The Oflag 64 “Fake Drunk Party” Escape

It was while Kriegy Lts. Frank Aten, Roy Chappell and William Higgins were serving a 30 day sentence in solitary for a previous escape attempt that another escape idea was born. It became known as **“The Fake Drunk Party”**. The three Lieutenants had discovered a small window with six iron bars in the South end of the solitary confinement block which overlooked a deep, broad drainage ditch leading to the West. They thought they could escape from the solitary cell block by cutting the six bars on the window, dropping into the drainage ditch and following it into the forest.

Once released from solitary and back at the camp the challenge became how to get back to solitary confinement with a hacksaw. Two more Kriegies were added, Lt. Dick Secor, and Lt. Col. Jack Van Vliet, and a plan was hatched. The officers brewed a horrible concoction from fermented raisins and after an afternoon Roll Call, they poured the stinking liquid on their faces and uniforms and rinsed their mouths with it. The officers began yelling and singing, took a cart filled with metal trash into the cobbled camp courtyard and began to make loud unbearable noises. They were immediately arrested and taken to the German barracks to be questioned, searched and confined. Secor had the hacksaw blade taped to the bottom of his foot. Aten, Chappell, Higgins and Van Vliet were searched first, so when the guards, already tired of smelling the liquor-saturated Kriegies, got to Secor, they weren’t prepared for his brilliant (although unplanned) maneuver of throwing up all over his searcher just before he got to his feet. They were quickly sentenced*: “10 days in solitary on bread and water for drinking and rowdiness”* and immediately thrown into solitary.

As soon as they reached the confinement cell they immediately began sawing the bars on the block window. On the morning of the ninth day after the last guard inspection, all the bars were cut enough to break them easily. Four of the five officers escaped (Van Vliet was unable to open his cell door), but were recaptured a short time later. A furious German Kommandant, Oberst Schneider, ordered that pants and shoes be removed from Secor, Chappell and Van Vliet each night. In addition, a guard was stationed inside the cell block both day and night.

