exchange for a cigarette. He at one time lived in the states. My meager meals were brought to me. They were not much, but I was hungry and ate what they gave me. This solitary confinement for me was the most difficult time in my entire 22 months as a POW> but prayers and the fact that I was still alive were some comfort.

After six, maybe seven days, the interrogator in an exasperated mood blurted out, "All right, you no tell me, I tell you, you are from the 381st stationed at Ridgewell. All of your crew got out except the pilot and it is believed he died in the crash." The was all true except the part about the pilot. He was safe and on the loose for two weeks before being caught. I did not know this at the time. I tried not to react at the good news. It was the first of any idea of what the end result was after I abandoned the plane.

That same day, I was taken into a room where 6 or 8 other Americans were. One of them was Francis Petrillo, our bombardier. Again I offered no sign of recognition. As I remember, we were told what was going to take place next. The group of us were then released into a large enclosed compound where other POW's were. It was here that I saw all of my crew except the pilot. I at the time, I did not know that Lt. King was safe until after the war and were on our way home.

I also saw many, many familiar faces. Of the fifty-plus bombers destroyed on the day I went down, eleven of them were from my bomb group. All were original crews that we had gone through training with. At this point, I was overjoyed seeing so many friendly faces. I believe in that old saying, "Misery loves company". I had both.

Those of us who needed clothes to wear were issued them here. I remember getting a pair of British shoes. I must have gotten other items as I know I didn't have a flying suit in camp. The shoes were too big. I was standing along side General Spivey who was sitting on a blanket spread out on the ground. He saw my shoes and said, "Pretty big aren't they Sgt.?" I responded affirmative. He then said something to the effect that we were going to have to put up with things like this for awhile. Gen. Spivey had come over from the

states to observe flack conditions. He saw all he wanted on his first mission. The clothes we were issued (one set if it was needed) was either US Airman or British. The Red Cross transported the clothes in.

I can only remember spending one night in the general compound area. I remember sleeping on a table. When we left Dulag Luft, we walked in a group to the train. I do not remember a train station. I rather think the box cars were on a siding and we were loaded in. The officers must have departed the camp first. I well remember that the only one who was given a ride was General Spivey.

The boxcar was crowded. One couldn't see where we were going. There was a small amount of straw on the floor. Our destination was unknown. I don't remember how long it took. Throughout all of my confinement following my release from solitary, I was in the nearby company of the enlisted crew members of our plane: t/Sgt. Cecil Floura, S/Sgt. Joseph Lyons, S/Sgt. Robert Dwyer, S/Sgt. Julius Mann and S/Sgt. Albert Pollard. Others I had known were on the boxcar as well.

We were offloaded in Moosberg in the locale of Munich. The camp we walked to from there was Stalag VII A. At that time it was all Army Air Corps men who were housed there. I was told later that we were there awaiting the opening for a new camp to be opened. I don't remember too much about things that happened at VII-A. My German POW tags were issued here No. 113231. My German prisoner record must have been started here as well. however, as I indicated earlier, my picture was taken at Dulag Luft. I still had my flight coveralls on and the mustache.??? While here, I was called out at least twice from the group and questioned about my background. There were interested in any relatives in Germany. I don't recall seeing a German newspaper anywhere except at this camp. I remember at least twice seeing the name Unger in the death notices,.

We stood roll call twice a day. We always stood roll call twice a day, 365 days of the year. We probably were issued our blanket here. All of the POW living quarters were much the same - side by side bunks, stacked three high. In my barracks two stacks were together so it looked like four, side by side three bunks high. An aisle was on each side and the same arrangement throughout the rest of the barracks.

In October, we headed for the boxcars again for our trip to Krems, Austria. I'm guessing that there must have been 1000 to 1500 Air Force POW's at the time. No improvement on the boxcars, still crowded and uncomfortable with no opportunity to see things unless someone would let you look 'through a crack that my have been near them. We had a bucket arrangement of some sort to serve as a toilet. Traveling by train was dangerous because of the bombings. At night one could hear the RAF overhead. Our trains stopped in marshalling yards frequently as we were not a regular passenger train.

This new camp in Krems, Austria was Stalag XVII-B. In addition to the number making the trip, the camp continued to receive new POW's until about February 1944. The eventual camp size for the Americans was approximately 4,000. We always looked forward to new people coming in. They were the source of information first hand as to what was going on in the war. Every once in awhile, there would be a familiar face from one's old outfit and we could find out about other friends.

I was assigned to barracks 39B and the other five men on my crew were assigned there too. It was a mixture of men having been captured from October 1942 until our move from VII-A in October 1943. Eugene Shanahann was the most veteran POW in our barracks. I reunited with Gene and his wife in 1983 when the National Convention, American Ex-Prisoners of War, was held in Cleveland. We remained in contact with him and his wife until his death in December, 1996.

Food the Germans fed us was pretty much the same thing every day. Black bread, ersatz tea, buggly soup, potatoes and rutabagas. This diet was fortunately supplemented with food items from RED CROSS parcels. These parcels came irregularly from the beginning then to worse and then did not come at all. A typical Red Cross parcel would have: a can of margarine, Nescafe coffee, Klim powdered milk, Chocolate "D" bar, small can of jam, cigarettes, bar of soap and tooth paste. I have probably forgot something.

The "D" bar and cigarettes became our standard of value, replacing the dollars we were used to. I don't know exactly how much weight I lost but I would guess it was about 40 pounds. Except for a bad session with boils, I remained in reasonable good health throughout. Bob Dwyer and Joe Lyons of my crew also had problems with the boils. It was the diet and we were lacking something.

Sleeping was not very comfortable. The bunks were of solid wood. There were no springs. Our mattress was a large burlap bag with a meager amount of straw. I don't remember having pillows. I must have stuffed something under my head as I am a pillow person. The barracks had two separate ends 39-A and 39-B. There were joined with a common wash room in between. There was no heat in the building and there was no hot water. The sinks were long with a number of faucets for use. At one end of the sink there was a faucet one could stand under for water, but no shower head. For shaving, we mostly used cold water. There was little heat in the barracks to start with and the stove there doubled for a place to cook, IF you had something to cook and IF you had wood to burn for a fire.

To wash one's clothes we used buckets and shaved the bar soap fine so it would suds up good. Empty cans of different sizes were nailed on the end of a stick to make a plunger. It took a lot of rinsing to get the soap out. Some fellows made extra money ("D" Bars) by taking in washings. Chester Beasley from my squadron was one of these men who did this. Some men made extra rations by serving as a barber. There was quite a market for cutting hair. Even in this place, we tried to look decent.

It was next to impossible to save canned food. The guards were there to open every package and punctured holes in everything so it would spoil if not eaten soon. The "D" Bar, soap, toothpaste, and cigarettes had a much longer life. I remember one particular time when we went to pick up our Red Cross parcels. Believe me when I say these were very special occasions. This time I was walking with "Pappy Hughes, an "old man" about 40 years old. He said to me, "It's hard to believe how happy a grown man like me can be with something so simple as this". They were important!

We stood roll call twice a day, sometimes more often if something seemed wrong in the camp. This was regardless of weather conditions. Mostly it was in formation and they could count us. If the count was correct, roll call was over. If it didn't come out right, they would check us off individually by POW number. Mine was 113231 (Ein Hundret Drizehn, swei, ein und dreizig. It was not uncommon for us to be "roused" out of the barracks when something unusual was discovered. Rumors of a radio, a hidden Russian in camp, general hunting for contraband or stored food. When these times occurred, we might be out doors

all day, rain, snow or shine. The longer we were persecuted as such, the louder we would sing in an effort to get their goat. They could not break the morale of the POW's in our camp. It gave us a good feeling as we were making life more miserable for the guards. "Raus", meaning out is one of the words most "POW's will never forget.

Writing home was governed by the number of letter forms or post cards we were each issued. I don't remember for sure, but it was something like two letters and four postcards a month. I don't know if they all got home or not, but many of them did. One of these is in my scrap book and others are in the saved letters to my grandmothers. Our outgoing mail was censored so we couldn't say much. They were however important as a link back home. In this way the folks knew we were still alive. We received mail but not too frequently. We also received an occasional package. All incoming parcels were of course examined by the Germans. I know everything did not get through.

