

World War II Memoirs
1942 to 1945
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December 17, 1974

World War II Begins

These are some of my recollections of World War II after a passage of 30 years and more. Memory is fallible and allowance must be made for this, although I will attempt to be as accurate as I am able.

World War II was the last of our country's wars that was a "popular" war, in that public opinion was 99% in support of the decision to go to war. President Roosevelt and General Marshall were attempting to mobilize our armed forces as the signs of war were taking shape. But the public was apathetic until the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, and severely crippled our Pacific fleet. The element of surprise in warfare is always desirable, particularly if the surprise is achieved by your side, and the Japanese were extremely successful in making this surprise attack. Despite obvious warnings the Americans were woefully inept in meeting the attack and we suffered a serious defeat. Admiral Kimmel and General Short, the Navy and Army commanders in the area were, of course, Court Martialed, but the unpreparedness was also the responsibility of many others, including the general public.

Nothing mobilizes public sentiment like a sudden and severe defeat and the American people were immediately united behind President Roosevelt in a declaration of war against Japan. He made a stirring radio address to the nation in which he described the "sneak" attack as it's called when your side is taken by surprise. He called for full mobilization and the production of 50,000 airplanes, an impossibility it seemed, but which was met and exceeded. The war had already been going on in Europe for about 3 years. Germany had overrun Poland, Holland, Belgium, and France. The British Army had been evacuated from the beach at Dunkirk by every available type of water craft that could be obtained, and while the Royal Air Force covered the evacuation area the Army was largely saved, but all their equipment was lost, abandoned.

Hitler's announced plan was to invade and conquer Britain. Neville Chamberlin resigned as prime minister and Winston Churchill replaced him and rallied the British people to resistance with stirring speeches that aroused their fighting spirit to the highest pitch. The Royal Air Force defeated the German Luftwaffe against superior numbers, performing incredible feats of heroism, and Churchill orated "Never in the history of human endeavor has so much been owed by so many to so few." Later in the war when the troopships carried thousands of men and a few army nurses or Red Cross girls, this speech was paraphrased as "Never in the history of human endeavor have so many chased so few, so long, for so little."

America admired and sympathized with the British people. We shipped them all the supplies and material we could, and so then German submarines began to sink our shipping, as much as 400,000 tons a month in the early months of 1942. Our east coast was lined with flotsam and jetsam from our torpedoed ships. Then Italy entered the war on the side of Germany, joining the side that was the obvious winner at that point. Roosevelt made another radio address to the nation saying, "The hand that held the dagger (Italy) has plunged it into the back of its neighbor (France). He pronounced dagger and neighbor as daggah and neighbah. So we declared war against Germany and Italy also, in addition to Japan. This action had the solid

backing of American public sentiment. Japan had attacked and humiliated us.

I Volunteer And I Get Drafted

Hitler was an evil man who was hated for his deeds (with justification) as no person in modern history has been hated. It was easy to go to war against this man. Vast numbers of young men volunteered for the armed services and as usual large numbers attempted to secure commissions, or favored positions, and large numbers also made efforts to evade any military service. I went to the Army Air Corps recruiting office in the Air Cadet program but was declined. Then I applied to the plant protection service, a civilian program for the inspection and safeguarding of industrial plants, which was in line with my work as an insurance rate inspector, but the draft was in full operation and no draft eligible person was accepted into this program. On January 16, 1942, forty days after the Pearl Harbor attack of December 7, 1941, I was inducted into the army as a private at Fort Custer, Michigan.

The first business after being sworn into service was to take a written test called the Army General Classification Test on which I scored 144. A few weeks later, when I had access to the orderly room records, I found this to be second from high, or third in order of 600 men in our unit. The first high with 150, which I believe was a perfect score, was Emory Gaffney of Lincoln, Illinois, who became a good friend of mine, and if he survived the war, may now be a prominent citizen of that community.

After receiving a new and reasonably well fitting uniform and overcoat and cap I was permitted to visit Kalamazoo for a few hours to see my parents and my girl, Ethyl May Humphrey. There is no reason for recruits to remain long at an induction center so after two days we were taken by train to Jackson, Mississippi, and told that we were the Jackson Army Air Base Medical Detachment. There were five companies of 20 tents each, ten tents on each side of a company street, and six men in each tent. The unit was commanded by First Lt. James Gosman, a young doctor from Indianapolis.

We had some medical treatment after the war for our kids by an older doctor who was a partner of Dr. Gosman. All young doctors entered the army with commissions although Gosman hadn't been in the army very long and didn't know much more about it than we did. The men were first put into the tents in order of their arrival, but in a few days it became evident that if they were assigned in alphabetical order it would be much easier to locate a man. So Lt. Gosman gave the order to redistribute the men in that manner. As these recruits had by that time lived together three or four days, they resisted this sundering of established friendships. One man came to me in desperation and said, "Did you hear what they're going to do?" I said I hadn't and he said in disbelief "They're going to bust up the old gang!"

Jackson, Mississippi

The January weather in Mississippi was quite pleasant during the day but below freezing at night. The tents had earthy floors and were heated by Sibley stoves. Sibley stoves were developed before the Civil War. They were cone shaped of sheet steel with a small opening in the bottom for air draft and a small door to insert fuel. There was a general disorganization, a more or less continuing state of affairs throughout the war and no wood had been provided for these stoves. Later when it was provided, there were no axes to cut it with. The problem of the problem of the axe was solved by pooling the finances of our tent and buying one from a hardware store in Jackson. But for a while the wood supply consisted of what we could obtain

by foraging. The area was soon cleaned of every combustible twig for miles around. We found an oak railroad tie that would make good firewood, but it was hard as stone and appeared completely indestructible, that was before we owned the ax. We took small pebbles and pounded them with stones into small cracks in the oak wood. This widened the cracks where upon we pounded in larger stones and in a short time we'd reduced that rock hard oak tie to a usable pile of kindling wood.

We also found out, as all armies do, that when it rains the army wallows in mud as civilians have never done.. Our training was supposed to begin here, but almost no trained men were available at that stage of mobilization so they called for Volunteer drill instructors. Having spent two summers at Citizens Military Training Camp at Fort Custer in 1936 and 1937, I had some knowledge of basic military drill, volunteered, and was made a Corporal after being in the army about a week. We drilled all over the place, took several marches around the countryside, attended many lectures on army medicine by Lt. Gosman, and in six weeks our basic training was over.

One of these lectures was about snakes and treatment of snakebites. The men were most all from the city, most had never seen a snake, and this lecture stirred up a great awareness of snakes. The weather was warming up. We'd seen one or two snakes on our marches, and were told that the area contained rattlesnakes, all of which were poisonous. I'd grown up along the Kalamazoo River, the swampy land contained many rattlesnakes, but I'd never heard of anyone being bitten by one. The city boys were most fearful of the thought of rattlesnakes and rumors began to spread about the great number of snakes in Mississippi. One of the men put some small stones in a match box and went around behind the tents after dark rattling them. A couple others followed him by a few minutes, pounding the ground with a stick and yelling "There he goes." "Did you get bit?" "He's under that tent." Then yelling into the tent, "Did you guys see a snake in here?"

The results was that many of the men didn't sleep at all that night staying awake to guard against snakes. A year later in Arizona we had a similar lecture to a different group of men about the desert scorpions, how they would get into your shoe during the night and sting your foot. I never saw a live scorpion but many men put sticks in others shoes, after dark, and then would watch and holler "scorpion" if the victim touched the stick with his toe, or if he emptied it out and the reaction was always that the victim would jump and everyone would laugh, except the victim.

Before leaving Jackson our detachment staged a soldier show in the Jackson Armory. Some of the men had been professional musicians and entertainers and put on a series of acts. Patriotism was intense and the place was sold out for two nights. The final was a speech by a man made up as Adolph Hitler, little black mustache, and Nazi swastikas all over him. Then came a heavy tramping of marching feet off stage growing louder, and finally a column of marching American soldiers four abreast, led by me carrying a large American flag, tramping slowly and relentlessly toward Hitler. He saw us and retreated slowly, shouting threats, but we came on and drove him to the side of the stage. Then he ran to the center of the stage shouting and raving in German; we turned tramping slowly in a circle and came at him. He shouted and raved in fear, but tripped and fell just as we reached him. We tramped over him while he screamed and writhed in agony, and the band played the Stars and Stripes Forever. The thunderous applause was all anyone could wish., The show made a profit of over \$600 for the company fund.

It was cold the next morning and all the men were out on the woodpile getting

firewood to warm up the tents, including Adolph Hitler. Somewhat bruised by the enthusiasm of the marchers, the comments were "You glamorous stage stars should not have to be out here getting wood. You should stay in bed and let the common people do that kind of work." But the common people would have kept all the wood for themselves and the stage stars needed to be warm too.

We spent the \$600 on a picnic: for the whole detachment at one of the city parks where confederate trenches were still evident having been dug by Joe Johnston's men in an attempt to keep Sherman's army out of Jackson during the Civil War.

Fort Jackson, South Carolina

Some of us left Jackson in the spring of 1942 and went to Ft. Jackson, Columbia, South Carolina, living again in a tent with five other men, all of them aircraft mechanics or B26 gunners. I was the only medical man in the tent. About June of 1942 I went to Key Field, Meridian, Mississippi, where I worked in the medical dispensary for about a month under Lt. Sanford Katz of New York City.

B 26's were difficult to fly. The crews and mechanics were all learning. Many errors were made. The squadron lost one ship a week as long as I was with them. One of my tent mates, William Oakes of Illinois, died in a B26 that blew up in midair. One man was to be sent to his home with his casket and each of us in the tent wanted to go, but Fayne from another tent was selected, which disgusted us because we claimed Fayne wasn't even a friend of Oakes. William Oakes was a fine boy, honest, loyal, brave, friendly, hard working, dependable, and virtuous in many ways. His death made us sad.

But he had one trait which first had made us lack enthusiasm for his companionship; he did not like to wash his socks. He apparently never changed them. On rainy days, with the tent flaps closed the atmosphere was most oppressive. It made us lose our appetites, and become ill. We wondered how he could stand himself. He completely disregarded our direct hints. Finally the five of us had a meeting to discuss the necessity of a remedy. We felt a frank discussion was required and as nobody wanted to be the speaker we drafted Ralph Nolan, a lovable and diplomatic Southerner who had few faults and no enemies, and he agreed to have a heart to heart talk with Oakes. We thought he should be the one as he slept in the bunk next to Oakes and stood to benefit most from any improvement. His talk and demonstration of sock washing was so successful. we wondered why we had delayed so long. Oakes never offended us again and he must himself have been gratified, when we all outdid ourselves in our efforts to be appreciative and friendly to him.

Ft. Jackson was a place of dust, pine trees, dust, flies, and dust. The best time to go to the latrine was at meal time when the flies were all at the mess hall. There was a rough board shack that served as a post exchange for the Air Base section. The camp also contained about 50,000 infantrymen and this PX did so much business when the men were off duty that it was always packed to capacity with customers. Some sanitation expert inspected the place, found dirt ankle deep on the floor, and decreed that it must be constantly swept. He seemed to ignore all the grease covered dishwater, flies, and other forms of contamination and in desperation concentrated on the PX, the least offensive place of all. But sweeping the floor of a room packed solid with men is hard to do. Nevertheless, a man with a broom was detailed full time to sweep the PX floor. He stood all day in the crowd, not being able to see his own feet, but moving the broom and shifting the sand and dust around a little. More was being tracked in than he could possibly sweep out or shove out for that matter

MacDill Field, Florida

In July I was moved again to MacDill Field, near Tampa, Florida and worked in a dispensary for three doctors, Lt. Sanford Katz, Lt. William Nelson, and Lt. Lloyd Dixon. My job was to work in the dispensary helping the doctors do whatever was necessary during sick call in the morning from 9:00 AM to about 11:00 AM

I kept a card file of the names of the men on sick call, serial numbers, and the nature of their ailments. If they had athlete's foot we painted their feet with gentian violet. If they had sore throats we painted their throats with gentian violet. Diarrhea or stomach ache was treated with kaopectate or Epsom salts. Ear fungus was washed out with warm salt water. Cuts were bandaged. Cysts were removed by the doctors. Anything of a serious nature was sent to the base hospital.

About 11:00 AM. all the men had been treated and about half the time we got the rest of the day off. As the dispensary had to be kept open 24 hours a day we always had to have one doctor and a couple of enlisted men available all the time, so if you were on duty you just loafed around waiting for something to happen. About 20 hours of work a week, no KP, no guard, and regular meals, was a generally easy life. Later on when I was walking around inside a barbed wire fence in Germany, I wondered what was the matter with my head to ever leave such a soft life.

During the night the dispensary had to be operated as a prophylactic station. About one night a week each enlisted man had to take a turn operating the "pro" station. This was a treatment for prevention of venereal disease given to men who came to the pro Station after a sexual encounter. Judging by the number who presented themselves for treatment, there either weren't very many sexual encounters or the men had such faith in the purity of their sexual partners that they didn't consider any treatment necessary. The procedure was after being awakened by the application for treatment you equipped him with a small bottle of green soap and directed him to wash the exposed area thoroughly. Then you took a small syringe of chemical solution designed to exterminate venereal disease inserted it into the tip of his penetrating part and squeezed it in. Then he pulled up his pants. The treatment was over and you went back to sleep, hoping not to be disturbed again.

Our squadron at MacDill was a B25 squadron flying mostly over water and the losses continued to average one ship a week. The movie actor John- Garfield and a crew from Hollywood was at MacDill at this time filming the movie "Air Force" and all the Actors wore army uniforms, of course, but they stayed at the Tampa Terrace Hotel, and wore their uniforms back and forth. Garfield told a group of us that one of the girls on the hotel elevator said to him "Aah yo in the Aiah Cowah?" To avoid explanation he said yes. She said "Do you flah ovah the wowtah'7"

As with all service personnel we had many lectures on venereal disease and the way to prevent contacting it, also movies. The only Sure fire method guaranteed to keep a person free of it was to avoid any exposure or contact. Now these young men didn't want to avoid exposure, they wanted to seek exposure. What they wanted to do was to identify the infected girls and expose themselves only to the uninfected or pure ones.,. So the inevitable question to the lecturing medical officer was: "Isn't there some way to find out if they've got it?" "Can't you check to see if there's something running Out?" And the answer was, "No, that wouldn't tell you anything. There' s always something running out."

On July 12, 1942 I received a visit from that beautiful angel -- Ethyl May Humphrey, and my heart overflowed with love for her, but her visit was soon over and my heart was again heavy with longing for her.

[Transfer To The Air Corps

I began to tire of my two and three hour working days and to wish for what I thought was the more exciting and glamorous life of the air crew members. The fact that I had an almost completely safe job while the air crews were constantly dying both in training and in combat, didn't seem to influence my thinking.

