The Thomas Sommers Story

I was born in Humphrey, Arkansas on March 25, 1925, and grew up in Dec Arc, Arkansas. In 1943, WWII was going strong and I was 18 years of age. I knew I would be drafted soon. I had taken a job in Minden, Louisiana Ordinance Plant. I really wanted to be in the Air Force. Airplanes were a passion of mine and to fly was always my dream. To be a pilot before the war required two and a half years of college. I was a junior out of high school having been held back a year in sixth grade. The Air Force needed pilots so badly that if you could pass the exams, you were in. I went over to Barksdale AFB and passed all the tests. I quit my job at the Minden plant and went home to Des Arcs to be with my family and wait for my call. While waiting I took a job driving a bus picking up workers in area towns and along the countryside to Jacksonville, Arkansas Ordinance Plant.

In a few weeks, I got my call. I was excited and ready. My last trip on the bus back from the plant was a bad experience. I was going back without passenger traveling on a gravel road. Many of Arkansas highways were not paved before WWII. I was passing a farmhouse and there was a young boy sitting on the porch. A big collie dog was in the yard and he ran out and raced me down the path. The dog came up on the road and froze in front of me. I could not stop the bus and the dog was killed. The boy, who was about 6 or 7, saw this happen. It still hurts to think about it. He picked up the dog and carried it into the house crying. I wanted to help him but I could tell he didn't want any help from me. I followed him back to the house. I told his mom I was on my last trip before going into the Air Force and I would leave money at Wray Brothers Chevrolet Dealers in town for another dog. I hope they got the money.

I reported to Camp Robinson, Arkansas, and got all my hair cut off! From there I was sent to Shepherd Field, Texas, for basic training. While there, I found out that the Air Force didn't need any pilots, but they did need gunners to fly on the big bombers. This was more bad news for me, but I did get to stay in the Air Force. The Army put 36,000 Air Force recruits in the ground forces around this time. I finished my basic and was sent to Laredo, Texas for gunnery school. Then I was sent to Casper, Wyoming, for advanced training. After being there for only a few weeks, some officers came into our barracks one evening and told us, "As soon as we can put a crew together we will ship out". This was gung-ho times. When we first got to Wyoming, the 'big boys" told us, "don't fly down Main Street, don't buzz 18 Wheelers, and for God's sake don't shoot up the rancher's cows". These big boys were to be a part of my crew.

We left Wyoming and picked up our plane in Topeka, Kansas. The plane was a new four engine B-24 Liberator. We took off from Topeka and flew to Bangor, Maine and then to Newfoundland. We stayed over in Newfoundland for maintenance and then flew to the Azores Islands. From there we hopped over to a couple of stops in North Africa before our final landing in southern Italy. This was called the Northern Route. We landed at the headquarters of the 47th Wing, 15th Air Force at Manduria, Italy. We were given our assignment there to the 449th Bomb Group, 719th Squadron.

At times when the weather was too bad to fly, I joined the band that played at the Officer's Club. I had checked out a trombone – it was a YMCA instrument. It was a lot better than the one I played in high school. I played for Gen. Twinnings second star promotion.

Each crew was supposed to fly 50 missions and then you could come back to the U.S. Some of our missions counted as two because the targets were tough, such as Berlin, Stuttgart, Vienna, etc. On my 23rd mission, I was on one of those tough missions to Vienna. The day was Friday the 13th, 1944.

We got to the target around noon and it was fogged in which meant bad news. We did not drop our bombs. Other groups were hitting targets in the same area. We were afraid of collisions. On this particular day, a Colonel in Administration decided he would go with us and lead our group. After our first try, the Colonel decided we should make a long circle and come back to try again, hoping the fog would lift. The fog had not lifted and we still did not drop! This was not normal procedure. Usually if you did not drop, you would proceed on to a secondary target and we had one to hit on the way back to the base, being Graz, Yugoslavia. Instead, our plane got banged up going around. We lost one engine, had flak holes, and my intercom was shot out. I could not hear what was going on. I was in the tail turret. The worst part was that our gasoline tanks were hit! Our biggest nightmare was fire from damaged tanks. We lost a lot of airplanes that day by going around twice, including ours.

Our crippled plane, Nancy Jane II, had a great pilot and copilot at the controls. They got us into Yugoslavia. We made it to Graz and dropped on the railroad yards. Our bombs knocked some doors off some outhouses and many dropped in an open field. Nobody really cared at this point in time. We were heading for a little island off the coast by he name "Viz". This island was held by the British for a fighter base. It had real short runways. This meant a belly landing if you could make it. But we couldn't. All our engines were running mostly empty. As we approached the Adriatic Sea, there was a range of mountains to go over and then we would have to "ditch" into the sea. Our very capable pilot knew that our plane could break up because the bomb bay doors would cave in, and if we ditched into the sea there would be serious injuries, and or drownings. So we turned back inland to find a better place to jump.