While we were at Stalag VII-A, and all through Stalag XVII-B, we had an American S/Sgt. who was elected as our camp leader (man of confidence). He had a staff of other POW's that helped him. We called the barracks that they lived in the "Whitehouse". One day one of these fellows from the Whitehouse came to me and said that in the near future I would be receiving a package from an organization in New York state. He said that when it came, he wanted to see it. It came and he proceeded to go through the various items: cribbage board, ping-pong paddles etc. He broke the things apart and there were radio parts, maps, money etc. all escape items hidden in the package. Phillip Zahm, also from Oberlin and my bomb group, received an exact copy of my package. No one had said anything to him. I thought I would be smart and destroy most of his items and found nothing hidden. I certainly knew then, if not before, that Uncle Sam was looking out for us.

The tobacco companies offered parents the opportunity to ship cigarettes to camp at \$1.35 a carton. POW's receiving these suddenly found themselves to be wealthy. A copy of one of the instruction letters is included in my scrapbook.

Because of our rank, none of the men in my camp were forced to work. Many of course volunteered various jobs about camp that helped our living situation and our morale. Because of the inactivity, time passed slowly. Our American camp was divided into three or four compounds each with several barracks. All were similar to the one I lived in. We

were free to visit any of these compounds whenever it wasn't dark or we were not standing roll call or otherwise confined. I did a lot of walking in camp as did most people. Around and around inside the barbed wire enclosures.

There were several other compounds in camp: British, Russian, French, etc. We were not permitted to intermingle. Stalag XVII-B was the second largest camp in all of Germany.

Before Germany was bombed so badly, the Red Cross furnished the camp with books, records, textbooks, a few musical instruments, softball equipment, etc. Most of the men took advantage of these things. We had teachers conducting classes in skills they were familiar with. We had a theater, ^{the}The Cardboard Playhouse. I even entertained in one of the performances by doing the "Dance of the Seven Veils". I was sexy looking to them then!

Each barracks had a softball team. There wasn't much room but it was fun and entertaining. Albert "Blue" Pollard, our ball turret gunner, was a boxer in camp. There were things to do for those who weren't sitting around feeling sorry for themselves, yet time dragged. Day dreams and visions of what we were going to do once we got back were ever present.

After the first month or so, I never seriously doubted that I would one day get home. Uncle Sam knew where we were and the Red Cross (Geneva Convention rules that the Germans tried to follow) was sure to look out for our humane treatment.

There always seemed to be a hidden radio somewhere in the camp and every night a former professional radio man would come to the barracks with news. Lookouts were posted at the doors and then he would read us the days war news from the British Broadcasting company. We knew that the war was being won by the Allies and it was just a matter of time before we would get out of there.

I jokingly tell people that I became one of the world's best bridge players (Maybe I wasn't joking). I also played a lot of poker. The stakes were food. Like most gambling – win some – lose some. I did play a lot of cards. I played bridge mostly with a Greek Christopher Basios and Clyde Slugowski from Wyoming. I saw each of these people at least once since returning stateside.

Most of us pooled our assets (food). We called these groupings Combines. They would be made up of 3 – 4 – 5 men. It was kind of like a family and when we were cooking or eating, we did it together and also shared the food preparation and the clean up. As you might imagine, these were both easy tasks as we had very little to fix in the first place.

I had a Camp Logbook that had been furnished by the Red Cross. This was a hardcover book filled with totally blank pages. In this we could put whatever we wanted. I hired a lot of pictures to be drawn in my book, I wrote poetry, made notes, etc. while on the forced march near the end of my POW life, I gave this book to a lady in Grún, Austria. She agreed to send this to me at the end of the war in exchange for soap which I gave her. This was ^{APRIL} ~~May~~, 1945, the day after President Roosevelt died. This lady was the one who told me that he had died. I didn't believe her. Among my POW books is a sample of this log book. In it are samples of things men included in their books. Many of these samples are from XVII-B. One of the drawings was done by Raymond Grimm who died recently having lived right here in Lakewood. This book is priceless as the drawings are very realistic as to what it looked like.

There was an American Army Major who operated an infirmary with limited supplies and limited facilities. He took care of everything he could. Some were wounds of the war some from sickness, disease, etc. I was treated for a while during an outbreak of boils. I have a couple of large scars on my legs as reminders. This was from poor diet.

We also had a chaplain and for most of my confinement, we had a Church building. It was barracks Number 40 and was right next door to my barracks. An escape attempt by way of a tunnel under the Church gave the Germans cause to tear the building down. It was located close to the fence. I always attended church.

About every three or four months we would all be marched up to the "Delouser". Here we stripped off all of our clothes, placed them in a basket so that they could go through the delousing operation. Most men had scabbies, some had lice and other infectious insects. Everyone would be shaved of all hair on one's body, then a solution similar to coal oil, was applied under arms and on one's private parts. After a specified waiting period we were permitted a shower. Our clothes were reclaimed and when we were all finished we were herded back to our compounds. One of the times that I really

feared for my life occurred at the delouser. Some guys put sand in their hair to foil the electric shavers. One guard went beserk, pulled out his gun shouting and waving it around. We were all pretty well shaken up.

I mentioned earlier that I played a lot of cards. I also did a lot of walking. The square area of our compound was well beaten down all around the inside fence area. There were always people walking while at the same time day dreaming. We were free to visit any of the four American compounds. This meant that we were free to visit any of the American men in our camp. Most people became best aquatinted with the men in their own barracks. Others from the local area that I became friends with were: Phillip "Phip" Zahm, Donald Lynch, Russell Chester, and Walter Gasser. I made use of the library for books and records which were furnished by the Red Cross. Opportunity for learning was always available. Our own POW's served as instructors for a variety of college level courses. I don't recall enrolling in these. I do remember playing two records over and over. This must have been due to a small selection: "I Was Born in West Virginia" and "Rock Island Line".

As mentioned earlier, we had a "Cardboard Playhouse" were every once in a while a new production would be in the offering. These were a lot like today's little theater productions only these were done "Rube Goldberg" style from original scripts. I don't know how it came about, but I was featured in one of the musicals doing the dance of the Seven Veils. I wore body colored "Falsies" and a "G" string. It made an impression on these deprived men.

I don't remember how long it was before I received any mail from home. Any mail was few and far between. Indeed it was a rare occasion. It was a relief to me when I knew that my parents knew that I was OK.

In my Log Book that never made it home, I had written a poem. I can only remember a few of the verses, but here is one that fits in here: "I've only seen one woman since I entered XVII-B, but she was standing so far away, there was very little to see."

As the War dragged on, the Germans had less and less to take care of their own, let alone we prisoners. We continued to get less and less of everything. We were burning pieces of our building for heat and cooking; rations were less and less, yet our

morale was getting better as the allies were on the move. We knew for sure that we were winning the war.

Near the end of the war, we could hear gunfire in the distance slowly getting louder as days progressed. It was the Russian Army closing in on our location. From the underground source of information, we were told to organize into groups. This was done. Leroy Berkley was my group leader. We were the first numbered group. It was shortly after that, that we were told to pack up our belongings for a march out of the area. We were permitted to take anything we wanted but you had to carry it. This was in early April, 1945. A diary of this march kept by Richard Patterson is included at the end of this story. Things that I recall and are deepest in my memory and how they affected me are as follows:

There were approximately 4,000 men in groups of approximately 500. I was in the first group. Each man cared as much of his worldly possessions as he could. Few, if any, had back packs. For most it was the bedding with everything wrapped in it. Some in ones pockets and a lot dangling around ones neck or body. After the first day we left a steady trail of discarded items. This to lessen the weight. Our march took us from Krems, Austria along the Danube River. I don't remember it as being blue. The distance I have learned later was 281 miles. We were on the march 18 days and living in a woods at the end for more than a week, before we were liberated.

We would walk 15-20 miles a day, resting occasionally before bedding down along the road, in fields, in sheds, etc. We had little choice. Our bed roll was our moveable home. The weather was cold but not bitter cold. As I indicated it was early April and Spring was in the air. I recall snow only once and this was at the end of our walk when we were in the woods at Branau, Austria. We were given limited food on the walk, but mostly our food was leftovers we carried from the camp. Drinking water was where we could find it, city pumps, public areas, streams, etc. Mostly, I think we just relieved ourselves along the road as there were no rest rooms.