President Roosevelt's request for 50,000 airplanes was rapidly being supplied and the need for air crews to fly them was apparent. All over the country they were advertising for applicants. There were no draftees on an air crew. These airships cost large sums of money and you can't produce an expensive airplane, put it in control of people who don't want to be on it, and expect anything but disastrous results. All air-crew members have to be volunteers. Furthermore, any air crew member can ground himself at any time by claiming disability. They don't want unwilling air-crew members at any time, but especially in the combat area. The inducement to Volunteering was of certain privileges, wearing a pair of silver wings, and some uniform distinction, such as a sloppy uniform cap with a "50 Mission" crush. It was natural that some men volunteered for air service for the rank and pay, and later when they reached the combat zone, advised all their civilian friends and relatives that they were at that point prevented, against their wishes, of course, from engaging in combat because of being grounded by the flight surgeon. The combat area was filled with these poor disappointed people and their sad stories. The fact was that you could get grounded in a combat zone, but you had to make a definite request for it. Flight Surgeons didn't try to reduce the air combat strength. I never heard of a man grounded against his will in the combat area. But there were many who intentionally got themselves grounded.

Anyway I succumbed to the inducements of the advertising program and the seeking after status. I applied for acceptance as an Air Corps cadet, passed the necessary tests, and was transferred to the air corps cadet training center at Santa Ana, California. But first I received a two week furlough. This was one of the inducements that went with the program.

It was October 1942. I took a train to Huntington, West Virginia and visited by brother and sister-in-law for a day. Then I went on to Detroit and hitchhiked from there to Kalamazoo to visit my parents and my beautiful angel

The Doolittle Tokyo Raid

I should mention another factor which surely stimulated my desire to enter the air crew program. That was meeting Jack Sims at MacDill Field. Sims was one of the boys called "The Tokyo Raiders." Ever since the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Americans had a burning desire to pay back the Japanese with a return attack. General James Doolittle was chosen to arrange this. He selected 75 men and 25 B 25's. Three men flew in each ship, pilot, co-pilot, and navigator-bombardier. They practiced secret low-level bombing. The Norden bombsight was a complex bombing instrument, costing \$10,000 each. They found it impractical on low level bombing, so they attached a pencil to a protractor with a rubber band, made some practice trial

and error bomb drops at different altitudes sighting along the pencil at different angles until they obtained the best release point for each altitude, and ended up using bomb sights costing about ten cents each. Then they took the B 25s to sea on an aircraft carrier, rigged them with special flaps and practiced carrier takeoffs.

B 25s had never been launched from a carrier and they didn't know if it could be done but Doolittle took the first one off himself. They put the ships and men on the aircraft carrier- Hornet and sailed for Japan. Nothing was known of this to the American public or to the Japanese. They had fuel enough to bomb Tokyo and a couple other- of the larger Japanese cities, and go on and land on the Chinese mainland. But about 500 miles short of the launching point, they encountered a Japanese fishing boat. They immediately sank it with gunfire, but had no way of knowing if it had been able to send a warning radio message to Japan. If so, and they sailed another 500 miles before taking off, the Japanese anti aircraft and fighter defenses would have enough time to organize and crush the attack. If they took off immediately, the attack would have a better chance to succeed but the ships would be so short of fuel they would probably be unable to reach their landing areas in China. Or they could call off the attack.

Doolittle decided to launch immediately. The fishing vessel apparently had no radio, no message had been sent, and the attack was a complete surprise. They roared in over the Japanese mainland spreading panic and confusion in the cities. But the ships were low on gas and couldn't reach their destinations. Some were shot down in Japan. Some crashed on rugged Chinese terrain and the men were killed or seriously injured. Some abandon ship and parachuted out and some were able to land safely in unscheduled places. Some were captured in China by Japanese occupation forces. The Chinese people offered all the help they could, and eventually some of the men returned to the U.S. But none of the aircraft could be used again. A bombing raid that loses 100% of its aircraft cannot be counted a strategic success. But as a propaganda move, it was one of the outstanding successes of the war. The dollar value of the damage to Japanese property probably did not exceed the dollar value of the loss in B 25s. But the propaganda value in raising the morale of the American people and armed forces was tremendous.

These returning Tokyo raiders received the acclaim awarded to super heroes. Their Pictures were published in Life Magazine and the red carpet was rolled out for them all over the land. Jack Sims was one of these. He was a trim, modest, handsome young man who was the ideal Young American flying hero. He and I had attended school together at Western State Teachers College in Kalamazoo. We had been friendly but not intimate. His mother was the head of the Red Cross Chapter in Kalamazoo and acquainted with my parents. At school we had always been social equals, but when I met him at MacDill Field there was a vast gulf between us. He was still unchanged, as modest, sociable and friendly as ever, and we had a most pleasant and heart warming discussion on a beautiful warm afternoon. But he was wearing silver bars and wings on the sharpest uniform the army could provide. He had a new white convertible automobile, an item almost impossible to purchase that time; and a beautiful young blonde wife. She was as friendly and cordial as he was. There were no barriers between us as far as tie was concerned, but I was a clerk in a dispensary and he could do nothing to change our relative status. That would be up to me, and was surely another factor encouraging me to start pursuing those silver wings and bars. So, as foolish as it now seems, I had no regrets at moving to Santa Ana.

My Flight Training Begins In Santa Ana, California

I soon found out that those two hour work days ~~and no~~ were gone forever. The work day was 14 hours and started at 5:30 A.M. It wasn't easy to stay there and many were "washed Out" but I worked hard to make the grade. My aptitude tests showed I was best qualified as bombardier, rather than pilot or navigator. But most everyone aspired to be a pilot and that was my preference.

When we awoke at 5:30 one of the Los Angeles radio stations had a musical program called "Reveille with Beverly." Beverly had a soft, musical, sexy voice and 40,000 men at Santa Ana Army Air Base loved her passionately. Axis Sally in Berlin, and Tokyo Rose in Japan broadcast music and propaganda to the over-seas troops and had a large listening audience. But nobody in the U.S. forces loved them very much. But Beverly was on our side, loved us enough to get up in the early morning before we did, and probably had more men who loved her without ever seeing her than any woman in the history of California.

Santa Ana was a new and expanding base. It was as muddy at times as Mississippi, and our first air crew training was shoveling cinders for sidewalks. There was also KP, guard duty, drill, physical training, classes, study, more exercise and drill and not much rest, and not much romance aside from listening to Beverly. The physical training was conducted by some prominent sports figures. One was a well known football coach named Marty Brill who conducted PT. classes like he was training a Big 10 football team. Marty Brill worked us like dogs. Another was a tennis star named Fred Perry. Fred was a good natured lazy guy who liked to do things the easy way. When the PT. instructors came out they each walked toward a separate group. When Fred Perry headed our way, everybody smiled and was glad. If Marty Brill started in our direction everybody groaned and looked sad.

One day I didn't feel well and went on sick call. One of the other men on sick call was Edward Love. Sick or not we had to march to sick call in formation and in step. As we were going along, Edward Love said, "Boys, I'll tell you something. There ain't a (fornicating) thing wrong with me that Heddy Lamar couldn't cure." Heddy Lamar was one of the leading movie stars of that time.

Every Sunday afternoon we had a parade and passed in review. The men were given Saturday afternoon to go to town. We all got the familiar VD. lecture, but were all nevertheless encouraged to purchase a supply of contraceptive rubbers just in case temptation proved irresistible. Being optimists, most everybody purchased a couple. But some Must have returned unfulfilled because every single Sunday afternoon, when the parade was formed we had to stand at attention waiting for what seemed an hour. During that time the invisible (from the reviewing stand) rear rank men occupied themselves in blowing up these unused rubber devices. When the review started they released them so that at least two dozen of them always went blowing across the center of the parade ground. If they blew across the line of march the men stepped on them and they broke with loud pops. The colonel was never able to suppress this form of amusement.

There were no trees of any size in this camp and colonel wanted a tree outside his office. He got about 200 men and dug a large hole in the ground. Then he got some heavy equipment and had a large tree hauled in and planted. This tree was about 24" in diameter and was the largest tree I ever saw transplanted.

One day one of my friends, I guess he was a friend, said to me, "P.B. you sure are a brave young man." I said "Yes, that's true, but how did you know?" He said, "I saw you out there running as fast as you could go. Anybody that would run like that on them

legs is sure awful brave."

Ethyl May Humphrey And I Are Married

I had been having some correspondence with my beautiful angel, Ethyl May Humphrey, and the mating instinct was upon us. We arranged to have her come to California where we would enter into matrimony and propagate the race. This was accomplished on January 30, 1943. There were young men by the thousands enticing young girls into enslavement. Saturday afternoon was the only time available for personal affairs, such as wedlock, and the army chapels did a thriving business. They were turning out marriages on a production line basis. Like everything else in the Army this involved waiting in line. The ceremony was performed by Army Chaplain Arlie McDaniel in about four minutes total time. There was one witness who also played some Music on the chapel organ to furnish the necessary romantic atmosphere. We left by the front door as Reverend McDaniel was uniting two more innocent hopefuls. It was raining and a florist was delivering flowers to some blushing bride waiting in the line. We had the good -fortune to get a ride into Santa Ana in the florist's truck. Arlie McDaniel performed a great service for me that day. He assisted me in forming an alliance with a wonderful Young girl, which has endured for 32 years at this writing.

She took me for better or for worse and got worse. She worked 14 hour days 7 days a week, 52 weeks a year, for room and board. She is now a mature attractive, capable woman who is everything in the world to me and to her children. When we got launched on the sea of matrimony my income was \$75 a month. She intended to supplement this princely sum by seeking employment in Santa Ana. But short time after becoming employed she gave me the startling news that she was in a condition which caused her to be sick and nauseated a good part of the time and she could no longer work. That's one of the items of information that sometimes comes to young males., and for reasons not very understandable in later years, it always seems to come as a surprise.

Thunderbird Field - Phoenix, Arizona - Flight Training Challenges

About that time I was transferred to Thunderbird Field in Phoenix, Arizona, and didn't see her- for a couple of weeks as we were in quarantine. This was a pilot training school and my experiences there are fairly well covered in a letter which I sent to my parents and is quoted as follows.

"It's been a long time since I've written to you but I finally have time now and a good deal to say. To begin with I have to announce that I am not the credit to the family that I tried to be as I am now about to get washed out of flying school. In spite of the efforts I made to stay in, I made enough errors so I guess I am on the way out, pending the decision of the board which meets in a couple of days. Although it's not completely final, I'm not being pessimistic when I say that I am pretty well washed out of pilot training. I can't relate everything that happened but will try and tell some of the main things. This is not an alibi and I know most of the errors I made. In some cases I was surprised at my own stupidity and sometimes I was criticized severely for things I didn't think were very bad. Back at Santa Ana I was always interested in the stories of the? returning washouts. In one way they were always similar, which was that he didn't do something they said to do, or did do something they said not to do. So I figured the simple solution was just do what you're told to do. no more and no less, and everything would work out. And so it should have. The flight instructor repeated the same, ' thing to us the first day we got here, If you boys

will do exactly as I tell you, I'll guarantee to get you through. There it was again. Very easy, I resolved - that's what I'd do. But I fell short of complete success in following my own plan.

The first thing you have to do is fly the "pattern." The pattern is a design of the traffic lanes which simply form two big rectangles around the field and this must be strictly followed as there is much traffic. It's fairly easy although it's purely an imaginary pattern which depends entirely on the direction of the wind. Sometimes it's fairly stationary and other times on windy days it may change every few minutes. The altitudes I mention will be misleading because we are at 1450 feet above sea level here so we set the altimeter at 1450 to take off. At 1500 we would be 50 feet above the ground. You first observe the tee setting which corresponds to the windsock and indicates the traffic pattern, taxi to the appropriate place on the field, head in the right direction, open the throttle, and take off. Then you start to get busy. When you're off the ground, hold the stick back until you're climbing at 70 miles an hour, not 72 or 67, exactly 70. Then, "When you're at 1800 feet, level off and put the throttle back to 1800 RPM'S. However, depending on temperature and pressure, the altimeter didn't level off when you did, and is now about 1820, so you have to try and guess the altimeter lag and judge the air currents which are out to throw you off 1800. By this time 15 seconds have passed and you're at the edge of the traffic pattern and due to make a turn called a wire bank which is banking turn to a point where a wire bracing the wings at a 45 degree angle is level with the horizon. You hold it until you've turned 90 degrees, level off, and leave traffic. Then you do maneuvers, etc., but the traffic pattern deserves more comment as it is the main casualty area at the stage of learning.

You reenter at a 90 degree angle, make a wire bank opposite the entry angle, take five seconds to check the tee setting, select the landing lane, observe the tower signal lights, and go into a gliding wire bank. That is what they say to do and all you have to do is to do it. It's surely possible to do because a lot of guys do it. If they don't, it's a near case of suicide because there are always about 5 ships on the left, and 2 or 3 on the right. You can't spend much time viewing the scenery as the landing lane which is about 1000 yards ahead appears to be about half an inch wide and approaching at 70 MPH if you are gliding at the right angle. There is some difficulty in a bank in keeping the wire level as 3/4 of the horizon was mountains, and I was never able to keep in accord with the check-rider's idea of the relation of the horizon to those jagged peaks. For specific flights of mine which didn't win high praise, the first breach of regulations was as follows -- 1800 feet is the leveling off point of the pattern and that altitude, about 350) above ground, is positively the lowest point at which a plane is to be flown on routine training, which I was well aware of. So what did I do? I left the pattern at 1800, and took a look at some cumulus clouds. There were a lot of low cumulus clouds that looked like big powder puffs, each one threw a shadow on the ground and the whole landscape was dotted with these shadows which I was watching with interest as I'd never seen the conditions before. But I should have been watching the altimeter because each of these shadows was a down draft and when we flew under one I was jarred back to reality, by the instructors profanity in the earphones wanting to know why I was trying to kill him. We were about 100 feet above the ground which I thought was a reasonable clearance, but he had enough of me for that day and told me to go back and land which I did, with him delivering a running commentary through the earphones about my defects. I headed into the landing lane and was paying such close attention to his comments about my shortcomings that the airspeed stole up to 90 MPH in the glide, whereupon he asked who had taught me to dive in for a landing and commit suicide.