Of course I knew we were in trouble, but it really did not hit me until someone tapped me on the shoulder and said prepare to bail out when you hear the buzzer. I was shocked, to say the least, at age eighteen. I got out of my turret and joined the others in the tail section. We would jump through the large camera hatch. Some other plane was carrying the camera that day. Leslie was up front on the flight deck and would go out of the bomb bay with the pilot, copilot, radio operator, navigator, bombardier, and engineer gunner. When Mike rings the buzzer, go for it.

We were wearing our flight gear, but the heated suit with slippers was not what you needed. We were told to carry our GI shoes because if you weren't captured and had to walk out you needed footwear that could handle the rugged hiking. I had always tied my "G.I." shoes together and put them on the floor behind my turret. (I also put my ration of a Coca-Cola in my shoe so it would get real cold and icy up there at 20 or so thousand feet. We had no ice at the base. Man, this was a real treat!

I thought to myself I'm not going to be the first to go out and I'm sure not going to be last. You squatted facing the rear of the plane and dropped through the hatch. I had no training for jumping. We were told it was like jumping from the top of a car traveling at about 15 mph. There was barely enough room to go through. While we were waiting to jump, our belly gunner asked me if I knew how to pray. He was older than I and this was a surprise to me. I told him "A.J. just talk to God as you are talking to me and ask him to spare us, if he will, as he has brought us this far." We jumped at 13,000 feet, which was good. You had time to get your wits together. The first guy went OK, but the second guy, Gilbert Luchsinger, thought he should go out headfirst and this was a mistake. He hit his head on the other side and cut a gash in his head. There was a large bandage on your parachute harness. He tied it around his head to stop

the bleeding. This may have saved him from bleeding to death. Hitting the extreme cold slipstream of air kept him from passing out.

It came my time. I took my shoes, left my cold, frosty coke and dropped through the hatch. What a scary blast! A cold, two hundred mph blast! When I hit the air stream, it was agonizing. I counted to ten so I would clear the plane, and pulled the ripcord. The chute opened with a tremendous jolt. I had an awful pain in my groin. That pain was taken over by another in my right hand. I had my shoes in this hand and they were gone. I looked down on this clear day, but I could not see them dropping. I looked up and they were hanging in the big snap that held my parachute. How lucky can you be? As I was coming down, I was watching the ground to see how it was coming up. I could see that I was going to hit a rock fence. I was coming straight down. Had I been drifting with a good breeze, the landing would have been easier. I pulled the shroud lines on one side of the chute and missed the fence about five yards, but I hit a rock about the size of a soccer ball and fractured my left foot. After checking to see if I had broken any more bones (I hit that hard), I got my heated slippers off and put my G.I. shoes on before my foot started to swell too much.

The Ustashi captured us. They were the Yugoslavian soldiers fighting for the Germans. I could hear rifle fire as I was nearing the ground. I thought they were shooting at me - I am dead. Our underground partisans saw us in trouble when we turned back from the mountains. They were trying to save us from the Ustashi. That was the rifle fire I heard. We were scattered about a mile apart. Leslie landed in a village among some children playing and scared them very bad. We tried to let them know we would not hurt them. The exact details of his capture I do not know.

Two Ustashi came up the hill for me and stopped at some distance, with their rifles pointed at me. I figured they were very apprehensive so I tried to get them to come up closer by motioning, holding my jacket open and patting my torso. This they did and we headed down a path for about a quarter to half a mile. As we were walking, one soldier kept pointing to my wristwatch. I finally gave it to him. Later I pulled my Air Force ring off and put it in my pocket. We came to a Catholic mission and stopped for a rest and some water. As we were sitting there, a nun found out that I had an injury and got some warm water for me to soak my foot. I did not want to do this because my foot was swelling inside my shoe. I finally relented and it did feel good. As I suspected, I could not get my shoe back on. When we had to move on, I put my foot in as far as it would go and tied my shoestrings around my ankle. After thirty minutes or so, we proceeded down a path about four or five miles. I asked this guard where we were going. He couldn't understand me, so I asked him if he was a friend or foe and he said "friend".

Soon we came to a small paved road and a house with a front porch. We were put in a vacant room. You could tell that they had done this many times before. As we were sitting there, I heard a 1939 Ford truck drive up. Ford built these trucks for the Germans. We heard hob nail boots on the porch. The gig was up and our time as free airmen had come to an end. We were loaded in the truck and taken to a village not far away
(Dernisch, Yugoslavia). There was a stockade there where the Ustashi kept their partisan prisoners. It was a three-story brick building that was surrounded by a tall barbed wire fence. We were put in on the third floor in a large room. There was a Partisan POW woman prisoner there who was leader of the Partisans. Her big strapping son was also a POW there and he would bring us our food once a day. The woman had connections and she fed us news at the risk of her life, and also her son's life. Leslie finally arrived and we had a great reunion and many laughs. He could change the mood. Gilbert Luchsinger was brought in still bleeding from the gash on his head when he bailed out. Leslie fixed him up and stopped the bleeding.