One day two P-38 US Army Air Corps planes flew toward us. We were afraid of being strafed. The POW's from our headquarters area laid an American Flag on the road. The P-38's made a pass over us and then returned to wave their wings at us. I had reassurance again that we were indeed going to make it back home. Another scene I shall

always remember was passing columns of starving and emaciated Jews. They were being marched in an opposite direction. Their skin and bonny hands reaching out for help and we couldn't do anything for them. We passed by many of their dead lying along the road. Once while we were on a break, sitting along the side of the road, a horse drawn wagon came by picking up the dead Jews. The Germans with the wagon were picking up the bodies and tossing them into the wagon like they were sacks of grain.

We as Americans were so lucky that both Germany and the U.S. were members of the Geneva Convention which established rules of war and care of prisoners.

When we arrived in Branau, Hitler's birthplace, it was apparent they were expecting us as the woods we were turned loose in had trees removed on all four sides and guard towers already in place. If you can imagine 4,000 men turned loose in a large woods and told to make do with whatever you had with you. Trees were stripped of their bark, small saplings bent or broken. All of this in an effort to make some sort of shelter. Most of us were still hooked up in combines, self selected friends, who worked and shared together. Water was available from a river but a considerable distance from where we were sleeping. We received only meager rations, if any, during this period. We lived in the woods for a week. I remember it rained a lot and it snowed once. On May 2nd, one could hear the men cheering and it was building louder and louder. A US Army Jeep was coming up the roadway along one side of the woods. The jeep pulled into a clearing with an Army Captain who could probably not believe his eyes, as 4,000 men engulfed him. I was pretty close and well remember him standing up in the jeep and saying "You men are no longer prisoners of war, but soldiers of the United States Army." The very thought of this moment of joy always seems to bring tears to my eyes. You had to be there!!! The Captain was from the 13th Armored Division of General Patton's 3rd Army. He said he was ahead of the troops and that they would be along shortly. It was the next day, May 3rd that other military personnel and at least one news correspondent officially took control of the camp. FREE AT LAST! An Associated Press clipping in my scrap book announces the release with my name and some others from Ohio.

A day or two later, we walked to an abandoned aluminum factory where we made do until plans could be made as to how they would get us out of there. We had a roof

over our heads and food to eat. This was glory land to be sure. Also in my scrapbook is a picture of me in the group that I was in combine with while in the woods. I have no recollection as to how I came to have this picture. I would guess one of our people "liberated" a camera and then later mailed me the picture. We slept on floors, tables, workbenches etc.

I was at the factory for only a couple of days before being taken by a US truck to a small airport and loaded on a C-47 for a flight to an airfield near Metz, France. From this airfield we rode in trucks through a populated area where civilians were lined up along the road and cheering us as though we were the ones who were winning the war. Having been POW's and being out of the fighting for so long, we felt really strange but did enjoy it.

While in Metz I remember we ate in a large hall, if my memory is correct, we were sleeping in a boxcar. This was a May 8th in Metz and is when we heard that the war was over.

We went by train, nice coach cars, to LeHarve, France. All returning POW's were processed through here. We were called RAMPS (Repatriated American Military Prisoners.) There was more than one train going to LeHarve. I recall going along side of another train and both trains were stopped. I saw a friend that I was with back before the war when I was on coastal patrol. I even went over to his train and rode a distance with him. It was Joe Raymond.

Here we were processed, interrogated, uniformed, given a controlled diet, nice beds, etc. USO shows along with personal reunions taking place and joy throughout. It was wonderful, but still we wanted to get home.

I don't remember exactly how long we were in LeHarve but probably a couple of weeks. Everyday we were hungry. I remember that Don Lynch and I were attempting to sneak into a tent that housed food. The guard caught us and then he went inside the tent and rolled a couple of No. 10 cans of green beans out. We ate them all and just right out of the can. Every day we would check the orders that were posted to see if our names were there to ship out. I was still pretty much with my crew but more closely associated with Don Lynch from Amherst. Don and I were together from this point all the way home.

I must mention that while at Camp Luck Strike, a guy came up to me, slapped me on the back and said, I've been looking all over Germany for you." It was my good friend Vincent Beeson that I took basic training with and were together for more than a year. We were separated at Radio School. At Lucky Strike I wore a pith Helmet and on the backside, I had written OHIO. Vince ended up on B-24's and was a POW near the end of the war. It was also here that I met my pilot, Lt. King, who I thought had been killed.

Don's and my names finally appeared on a shipping out order and we went by land transportation to the harbor. Here we boarded the USS Marine Dragon. It was loaded with POW's and we were headed for the United States and New York City.

I slept in the lower level on a upper bunk. The fellow on the lower bunk was seasick most of the time so we were able to go to mess twice for most meals using his meal pass. Our eating was still somewhat controlled so we wouldn't damage our stomachs. The Marine Dragon happened to be the same ship that the 13th Armored Division had gone to Europe on. They were the unit that liberated us. It was on this trip home that I first heard the song "Sentimental Journey". Also on this trip, Bevin and Trzynski, writers of the production XVII-B were putting together a show for entertainment on the boat. They asked me to do the "Seven Veils" and I declined. I don't remember how long we were enroute, but I DO REMEMBER coming into New York harbor and past the Statue of Liberty. It was another of those immensely joyous occasions. One never to be forgotten. New York harbor was too crowded with so many troop ships returning and as a result, our ship was diverted to Boston.

We didn't have as big a welcome as those going into New York. I think we had music and I know there were many, many Red Cross ladies and others there to give handouts etc. Just being back in the US was the greatest thrill. We were processed at Camp Miles Standish. The 381st bomb Group (my unit) was deploying and were coming through Camp0 Miles Standish at the same time. I saw a lot of people that I knew including the Group Chaplain James Brown and Lt. Col. Shackley who was the operation officer at that time I was flying. This was in early June 1945. Certainly, I would have called home from here.

Again, I don't remember how long we were there. We received some pay (I had 22 months pay coming) proper uniforms, orders, etc. My orders read "Assigned to 87 East

College Street, Oberlin, Ohio for sixty days of rest and recuperation after which reporting to the Cadillac Hotel, Miami Beach, Florida August 17, 1945. Don Lynch and I were traveling home together on the train. It was to make a brief stop in Wellington. Don had called the Wasem family that he used to live with and Don Wasem picked us up at the train station in Wellington. This was Father's Day. They dropped me off in Oberlin.

The closer I was getting to home my heart beat faster and faster. Just walking up on the porch and ringing the bell was something special. It was really early, 4 or 5 o'clock in the morning. I can still hear my dad coming down the stairs saying, "It's him, It's him, It's him!" We talked and talked then one of the first things that I wanted to do was see if I could still drive a car. I drove around the block a couple of times. I didn't lose the skill. The ordeal is over and I'm home at last. To complete this was related story I have to mention Alice Tarry, the girl I fanaticized someday marrying. She was already married. Kind of an unwritten Dear John letter.

The sixty days at home went fast. I bought a 1940 Hudson convertible with some of my back pay and spent time running around, chasing the girls and keeping out of serious trouble. There weren't too many men around yet as the war with Japan was still going on. One of the fellows I spent a lot of time with was Tom (Tug) Wilson from Vermilion. He had also been a POW and had been repatriated early. He was convalescing on medical leave at home having been wounded in the Battle of the Bulge.

Most things were still rationed, I was treated like a special entity and given permission to buy new tires for my car and other considerations. I remember telling my story to one of the civic clubs in Oberlin.

Following my leave Don Lynch and I were to make the trip in my car to Miami. Tom was getting bored with no one to spend time with so he decided to ride to Miami with us. We were in Summerset, Kentucky when V-J Day occurred. We celebrated right along with the local folks. Traffic was at a log jam in the circle of the downtown area and we were right in the middle of it. This was a "Dry" county but we managed to buy some bootleg whiskey. It was bad and I brought most of it home "Lincoln Log Cabin".

In Miami Don and I were assigned to quarters and we smuggled Tom along. I don't remember what our sleeping arrangement were but we managed. Tom stuck around for awhile and then went back to Ohio.

