

May 21, 1945

I'm in a little camp on the West Sea Coast of France called "Camp Lucky Strike." I have a nice 60 day furlough coming to me as soon as I am shipped to the States. This camp is about 42 miles from the Seaport of LeHavre.

I have been in this camp going on the 11th day and I have been unfortunate to be in the wrong block. It seems that some fellows have been getting out in 3 or 4 day. I ought to be processed in 2 or 3 days and on a ship in 4 days.

Censoring has been lifted so I'm going to give you a concise summary of what happened in the last 2 months.

On April 10th, we were setting out on our 16th mission. Krieg, flew with a new crew and their co-pilot flew with us on his first and last mission. Well--the target was Oraniansburg, the S.S. barrack's, and arsenal that the Russians wanted out of the way for their Push. It is located a little north of Berlin. We were on the bomb run when we got hit by a jet propelled plane. It hit the waist and blew a hole big enough to drive a truck thru. Tish, got his left leg and arm shot off by about 20 hits. The oxygen and electrical systems were shot out. We were at 25,000 feet. We dropped our bombs and went to the front of the ship to tell the pilot what happened and to set up an emergency interphone. This didn't work, so I told him to try to lose altitude.

I started back down the cat walk which leads through the bomb bay to the radio room. The bomb bay doors were open. As I crawled around the bomb rack we got hit again--in No. 3 engine and flames kept pouring into the bomb bay. I made it back to the radio room where upon an explosion occurred and the ship went into a dive. The walls caved in and the floor gave way and I was underneath it all. I thought that, that was it; and started to pray and try to move. I couldn't move, at all. All of a sudden the plane leveled off and I got up and found my chute, ripped off my flak suit and put my chute on. I then noticed Boyes, diving out of the waist door. Tish, was still sitting on the floor. They had given him first aid. I looked for his chute but every thing was strewn around and if his chute was in the chute rack, it was blown out of the ship by the first hit.

I then dove out the waist and none too soon--because I only counted 5 and the ship exploded into bits. I waited a little longer and then pulled the cord. When the chute opened I noticed 4 more chutes around me.

I landed in a tree in a stumpy clearing that once was a woods. I climbed up the tree, unbuckled my chute and slid to the ground. I crawled on the ground to some marsh grass and lay there for a few minutes and headed deeper into the swamp. I could hear voices and see civilians and soldiers with guns all around. One guy almost stepped on me--but he didn't see me. I then crawled to a brook and followed it to a bridge over which a road ran. On the other side of the bridge I ran into a German Lieut. from the Wehrmacht. He asked me if I had arms. Then many more angered civilians came at me, but he chased them away. He took me to a First aid station where my face was bandaged. I had the left side of my face--forehead--nose--lips and eye brows burned and a nose bleed--got banged landing in the tree. It looked pretty messy but the burns were only second degree and some of the blisters were broken any how, now they're all healed and my eye lashes are growing in again. I have a skin discoloration over my left eye which will soon go away.

At the First aid station I ran across Boyes, and he had his left arm blown off above the elbow. I found out from a kid who was evacuated from a hospital in Berlin to our Stalag (prison camp) that Boyes, couldn't be moved because he was too weak from loss of blood. The Tail Runner whose name I don't know was the 1st one to get out. Engard, a radar operator was 2nd out. Boyes, was third, then Lewis, our toggelier, was fourth one

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out. He bailed out of the nose. McAfee, Roth, Ruit, Tish and the co-pilot didn't get out of the ship.

I was taken to a German air field at Finow, I was there 3 days and taken to Staaken, an air field in the suburbs of Berlin. We stayed there a few days and were taken to a P.O.W. camp in Luckenwalde, this is where we saw our first American prisoners. Well, then the Russians came in on April 22nd and the camp was liberated. Fighting was still going on. We didn't get any action though, so in 5 days I took off from the camp with 5 other guys, 2 fighter pilots, Lewis, and 2 fellows who had been prisoners for 27 months. I acted as an interpreter and we walked and hitch hiked and ate with the Russians for 2 days. We crossed the bridge at the River Elbe at Wihenberg and were on our way towards the American lines when a Russian boy (soldier on a bike whom I had talked to about 15 minutes previous apprehended us and told us an American mechanized scouting patrol had entered the last village. So we hot footed back and hopped on with them and they gave us guns and ammunition. We captured over a hundred Germans.

We finally ended up in Halle, at Herman Goerings famous air school. From there we went to Merseburg by truck and then were flown here. They are 6 days late in their predictions already you know--the U.S. Army-- (SNAFU) never the less, its the best and most efficient army over here. No other can compare withit.

We are getting good food, fresh eggs, chicken, steak--we are supposed to be on hospital diet plus 10% extra food while we are here.