After landing he gave me what is called a severe lecture for 15 minutes And walked away. He got sick the next day and I never saw him again. After that I rode with three other instructors and went from bad to worse. The check rides began and I had two strikes on me then. There were? two rides by civilians who supervise the flight training and the third by an army captain who is the official washer out and flies a ship known as the Maytag dive bomber. When you fly the Maytag you feel the hot breath of the washout board on your neck. I wasn't much worried about the first check as passing it was a matter of being alert which I resolved to do. it consisted of flying the basic maneuvers which we'd learned. Power-on stalls, power-off stalls, S-turns, gliding turns, and a spin. A power stall is a climb from cruising speed up to a point where the ship can no longer maintain the climb and begins to hover and threaten to fall backward. You hold an angle to where you only see the sky and watch-the air speed indicator go down. You also feel vibrations until you think you're "stalled." So you do the logical thing, which is to throw the stick forward, open the throttle, and kick the right rudder to counteract the propeller torque which pulls the ship to the left. In an instant You've regained all your speed and had better start to level off. I had been tardy about this one time and took the first instructor for about half a mile straight down which surely tried his patience.

The power off stall is similar except you climb with a closed throttle which stalls you sooner. I did fairly well except for the spin which was poorly executed, in a way I'd tried not to do. If they say to do a two turn spin, they mean two turns, not one and a half or two and one half turns. The proper way is to select a landmark, like a road, do a power off stall, but as the ship noses over and starts down you kick the rudder and hold it so instead of falling haphazardly you spiral down. Then check the landmark and kick the opposite rudder in time to stop the spin at the proper number of turns. I did everything right except checking the landmark. When I looked down all I could see was spinning sagebrush. When I'd seen it all twice, I kicked the rudder and leveled off. The check rider said it was a three and a half turn spin. The second ride was not worth mentioning if you are looking for good points. The third ride was not so bad but was my last chance. The spin was two turns and the maneuvers were passable but were criticized as being mechanical and tense.

Flight Training Wash Out

Then I got the speech which is given to all washouts ; that they are going to do you a favor and wash you out to save your life. You hear that a dozen times over. This man was a good flying Captain, but his business was washing out cadets and explaining to them why he did it. Then he went right back up and washed out my friend John Erving, who is in my room, and we used to talk for about it for an hour every night after lights out. We have adjoining cots now in this washout barracks.

If it's any consolation there's plenty of company. We started with eight in that room a month ago and only three are left. I'd think they were pretty safe. They can't wash everybody. You would think we'd feel pretty bad about it, and we do, in a way. But we aren't unhappy or mad. We talk about it all the time and the other guys kid us but we are not depressed or sad. Erving claims he wouldn't get back in if he could, but I would.

I called Ethyl and told her and explained that she could divorce me if she wished but she declined the opportunity.

Friday noon. I saw the board today and talked with them a long time. They had a

complete record of everything I did and kept correcting me for saying washout instead of eliminate. Elimination is the last part of a digestive process. I would rather wash out. I talked and argued and finally told them I might as well stop wasting my breath. This was a relief to them as for a couple of times for a fleeting instant it had looked like I was beating them and several had to talk all at once to help each other out. They said if my records at Santa Ana showed I was qualified for further air-crew training, I could go back there and be reclassified as navigator or bombardier if I was in favor of that. -I said I was. I have another job now, of course as they don't give anybody any rest around here. Yesterday they had some of us shifting spare wings, around in the hangar. When ever they have a work detail they just wash out enough guys to do the job. Today I'm working in the commandant's office. There are so many guys getting "eliminated" they have to have somebody make out clearance papers for them. The next place I'll be is at Santa Ana doing KP and guard duty. I hope they -finally got all that dirt shoveled.

Poor Ethyl didn't know what she was getting into. I to^{ok} her on the telephone this morning and she said she didn't care if I washed out or not. Up at the OD. office they have a P.A. system that plays phonograph records at night. The man who has the detail for the day is always dedicating some song to his friends naming some who have just washed out. Then the song, which is playing now, is "Somebody else is taking my place."

About those wings I was going to send home. I should never have mentioned them because right after that the heat started to be applied and nobody needs any wings from a washout. But I will go back to Santa Ana and start again and maybe able to send a pair yet."

To Victorville, California For Bombardier Training

That letter pretty much tells the story of my time at Thunderbird Field in Phoenix. Of my three remaining roommates who didn't wash out, one was Jack Foster. I later spent over a year in the same compound with him at Stalag Luft 1. Back at Santa Ana I was reassigned as a bombardier and went through ground school -for six weeks of the same type of instruction I'd been through before, Guard and KP. again. "Reveille with Beverly" and parades on Sunday after-noon with the latex balloons blowing out through the ranks. Then we were sent to Victorville, California, on the Mojave desert for bombardier training. At the completion, if we qualified, we would graduate 2nd Lieutenant bombardiers.

They told us it cost the government \$100,000 to train a bombardier and I can easily believe that the total cost of the program divided by the number of men graduated was well over \$100,000. I also believe this was largely unnecessary, for these reasons. When a ship makes a bomb run the bombardier directs a telescope with cross hairs on to a target. The telescope is controlled by gyroscopes to remain level, regardless of movements of the ship and it's tilted at a slowly increasing rate by a small motor to stay on the target as you approach it. These cross hairs will drift off the target so you move some controls and center it back on the target. As it repeatedly drifts off you repeatedly correct it and as you make the corrections a directional arrow in front of the pilot tells him which way to turn, which is upwind. As the bombsight will detect a downwind drift and indicate the proper angle and distance to fly up wind in order for the bombs to make a hit. Also the opposite corrections will tell the pilot whether to increase or reduce the airspeed in order to hit. If the altitude (the time the bomb will be falling) is set correctly and the cross hairs stay right on the target and do not drift, you can depend on the hit being fairly

close. If the cross hairs drift off the hit will be inaccurate. The longer the bomb run or aiming time, the more accurate the hit will be.

But it behooves you to make it as short as possible because you are being shot at by anti-aircraft fire and everybody wants to start taking evasive action and not fool around on a long bomb run. Now this works fine for single ships or small formations doing pin point bombing, but in Europe it was mostly saturation bombing. With 1,000 ships in a raid, the pilots have to devote their attention to keeping their place in the formation. If everybody was on an individual bomb run with the pilots following individual directional indicators, there would surely be mass confusion and disaster. The enemy could forget their anti-aircraft fire and just count the bombers crashing into each other. So the only need for any bomb sighting is on the lead ship, with perhaps one or two others in reserve if the lead ship was knocked out early in the run. Everybody else merely watched the lead ship and released their bombs when the lead ship did. After the first few bombs hit there was so much smoke anyway that you couldn't see to sight anything. This saturation bombing just devastated Germany.

When we were flown out after the war was over, all we saw below was wreckage and destruction. It apparently was the same in Japan. But today oddly enough, the Germans and Japanese are our staunchest friends, and our former allies, France and Russia, have lessened their esteem for us. So about 99% of the highly trained bombardiers never put their training into any use in combat. All I ever did in my brief combat career was watch the ships ahead and snap a switch to release our bombs when they did. We couldn't even tell which was the lead ship. Aside from that, the bombardiers occupied themselves as nose gunners. The things I did to release the bombs required no training at all and could have been done the first day I got in the army.

At Victorville we flew in twin engine AT 11's and dropped 100 pound sand filled bombs. They contained five pounds of black powder fired by a shotgun shell and made a pretty good explosion. We bombed in three shifts, and it was a pleasant experience. The morning air was turbulent as the desert heated up and you bounced so much that your head bumped against the telescope eyepiece. The afternoon and night air was calm and smooth flying. The night bombing was the most interesting, and the bombs made a brilliant flash when they hit. The night targets were lighted by kerosene flares.

In going back and forth to the bombing area the pilots were sometimes allowed to practice strafing runs against army vehicles and buildings. Sometimes in the classrooms a ship would zoom over the building sounding like it cleared the roof by about three feet. Whenever possible we arranged to fly over and pass Lake Arrowhead, which is a very beautiful Lake. The pilots liked to skim the water as low as possible and the bombardiers got a perfect view from the Plexiglas nose. One day we came in low over- the cottages, skimmed the water- and headed for a boat in the center of the lake, flying at 130 mph about 15 feet above the water. A man in the boat was standing up casting and apparently hadn't seen us coming at him. I sat in the nose and saw his terrified expression as he threw himself flat into the bottom of the boat as we passed over. Anyone doing that today would and should be put in jail. We considered it a joke but I'm sure the man in the boat thought differently.

The desert in the day time appeared absolutely desolate and uninhabited but at night there were lights all over scattered as far as You Could see showing that people were actually living in places all over that barren land. On this shift we got more time off

and could loaf around, more during the daytime. The food at Victorville was the best we'd had so far, although it was also very good at Clovis, New Mexico. Later on, and also at the base in England when we started combat, if the mess sergeant was mean and tough, the food was apt to be much better than if he was genial and pleasant. It also helped if he'd had previous experience in civilian life, such as running a good high class restaurant. We had no KP to do at Victorville so I never got to know him. Most mess sergeants were inclined to be mean, however, good food, or not. So perhaps my first statement is not entirely true. Most first sergeants also seemed either to be naturally mean or the job made them that way.

Later on in England when I was on a detail to answer the mail, I read a letter a first sergeant wrote his wife. He was telling about his job and said, "I don't have a single friend in the camp and all the men hate me." His obvious pride in making the statement indicated he was a typical first sergeant.

The weather on the desert was scorching hot and the barracks were somewhat cooled by the first air conditioning devices I'd ever seen. They were screened boxes covered with cloth, which was kept wet by water dripping from a pipe above. An electric fan inside drew air in through the wet cloth and into the building. The air was so dry that the water evaporated rapidly and had a definite cooling effect without raising the humidity too much inside. It worked very well in that dry climate, but the same system would not work in Michigan because of much slower evaporation. That system here is known as a swamp cooler. It lowers the temperature a little but raised the humidity so much that the dampness becomes as oppressive as the heat it reduces.

My faithful angel lived in Victorville but her condition in the hot weather caused her much discomfort I am sure, although I do not remember that she complained.

We graduated the rank of 2nd Lieutenant in July of 1943, actually a month or so ahead of the pilot class I started with. We all got new uniforms, gold bars and silver wings. We were given leave to go and display our new status, which everybody did with very little modesty. Ethyl stayed in Victorville after and I didn't see her again for almost two years, when the war in Europe had ended.

Clovis, New Mexico For Crew Assignment

After the leave I went to Clovis, New Mexico where bomber crews were being assembled. New graduates were coming from pilot, navigation, bombing, engineering, radio, and gunnery schools. Everybody considered himself a veteran, but really they were all green and inexperienced.

The B 24's, with four engines and 120 feet of wingspread, were the biggest ships I'd ever seen and the fastest bombers in the world at that time. There was always controversy between crews of B 24's and B 17's as to which was best. Your attitude depended on which ship you flew. I always argued violently in favor of the B 24's, although each had its advantages. The bombardiers in the nose of a B 17 had a very limited area which it could cover and there was no protection but Plexiglass, which was no protection at all. But there was a lot of room and it was easy to get out of. The nose gun in the B 24 was in a turret which revolved around and had two guns which moved up and down electrically and covered a far greater area. Also there was one quarter inch metal plate all around the turret and a 2 inch bulletproof glass plate that moved up and down with the guns to protect your space. But the space was so small you didn't have room to wear a parachute in the turret and you had to enter

through two doors, one which the navigator locked on the side away from you and couldn't be opened from the turret. One could only watch the ground get closer. The ball turret gunner was in a similar situation and so was the tail gunner.

Most of the other crew members had a better chance to escape. A B 17 bombardier in the above situation would have a far better chance to abandon the ship by parachute. Despite my arguments in favor of the B 24's, I think now that overall the B 17's were better. They were able to take some terrific punishment and still get back. The B 24's were not as tough in taking than punishment that a B 17 could stand. In one case, a B 17 was rammed in midair by a German fighter, making a large slice almost completely through the midsection of the top of the fuselage. The ship was almost cut in two. Another ship alongside took photographs of this magnificent ship flying along as if nothing was wrong and they returned and landed safely. No other ship but a B 17 would have survived that experience.

At Clovis, we weren't assigned to crews right away but were supposed to get as much flying time as possible with anybody that was going up. I knew the bombardiers didn't know much but, made the mistake of thinking the pilots knew what they were doing. Actually most of them had never been in a four engine ship before. But the flying weather was fine, ignorance is bliss, and I went up as often as I could.

One day I went up with a completely strange crew. The pilot's name I learned later was Atlas Molnar. I spent 13-1/2 months in the same room with him in Germany. Molnar didn't apparently know enough about a B-24 to try any experiments, but he did. He shut two engines off on one wing to see if he could fly on only two engines. They should have washed him out of primary training. He didn't have enough altitude to try that. He couldn't fly well enough to stay up on two and he couldn't get the first two started again. I watched calmly out the waist window as we began to descend in a slow circle, heading down toward some cattle in a field below. I was thinking how skillful he was to be buzzing those cattle on two engines. Then the cattle scattered out of the way and we hit the ground and plowed a shallow ditch about eight feet wide and several hundred feet long across the pasture. When we hit the ground, I grabbed a gun mount and hung on while the dirt poured in through the bomb bay and the dust filled my mouth and nose and eyes and ears. My parachute was hanging safely on a hook where I put it to avoid the discomfort of wearing it. I never got off the ground again without wearing a parachute all the time except when I had to hang it outside the turret.

The wing of a B 24 is about ten feet above the ground and one man went out the top turret and ran on the edge of the wing. The ship didn't catch fire, but we expected it to and it's a wonder it didn't. We all got away from it as fast as we could. Other B-24's began to circle overhead and radioed the field of the crash. Soon we began to hear sirens in the distance and all the ambulances, fire trucks and emergency vehicles from the base in at full speed. They didn't stop for gates or fences but drove crashing through them.

No one had been injured but the ship was a total loss. I rode back on an army truck with some firemen. They stopped at a gas station at a crossroads and I went in the rest room to wash off some of the dirt which was all over me. This took quite a while. Several country boys were hanging around and more gathered and these firemen had obviously been telling them a wild story. When I came out they were all standing in a semi circle around the door waiting awestruck. They didn't realize the incredible stupidity of the whole episode. The Colonel at the base did though. He had already examined the ship, the instruments, throttle settings, and questioned the

crew. So he knew exactly what happened and reduced Molnar to permanent copilot. Molnar had already been involved in a B 26 crash and been shifted to B 24s, which were easier to fly. Now he would be a permanent co-pilot. Aside from watching the instruments and relieving the pilot at times, the co-pilot doesn't have many jobs. One thing he does is pull a lever to retract the wheels on take off. Since this reduces drag it should be done as quickly as possible.