Now that the war was over, they were discharging personnel. There was a point system employed. Points were determined by length of service. Overseas time, etc. I had plenty of points and decided I wanted to get out of the Air Corps. I also wanted to get out of Miami as were spending too much money. Bob Dwyer was there with his new bride. Cecil Floura was there with a "friend"

Transfer orders directed me to Atterbury Air Force Base, Indiana to be processed for discharge. At Camp Atterbury, I made a decision to remain in the Army Air Corps Reserve. I was discharged on September 8, 1945. I remember one thing above all else at Camp Atterbury. The fellow in the bunk bed next to me had received the Congressional Medal of Honor. He told me how they had wined and dined him while he was at home. I have always been sorry I didn't get his name.

When I got home, Tom was still convalescing. He had attended Indiana University for a year before he went into the service. He kept urging me to go with him when he returned to school in January of 1946. I decided that it was something that I would do.

The GI Bill made going to college both attractive and affordable. I made a trip to Bloomington, Indiana where the campus is located. Due to the fact that I was an out of state student, I had to meet the academic standards. My high school record was so bad that I had to take entrance exams. This I didn't want to do. Tom was persuasive so I took an exam on Friday afternoon and had a passing grade of 70. The next day I took four more exams with a total score of 350, which was the bare minimum to qualify. I formerly enrolled and got my dormitory assignment. However, just before school was to resume, I was notified that they would not hold a room for me as they had an overflow of Indiana students who took preference. I decided that I wouldn't go. Tom (Tug) insisted.

He convinced me that I could stay in the Sigma Nu Fraternity House until we found another place for me to stay. I think I was at the fraternity house so long that they decided that they only way they would get their money was to pledge me. Had it not been for Tug Wilson, I probably would never have gone to college.

"Mighty Men of the 381st" by JAMES GOOD
Heroes All "1" - MISSIONS NO. BROWN
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12, 13, 14, 17, 20

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PERSONAL SCRAPBOOK

"AMERICAN EX-PRISONERS OF WAR" TURNER
PUB.

BOEING B-17
FLYING FORTRESS

Nr

773231



UNGER

Waynard

BARACKE:

GEB. DATUM:

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AMERIK. MATR. Nr

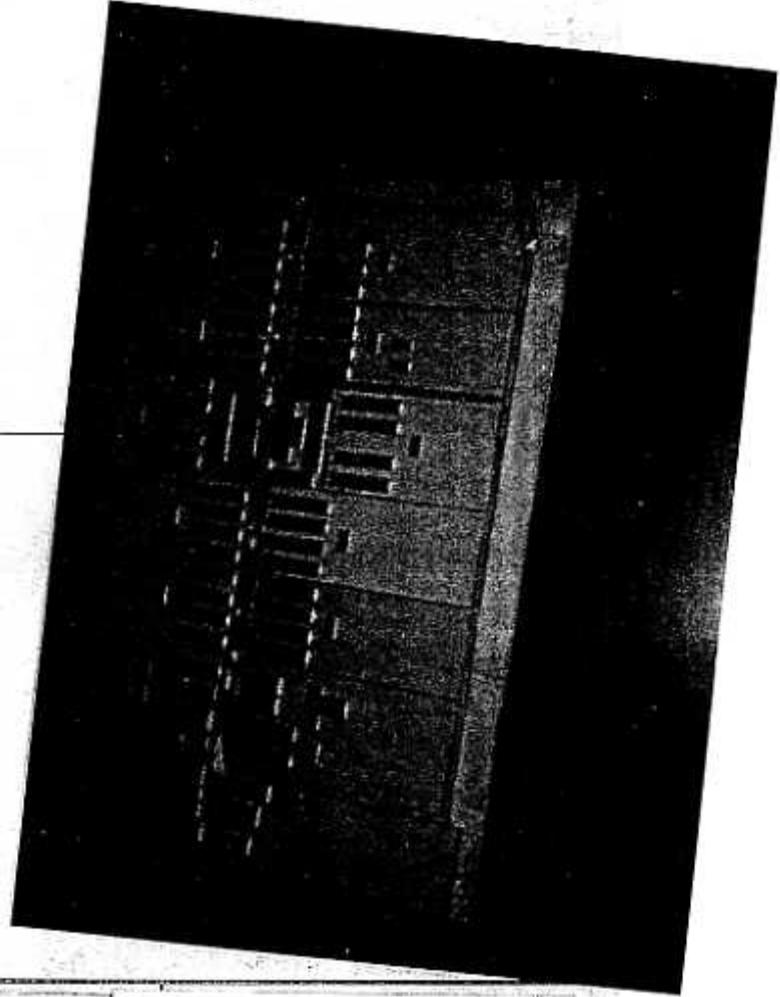
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FÜHRUNG

BEURTEILUNG

STRAFEN:

STRAFBARE HANDLUNGEN:





381st BG



HELL'S ANGEL



534 SQ

REINHARDT M. KING CREW

NEIL H. WRIGHT JR. CP

EDWARD S. McGLYNN N

FRANCIS A. PETRILLO B

MAYNARD W. UNGER R

CECIL L. FLOURA E

ROBERT E. DWYER LW

JULIUS D. MANN RW

ALBERT A. POLLARD BT

JOSEPH R. LYONS TG

SCHWEINFURT - 17 AUGUST 1943 - ALL POW's

airmen of Ridgewell



Commanding Officer of the 381st, Lt. Col. Joseph J. Nazario, who was 'shattered' by the loss of all those who failed to return.

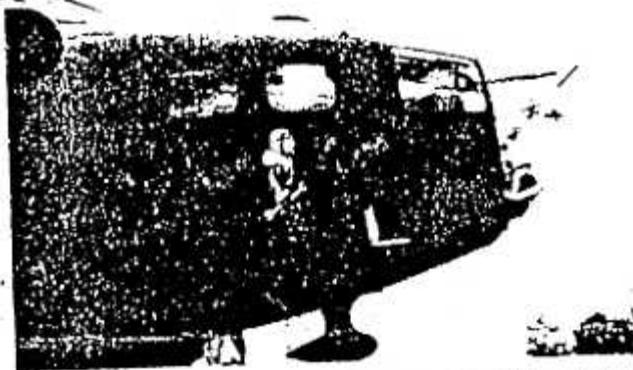
FORTY years ago this week, on Wednesday to be exact, on August 17, 1943, the 381st Bomb Group of the US Air Force stationed at Ridgewell, lost 11 aircraft, over 100 men, in the worst day's losses of any Eighth Air Force group on any one raid. Dave Osborne recalls this tragic day.

IT WAS in February, 1942, that General Ira C. Eaker came to England to launch the Eighth Air Force, eventually one of the mightiest air armadas ever assembled.

Gradually airfields sprang up all over East Anglia, one such base being at Ridgewell, soon to become the home of the 381st Bomb Group.

Months of wrangling took place among the top brass of both the United States Army Air Force and the Royal Air Force over the

A close up of 'Strato Sam', another who failed to come home, this picture was taken a few days earlier.



best methods to bomb and the most valuable targets to bomb.

Locations of the manufacture of synthetic rubber, oil, heavy industry and ball bearings were studied thoroughly by American intelligence and it was decided that one such target would be Schweinfurt, a ball bearing plant in southwest Germany towards the Czechoslovakian border. This had been prompted following attacks on a similar works, Hoffmans, (now RHP) at nearby Chelmsford.

Schweinfurt was one of the most important targets in Europe, where five factories were clustered round the town and produced about two thirds of the German ball bearing supplies. If successful the Nazi war effort would grind to a halt, for with no ball bearings, no tanks, ships, aircraft, submarines, trains or artillery could operate.

After much planning the raid got underway on August 17, 1943, using a route to keep away from the many Luftwaffe bases in enemy-occupied Europe, and another for the return trip.

Some 146 B17s (Flying Fortresses) took off that foggy morning and up through the huge mass of cloud that covered England, and they climbed to 17,000 feet over the North Sea after passing between Clacton and Orfordness.

Among this aerial armada were 26 B17s of the 381st, with the Triangle L emblazoned on their tailplanes, and led by the Group Executive Officer Lt.-Col. Conway S. Hall, on the deepest mission in Germany the group had ever flown.

