

**National Prisoner of War Museum  
Andersonville, Georgia**



**My World War II Prisoner of War  
Experience**

by

**Carl F. Miller, Jr. Capt. Ret.**

Date: Oct 3, 1998

Signature: Carl F. Miller Jr.

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Andersonville, Georgia

1. Name:  
Miller, Carl F. Jr.
2. Current Address:  
637 Ridgecliff St.  
Tallmadge, Ohio 44278
3. Birthplace: Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio      Date of birth: October 2, 1921
4. Branch of Service:  
U. S. Army 107th Calvary - Band Section 7-20-40  
7-20-1940 to 1-5-43  
U. S. Army M. P. Detachment, Fort Ord, California  
1-5-43 to 3-5-1943  
U. S. Army Air Force Cadet  
3-5-1943 to 12-3-1943  
U. S. Army Air Force      Serial # 0701625  
12-3-1943 to 11-9-1947
5. Service Dates:  
7-20-1940 to 11-9-1947
6. Campaigns:  
European Theatre of Operations  
15th Air Force flying out of Italy
7. Number of Flights before capture:  
(3) three
8. Ground of Sea Capture:  
None
9. Place of Capture: Weiner Neustat, Austria      Date of Capture: May 24, 1944  
Rank: 2nd Lieutenant      Age: 23 years  
Unit Bombardier - B-24  
98th Bomb Group  
395th Bomb Squadron

10. Circumstances of Capture:

I was in the 98th Bomb Group, 395th Bomb Squadron based in Leese, Italy, located at the heel of the boot. I was the Bombardier and our plane was a B-24 D. The 98th Bomb Group was all B-24's.

It was my third mission. I had been in Italy 24 days, and this was the 24th day of May, 1944. Our target this day was the Messerschmitt Aircraft Manufacturing factory in Weiner Neustad, Austria (this was the Luftwaffe's most successful fighter, the BLUFF-109 called the ME-109). This mission was to be about 12 to 13 hours and was clear flying until arriving at the target area, about 1200 hours. Target altitude was at 19,500 ft.

We were the first flight in and the flak was heavy; down the Bomb Run our plane was hit pretty heavy. It knocked out #3 engine which was on fire, then #4 engine was hit, it was on fire also.

I had opened the bomb bay doors at the beginning of the bomb run so I dropped the bombs at the proper time. Bill Shaughnessey, the pilot pulled off the bomb run for the return trip back to the base. We took another hit by flak, this one rupturing the fuel lines. The whole plane was on fire.

The pilot gave the signal for emergency exit - to bail out - every man for himself. I was in the nose of the plane with the navigator, John Velin. We both strapped on our parachutes. John and I both wore our parachute harnesses so it was simple to hook on the "chest pack" which contained the chute.

In the front of the plane, behind the nose compartment was the "Nose Wheel". There were two levers to pull and the "Nose Wheel" doors opened for emergency exit. Only one lever worked so it left half of the space to go down through. John went first and there was not enough space to exit. It was a tight squeeze. John get stuck!

I stepped on his head and down he went. When I went through I got stuck, too. So the upper half of me was in and the lower half of my body was hanging out. The fire from the oxygen and the gas was at my face. The last memory I had was the fire in my face; then I lost consciousness.

A year later, the pilot told me that the plane went into a dive and exploded. I believe this is when I got out of the plane. When I became conscious, I was about 8 or 9,000 feet above the ground and the parachute was opened. I looked upward and saw one of my riser" lines on my parachute was smoldering but it held until I got to the ground.

Before I landed I knew my face was burned pretty badly, also my left hand was burned. When I took off my glove, the skin came with it. The force of the explosion caused my right knee and right ankle to be broken along with my left wrist. The bone on the right knee was protruding through the skin. I floated down in the parachute and, as

luck would have it, the chute caught in the tree tops and my feet were about three inches above the ground. I unhooked the chute harness and slid down the tree trunk.

I spied the German soldiers running toward me; it was at this point I lost my sight - I went blind. Other senses took over. I did not understand their language. They carried me out of the woods on a stretcher and placed me in a horse-drawn cart. It was a bumpy ride to some first-aid station.