Later on their take off at Dakar, Africa, fully loaded and twelve men aboard, Molnar retracted the wheels at a speed of about 100 miles an hour but unfortunately they had not yet left the ground and the ship crashed and burned, with the loss of two men. The next time I saw him was at Stalag Luft 1, when I was assigned to a room with eight double bunks and he slept on the bunk below me for 13-1/2 months. He had been captured after something had caused disaster to another B 24. The Germans count their victories by the number of engines on the downed ship. On that basis we always told Atlas he qualified as a German Ace. We told him the Germans would have been smart if they had released him back to the American Air Force. He wasn't doing any damage at all in Stalag 1.

Our B 24 Crew

We were finally assigned to a crew #136, with which we would stay. They were, William Lafferty, pilot, Jack Reed, co-pilot, Harold Garman, navigator, P.B. Miller, bombardier, Herman Schmidt, radioman, Tom Fraleigh, engineer, Bernie Keller, assistant engineer, Jim Steubgen, gunner, Elbert Ninesling, gunner, and one man who grounded himself, gunner, and was replaced by Joe Libero, gunner. The first four were all 2nd Lieutenants and the last six all staff sergeants. There was some trading around from the assigned crews, sometimes to settle personality conflicts, and sometimes requests by the pilot to acquire some drinking buddy on his crew. We didn't make any trades and got along well together although several of us got solicitations from other crews. Steubgen was probably sought after more than anyone. He was one of the most amusing men I have ever known in the army or out. My parents went to Pittsburgh after the war, met him and were completely charmed by him.

At our first meeting he was 36 years old, quite old for a bomber crew member. Nobody ever called him handsome, but the way he operated with the women was a lesson to all us amateurs. He captivated them all, young or old. Once we went to Juarez, Mexico and were making the rounds when he came in and announced that he had found a group of girls who wanted to buy us a few drinks. Sure enough, they did just that but a lot of time had passed since they had been girls. It was a group of women from a wedding party. One was the bride's mother and the others were her friends. He asked Jim if he didn't think they were past our age group. He said,,- "Hell no, they're the best kind. All they want is one more f-- before they die."

We went from Clovis to Alamogordo (called Alamogoo), New Mexico, flew formations of three or four ships, made practice bomb runs at night on Elephant Butte dam, and the Albuquerque railroad yards. We fired lots of ammunition at a target towed by another airplane and on the White Sands desert. The nearest town, Las Cruces, was about 60 miles away over a Mountain pass. We hitchhiked there several times getting rides in trucks hauling lumber and other things to town. The trucks were equipped with three transmissions in a row which apparently gave them added gears not by addition but by multiplication. We rode in back on the road and counted 19 down shifts on the way up and they shifted back out the same number of times on the way down, so they must have shifted according to a tachometer. We lived in screened

canvas huts in Alamogordo, and the frequent sand storms penetrated everything. The auto license plates in New Mexico had the motto "Land of Enchantment." Steubgen would get out of bed in the morning with sand in his hair, ears, teeth, nose, and throat, shake the sand off his bed and call out "the land of enchantment."

We Get A New B 24 And Prepare For Overseas Assignment

In late November 1943 we went by train to Lincoln, Nebraska to pick up a new airplane which we were to fly to either the Pacific or European combat zone. Just before leaving Alamogordo I had word from home that our son David B. Miller was born on November 19, 1943. He was nineteen months old when I first saw him.

Florida And Puerto Rico

On December 23, we left Lincoln in weather about six degrees above zero and landed in Miami that afternoon in warm spring like weather. As we would be leaving the country for an area where some things would be unobtainable we stocked up on everything we could. I filled up the ammunition cans with chewing gum, toothbrushes, extra combs, extra clothes, chocolate bars, etc. The boys referred to this as P.B.'s drugstore. We drew 45 automatic pistols, sheath knives, and jungle survival kits, with matches, fish hooks, etc. Next day we took off, opened sealed orders directing us to Puerto Rico, with maps included, and landed there on Christmas Eve 1943.

There was an all male Christmas Eve celebration in full blast at the servicemen's club bar. The place was packed to standing room only. Two teams of three men each were tending the bar. One man lined up about ten glasses in a row and put in some ice, then began to prepare another row. The second man poured the glasses about two thirds full of Coca-Cola. The third man had bottles of rum which he opened and played back and forth over the row of glasses until they had all overflowed on to the bar. These drinks cost a dime a piece and the waiting men laid down the money and took the drinks as fast as they were prepared. At intervals the pile of wet money was collected into a dish and stored away. We all invested about one dollar apiece. Then went to bed with all our clothes on, including our shoes. I can understand how Washington could cross the Delaware and overwhelm the Hessians on Christmas Eve.

British Guiana

Next day we left and flew to Georgetown, British Guiana. Lafferty and Rufe were competent and able pilots. Jack's name had been changed to Rufe by Steubgen, after a hill billy character of the time. At this juncture we surely began to appreciate Garman's value as a navigator. He became the most absolutely essential man in the world to us. He flew the entire distance from Miami to England without seeing a single ocean ship, and only one other airplane not in the immediate vicinity of a base. So flying completely alone and over water for ten hours or more, and then to have the Navigator guide us into a completely strange area and hit the landing field right on the nose is an experience that increases your love and reverence for a competent navigator.

My friend and schoolmate Dean Foster disappeared in a B 17 in the Pacific. They just never arrived at their destination, which was a small island in the vast Pacific Ocean. Navigation errors accounted for enough ships and men to build a fair-sized Air Force. Harold Garman was a typical example of the ideal young American airman,

Brazil

We next landed at Belem, Brazil, at the Mouth of the Amazon river. This was a real jungle base, being carved right out of the jungle growth and requiring constant work to keep it cut back. We walked the jungle paths with one hand on our sheath knife and one on our .45 trying to appear completely relaxed and unconcerned, but at the same time prepared to resist the boa constrictors that we imagined to be lurking in the trees overhead.

Next day we went on down to Natal, Brazil and prepared to cross the Atlantic. As this was a much greater distance than the other flights had been and ships couldn't fly above the weather as they do now. There were many delays here and a large accumulation of incoming ships before the weather was considered good enough to give clearance for a flight. The pineapples, bananas, and coconuts we got here were just excellent. Most of the other food was not as good quality. We took a swim in the ocean and waited for the weather to clear. Night after night we were on standby until almost dawn, when the lights would be called off.

One evening we were told there would be no standby and everybody spent the night at the bar. Rufe and Lafferty in holding each other up and woke Garman and me. About an hour later an orderly came around announcing that the weather was clear and we were to leave for Africa at 4:30 AM. They began to stumble around and get ready but I decided I wouldn't accompany them. I didn't think they were in any condition to fly the Atlantic, and although I thought they were completely capable at other times, I thought this was an exception. They began to tell me I would get a Court martial and I said that I would at least be alive to attend the court martial and the worst that would happen to me was assignment to another crew that would be still living. They went in and both took cold showers for about 45 minutes and came back and announced they were completely sober. Rufe was in a little better shape than, Lafferty and told me he would take the ship off. I could set up the automatic pilot and Garman was in good shape to navigate. I figured the worst they would do to us for being a couple of hours late would be a reprimand or to hold us over for a day. Nothing serious in either case. Besides in the army you always hurry up and wait, and in this case we really wouldn't miss anything if we delayed a little, which we did, got breakfast a little late, and were able to take off on time.

Africa

We flew on the automatic pilot most of the way over. Laferty and Rufe were able to rest alternately. Garman did his usual flawless navigating and we went over without incident. Steubgen had brought along a little rum out of which he took a liberal portion for himself and announced that he was on the lookout for submarines, frequently calling out that he had located one. The flight was 14 hours and we were low on gas when we came in. A gas line had developed a leak and gas was dripping into the bomb bay which we were catching in a pail. This laid up our ship for a few days and in the meantime other ships came in needing repairs, and having no adequate supply depot, they began taking needed parts from our ship. Soon it was missing so many parts they had to send a special order back to the U.S. and so we were in Dakar, Africa several weeks waiting for repairs, 5009

Everyone coming through Brazil had bought one or more pairs of beautiful soft comfortable Brazilian leather boots, which were sold by the thousands at \$5 a pair. In England You could always identify the crews that came over the southern route by those boots. They also brought along numbers of small South American monkeys and

Parakeets, but these did not survive long in the colder climate and soon disappeared.

We played softball a lot and stood in line at night for ice cream. The French movie actress Louise Rairier came to entertain us, playing a scene from her recent movie, Joan of Arc. She recruited a couple men from the audience to play the part of the guards who dragged her off to execution after her impassioned scene at the trial. As these men dragged her off they were loudly booed by the audience, with shouts of "Those #@% blank, blank M.P.'s." She was a beautiful woman and visit was much appreciated.

This was a big field and I can remember standing in the center of it and in every direction as far as you could see were lines of heavy bombers. I did not see how Germany could avoid being overwhelmed by air superiority. They told us it cost the government \$6 for each gallon of gasoline supplied to that base and each bomber left with 1600 gallons, which at that price was \$9600.

We slept under mosquito nets over each cot and in addition the flit gun brigade waged constant war against mosquitoes. This was a line of six natives, each armed with a Spray gun of insecticide, and as they walked slowly along through the barracks spraying away, each gun was pointed in a different direction. They were followed by a large cloud of foggy spray. One night Lafferty and Rufe spent considerable time at the bar and were so talkative when they came in that they kept Garman and me awakened would not quiet down. After warning them several times, I got up and poured a half canteen of water on each of them. This had the effect of ending their conversation, but I knew I could expect some retaliation. Rufe went to bed as usual the next night and so did I, but only after supplying myself with a full canteen cup of water which I was careful to conceal. It was a clear bright moonlight night and visibility was pretty good. I lay quietly, breathing heavily and doing my best to feign sleep. After what seemed like about an hour, there was some movement over by Rufe's bed. He was sure he had waited long enough so there would be no slip up. I could see him clearly crawling along the floor with his canteen in his hand. He came up real close and was just ready to pour out his canteen when I zeroed in on him with a full cup of water. He was able to score a partial hit himself, but his attack was not really an unqualified success. I said "Rufe, whatever made you think that you going to surprise somebody?"

Lafferty was a good pilot and had flown all kinds of airplanes. One of the other pilots was saying he had flown more army planes of different types than anyone. Lafferty asked him if he ever flew a B49, which Lafferty had done and this other man said he had. Bill asked him where the engine instruments were on a B 19, which was an obsolete ship with the engine instruments out on the side of the engine so you had to look out the windows to see them. He claimed he knew where they were but refused to tell us. We ridiculed his claim of having flown one which made him mad and he wanted to fight so we said that proved he was trying to take us out, which made him madder. He then said his crew could beat our crew in a softball game. We accepted that offer and were able to beat them with Rufe as a pitcher. Finally our ship was repaired and we flew up to Marrakech in North Africa.

England

There I came across Ralph Nolan, my old tent mate from Columbia, Key Field, and MacDill. He was an engineer on a B 26. We left in a few days to fly around Spain and up to Lands End, Britain. Our ship was armed for the first time with 200 rounds per gun as German fighters occupied part of Spain and had been known to come out and

intercept some of the bombers. It was early morning when we started and some of us fell asleep. I woke up when someone started yelling in the intercom that the ship was on fire. To show how inexperienced we still were, some of us, me at least, prepared to bail out into the ocean, with no thought of fighting the fire. Our life expectancy would have been about thirty minutes in that icy water. However, Fairleigh the engineer had sense enough to extinguish the fire, which was some burning baggage caused by an electric short. We landed in England in February, 1944 and our ship was sent directly to a combat squadron while we were sent to Cookstown, Ireland.

Steubgen had a peculiar call which he used frequently to announce his presence and which he said was used by mule drivers to call the mules at feeding time. It was as recognizable as the rebel yell of civil war times. The best spelling of it would be hooarruup-haarr. Everybody that knew Steubgen knew the mule driver's yell. We went by train through London and were in the London depot quite a while. The crew got separated and we couldn't get them together again. Steubgen stood up in the middle of the crowded London train station, gave the mule drivers call as loudly as he could, got our own crew reassembled in about three minutes plus some other friends we hadn't seen in a while. We went to Edinburgh, Scotland and then to Cookstown, Ireland.

There was always a lot of gambling in the Army. At Jackson, Mississippi, the first time we were ever paid, and we were making \$21 a month, one man won over \$600 in a card game. In Ireland all the dollars were changed into pounds, worth at that time about \$5. But the men still treated them as dollars and in a dice or card game the table would be covered with about half a bushel of pound notes so that over \$600 would change hands with every hand or roll of the dice. This matter - of money was one of the areas of friction between our forces and the British. The Americans were welcomed heartily by the British government and the people. In the Royal Air Force, the highest man on a bomber crew was frequently a flight sergeant, about equivalent rank. But our staff sergeants were paid almost four times as much as their flight sergeants and our officers about six times as much. The same ratio applied to other branches.

Britain had been in the war since 1938 and these men had been through the Battle of Britain and Dunkirk. Now a bunch of newly arrived American recruits had come to announce that their presence would save the world and their lavish expenditure of money could not be matched by the lower paid Britons. Further, the hard pressed British economy could not furnish uniforms of the quality worn by the Americans. But perhaps the unkindest cut of all, the young British girls looked with favor on these free-spending and open-hearted Americans. It was completely understandable that the veteran British armed forces were limited in their admiration of their new allies.

Preparing For Combat Missions

It was our bat and ball so we were permitted to interpose some of our rules. Eisenhower, an American General, was made top commander over everyone but Russia. This surely must have met with the disapproval of many top veteran British generals who considered themselves qualified for the job. The Americans even overrode Churchill and made the invasion on Normandy instead of using his plan to "attack the soft underbelly of Europe." There were no more bitter rivals than Patton and Montgomery. At Cookstown we were checked out again.

I received some bombing instruction from a survivor of the Ploesti raid. The Ploesti oil fields in Rumania were an important source of petroleum for Germany and of course were guarded accordingly. It was determined to try to bomb them out. But instead of saturation bombing from 20,000 feet, for which the American bombers were designed and trained, it was concluded to try and effect a surprise by bombing at low level with these big cumbersome ships. It was suicide to go against the ground and fighter cover on that plan. It was like expecting a two ton truck to outperform a motorcycle. There wasn't even the element of surprise as the attacking force was identified long before they reached the target and their objective was easily guessed. Apparently the expected results were considered to be worth the expected losses because Eisenhower, with some misgivings, approved the plan.

But Eisenhower was not an Air Corps general and the flying generals who dreamed it up as a low level attack were possessed of a Vast amount of poor judgment. The losses were about 50%, and the oil fields were not severely damaged. The courage of the men could not compensate for the poor planning of the top brass. This veteran of the Ploesti raid said to us, man for man the Germans are better airmen than we are. He didn't mean that they were physically or mentally superior to our men, but they were brave and had long experience, and experience counts for a great deal in war. They weren't any more experienced than the British, though and man for man the British had won the Battle of Britain. They were going to be beaten in the Battle of Germany because they were on the defensive, and no army on the defensive has ever won a war. We were going to out produce and out supply them and in the end, outfight them and they would surely end up losing.