The 381st already had 19 missions under their belts and had claimed 43 enemy aircraft destroyed, so they were no 'Rookies'. The group was in the low squadron position, with Brig. Gen. Robert W. Williams, the task force commander aboard a 91st BG ship from Basingbourne, the whole force totalling some 230 aircraft, which included the escorting P47 Thunderbolts.

A cynical joke among the bomber crews was that "The P47s would take us as far as Aachen, then the ME109s and FW190s would take them to the target and back, with the P47s taking over again when we reached the English Channel."

This, of course, was before the days of the P51 Mustang whose range allowed them to escort the 'Heavies' to the target and back and whose introduction was one of the turning points of the war.

The bombers were detailed to change course at Mannheim and the 381st were part of the formation attacked by about 200 enemy fighters. The escorting P47s had completed their task when the

The formation dived deeper and deeper into Germany at around 160 mph, and as one Luftwaffe squadron left the action so another would take its place, with twin-engined ME109s and Ju88s also entering the fray. Although slower than the ME109s and FW190s they were just as formidable, and they would move in to hit a straggling B17, which had been hit earlier, and lost an engine, dropping further and further behind the formation, a 'sitting duck'.

RAF Spitfires played their parts as escorts, weaving in and out of the heavy bombers until they had to leave the battle to refuel.

The Germans began to concentrate their attacks on the section containing the 381st where Lt. Ted Winslow, bombardier in the lead B17, saw the aircraft on his wing catch fire and began to fall.

The time was 14:08 and the ship, flown by 1st-Lt. Hamden L. Forkner of the 534th Bomb Squadron, went down at Simmich, near the Belgian border.

Second to go was 1st-Lt. Weldon F. Simpson, flying a ship called 'Lucky Lady' which went down over Eupen, crashing at Rumst some six minutes later, but nine 'chutes were seen to leave the ship.

At 14:19 near Vogelsand airfield, the right wing of a B17 caught fire, flown by 1st-Lt. Challen P. Atkinson. All ten bailed out, but one chute failed to open, the ship eventually crashing at Reitlerscheid.

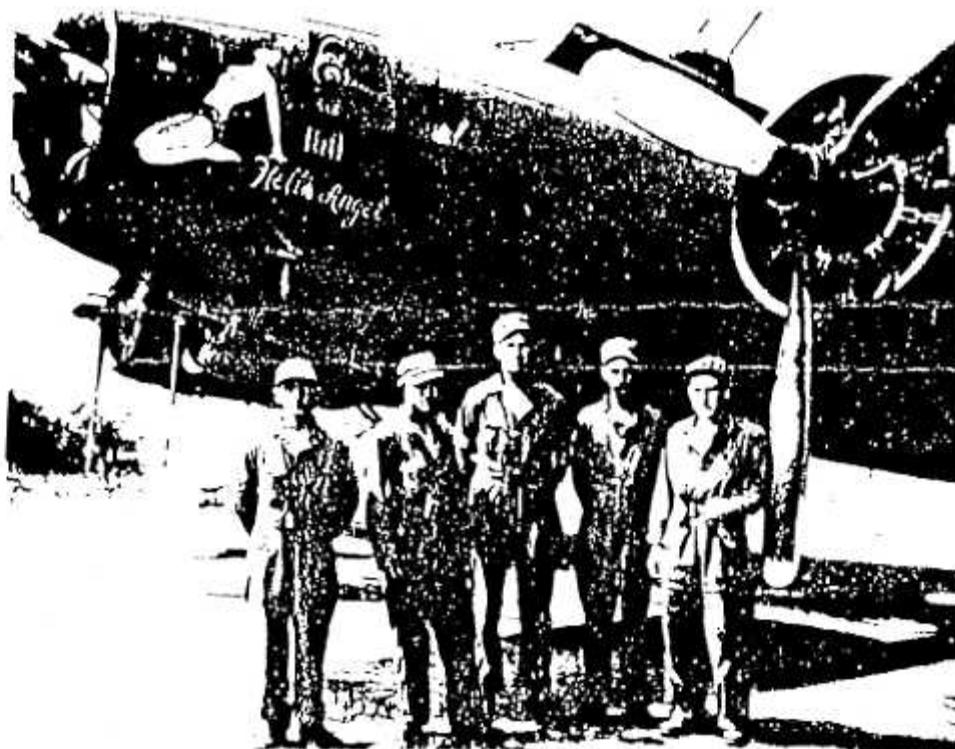
Two ships then fell simultaneously at Munsterceifel - 1st-Lt. Robert F. Nelson, whose 'King Malfunction II', had an engine feathered and although it looked under control, the cockpit window was shattered by a shell, probably killing the pilot and copilot. 1st-Lt. Jack B. Painter. Only one 'chute was seen. Immediately 'Strato Sam' went down, flown by F/O James Hudson. It had lost an engine and one wing was ablaze.

The sixth casualty was 2nd-Lt. Neil Wright Jr., on 'Sweet is Lavi', which took two rocket hits in the cockpit. It went into a slow roll before spinning down to earth in a burn. Only one crewman bailed out.

'Hell's Angels, was next to go, when 1st-Lt. Reinhardt M. King, who had been flying for several miles with No. 2 engine on fire, went into a dive. Three 'chutes were seen, the ship burst into flames and the remaining seven men looked like plunging to death below. However the tail section broke away and several were thrown free, four to five 'chutes being seen to open before the ship hit the ground at Bad Schwabach.

Only 18 ships had reached the target when Lt. Lee Jarvis was hit by flack and fell out of the formation into a long glide.

On the return journey 1st-Lt. Harry Smith, pilot of 'Damfino' (Damned if I know) was unable to keep his ship under control after



The B17 'Hell's Angel' which did not make it back, with her ground crew after an earlier mission.

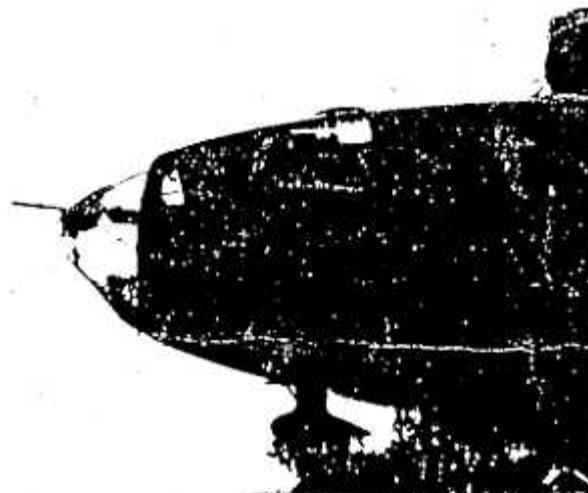
thinking he had made it home, for although the 532nd Squadron ship was damaged and flying low over the North Sea, he had every confidence in reaching Ridgewell.

But gradually the battered plane dropped lower and lower as the damaged engines were losing power. He ordered the crew to prepare for ditching and sent out a Mayday call to the Air Sea Rescue base at Manston in Kent.

Darrow gently brought the giant B17 down on the water and the crew stepped out safely into their dinghies. An hour and a half later they were picked up, and returned to their base the following day, where they were met by a barrage of questions.

Leading these was the commanding officer of the 381st, Col. Joe Nazzaro who was 'Shattered' by the loss of his men, and the group surgeon reported a dramatic drop in the morale of the rest of the crew that night.

However, the 381st licked their wounds and got on with the war. They even went back to Schweinfurt again the following October, in fact attacking the same target six more times, but there were never any losses like that day 40 years ago.



The aircraft 'Lucky Lady' did not complete many missions, only two are shown when she posed for the camera the week before.

Lt-Col. Conway S. Hall, (right) of Little Rock, Ark., who led the raid on Schweinfurt.



Stalag XVII-B Revisited

by Barbara Stelzl (Marx)

clo L.B.-Institute for Research on War-Consequences, Schoergelgasse 43, A-8010 Graz, Austria

EDITOR'S NOTE: Ms. Stelzl is writing her doctoral thesis about the facts and fiction of Stalag XVII-B. Her research is funded by the Austrian Academy of Sciences, doctorate scholarship No. 355.