My American uniform marked me as an enemy, therefore, the villagers threw stones and spit at me. It was a known fact that if you went down it was better to be picked up by German soldiers than the civilians. The civilians would usually kill the enemy airmen, specially, if he was injured. After all, we were bombing their homes and killing many of them even though the targets were industrial. As planes were hit, they would veer off target and dive into a residential area.

At the first aid station, they put a splint on my wrist and leg. I stayed there that night. The next day they put me on a bus which took me to a hospital where I remained about 10 days. I was still blind and really not conscious all the time. At the hospital, they put me under an anesthetic, put a cast on my right leg, from foot to groin, plus a cast on my left wrist. Also they placed a mask on my face to ward off infection. After about 10 days the medics removed the mask from my face.

Then I was transported to Prague, Czechoslovakia - now called the Czech Republic. Here I was with 12 other American and one Canadian Royal AF man, all 14 of us were airmen. From this day on my vision began to return gradually. The medical staff would see a little more each day. This medical staff gave us decent medical care as they had never had any POW's before. My eyes and legs healed but were never right. I had small holes to see through and I was on crutches the remainder of the time.

From Prague, we were sent by railroad back to Frankfort-On-Main, which was an Interrogation Center for Airmen. All wounded were sent across the river for interrogation which lasted about 3 or 4 days. The questions were the same; our answers were name, rank, and serial number.

From there our next stop was Meineke, which was a convalescent camp for wounded prisoners. Here I stayed for 2 - 3 months until my appearance before the German-Swiss Board, where decisions were handed down to be an Exchange Prisoner or not. I was lucky to be exchanged.

From Meineke I was sent to Annaburg, about 30 miles south of Berlin, where a group of prisoners were gathered before the Exchange began. We arrived in Annaburg soon after Thanksgiving and spent Christmas and New Years here, hanging around until the end January, 1945.

In Annaburg we were treated fairly well and Americans, as they are will always find a way to entertain themselves and make the best of a bad situation. For New Years Eve, we had saved our sugar, prunes, and raisins and let them ferment in water. We toasted 1945 New Year in grand style.

From Annaburg, about the end of January, the train threaded its way through the southern Alps into Switzerland at Lake Lucerne - (free men again). Then across Switzerland to France and on to the Port of Marseille, located on the south coast of France. We had the chance to relax and enjoy the scenery of the Alps.

Five Hospital ships were anchored in the Port of Marseilles. Every service man was given a physical and de-loused before boarding the Swedish ship, the Gripsholm, for the 13 - 14 day trip to Good Old U. S. A. We arrived in New York City the later part of March, 1945.

Happy to be home in the U. S. A even if I would spend a few more years in the Army Hospitals.

11. POW number - none
12. POW Hospitals - May 24, 1944  
Weiner Nuestat - Hospital  
Prague, Czechoslovakia - 2-3 Months  
Frankfort, Germany - Convalesce Hospital  
Hospital Ship Gripsholm - 14 day - arrived in U. S. A. March, 1945
13. Forced Marches - none
14. Ship journeys - POW Exchange - 14 days S. S. Gripsholm
15. Never bombed or strafed.
16. Never rode in box cars.
17. In Prague, Red Cross sent one parcel a week after the Swiss Consul came to visit and investigate the hospitals.
18. Red Cross parcels contained candy bars, can of powdered milk, corned beef, Spam, butter that didn't melt, & cigarettes, 5 packs. Food from enemy - Black bread, potato soup. We were fed three times a day. Cigarettes were traded, we saved the butts, emptied the tabacco in a can, then traded with German guards. We were treated well by the Austrians.
19. My time was spent in prison hospitals. Not the best medical attention was given but the Germans treated us in a humane manner. We were all unable to work because we

were all wounded men. Wooden barracks housed 40 men, double bunks with a coal stove for heat. They used oil bricks which burned for 12 hours. Wintertime - December and January was very cold. At night, four men would sneak out and steal bricks from the coal bin. Two men would be on lookout and two men to fill pails.

I learned to play bridge and chess. We swapped stories about the Army, our experiences, and our life at home, the U. S. A.

20. I was liberated by the Prisoner of War Exchange between the Germans and Americans. I was incapacitated, unable to be sent back to the front lines by Americans so I was entitled to be exchanged for a German P. O. W. The rate was five Americans to one German.

Very Important:

I give my permission for this questionnaire to be deposited at the Andersonville National Historic Site for use of future generations.

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Date: Oct. 3, 1998

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Mail to:

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