Ireland

I ran into one of my old friends Pete Cannistraro, from Victorville. Pete and I went to a dance at the school in Cookstown. Back in the U.S. Kay Keyser's popular and nationally known dance band had a drummer who was also a singer and a comedian. He called himself Ish Ka Bible, and combed his hair straight forward over his forehead and always wore a dead pan expression. The drummer in this small amateurish bar in Cookstown was a small boy, about twelve years old, who had a natural dead pan look and combed his hair straight over his forehead and had the bangs cut in a straight line. He looked exactly like a miniature edition of Kay Keyser's drummer. He couldn't have been more popular than if he was the original. Ish Ka Bible himself. The base commander had told us to go easy with the Irish whiskey as it was very powerful. This was an accurate statement.

Back In England

Ireland abounded in many varieties of beautiful birds. I have never seen as many beautiful winter birds before or since. Soon we were sent back to England and joined the 703rd Squadron of the 445th bomb group, as replacements. The base was at Tibbenham in the vicinity of Nottingham, England. The town of Norwich is also in my memory, so maybe it was closer to there.

The squadron commander was James Stewart, who both before and after the war was a well known movie actor. He flew with us one day and we were "checked out" for the last time. Stewart had enlisted as an Air Corps cadet well before Pearl Harbor, and advanced rapidly in the Air Corps. You can also bet your eye teeth he advanced on his merits too and not on influence. In the first place, our army was pretty free of advancement by influence and in the second place, his movie star reputation was undoubtedly more of a detriment to him than an asset in the training program. He

was popular with the men and was a good leader. The difficult missions he led himself and the easy ones he assigned to others. He was later made colonel and stayed in the reserve after the war and now thirty years later is a brigadier general in the Air Force Reserve, although for a while his appointment was blocked by Maine senator Margaret Chase Smith for no good reason that I know. A few years ago his life story was serialized in one of the magazines, but all mention of his war record was omitted. I wrote him to say that I knew his war record to be a good one and it should have been mentioned. He wrote me a kind letter in reply and said that he didn't think it was important.

I should mention one of the war time songs with which all men stationed in the United Kingdom will be familiar. It was called "Roll Me Over in the Clover" and had ten or more verses. When I first heard the Irish girls in Cookstown singing away at the top of their voices the "inspiring" words of this song I had to ask Pete Cannistraro if I was hearing it right. It went approximately as follows:

"Oh, this is number one and the fun has just begun.
Roll me over, lay me down and do it again.
Roll me over in the clover.
Roll me over, lay me down and do it again."

The last three lines of each verse were always the same but the other first lines continued ...

"Oh this is number two and the rest is Up to You"
"Oh this is number three and you've got me on your knee"
"Oh this is number four and you've got me on the floor"
"Oh this is number five and (can't remember)"
"Oh this is number six and you've got me in a fix"
"Oh this is number seven and I 'm on my way to heaven"

Eight and nine same general theme; number ten and we'll do it all again." This was a real popular song with all the American service men.

Many of the combat crew members were wearing British type battle jackets with wings embroidered of gold and silver thread. I coveted one of these and found that they had to be ordered from civilian tailor shops. I went to a tailor in Norwich and asked if he'd make me one. He said he had one he could alter to fit me but I would have to pay him an advance of five pounds as he had already altered it for four other Americans and the work would take a couple weeks, but the other men had never come back to claim it. This should have told me something, but I paid him and by the time he was scheduled to have the work done, I was looking out the barred windows of a German guard house. He must have pretty well worked that jacket over with alterations, but the mark up should have been pretty good.

Assembling For 1,000 Plane Raids

Before we actually went on a combat mission we went up twice to assemble with the 8th Air Force. The 8th was the largest air force ever assembled and the missions were designated as 1,000 ship raids. They will never be duplicated because 1,000 ship raids are as obsolete as cavalry charges. One present day supersonic bomber fueled by a full railroad tank car of gasoline and carrying an atom bomb, has the destructive power of all the TNT bombs dropped by the entire Air Force over a period of months. Each group contained ninety ships and crews and they never put up

more than half their strength at any one time. If the entire air force had been shot down some day, it could have come back the next day in full strength. No military force in history ever had reserves like that.

The 8th Air Force was never turned back by enemy action, sometimes by weather, but never by the enemy. I believe the same can be said of the 15th in Italy and the medium bombers up in Scotland. The weather was always overcast in March of 1944 and the ships took off one minute apart and climbed in a spiral until they came out of the overcast at about 12,000 feet and everybody went on oxygen. They kept climbing to 20,000 feet. It took 45 minutes to get the squadron off the ground so by the time the last one came through the clouds, the first one, which had been flying for 45 minutes, was anywhere within a radius of 30 or 40 miles. There were no land areas to use as assembly points as all you could see was cloudy weather below. They had assembly ships which were old stripped down bombers painted in bright colors. Ours was black and white or yellow. Then the same color combinations in polka dots. You flew around about another half hour trying to locate your assembly ship. At 6:00 AM the assembly ships drew in closer together and began to assume a designated order, the sky all around being pretty well filled with 1,000 bombers flying in a big circle. If by this time you had never located your own assembly ship, and there were always numerous stragglers, you were supposed to join any near by squadron when the assembly ships left at 7:00 AM and the formation headed into enemy territory.

Our First Combat

Finally we were scheduled to start flying combat, and for several days were awakened at 3:30 AM to have breakfast, attend the briefing and be ready for take off at 4:30 AM. There was still the usual hurry up and wait. You might be the last ship to leave but still had to be ready on time with the first and attend the briefing. The weather didn't have to be clear in the early morning but it did by afternoon when the ships returned. It also had to be clear over the target area. So the missions depended entirely on the weather forecasts. You got up and waited until it was determined which way it would be and the decision had to be made by the proper takeoff time. At that time of the year, missions were only flown about one day out of four. The others were called off. By that point everybody that was going to ground themselves had already done so. It took 110 or more men on the ground for every bomber that was put in the air so 110,000 men worked on a 1,000 ship mission. The men that stayed on the crews never exhibited any reluctance to go where ever they were ordered but I never saw any evidence of displeasure when a mission was called off. Being six or seven hours over enemy territory at 20,000 feet on oxygen is very tiring and there was also the added strain of seeing a lot of anti aircraft shells exploding around you. Our combat career was so short that I never became acquainted with the defense characteristics of the different areas. But the pursuit pilots I met in Germany later said there was one area on the coast of Holland that had a real good gunner they called Daniel Boone. They didn't go in his area if they could avoid it, but he did some shifting around and whenever they would be surprised by some real close bursts in clusters of four, they knew that they'd better get out of Daniel Boone's territory.

The first mission finally arrived and was to be Berlin. The fighter escort was able to go all the way in, but was divided into two or three shifts. A lot went wrong that day. First we couldn't find our assembly ship. We looked all over. There were plenty of ships around but not our zebra ship. There were plenty of other lost souls up there too, and when time began to run out, the stragglers began to band together. The formation headed out over the North Sea for the coast of Holland. The ship we were

following was obviously unhappy at some other ships forming behind him and appointing him section leader. So he was still running all over looking vainly for his own group and wasting a lot of gas accelerating to overtake first one flight of ships then another. This was ruinous, as nobody had any gas to waste. At 20,000 feet you have to fly on Superchargers, which are large power driven turbines that force an extra supply of the thin air into the carburetors to provide enough oxygen for combustion. The air is carried from the turbines through rubber ducts to the carburetors. You can control speed either by opening the throttles wide open and regulating the superchargers, or you can open the superchargers wide open and regulate the throttles. There isn't any difference in the results and both methods were used. We were following this cowboy and Lafferty had the superchargers full on and was flying with the throttles. We were near the Frisian Islands by with the throttles. We were by Holland and this "leader" was still hopping around looking for his friends. We should never have stayed with him. The formation was flying at 190 mph. He would throttle up to about 210 or more to catch somebody, run right up behind them and then almost run into them as there are no brakes on a B 24.

We had already made up our minds that this was the last wild goose chase we would go on with this guy when he came slamming up behind another formation and everybody throttled back. Lafferty closed our throttles, which was normally not done, and the pressure from the superchargers blew out the sides of the rubber ducts. With the superchargers out we immediately lost about 40 miles per hour of speed and the entire formation left us behind. There was no way we could keep up. We turned around and headed back over the North Sea, good old Garman coming up with the proper heading in about a minute. Stragglers like us were duck soup for any German fighter that might be around and we were surely uncomfortable, until we got back over Scotland. The Colonel always checked out the turn backs and had a few severe words for Lafferty and Rufe, but beyond that, nothing.

Four More Missions

In the second half of March, 1944 we flew four missions, and were always able to find our assembly ship. On one of them the ship ahead of us, containing one of my friends from Victorville, Don Murky, fell out of the formation with a smoking engine and never came back to the base afterward. I mentioned this in a letter home and said there was no emergency and they probably landed or bailed out and were captured. My parents looked up the address of Mural's parents in some papers I had sent home and wrote this information to them. On another occasion a shell burst just ahead of the ship, and I have a piece of the flak that came into the turret. The ground crew had to patch up the nose and put on new Plexiglas. I began to suspicion that life was not as tranquil and secure as it had been and wrote my parents that if they received any notice about me to consider that I had encountered some delay but would be back eventually.

We Lose Our Plane

On April 1, 1944 we went to Ludwigshaven, Germany, which is a long way in, on the Rhine River, near the border of Switzerland to bomb a chemical plant. A common description of flak was that it was thick enough to walk on. The Air Force was doing saturation bombing so the ground force was doing Saturation flak firing. They just judged where the release point would be and sent up a barrage at that point and everybody fired into it. They could change the barrage area a lot faster than the formation could change course. Everybody would have to go through the barrage. There was a certain fascination in watching the ships ahead of you going into this

dense area of smoke and exploding shells, except for the sobering thought that in a very short time you would be having the same experience. A few columns of black smoke reached all the way down to the ground marking the path of the luckless burning ships. Anybody having the misfortune to bail out over an area like this also had the problem when he reached the ground of facing a mass of ill tempered and hostile civilians. Their hostility is quite understandable. One bomber crew had the poor judgment to name their ship "Murder, Inc." and the additional poor judgment to have this name painted on the backs of their jackets. They compounded their faulty thinking by wearing these garments into combat and getting captured with them on.

Ludwigshaven was equipped with a Multitude of 88 mm and 120 mm flak shooters and they surely laid down an impressive barrage. We were into it for what seemed like a long time. Everybody's version of what happened differs and from my viewpoint in the nose, I could only see directly ahead and wouldn't know what went on behind. When we came out I did observe that one engine was stopped completely and another was faltering and was more of a drag than a pulling force. We again lost about 50 mph of speed and the formation left us behind in a matter of minutes. That wonderful Garman again gave us a course for home, but we had a real lonely feeling.

Suddenly we found ourselves being escorted by two beautiful P-51s, with the white star of the U.S. Air Force on their sides. They stayed with us as long as they could, but we knew their gas would be getting low and eventually they had to leave. Our speed was too slow for them and they had to circle us to keep near and just didn't have enough fuel to stay. Our altitude was dropping. The altimeter was revolving backwards rapidly, and when we reached 5,000 feet, good old reliable Garman opened the turret door and I joined him and buckled on my chest chute. Lafferty was ringing the bailout bell, indicating that it was his intention to jump and if he was leaving, the rest of us intended to do likewise. Garman and I opened the nose wheel door. I motioned him to go and he motioned me to do the honors. Frankly neither one of us was enthusiastic about jumping into that open air. I looked again at the revolving altimeter, put my feet into the open hatch and dropped through. After the war Lafferty said that the third engine had quit before he left.

When I dropped out everything suddenly became quiet. I pulled the rip cord to open my parachute but it didn't open. I began pulling the cloth out with my hands and it remained tangled in the center but began to billow out on both sides of the tangled part. The shroud lines were twisted and I rotated myself in the air and jerked on the lines to get as much air in the chute as possible. I never looked at the ground, being too busy looking up. I hit the ground with a severe jolt which dazed me and knocked my breath out. I tried hard to breathe but couldn't. Finally I quit trying and immediately could breathe again.

I Become A Prisoner Of War

I was in the middle of a plowed field and for a few seconds couldn't remember how I came to be there. Then things cleared up and I ran to the edge of the field and put the parachute under some bushes. I also looked around and saw some German soldiers coming toward me in a small car. They had rifles and I watched until they came near and then raised my hands in the air to indicate there was no need for them to start shooting in my direction. Then motioned me to get into the car and we drove a short distance into the small town of Rosday, France.

All the people in the town seemed to be gathered outside a house to which I was taken. Rufe and Smitty, the radioman, were there, as were several German soldiers

and officers. They took my escape kit which contained \$300 in money, water purifying pills, A compass, maps, some chocolate, and a few other escape aids. Also they cut the cord off my electric suit as I suppose they considered this a weapon. After a few minutes we were taken outside and marched through the crowd of French people. All of them were openly sympathetic. The women were crying and all were shouting words in French that we could not understand but knew were words of encouragement. We did not feel very jovial but did manage to indicate some appreciation of their friendliness and even a couple of faint smiles. We went to another house about a block away and stayed in a second floor room guarded by three German soldiers who jumped up and clicked their heels whenever one of the officers came in. They offered us cold coffee and dark bread but we declined it. That bread later became the most important food item and I never declined it again.

About dusk a soldier with a machine pistol came in and directed me to put my hands up and walk out ahead of him. I was in very low spirits and felt that this was probably my last walk as I expected to be shot in the back, but didn't really care. He was only taking me out to get on an army truck and returned to get Rufe, who showed by the expression on his face as he came out that his thoughts were the same as mine. Then Smitty came out showing the same expectations. We drove some distance and were put one at a time into a guard house. The rooms were about twelve feet square, barred window, one door with a peephole in it, a ceiling light which was on all the time and a bench in the center containing a straw mattress and one dark gray blanket. They brought some more cold coffee, a slice of bread and some cheese completely covered with mold. I learned later that mold on cheese is not harmful in the least but on that night I did not have any yearning for it. Someone knocked on the wall and I answered. Smitty's voice said "P.B. , dinner at the Ritz!" I believe prisoners throughout the ages have made friends with mice, and I had a most friendly feeling that night toward a little mouse that played around the room.