In June 1995, a group of American ex-POWs revisited their place of captivity during World War II: Stalag XVII-B Krems-Gneixendorf. The once largest prisoner of war camp in the Ostmark, as Austria was called during the Third Reich, had almost totally disappeared. On first sight Stalag XVII-B had slowly become invisible, had vanished into the past. Looking more closely, however, it was possible to make out some marks of the Stammlager in the landscape of Gneixendorf. What has happened in the meantime?



A former American POW has found the approximate location of his barracks in Stalag XVII-B. He points out the spot on a map made by Ben Phelper during captivity. Only with the help of bushes, hills and the four cardinal points was he able to work out the site, as the foundations had disappeared in the last fifty years. Where there used to be barracks for thousands of POWs, there are just meadows now. (All photos by B. Stelzl).

1939-1945

The camp in Krems-Gneixendorf was founded on September 25, 1939. At that time it was used as a Dulag, transition camp, for newly captured prisoners of war. Soon afterwards, on October 26, 1939, the Dulag Krems-Gneixendorf was changed into Stalag XVII-B Krems-Gneixendorf, thus becoming a stationary POW camp for captured enlisted men and non-commissioned officers. Polish, French and later Soviet prisoners, who had to work in factories or at farms, were the first soldiers to arrive at Krems. By the end of 1941, Stalag XVII-B had become the second largest POW camp in the Third Reich, detaining more than 60,000 prisoners. Many of them did not live in the actual camp but stayed in their attached Arbeitskommandos, the working detachments.

On October 13, 1943, more than 1,300 non-commissioned American Air Force officers were transferred from Stalag VII-A Moosburg, Bavaria, to Stalag XVII-B, which by that time also contained prisoners from Italy, Yugoslavia and various smaller nations. From then until the liberation of the camp in May 1945, their number increased to 4,237 US POWs, all of whom stayed in compounds separated from the other nationalities. Due to the arrival of Air Force non-coms, the Wehrmacht camp partially fell under the responsibility of the German Luftwaffe. In November 1943, the order was given to organize a Luftwaffe camp inside Stalag XVII-B, its official name changing to "Kriegsgefangenen Mannschafts-Stammlager Stalag XVII-B Krems-Gneixendorf. Teillager der Luftwaffe". The friction between the Lager Officer Major Eigl (Luftwaffe) and the Commandant Oberst Kuhn (Wehrmacht) led in some ways to the relatively bad conditions in the camp. It had become the only German POW camp controlled simultaneously by Wehrmacht and Luftwaffe.



The once predominant Lagerstraße has become overgrown and almost invisible in the last few decades.

Liberation

When the war was finally coming to an end, orders were given to evacuate the camp so the prisoners would not fall into the hands of the advancing Red Army. The first Americans left the camp on April 8, 1945; other nationalities, such as the Russians, had marched out before them. An 18-day march of 281 miles took them to a collection point at Weillhartforst, a forest near Braunau, Austria, where lean-tos had to be built out of trees and bark. Liberation came on May 3, 1945, by the 13th Armored Division. Soon afterwards

the majority of them were repatriated to their home countries.

However, not all POWs were evacuated in April 1945. Approximately 200 American and 300 French prisoners were left behind because of health problems. Additionally, many of those engaged in work detachments or working at farms were not evacuated either, but gradually came back into the camp. Soon they were joined by a number of foreign workers who felt safer in the camp than outside. The situation in Stalag XVII-B had changed significantly. Most guards had deserted, the remaining prisoners could freely walk around in the other nationalities' compounds and everyone was awaiting the end of the war. On May 8, the day of Germany's unconditional surrender, the last guards went away. The following day the camp was liberated by the Red Army.

Soviet Occupation Soldiers Moved Into the Former POW Camp

Although the last repatriants had left Stalag XVII-B by June 1945, the camp was not immediately destroyed. For a short time Soviet occupation forces moved into the empty barracks, where POWs had been detained not long before, and stayed there until they found more comfortable lodgings.



Looking towards the former campsite. The buildings were almost completely torn down soon after the end of World War II.

Destruction of Stalag XVII-B

An Austrian tailor, who had worked together with French POWs in Krems, remembers that the camp was completely pulled down in 1946-47. Tiles and wooden boards of the barracks were sold to the local population for a small sum, who were short of building material in the post-war era. "Everybody was happy that the camp was pulled down. It was cheap material and you only needed to have a cat." Even today there are buildings in villages surrounding Gneixendorf which contain bricks, tiles or boards of Stalag XVII-B.

Besides, it is reported that when bulldozers were destroying the camp the ground often collapsed under their weight. The reason for this is quite unique: prisoners had dug a whole tunnel system below the ground which linked EX-POW BULLETIN, MAY 1997

the area behind the barbed wire with the outside world. Although everyone knew of the mortal danger of an escape attempt, the projects were not stopped in many cases; some were, however, prematurely discovered.

The Camp Cemetery

The majority of POWs who died in Stalag XVII-B were buried in a cemetery that was located in the woods not far from the camp. Up to 2,000 prisoners of different nationalities were interred there. After the war the remains of those who had died in the camp have either been buried in the cemetery of Krems or returned to their home countries. Among them were approximately 1,600 Soviet bodies who were exhumed in September 1960 and buried in the city churchyard of Krems. Although the forest can still be seen today, it is in no way marked as the camp's former graveyard.

Memorial Stones



This memorial stone was put up at the "Flughafenstraße", the road leading up to today's aerodrome. It says in German: "During World War II, the POW camp Stalag 17 B was located nearby. Prisoners who died in the camp have been buried in the city churchyard of Krems or have been returned to their home countries."

continued next page...

STALAG XVII-B REVISITED, cont'd...

On the opposite side of the road, former French POWs, who had founded the association L'Amicale des Stalags XVII-B in Paris, set up a memorial stone on June 15, 1984. It says in French: "Here was Stalag XVII B 1940-1945. In remembrance of all those who died here. Erected by L'Amicale des Stalags XVII-B 15 6 1984". Above the last sentence the following is written in German: "The POW camp Stalag XVII-B was located here 1940-1945".



Memorial stone by the French POW association L'Amicale des Stalags XVII-B.

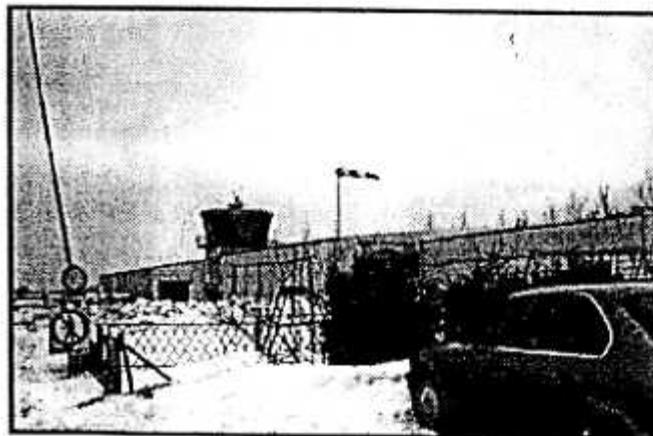
A group of American ex-POWs revisited the camp on the trip "Retracing Your Steps to Freedom during the 50th Anniversary of Your Liberation from Stalag XVII-B" at the beginning of June 1995. During a brief ceremony on June 4, they "dedicated a commemorative plaque marking their return to the campsite and remembering all those imprisoned there" (quote from the touring program). After visiting Krems they went on "The March" with motor coaches, which took them up to the woods at Braunau, where they had been liberated fifty years before.



More than fifty years after their arrival in Stalag XVII B, a group of American ex-POWs revisited the campsite. To mark this day and to remember captivity, they put up the memorial stone "WE DID RETURN 1995" on June 4, 1995.

Sports Aerodrome and Fields

Today the former campsite has given place to fields and a small aerodrome for sports planes. Not far from the barracks, where several thousand Air Force soldiers had been imprisoned, the "Flugplatzstüberl" was put up. Lisa and her husband, the owners of this restaurant, show some of the curious visitors two original, yellowed photographs of the camp hospital and the Vorlager. They recall that former prisoners and their families from various countries, primarily from France and Belgium but also from the Soviet Union, have revisited Stalag XVII-B in the last few decades.



Sports aerodrome in the vicinity of the campsite.

Walking across the now innocent looking fields or meadows, it is difficult to imagine that they had once borne one of the largest German POW camps during World War II. Apart from the above mentioned memorial stones and hardly visible remains of the camp such as the overgrown Lagerstraße or a heap of barbed wire, nothing is left. For several decades Stalag XVII-B Krems-Gneixendorf was deliberately consigned to oblivion. Only in the last few years has a discus-

sion on World War II prisoners of war been started in Austria. There is still much more research to be done on war consequences and the fates of those who had been in captivity in particular.



A heap of rusty barbed wire, next to the former Lagerstraße. The whole camp was surrounded by two separate wire fences with a warning wire on the inside. •

Will You Remember

Will you remember our service people
Will you need their service again
Will you remember their sacrifices
And visit their graves now and then.

Remember when they left their families
Their loved ones and home
Their cards and letters daily
Were good to read alone.

Remember the ones we honor
For those who paid the price
They kept "Old Glory" flying
Not just once or twice.

Remember them on Memorial Day
Place some flowers on their grave
They did what they had to do
Let's remember the memorial they made.

Remember America is free and great
Not just for this special day
I would do my time again (POW)
For I want freedom, every, every day.

— Warren G. King, Sr.
Nashville, TN, 1991

EX-POW BULLETIN, MAY 1997

Second Winter

(In Stalag XVII-B)

Another winter draws nearer,
The days are growing cold.
Most of the prisoners in this camp
Are now one prison year old.

The walls of the barracks are looser,
And the winds keep howling thru;
Our cupboards are much barer
We all seem mighty blue.

Still the news keeps right on saying,
"Home for Christmas, never fear."
We know we'll be home for Christmas,
But we wonder, in what year?

Things are quite a bit rougher
As this winter time draws near,
A second prison winter,
A second forlorn year.

— Walter (Chic) Ferens
165 E. 13th St., Oswego, NY 13126
written in Stalag XVII-B, Oct. 1944

Black Bread Recipe

Former prisoners of war of Nazi Germany may be interested in this recipe for WWII Black Bread. This recipe comes from the official record from the Food Providing Ministry published (top secret) Berlin 24.XI 1941 and the Director in Ministry Herr Mansfeld and Herr Moritz. It was agreed that the best mixture to bake black bread was:

50% bruised rye grain
20% sliced sugar beets
20% tree flour (saw dust)
10% minced leaves and straw

From our own experiences with the black bread, we also saw bits of glass and sand. Someone was cheating on the recipe!

— Joseph P. O'Donnell
20 O'Rourke Dr., Robbinsville, NJ 08691

PNC Charles Prigmore, who attended the Board of Directors Midyear meeting in Washington, DC, in March and had heart bypass surgery while there, is doing well as of April 4. He is in the rehabilitation unit at the hospital. We wish him a speedy recovery.

Ex-POW Picnic Plymouth, Vermont



Each summer we gather at Plymouth State Park
midst clusters of birches in paper white bark.
The distance some travel in crossing the state
feels shorter just knowing there's much to relate.

The women chat freely on domestic things
of gardens and grandkids and what new life brings.
Then on rustic tables then generously spread
green salads and baked beans with juicy brown bread.

Old soldiers assembled still picture their foe
as memories swing over to days long ago
when duty demanded at terrible cost
the battle, then capture, with all freedom lost.

Abruptly our leader bids all of us know
how illness has laid two comrades down low.
And further sad tidings list one comely wife
departed, while seemingly so full of life.

The schedule we'll follow includes a parade
to mark when our country's freedom was made.
We'll march in a body of Fourth of July
as national guard fighters do their fly-by.

With eating now over some make for home base,
while those living closest help clean up the place.
Now, future campers, a word of advice
from well meaning oldsters who paid a full price:

*The wisdom which aging can sometimes bestow
prompts veterans of combat to share what they know.
Strong vigil for country's a must at all times
to counter war's outbreak and terrorist crimes.*

— Bill Smallwood

P.O. Box 177, Brownsville, VT 05037



Followup to "Stalag XVII-B Revisited"

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following diary, of the march from Stalag XVII-B to the aluminum factory at Ranshofen and finally arrival in New York aboard the USS LeJune, was submitted by Robert A. Patterson, 9324 Fairfax St., Alexandria, VA 22309, who writes: "

I read with great interest the article "Stalag XVII B Revisited" in the May 1997 issue of *Ex-POW Bulletin*. I was with a group of ex-POWs who visited the site in 1995. I was shot down on April 13, 1944, on a raid over Schweinfurt and spent thirteen months in Stalag XVII-B. During our march from the camp to Braunau, I kept a diary of the day to day "events" on cigarette papers. When we returned from our reunion trip, my wife typed the account of our march. I thought you may want to use this diary as a followup to the May article. Incidentally, I didn't marry Bette - I married her best friend."

APRIL 8, 1945

Began our marching journey from Stalag XVII B, Gneixendorf, Austria, at 10:30 a.m. and marched until 8:00 p.m. Slept on the side of a hill. Ate a slight supper before turning in. Night spent NNE of a small town of Stiefeldorf, 22 kilometers from Krems.

APRIL 9

Awoke at 8:00 a.m. after a good night's sleep on the ground. Had several small pieces of bread and a quarter can of ham & eggs and a cup of hot brew. Started to march at 10:30 a.m. March ended at 2:45 p.m. Camped on grounds surrounding a monastery at Lugendorf. Boiled beans for supper and saved some for breakfast. One slice of bread before turning in.

APRIL 10

Awoke at 6:00 a.m. and started a fire. Last night was colder and more restless than night before. Heavy dew. Awoke shaking fiercely. Had beans for breakfast that we cooked the night before. Breakfast at 8:00 a.m. Prepared to march, packed and rolled one blanket but march was canceled at 9:00 a.m. until further orders. Our heading now is WSW. Our position 15 km north of Danube and 12 miles WNW of Krems. Ration for Germans from 8-10 men was one ration of barley and 3 slices of bread - 18 men per loaf. Germans were supposed to carry their own bags today. Guards showing disorder on lack of food - 1/4 loaf per man for three days. Enemy action reported WSW ahead of our movement. Priel and Mailgen towns passed through today. March estimated at 7 km.

APRIL 11

Awoke at 7:30 a.m. Passed through St. Johann, Wunberg, Muhldorf and Trandorf. So hungry I ate can of corned beef loaf at lunch stop. No bread. Had brew. Arrived at Poggstall at 6:15 p.m. Hit the hay and slept well. 30 km today.

STALAG XVII-B REVISITED FOLLOWUP, cont'd...

APRIL 12

Awoke at 6:00 a.m. and built fire. Stafford (James F.) was up a little before me. Picked kale, boiled it and ate. Got report that we get no more bread. Arrived at Laimbach at 3:00 p.m. Rained all day, we got soaked. Slept under shelter. 15 km today.

APRIL 13

Started march at 2:30 p.m. Rained all day. Arrived at Ysper and Altenmarkt at 5:10 p.m. 13 km hike today. Slept in old paper mill on third floor. Pea soup for supper. German chow at 9:30 p.m.

APRIL 14

Awoke early. Cut the bread for the group. 15 men per loaf. This was the first bread in three days. Had a brew. Walked several kilometers to first German chow. Barley soup and horse meat. Left Ysper at 12:45 p.m. Marched 14 km from Ysper to Grein. We had sour whole grain soup on the march today. We were all too starved to turn the soup down. German ration for today was 4 pieces of hard tach, 1 slice of bread and several pieces of Swiss cheese. Slept in a barn loft and felt fine when I awoke. Each day on the march the sole thought in my mind is one day closer to freedom and then home to the one person in this world that I love, Bette. I might add also a reminder for me to never forget what thanks I have to give to God for the help she has been to me to come through this war alive and to be returning. Death still confronts all of us on this march.

APRIL 15

Awoke at 8:00 a.m. A good night's sleep. Had one baked potato, a brew and one hard tach biscuit. Left Grein at 9:30 a.m. Left the banks of the Danube River after traveling along the northern banks from Ysper to Grein. We march 7 km. Germans took it easy on us today. Quite a few boys are getting sick now.