Finally I fell asleep on the straw mattress. It had been an eventful day. Next morning I looked through the barred window and saw the Nazi flag on the flagpole. There was a radio out in the hall tuned to a BBC station playing records, and Frank Sinatra was singing "Pistol Packing' Mama." The peephole in the door frequently had an eye looking through it. I considered taking one of the pieces of straw which covered the floor and jamming the peepers in the eye. However this is not a wise thing to do to people who have you completely in their control so I restrained my impulse. There was a latrine down the hall and when you had to relieve yourself you watched until the eye appeared and indicated your wishes in pantomime. The guard would then conduct you down there and keep his gun available while you were occupied. On these occasions Rufe would stop and look through my peephole. He asked me if I'd seen him looking in at me. I said I didn't recognize the pupil of his eye. He said "I looked in at you whenever I went by. You sure were a sulky looking guy."

France, Germany And Interrogation

Back in England we'd had many lectures on what to expect if we were captured, so when we were put on a train with three guards we assumed our destination was the interrogation center, Dulag Luft. The first stop was Rheims, France, and we were put into a barred enclosure, that was intended to store baggage, while waiting to change trains. A group of German soldiers came over to look at us. I took an imaginary machine gun and mowed them all down complete with sound effects. This caused a larger crowd to gather so I obliged them by repeating the act. The crowd became larger and Rufe and Smitty had no wish to be the center of attention so they

suggested that I cut out the damn foolishness.

The next change of trains was at Frankfurt, Germany. Coming into Frankfurt we rode past miles of burned out railway cars and wrecked buildings. It was clearly apparent that there would be no friendship for us in that town. We had to wait for about two hours in the station. The three guards stood in a triangle with us in the center. They didn't face us but stood facing the crowd with their machine pistols ready. They had no reason to have any liking for us, but German soldiers were very well disciplined. They had been ordered to deliver us to Dulag Luft, and they intended to carry out their orders. They were as relieved to leave Frankfurt as we were.

We were now on a troop train filled with German soldiers. There was a compartment on the train from which they evicted some displeased soldiers and put us in where we could be more easily guarded. About the middle of the next afternoon we arrived at Dulag Luft and were put into solitary confinement. We had been told about Dulag back in England. After being in solitary confinement a while we would be taken out and threatened with execution if we did not give them all the information they asked. The second questioner would be a nice guy who would be able to save us from execution if we would cooperate with him and give him information he needed. After that we would be left alone with a beautiful woman. She would really give us the friendship treatment, including the offer of her personal favors in exchange for a few simple facts. Everybody was saying how they would lead her on and make her perform and then tell her nothing but lies.

The first interrogator had me pretty well convinced. Despite the forewarning I really believed he was going to execute me. He went into a towering rage and said that I was a spy and a saboteur and execution was what I deserved. I decided that when I got in front of the firing squad I would begin to be talkative and garrulous, but they would have to point the rifles at me before I would begin. The only information we were to give was our name, rank, and serial number, which I had already done. In England they had said that the interrogation would begin with simple harmless questions, which were not to be answered, as the intention was to lead you in deeper and deeper until there was no turning back.

The second man was friendly, as expected. He told me all about himself, how he had worked in the U.S. as a traveling salesman in Tennessee. He said it was true that I was a suspected saboteur with an assumed serial number and rank and they needed additional information to identify me. I said if I was going to assume a rank it would be a rank higher than Second Lieutenant. He disregarded that reply and asked what part of the U.S. I had come from, what was my mother's name and what schools I attended. I told him that none of these things had the remotest connection with the war. He said that was true, but they would speed up the identification process and that might be of importance to me. I was sent back to think it over.

During this time I spent about ten hours a day sending messages home by mental telepathy. I tried all the channels. None of them got through. My folks did not know I was missing until later. I do not believe in mental telepathy.

One day the door opened and a young girl was there with the guard. Anticipated treatment number three was about to begin. But she only stood outside staring and did not come in. I concluded she must have been a friend of the guard who only wanted to see one of the "terror fliers." After three or four more sessions with the friendly man, he finally said our visits were ended, but first he would tell me a few things. He then read off the names of our crew members, it was the original crew to

which we had been assigned in the U.S. and included the man who had grounded himself. It also included Fraleigh and Lebero, who had the good judgment to stay in bed the morning of April 1st. Then he told me some things I didn't know, that Major Stewart had been promoted to Colonel and no longer commanded the 703rd Squadron, having been succeeded by Captain Casey.

I believe that my surprise must have been evident to him although I tried to conceal it and pretend no interest. Then we turned back into a large barracks where I was reunited with Rufe and Smitty. If the Germans didn't have that barracks equipped with concealed microphones then were not as smart as we knew them to be. All the men who had been in solitary confinement were back with their friends and everybody was chattering like a magpie. All the information that had been withheld from the Germans was now freely discussed.

Some German officers came in and had long, friendly talks with us. One of them was a pilot who had the lower part of his face shot away during the battle of Britain. The German doctors had rebuilt his jaw and made him a new face that had the appearance of being artificial but was surely a splendid job. One of our captured pursuit pilots was named Bunte. This German with the artificial face was talking to a group of us and a German airplane appeared in the distance. Everybody turned to watch it and the German said "Go get him Bunte." Everybody laughed.

Treatment Of POWs

After every war, there has always been complaint about the treatment of prisoners. War prisoners have never been pampered in the history of the world. In Roman times they were sold as slaves. Many were just murdered and tortured. The greatest concentration of human misery ever assembled on the North American continent was the Andersonville prison camp in Georgia during the American Civil War. The British and American forces captured 300,000 Germans in North Africa in 1942 and most of them were sent to the U.S. and Canada. These men may well have been the best treated prisoners in the history of warfare. After the war many of them came back to live in this country. Meinert is one of them with whom I have an acquaintance. He had been a prisoner in Michigan and is now an optician in Kalamazoo. There never, was or ever will be a war prisoner who is not disliked or hated by the civilian population of his captors. No nation had ever put its most astute officers or best combat troops in charge of prison camps. The guards that have to do this work encounter so much annoyance and friction that there is almost no possibility of anything but mutual hostility between prisoners and guards.

Germany was under the rule of an insane man and under his orders, two and a half million people were exterminated by mass murder in gas chambers. Germany was in total war on two fronts, and was losing on both. All the production and transportation systems of the country were being strained to support this all out war effort, and the allied air forces were working day and night to knock out these production and transportation systems. The German civilians were being killed by the hundreds of thousands in bombing raids and the ones that survived their standard of living reduced to a low state. Under these circumstances, there was no way that a captured Allied airman was going to receive anything but an unpampered confinement. I believe that the treatment received was good as could be expected. The German prisoners in US may have lived better, but so did the U.S. civilians live better.

A prison camp commander lives in fear of many things. He probably had thirty or

forty guards for each 1,000 men in the camp and would be vastly outnumbered in case of a mass uprising, so he is in constant fear of revolt. The prisoners will revolt if their conditions become hopeless or desperate enough, and he has to try and keep the situation from reaching this state. If his side is losing, he also has to anticipate the war's end and the possibility of being brought to trial for his treatment of prisoners. So he tries to do the best he can to keep a revolt from developing. The food and fuel were never plentiful but the fact that life in the camp was bearable is evidenced by the fact that the survival rate was very high.

Stalag Luft I

We were taken to Stalag Luft I at Barth, Germany directly north of Berlin on the shore of the Baltic Sea. I was given a German identification tag number 4216, which I believe to mean that I was that number in order of capture. By the end of the war they had over 50,000 Air Corps prisoners which shows why so many replacements were needed. The location was about the same latitude as Hudson Bay. The summer was not very hot and the winter was about the same as it is here in Michigan. The camp had been used by the German army before it was fenced into two compounds and converted into a prison camp. The south compound had been filled and we were put into the north compound, later called North I as two more north compounds were added. They contained about 5,000 men by the war's end. Smitty was sent to another camp and Rufe and I were in a room with fourteen other men in eight double deck bunks. Atlas Molnar was in the lower bunk below me. Each bunk had a wooden bottom covered by an excelsior filled mattress. The best of the food was furnished by the Red Cross, one ten pound package per week per man. When things went well, the packages came in cardboard boxes bound with steel tape. The cardboard boxes and metal tape were discarded at first, but later on nothing but ashes and tin cans were discarded. We strung the tape between the sides of our bunks and laid the cardboard boxes on top of the gap, and it was much better than the boards. The boards were used for many other things, including chairs and benches. The chairs had metal and cardboard seats and were so comfortable that we vowed to make the same kind when we got home.

The entrance to the compound had two gates with an enclosure between and one gate was always closed before the other was opened. New prisoners were coming in every few days and the whole compound gathered at the entrance to await their arrival. This always involved a long wait and the only entertainment while waiting was watching the guard march constantly back and forth letting people in and out. He marched stiffly and kept in step so the prisoners began to count the cadence to his march, "Hup, two, three, four," and just as he reached the gate, everyone hollered "Halt." He tolerated this for a while but began growing noticeably more angry. He speeded up his steps and the count speeded up. He slowed down and the count slowed down. He stopped and faced the crowd and the count stopped. He started up again and the count started with him. He whirled and unslung his rifle, leveling it at the crowd and shouted in German. The people in the back of the crowd shouted "Don't let the son of a bitch bluff you." The people in the front rank didn't say anything, but a few of them tried to get back into the rear rank where all the brave people were.

The guard started to move again and the front rank remained silent, but the courageous rear rank people bravely took up the count and again the guard leveled his rifle, the rear rank had to keep tightly closed to prevent the cowardly front rank people from getting through and making themselves than rear rank. All this had been observed by the guards in the towers, who had telephones and had already called in to advise the orderly room that if the gate guard was not relieved real quick

there would be a lot of hell breaking loose. So just at this time a relief guard came marching rapidly in. The man with the frayed nerves was replaced with a light-hearted man who laughed and counted the cadence with the prisoners. The problem was solved and the angry man was never given the gate detail again.

Life At Stalag Luft 1

There is no romance or glory in war, only waste and cruelty, death, and loneliness, sadness and a longing for the end to come. I will try to tell how we passed the time in Stalag Luft 1. The food varied about in proportion to the weather and the successes of the transportation system in Germany. If the weather was good and transportation was working the food supply was more adequate. When weather and transportation got worse, the food supply was affected accordingly. We began getting three meals a day, but soon dropped to two a day with two loaves of bread to each room at noon. When the Battle of the Bulge began we dropped to one or two loaves of bread at noon and one meal in the mess hall at night. There were 1,200 in the compound and breakfast each day consisted of six sacks of barley soaked overnight and heated early in the morning. This barley inevitably had a few worms and insects boiled in and could be detected with the grain but it was soon discovered that these were not harmful, and the barley made quite a good breakfast. The bread ration at noon was divided into sixteen parts laid on the table and sixteen cards laid out, one on each pile. Then sixteen matching cards were drawn by the men in turn. Our one deck of cards became so familiar that the men could identify each card by its backside. This bread was baked with sawdust as a partial filling and wood chips could sometimes be found in the loaves, it was absolutely delicious and many of us agreed we'd never had bread of such good quality before.

Our cigarette ration was five packages a week from the Red Cross boxes. I didn't smoke them but always traded them for bread. Ascorbic acid pills also came in the Red Cross boxes but many were discarded and I was easily able to accumulate a good supply, which helped me to maintain better health during the winter. Supper consisted of potatoes and Spam, potatoes and sardines, or potatoes and some kind of gravy. If animals were killed in the war, they were sent in to be used in the gravy. One sheep would make enough gravy for the whole compound. Sometimes we had pudding made of bread and chocolate with some prunes or raisins. This was always a real treat. Prunes or raisins were also put into the breakfast barley sometimes. The prunes and raisins were always soaked in barrels before being served and juice was then saved and put into kegs to ferment. There always seemed to be an adequate supply of fermented juice for the kitchen staff and some of the higher ranking officers. Colonel Byerly was noticeably unsteady on his feet at some of the roll calls. These roll calls were held each morning and evening. They took from a half hour to almost two hours, depending on the number of men. He recounts it took to make the figures come out right. Rufe was from Tennessee and spoke with a pronounced drawl. After one lengthy recount on a cold day, he said with disgust, "Ah wish them Hahnies (Heinies) would get that Count raht one tahm."

The men who occupied our room from first to last were as follows Jack Reed (Rufe), Tennessee; P.B. Miller, Michigan; Ernest Chumley, Illinois; Jack Armatoski, Michigan; Ed Wronkosky, New York; Frank May, Illinois; Tom Kennedy, Massachusetts; Atlas Molnar, Georgia; Ralph Hammerstram, Minnesota John Guldán Minnesota; Jack Hamilton, Michigan; Glen Zintz, California; and Tony Tavernit from Pennsylvania. Others who stayed a while but not all the time were Ed Clark, California, John Crashy, Massachusetts; Pete Belitsos, Massachusetts; Grover Dean, Texas; Frank Kelley, New York; John Beam, West Virginia; and Roy Massey, Georgia. Beam and Massey slept in

the hall outside the door until there was room for them inside. Roy was withdrawn and quiet. One day he cut his throat and wrists with a razor blade and lost enough blood to paint a house. There was an excellent British doctor who stitched him up and he was returned to the compound but only came back to our room one time and then he said he wanted to apologize to us. No one felt he owed any apology to us but Zintz said we probably owed him one, "as we must have drove him around the bend."

One night a major came into the camp about dark and we had a vacant bed for a day or so, so he was sent to our room. It was dark when he came in and he only got a brief look around as he came in by lamplight. Dulag Luft was closed then and he was about two days out of England where he'd been eating steak and eggs. The next morning he was the first man up. The shock was a little too much for his system. We had always commented about how everybody's room stank but ours. The Germans closed and locked the shutters at night (more about that later) so the ventilation was "inadequate." The major's facial expression ~~of~~ complete disbelief and disgust was observed by everybody. He left immediately and never returned, having done whatever was necessary to obtain a place in the "wheels barracks," where there were fewer men to a room.

The Cottontail Group

Frank Kelley had a complete nervous breakdown and was eventually taken away by the Germans and may have been repatriated. The story he told us was as follows: He came from a group in Italy that had the tails of their ships painted white and called themselves the cottontail group. One day a ship from that group was under attack by German fighters and dropped its wheels, indicating that it was surrendering and would land. The Germans accepted this, discontinued the attack and one or two of the German fighters escorted them down. They soon felt themselves able to combat the escorting ships, opened fire on them, apparently shot one or both of them down, retracted their wheels, and made an escape, getting back home safely. This story became well known and was confirmed in these basic essentials by other people than Frank Kelley. The Germans pronounced this a double cross and vowed to seek revenge. Axis Sally, whose broadcasts from Berlin were heard by all our European forces, reviewed the event and announced that the white tail group was in for trouble, as the Luftwaffe would devote special attention to them in the future. This would not be hard to do as the white tails always stood out like a sore thumb.