APRIL 16

Awoke at 6:00 a.m. after a good sleep on the floor of a silo pit. Cooked the corn meal we five bought from a German farm lady. We left at 9:30 a.m. and marched to Naarn, a distance of 18 km.

APRIL 17

Left Naarn at 8:30 a.m. Coffee for breakfast, that's all. Marched 22 km today to a town of Steyregg.

APRIL 18

Awoke at 6:00 a.m. Had a brew of German coffee and corn meal. Left Steyregg at 7:20 a.m. Reached Linz at 9:00 a.m., 13 km from Steyregg. They really pushed us this morning on account of crossing a large bridge at Linz, subject to bombing. Crossed the Danube at Linz from north bank to south bank at 9:30 a.m. Halfway across the bridge the air raid sirens blew. We managed to get out of town before the bombing. Had one hour rest 3 km west of Linz on the south bank of the Danube. It rained late in the day. We marched 34 km today. Slept in farmer's barn yard. Was very tired at end of day but even though it was a long march it went fast. All day my thoughts were of Bette, home and the things I wanted to have some day.

EX-POW BULLETIN, JULY 1997

APRIL 19

Cloudy in the morning. Cool for marching. Sun was out in the afternoon. Nothing of importance today. Things could be worse than they are. "Time and the hour run through out the roughest day." Did some trading along the road today. Marched 18 km to Eferding.

APRIL 20

Broke camp early, 7:30 a.m. Good day. Sun out and beautiful day. I was more than glad to welcome earth as a bed to-night after 32 km of hot marching plus a bad case of dysentery which is slowly weakening me. Neumarkt on the ground.

APRIL 21

Had a 24 hour rest today. Was I glad. A dreary day but I didn't notice much as I was more interested in some rest as I know tomorrow will be a hard pull for the condition I am in. Washed for the first time in I can't recall how many days. Went to a nearby stream. I even shaved.

APRIL 22

Broke camp early. Rained and hailed most of the day. Traveling through high country. Arrived at Eizling at 7:00 p.m. All were tired but we built a fire to dry our soaked clothes. We all got relief by sitting around the fire and talking of home and the ones we love. This gave us all the spirit to fight on to home. If it hadn't been for these chats we would have gone crazy. Marched 25 km today. Stole a German bayonet.

APRIL 23

Awoke at 7:00 a.m. Rested and feeling fine. Had a beautiful dream last night of the one I love. It is one I will never forget. The dream plus a fairly good breakfast of French biscuit, fruit bar, pudding and a brew. I was ready to march. We started at 9:00 a.m. It rained and sleeted but I didn't notice it as my thought and heart were many a mile to the west of me. My thought and my heart were with her all day. Reached Altheim at 6:00 p.m. Rumor of 24 hour rest tomorrow. Slept in a machine shed. I think we are about to the end of our march.

APRIL 24

Twenty-four hour rest at Altheim. Awoke at 9:00 a.m. What a rest. Fairly good breakfast from food bought from Germans. Fried spuds, Jerry soup (water), ate it anyway. Stole some sauerkraut from a farmer's cellar and had it for dinner. Baker (Lewis E.) and I kept things and cooked while Pappy O'Dea, Stafford and Maucy went out to trade. They came back drunk but with lots of food. Stafford had to break two eggs in his pocket. Cloudy all day but no rain until 5:00 p.m. Started supper at 6:00 p.m. French noodles, cheese and spuds. Had mush after supper, this also stolen from farmer's cellar. Hit me a little. The rest were feeling fine again. I steered clear for a while as all wanted me to fry some pancakes made from the buckwheat flour they had bought from a miller. From 7:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. I fried pancakes. What a job for five men.

APRIL 25

Up early. 17 km to Braunau. Marched around the south of the city. Got caught in an air raid in the city. No bombs but

STALAG XVII-B REVISITED FOLLOWUP, cont'd...

strafing all around us. Moved on for 11 km to forest at Weillhardt, our new home. No shelters, no nothing. Forest is 11 km SE of Braunau, Hitler's birthplace.

APRIL 25 - MAY 1

Our home in the forest was all work, no play and no eating. Our first step was to build a shelter with our jack knives. This we did in quick order. It rained our whole stay. Little sleep after first night of rain. By then our shelters began to leak. Left my gang on the 27th and moved over with Beryle, Smokey and Hulsey (Russell L.). Beryle cooked as he couldn't walk or stand for long. Hulsey and I built the shack and Smokey walked 4 km to the river for water. We had only one issue of German rations in this period. Many were too sick to sit up, things were pretty bad. On the 29th we heard gun fire to the northwest late at night. We were around the fire drying our clothes. No sleep.

MAY 2

Camp surrendered to an American captain from 13th Armored Division of the Third Army. We were still guarded by Germans during the night. We were really happy when we saw the first Americans. By this time our hopes of reaching home were at an unusual high. My first thoughts were of Bette. She is the one I love more than any other person on earth. I will always feel this way no matter what comes about.

MAY 3

We were liberated. The Germans were disarmed. From here on it was a field day for us. We loaded everything eatable and everything that ran for our transportation.

MAY 4

Hulsey and I started out on our second day of food searching and a house to get a bath, as we were crusty. We returned that evening with 18 eggs in a poke, two freshly baked loaves of bread and two fat chickens. Beryle had supper ready for us.

MAY 5

We left the forest at 6:00 p.m. with houses on our backs. Marching in the rain to aluminum factory at Ranshofen. Beryle and Hulsey had it out before leaving. I tried to patch things up but both were too stubborn for me to handle. I went with Hulsey and Smokey went with Beryle. The fight was over me and Beryle not watching some of our things. A Russian stole the whole kit and kaboodle.



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MAY 6

Still at the aluminum factory at Ranshofen. First American rations. Did I stuff myself!

MAY 7

I was so sick last night I wanted to die. I think I even had food coming out of my ears and eyes. The most wonderful feeling to be sick with food instead of without.

MAY 8

Left aluminum factory at 1:00 p.m. by truck to an airfield at Pocking, 13 km from Passau. No take off today. Laid over in Barracks 93 on airfield radio school barracks.

MAY 9

Up at 6:00 a.m., packed and ready to go. Planes due at 8:00 a.m. Take off at 10:42 a.m. Stopped at Metz, France, and refueled at 1:57 p.m. Beryle and I were together. Our first flight since April 13th, 1944. Landed at La Harve at 4:00 p.m. Band there to greet us. Moved by GI truck 30 miles to Camp Lucky Strike.

MAY 10

Camp Ramp - Hospital

MAY 11

Camp Ramp - Eat and sleep.

MAY 12

Eat and sleep.

MAY 13 - MAY 17

Looked for fellow I knew, Mat Al Logawnich. We were 15 in egg nog line. Met Earl Friess, my left waist gunner on May 16th. First sight of him since take-off April 13th, 1944. All crew got together that night. All who were alive.

MAY 18

Left Camp Ramp for La Harve, got there at 2:00 a.m. I was anxious to board that boat for home as I was looking forward to what I hoped would be the happiest day of my life. Seeing Bette.

MAY 19 - MAY 20

Stayed at La Harve

MAY 21

Boarded boat USS LeJune at La Harve harbor.

MAY 22 - MAY 23

Left La Harve at tide 6:00 p.m. Lay at bay til 10:00 p.m. Arrived at South Hampton, England, at 11:00 a.m.

MAY 24

Left South Hampton at 8:00 a.m.

JUNE 3

Arrived in states at New York

JUNE 3 - JUNE 6

Stayed at Camp Kilmer, NJ. Left by train to Pittsburgh.

JUNE 7

Arrived at Pennsylvania Station at 8:15 a.m. Was not able to reach Mother or Bette's mother by phone. finally, at 6:30 p.m., I heard her voice on the phone. At 8:00 p.m. I walked in her front door and embraced her. The happiest moment of my life after not seeing her since January 1944.

Also in my notes I found information that stated there were eight groups of five hundred men who left Stalag XVII-B on April 8, 1945. Group seven included men from Barracks 36, 37, 38, and 39. I was in 36B. *