The men in the group who did the flying considered that it might be prudent to repaint the tails olive drab to match the rest of the Air Force, but the colonel, it wasn't said whether he did much flying, decreed that the challenge would be accepted. Some of the newer ships that hadn't yet gotten their tails painted white immediately had that done. The Luftwaffe was still a powerful fighting team and while they could not turn back the entire 8th or 15th Air Forces they could surely devastate any one group on which they wished to concentrate. So the white tails, which I believe was the 150th Bomber group, (our crew had been a part of it one time at Alamogordo) received the concentrated attention of the best of the Luftwaffe squadrons and the results were disastrous to them. Kelley's ship was among those shot down and when he jumped out he said he had neglected to open the bomb bay doors, which he thought caused two men to be trapped inside. This was really not important because those doors could be opened in more than one way. There was a lever right in the bomb bay that would do it, or just jumping on them would knock them out. We told him this but he insisted he had been the cause of the death of these men.

He brooded a lot and one day he spent the entire time trying to write a letter to his parents, and at the end of the day had only written six words, "I am fine. Your son, Frank" He showed it to us and said "It's not Much of a letter, is it?" He got worse and said he did a lot of things wrong. When he was a boy in New York he used to go down by the East river and play with himself. Glen Zintz said "Why, hell Frank. That ain't anything. Look at Rufe there. That's his favorite sport. When was the last time Rufe?". Rufe answered "Laist night."

Kelley wouldn't be consoled and repeatedly said that we should give him what he had coming. Then he began to stay awake all night and you could always see a cigarette glowing in his bunk. This made us all uneasy as we had a concern about fire in that excelsior mattress. We tried to get him to cut it out but he apparently couldn't. Then he couldn't go to the mess hall at the proper time, but when it was closed and locked he'd go over and bang on the door. Finally ~~we~~ he tried to climb the barbed wire fences in broad daylight in full view of the guard towers. The Germans had issued full warning that this action would bring on a burst of gunfire, but they obviously recognized him as a disturbed person and did not shoot him but just picked him up and took him away. We never saw him again.

A few months later a package from his parents came for him. We didn't know his whereabouts, and reasoned that he might have been repatriated as a few had been. A man named Smith from our compound with an eye shot out had been sent home. We also rationalized that if we returned the package the Germans might confiscate it for their own use so we decided to lay the items on the table and draw cards for them. I won the first draw and selected the card matching the can of tooth powder. That tooth powder lasted for over six months. The package to Prank was the first one that came to anyone that had been in our room.

There was no visiting between compounds but one of Rufe's old friends from Knoxville was in the South compound and had heard of his presence so he sent over a note. Rufe made the mistake of reading it to us. It began, "Hello, you Fountain City Bobcat." Rufe explained that Fountain City was a section of Knoxville and the school athletic teams from that area were called Bobcats. Everybody began calling him the Fountain City Bobcat until he became thoroughly fed up and disgusted with the name. He explained that he did not live in Fountain City, and did not attend school in Fountain City and we could kiss his ass. Nobody accepted the invitation but his name didn't change.

News About Patton's Third Army

Patton's army had just broken out of the Cherbourg Peninsula. The news report indicated the tanks that spearheaded the breakthrough were all picked men, Patton's favorites. That part was factual I believe and was the First armored division which was a favorite of his for tough assignments. Glen Zintz brought this news and added some information of his own. He said all of the leading tanks were operated exclusively by Fountain City Bobcats. "They can't lose, why hell men they're invincible! Them truckers (substitute word) don't know fear." Rufe had to endure some use Of that name until the end of the war.

POW Games

The YMCA sent in some games for our use, Monopoly and backgammon. A room would get the Monopoly game about once a month and everybody would spend the entire day playing. Backgammon was easier to get but not very challenging. Dice,

cribbage, bridge, and chess were the most popular. Cigarettes were plentiful at times and a few men were able to win as much as two or three hundred packages by being the "house" and marking out games on blanket, with a system that offered a slight advantage to the house. The volume of play would practically guarantee a good return to the house. Cigarettes were the medium of exchange and commodity prices were listed on a bulletin board, varying up and down depending on supply. Bread would vary from 16 to 60 cigarettes, chocolate bars maybe 200 to 500, not many available, and watches 1,200 to 1,500 cigarettes. When packages came from home all sorts of new items would be listed and trading would be more active. Many men had decks of cards and bridge became very popular with games going on all the time. Then arguments and debates lasted long into the night. No domestic friction was ever more spirited than those conversations in the dark about the bridge games. After endless debate, someone would be hollering "Yes, you know damn well I'd have made it if it hadn't been for that blank ace of spades."

There were other endless arguments that went on and on. One was about the type of aerial maneuver performed by a fly in landing on the ceiling. That went on all summer. He apparently flew with his feet below him but had to land with them above him. You couldn't answer the question by watching them do it. We watched them for months and didn't resolve anything. They flew around and around in circles and when they decided to land they did it so suddenly there was no way to observe their method.

Chess games were in every room. Everyone made a set of pieces of wood, and some were traded from the guards for cigarettes. Our room had two or three. One of these I made and brought home later. After we'd learned and played everyone a few times it was apparent that we all settled down to playing others only at our own level. This is generally true of all games. Good bridge players generally prefer to play against other good players. Expert golfers are not challenged when they compete with duffers. That's surely true with chess. Jack Hamilton, Frank Moy, and I were probably the best in our room and ended up mostly playing each other. I also played five or six men in other rooms. One of them was John Matty, in a room with my old friend Jack Foster, from Thunderbird Field. Everybody in that room was a pursuit pilot. Matty was quite an intrepid flyer and I sometimes questioned him about his experiences. The trains in France and Germany had to discontinue running in the day time because of our air supremacy. This hurt the German war effort and also our food supply. Matty was concentrating on the chessboard and not greatly entranced with my conversation. I said, "Did you ever shoot up a train, Matty?" He just kept studying the board and nodded his head. I said, "What's it like?" He just kept thinking and didn't answer for a while. Then he said absently, "Lotta steam."

Another man with whom I played was Jay Weiselberg. He was probably the best player I knew about in the compound. He was also the block trader. He wore a black eye patch over one eye, and had a pronounced Semitic appearance. The Germans segregated all the Jews into one barracks, probably on Hitler's orders. Other than annoyances like turning off their lights when others were left on and things like that, they were not physically harmed. Weiselberg, although he made no attempt to conceal his Jewish origin, was left undisturbed. He said he didn't understand it but was willing to let matters stand.

Trading with the guards was forbidden, but they had a preference for American cigarettes, and the prisoners had a need for things like onions, matches, lighter flints, and lighter fluid, chessmen, all the things the guards would permit. Ability to speak the German language was an essential requirement for traders and the Jews

are the best linguists in US with the French, Germans, and later the Russians. It was the Jews who were best able to do the communicating. Each barracks (block) had a trader, and most of them were Jews. Also, most of the people who dealt with the Germans on mess hall affairs, camp administration problems, work details, etc., were Jews. It was a necessity to speak the language and these Jews were able to do it. They were also capable. It was as simple as that. So Weiselberg (first "I" is silent) was our block trader. As this was a forbidden activity there was some risk of penalty if caught, such as a few days in solitary confinement, but the trading ban was very laxly enforced. This was understandable as the French "Elegantes" and the German cigarettes were so inferior to the American brands that they had only negligible value on the exchange. The traders kept the blocks supplied as best they could but being human they also made a few deals of their own accord. They were criticized for this, of course, because the critics would like to have done the same thing for themselves.

Weiselberg had a very fine chess set and board which was far more elegant than the hand whittled pieces and pencil marked cardboard used by the rest of us. A few more words about chess and we'll end that subject. The game has been played by prisoners of all the wars in history. It can be played with stones or pieces of wood, or pieces of paper, or twigs, and is the most absorbing game I know. Also the most exciting as you could play for two hours and not know but what you were home in the U.S. Only when the game ended did you come back to reality. One of the most difficult chess problems is to check a lone king using a king, a bishop, and a knight. Any lone king getting this combination against any player below a top expert is pretty well able to count on a draw or a stalemate. Several of us worked out a solution and memorized it, but have long since forgotten as it takes frequent use to keep it in mind. About twenty moves are required to force the king to the edge, and about fourteen more in exact order for a checkmate. These games were very helpful to our well being.

POW Hobbies

Roy Massey and Frank Kelly didn't have much interest in games, as I recall. Another good way to spend the hours was the hobby of making things. Many wood carvings, using broken glass and razor blades as tools, were produced of airplanes and other familiar things. Some water color paint sets and art supplies were furnished by the YMCA and some good art work produced. Colonel C. Ross Greening, who had among other things, been one of the original Tokyo Raiders, was a talented painter and produced some of the best water color paintings I've ever seen. He had to spend some time as an evader in Yugoslavia. Before being captured, and this was in winter, he had no blankets and went into barns and slept in the stalls with cattle. He said a cow gave off a great deal of warmth. The general preference though was for a couple of bare naked milkmaids and a lot of hay.

The YMCA also sent in some scripts for plays, such as the currently popular "Front Page", and "The Man Who Came To Dinner." These were performed in the mess hall by the "Table Top Thespians" to spellbound audiences. Some men of smaller stature played girls' parts, and with some padding, their appearance made a startling effect. There were also constant lectures in the mess hall on every imaginable subject. About every major city in the US was described and covered in detail, as were all kinds of hobbies, crafts, and business lectures. For good weather balls and bats and volleyball equipment were furnished by the good old YMCA. The games were reported in the camp newspaper which will be mentioned later.

Harassing The Guards

The enclosing fences were double barbed wire about twelve feet high, with about four feet of space between filled with coiled barbed wire. About six feet inside was a warning wire beyond which it was forbidden to go. If a ball went outside the warning wire the way to retrieve it was to get a red flag, wave it to get the attention of all the guards and get permission to recover the ball. As this took some time, a few men would risk it and take a chance of their speed rather than delay the game. They were about like kids running into the street in front of a car to get a ball instead of waiting for traffic to clear. One time the men hit the ball over the deadline and had gone through the procedure of the flag waving and had gotten clearance to cross over. Just then a walking guard came around the corner of a building and not having seen the flag, which had been laid on the ground, he raised his rifle and fired. The man who had been fired at jumped back and caught his leg in the barbed wire but fell into safe territory. The barbed wire had dug into his leg and his first thought was that his leg had been hit by the bullet. So he started to yell. The shot and the yelling brought about 100 men pouring out of the barracks and the walking guard was soon backed into a fence corner by a howling mob of prisoners. The guard had made a mistake but might have killed a man by his error. The guard was in a spot but had recharged his rifle and had it leveled at the crowd which kept everybody back. His face was red and he was obviously frightened, and was shouting in German.

The Americans were also shouting names at him, like "Schweinhund!" which translates as pig dog and is considered insulting by the Germans. It was later rumored that the man had lost some of his relatives in air raids and had no love for the prisoners. The tower guards had gotten on the telephones again and a rifle squad soon came in behind the crowd, opened a way through and took him out. These walking guards couldn't have had much love for their jobs. There were only one or two of them in a compound of over a thousand men and many things were done to annoy them. If one thing was forbidden something else would be tried. Sometimes men would begin to fall into line single file behind the guard. Staying a few feet behind him wherever he went, the line would grow to include 400 or 500 men. No guard ever appeared to enjoy this. At night the walking guards were on duty all night long and were accompanied by dogs, either German shepherds or Doberman Pinschers. Sometimes the area was lighted, but all electric power came from a camp generator and later in the war fuel was scarce for the generator and water pumps. So the camp was then pitch dark at night.

The shutters on all windows were supposed to be closed but this allowed only a small area for ventilation. The guards had over- 120 shutters to check and just couldn't get around fast enough to cover them all. The shutters were only closed with a hook and staple on the outside so it was not difficult to slide any thin object between the doors and lift the hook. Armatoski and Tavernit were working away on the shutter night and Armatoski saw the toe of a boot below the crack at the bottom of the shutter. He didn't make any big commotion about his observation but just decided to go to bed immediately with all his clothes on.

Tony kept working away, though, and didn't notice Jack's sudden departure. He got the hook loose finally and swung the shutter open. The lights were on that night and he found himself looking into the muzzle of the guard's pistol. The guard commanded "Raus mit ya!" ("Out with you!") and Tony was taken completely by surprise and said, "Who me?" The guard repeated "Raus!" Tony began to retreat but the guard reached in, took him by the shirt and dragged him through the window. It was below zero, the snow crunched under their feet as they walked away, Tony had no coat, and was being taken to solitary confinement. It was well known what the penalty would be, so we

had no cause to protest, and nobody indicated much sympathy for Tony. He was well liked but we thought he would be able to stand it all right. Tony was not considered the smartest man in the room and somebody said, "You'd know that it would be Tony." This started everybody laughing and then Armatoski told about seeing the boot toe and his sudden decision to retire from the job. More laughing. About the time it quieted down somebody would say "Raus mit ya!" and then answer "Who, me?" and the laughter would start again.

There was always a lot of laughter in the camp, not because it was such a joyous life. It wasn't. There was no freedom, no girls, insufficient food, poor clothing, poor quarters, no pay, endless monotony and dirt and loneliness. But the American army in all wars has always demonstrated that it knows how to laugh in all situations. There was actually more laughter in this dreary camp, in freezing winter weather than back at MacDill Field in plentiful sunshine, and more food than we could eat. So we didn't laugh from gaiety, but because the army just always reacted that way.

Tony stayed in solitary three days. The next day we took his coat over to him and when his exercise time came in the afternoon the whole room was lined up to wave and holler over the fence to ask him how he was enjoying life. He was not supposed to answer us back but ~~he~~ waved and smiled. We turned out to see him everyday and saved his bread ration for him. When he came back in three days, he had six extra slices of bread. He said for six slices of bread he might do it again sometime. We still opened shutters, but were always more watchful thereafter.

An Intelligent Guard Dog

The dogs were as alert and watchful for shutter violations as the guards and would run and throw themselves against a shutter that was being opened, snarling and barking. They appeared to enjoy this and sort of regarded it as a game. They tried to do it without warning so the first you knew was when their weight would hit the shutter. But in the winter the snow was packed down or it was icy, and we could hear their claws scratching on the ice as they tried to get up speed to make the jump.

A dog was jumping at our shutter one night. A big police dog, he was very intelligent. We tried opening it just a little but he would jump against it. He went away and we would open it a little. He'd come back to check and jump against it again. The guard was standing out of the wind letting the dog do the work that night. We could hear his claws scratching the ice. Pete Belitsos took a stick with a tin can on the end that we used for washing clothes. He said "I'm going to open that shutter and when that dog comes again he'll get this tin can jammed down his throat." It was dark in the room but the moon was out on the white snow making it light enough to see inside. About five men stood behind Pete to watch but not to participate. We heard the claws scratching on the ice, and Pete's resolution began to waver. The dog came hurtling through the open window and there was a stampede and a growling and snarling like three or four wolves were loose in the room. I was well satisfied to be on the top bunk. Everybody thought at least three legs were taken off. The all time record for getting into bed was set that night. When all the bunks were occupied the dog jumped back out. We all started asking "Who got bit?" To our surprise, not a single person had been even nipped. The dog had faked us all out with pure bluff. We all agreed that he had gotten the best of us that night. Belitsos had to tolerate some comments on the speed of his retreat.

Cold Quarters

The rooms were pretty much unheated. Each man got one lump of coal a day, so we had sixteen lumps of coal and a stove. Sixteen lumps would have lasted for perhaps an hour and a half, so we burned our coal in walnut sized lumps in tin cans which we put on top of the stove. Most of the winter it was cold enough in the room so you could see your breath all the time in the frosty air. We had two cotton blankets and kept all our clothes on day and night.

I only saw one black prisoner. He was from the 99th Fighter Group in Italy. This was a group of Negro pilots who made a very creditable combat record. Chappie James, who was later an Air Force General in the Viet Nam war, started his career with them. The man who was in our compound for a while before moving to North II had left his ship in a dive of more than 400 miles an hour. Hitting this air stream had broken all the blood vessels in his eyeballs, filled his eyes with blood, and blinded him. He was able to see when he came to Stalag I but the condition had not cleared up. He had no whites in his eyes. He had dark brown eyes surrounded by dark red "whites."

The War Progresses

This is becoming monotonous, but so was life in general. When Patton's army was running wild across France, Zintz would go out to check the news on the map by the mess hall and come back yelling "Everybody out for gang plank drill." Now the battle lines were deadlocked near the French border and the drive had stopped. Just as 1944 was ending the Germans launched the attack known as the Ardennes offensive, called by us the Battle of the Bulge. It made a large opening in the allied lines and penetrated a large area in rear of our Armies. It was a blow to our forces and the bottom dropped out of the morale at Stalag Luft 1. General Patton's morale was not affected, however. He said, "Let them go clear to Paris if they want." The more Germans in the bulge, the more they could capture, in his opinion. So he turned his army and attacked the Germans in bitter freezing weather. His army was living outdoors that winter. He and others closed the neck of the bulge and captured the Germans who had broken through. That was another step down to defeat for Germany.

After that the conditions in the camp got worse. The lights were off for a period of about two months. The water was frequently shut off for six to twelve hours. It got dark at that time beginning about Four P.M. due to the high northern latitude. That was a period of six or seven hours before we normally went to bed. The only lights were margarine lamps. This was margarine in a tin can. The wick was a piece of string from our web belts, held by a small piece of wire. I had a full lamp but saved it. We were wasteful sometimes, using two lamps. In about three weeks the others all burned their fuel up. We burned my lamp for about seven hours at night for over thirty days, with the flame about one eighth of an inch high. This small handful of dirty grease furnished all the light for sixteen men for about 200 hours. That's energy conservation. Today this country is having what they consider an energy crisis. They don't know what a crisis is. The amount of food and energy wasted by many families in this country is enough to supply another family of equal size.

Having read the story of Andersonville, during the Civil War, I am aware of how these prison camp stories drag on endlessly, so I will try and hasten this.

Camp News And Escape Attempts

The camp newspaper staff included a captured war correspondent, Lowell Benneth, and was published daily. We were given as good news coverage as the people in the

U.S. Some was better as it came from newly captured prisoners who had just come from combat. The news was authorized by the Germans as they furnished the paper. But the news source was secret, rumored to be a crystal set radio which the radiomen could probably have assembled. On Sunday there was even a comic strip of Klim Kriegie, who was always trying to escape, but you could depend on it, he would get caught. Escape attempts were always going on. None were successful. The ones that got out were always returned. Everybody's first thought was to dig a tunnel. One barracks had so much dirt dug away on the side toward the fence that it leaned over in that direction. Every night the guards crawled around under the buildings looking for new tunnels. One night some men poured water on one of these tunnel hunters. He took his pistol and began to shoot up through the floor. They went charging over to the colonel and next day protested that the guard violated the rules of the Geneva Convention. We all figured that if they didn't expect some sort of violent reaction from the guard they needed their judgment improved.

The YMCA sent in some garden seeds and the Germans had allowed us to plant these along the warning wire. I had a few carrots growing outside our room. Two men had made some wire cutters from two stove handles and they were pretending to be working in the garden but were also cutting the bottom wires of the fence, and eventually started crawling under. It took about an hour for them to get under and the tower guards were observing enough to send a couple walking guards to investigate, and pick them up. A short time later a German officer came in with a detail of men and they began to stamp all over my carrots. I went out to protest to the officer but he told me in good English to save my breath. There was one major who worked on escape plans all the time. There was an old trash wagon which was left inside the compound until it was filled with ashes and cans. Then a man would come with an old horse and a couple guards, haul it out, dump the trash, and return it for a new load. The major took one of his blankets, sewed tin cans and trash all over it and covered it with ashes. When the trash cart was mostly full he had some of his friends wrap him up in his blanket, carry him out, put him in and cover him with ashes. They had to come back every day and provide him with a little bread and water. The tower guards were on the watch for this and were able to observe these men coming to converse with the trash wagon. So they let it stand in the sun a couple extra days for more observation. Then when they took it out, the guards took pains to probe the ashes very thoroughly and all the major got for his trouble was about ten days in solitary confinement.

The medical service was performed by a British doctor who may have volunteered to be captured to treat the prisoners. He was very competent and had the complete confidence of all the men. We all thought he was capable of doing anything that could be done in the medical field.

POW Aces

Many of the top ranking aces of the European Theater of Operations ended up as prisoners. Among those who were in our compound were the fighter aces Seem and Gabbers, and Colonel Spicer, who commanded an occupation jet fighter group after the war. Also Major Gerald Johnson, who is today the top commander of the 8th Air Force. I wrote General Johnson a couple of years ago and received a formal reply, as you expect from a General. Colonel Spicer was one of the most popular men in the camp. In the summer he would umpire the ball games. If a ball was a mile outside he would rule it a strike, and if it was right down the middle, he would call it a ball. If a man was out by mile, he called him safe, but if he was easily safe, he would be called out, and everybody would laugh and cheer. He always tried to even things up in the

end but more men turned out to watch the colonel umpiring than came to watch the game. He was very outspoken and bitter toward the Germans and the last seven months of the war they kept him in solitary confinement on the charge of inciting the men to riot

To get on with the war, when the Germans were driven across the Rhine River, there was no denying the end was near. They blew up all the bridges behind them, except one at Remagen, which was wired to be blown up but a bullet cut the wire. The United States Army captured it intact, threw men across to establish a bridgehead, got a heavy duty pontoon bridge set up alongside and began to pour men and supplies into Germany. I talked with an infantryman who had just been captured. He said that he had been on guard duty for twenty four hours at the Remagen Bridge and during that time, a line of tanks had been crossing continuously. There was no way those retreating Germans were going to stand up against that much strength. In April of 1945 the Russians artillery was close enough for us to hear big guns firing. Our air forces were also helping the Russians.

Our Guards Depart

Several times during the year the 8th Air Force had passed over us on the way to Berlin. This was a tremendous show. You could hear them long before they came into sight. Then they appeared in a gigantic mass, moving on relentlessly. We had heard that the infantry always cheered the airplanes. Now we were doing the cheering, jumping, waving our arms, and yelling our heads off. I believe those were the most exciting days of the year. Had they not been our own ships, I can well understand the hatred and terror they would inspire. The end was getting near. One day we got up and there were no guards in the towers. The officers had departed, leaving instructions to the enlisted men to stay on duty. The enlisted men stayed on duty about long enough for the place to get good and dark. A short while before this, Hitler had ordered the execution of all the prisoners, but Hitler's insanity had long been recognized, and that order was issued too late to be obeyed. Now the camp was unguarded and in almost no time the fences were all taken down. We were to stay there about nine more days

The Germans had some warehouses that contained shoes, clothing, and Red Cross packages. During the remaining few days, we all got three ten pound Red Cross boxes. I found a room filled with shoes scattered all over the floor, and got two that matched and kept my toes out of the open air. Rufe got three fur hats and a couple of ski poles. The Americans were running the camp now. The water was on, the lights were on, and the P.A. system was on and tuned to the BBC. One song they played was "Don't Fence Me In."

The Russian Army Arrives

About eight in the evening on May first, we heard a tremendous roar over by the South Compound. It was like the shouting of a crowd at a football game. The advance elements of the Russian army had arrived. The next day they were there in full force. The Germans had been describing them as "The Mongol Hordes of Ghengis Khan." They pretty well looked the part. They had been fighting and living outdoors all winter and were one tough looking bunch of men. They had come across the German countryside like Sherman's Army across Georgia.

About one hundred fifty cattle were driven into our camp and presented to us as a gift. This was the first fresh meat we had since arriving in Germany. Those cattle all

disappeared in one day. I took a walk outside the camp and saw a dead baby in a carriage. Its blue eyes were wide open and a bullet hole was in its forehead. Nearby were two women, a mother and grandmother. The Russians had moved on and I believe this was a murder and suicide. The Russians were not staying around to entertain us.

We Start For Home

In a few days it was arranged to fly us out. The 8th Air Force was scheduled to move the entire camp in one day. We marched out in a long column. The P.A. system was full on and playing, "You Gotta Accentuate The Positive." We began to sing songs like "I've Got Sixpence." The B 17s came in one minute apart, fifty men were loaded in about twenty seconds and took off. We flew low over Germany and saw devastation below all the way. At Rheims, France, we were landed, and I have never been in an airplane since!

There was a truck at the landing field loaded with little cloth bags. A line of men was there, so Rufe and I got in the line. We each got a cloth bag with a card attached which read, "The Red Cross salutes you for your sacrifices and welcomes you to freedom." In the bag were a comb and toothbrush, mirror and razor, shaving cream, soap, toothpaste, and a few handfuls of hard candy. We got on a big long army truck that was being loaded. When it was filled, the men began to yell that there was no more room. The two men in charge of the truck knew what their capacity was and had kept count. The driver started off and the men cheered. Then he turned in a big circle, came back to the starting place, set the brakes hard, and made room for about thirty more men. We were hauled over and put on a train that was on a siding and did not move for several hours., Rufe and I stayed together until we reached the United States, if you had to select somebody to spend four hundred five days with you in the jug, the old Fountain City Bobcat would be hard to beat.

Slow Train Through France

The trip to LeHavre was probably about 150 or 200 miles. The train took over twenty four hours to make it. There wasn't a single train in France that did not have priority over us, and we spent a great deal of time standing on sidings. If anyone got left behind at one stop, he could always walk to the next siding and catch up to us. No food was provided for us this trip, but we had pretty well provided for ourselves. My pockets were filled with bread, prunes, D-Bars, cigarettes, and bars of soap. The first woman I saw was a young Catholic nun.. She looked as pretty as an angel and was standing in a station talking to some men. I told one to ask her if she would like a bar of soap. He said, "You ask her, she speaks English as well as you do." I went to her and handed her a bar of fragrant Sweetheart soap. She did not say anything, but began to cry. The sight of anybody that needed soap as badly as I did, being willing to give it away was too much for her emotion. The train moved slowly all the next day. About dusk we were across one of the main lines into Paris and waiting for the other train, which had stopped. Two French girls and a French man looked out the window above where I was standing and asked what that train was. I answered that it was loaded with prisoners coming out of Germany. They assumed I would ask them for food and told me they had none. I took a D-Bar out of my pocket and threw it up to them.

The next day we arrived at Camp Lucky Strike near LeHavre. There was a big shower set up and we took all our old clothes and threw them into a pile, got a bar of soap and washed away all the dirt and grime of the last months. We came out the other side

and down another line where we got all new clothes, a sleeping bag, and new mess kit. Here we encountered our long lost friend, Harold Garman, and also Smitty.

Old friends from all over were there at Lucky Strike. Pete Canistraro and Arnold Ostwalt from our tent at Columbia, South Carolina were there. Rufe and I found a tent and went into a long sleep. The chow lines were always about a block long, but the food was good and we began to feel good.

A USO show was there and we went to see it. The evening was cold and a girl came out in a light gown and shivered as she pulled it around her. She said that she needed somebody to keep her warm, and five thousand men shouted to accept the job. The MC was a big fat guy. Squads of Germans who were now the prisoners and doing the work of the camp were marching back and forth. Every time one of these went by, this fat guy would holler at them, "Herman? Vas ist los?"

Paris Pass

Rufe and I drew two hundred dollars each and were given a three day pass to Paris. I ran into Glen Zintz in Paris but found him difficult to recognize. In the camp he had a red mustache that was nine inches from tip to tip. You could stand behind him and see it clearly. Now it was gone. Apparently it was interfering with his social life too much. We got back to LeHavre with about two dollars apiece left.

To The States By Ship

In a few more days a boat came into the harbor to take us to the United States. Rufe and I put everything we owned on our backs and filed on board. An ocean going ship is an impressive structure and never having been on one before, I attempted to ask a few questions of one of the sailors. As I did not know what kind of ship it was, that was my first question. The abysmal ignorance of the other branches of the armed services has always been a sore trial to the seamen. He looked at me with unconcealed disbelief, but as I only thought he had not understood my question, I repeated it. He shook his head and walked away, saying, "Sometimes I wonder." Apparently he did not know either. It was a troopship owned by the U.S. Coast Guard. One of the popular members of the crew was the movie actor Victor Mature, who was a Chief Petty Officer.

Arriving In The States

The war was cruel, wasteful and tragic. The only good part of it was to be on the way home, unharmed, as I was fortunate enough to be doing. The trip was seven days from LeHavre to Boston. We were now divided into geographical sections. Rufe was with the Southerners and I was with the Midwesterners. At the landing in Boston a very large rubber map of the United States located right at the end of the gang-plank. As we came down off the ship, an army brass band was playing "The Stars and Stripes Forever" as we walked over this map. A lot of men cried that day. We were taken to Camp Miles Standish, where everybody was allowed one telephone call home.

Home At Last

The train for home was loaded the next day, and I had shaken old Rufe's hand for the last time. The train had chalk marks and signs all over from the engine to the caboose. It was marked, "Berlin to Chicago Express," "Stalag Luft I Special," "Rome to California Express" "Paris to Kansas City Express" and "Special from every camp in

Germany." Kilroy had also been there. It was June 14, 1945. I got on board and rode to my wife and my son.