The German officers arrived to gloat over our capture. Leslie would be our spokesman. We were concerned about his Jewish dog tag. He stood up, faced them eye to eye, and had some conversation with them. Leslie could understand a little German. He told them he was Jewish and even showed them his dog tags. He immediately reminded them that they had signed the Geneva Convention and he expected them to adhere to it. He said we were human

beings and we wanted to be treated that way. The Germans respected him for his rank and being a doctor. The POW camps needed doctors. The Germans told him he would be moving out in about a week and he would be going to an officer's camp. He told them he did not want to go to an officer's camp, but with us because they needed doctors in the camps for enlisted men. The German officers were a little surprised, but liked the idea. Leslie and the Germans knew that doctors were needed there more than at an officer's camp. We were delighted.

We were in the stockade for about a week and then were moved out in a truck. The truck was an open bed type with sideboards. There was just enough room to sit in a squatted position. A chain was placed across the bed of the truck and some of us had their backs to the cab, while the others had their backs to the chain. This was real punishment so we took turns on the chain, except for one of our replacement crew members who could not handle it. I took his turn. On the other side of the chain were some fifty-five gallon oil drums, and then four guards on the rear. The guards told us "if vee see der head vee vill shoot der head". They did not see der heads! We were sitting so close to each other that he body's warmth made it good. We had some rest stops. One of those stops was notable. We stopped and they tried to hide the truck at the base of a small hill. Allied fighter planes were always looking for something to shoot. We unloaded and the guards handed us a couple of shovels. We hiked up to hide under some trees and they told us to do some digging. I thought my dear God, are we digging our own graves? In a few minutes, some British "Spitfire" fighters came by real low. I knew they saw the truck, but they flew on and nothing happened. Our guards decided we had better move on. The fighters may come back and shoot up the truck with us in it.

Late in the day, we came to a large city by the name of Graz. There were civilians there. They hated us. These civilian encounters were very tense. I could understand their feelings because they had lost loved ones from the bombings. We were put in a jail for an overnight stay. Graz was our secondary target that we had hit on our way back a week before. All the damage I could see was a few rails, several outdoor privies, and craters in a field.

The next day we moved on into Austria. I don't remember how long it took us to get there. We were put into solitary confinement for several days. Each one of us had a little room, six or eight feet, pitch black dark, no chair, and no bed. I could not judge the time, but I think it was two or three days there. The purpose of this stay was to prepare you for interrogation. I was called into an office before a German officer and seated. There was an opening under his desk from my legs to his. I noticed that his legs were crossed and he had on leather boots. There was a ledger on his desk, which had data on my bomb group plus many other groups. I was very surprised that he knew so much. I really could not tell him much he did not already know. The officer handed me a form to fill out. We had been told to give only our name, rank, and serial number. This I did and gave him back the form. With a poor acting scene, he tried to get me to finish the form, with no luck. The officer tried everything he was trained to do. I just looked him in the eye and refused. He told me, "OK, I will call the Major. He knows how to get things done". Then he picked up the phone and pretended to dial. When I would not respond, he slammed the receiver down and yelled, "Sommers, you must fill out this form!" This happened several times and it was very scary for an eighteen year old. He tried to make his demand by kicking me on the shin under the desk. I moved my leg and he missed. He was livid and that wasn't acting. He finally gave up and I was taken back to the little room. I won that game.

Our next move was to Vienna by train. We were in a passenger car with two armed guards that had machine guns. There was propaganda throughout Europe that we were paid Chicago gangsters, "terrorfliegers" paid to bomb women and children. News of our presence spread around the station In Vienna and soon we had an angry mob gathering outside. One of the guards left to get his orders. The remaining guard spoke English very well. He had spent his childhood in Red Bank, New Jersey, and plainly stated that he didn't care about who won the war. He was fun to be around and we needed his humor. He was a ladies man and he decided he would check out the train for the ladies who might be aboard. We tried to get him to stay

and protect us, but he told us those people wouldn't bother us. The machine gun was hanging on the wall, and we told him "if you go, leave that gun with us". Much to our surprise, that's what he did. We were glad when he finally decided to come back. We had seen pictures of some airmen who had been captured by civilians. It was one of our worst fears. The two guards finally returned. We vacated the train and went out of the station to board a trolley. We were sitting in the trolley with all of these people, some having lost their family. How bad can it get? It was sad and we were lucky.

We came to a large jail or prison and checked in for another overnight stay. They let us wash up a bit in cold water and we got to shave. I was fifth on the blade. We would have passed up the shave, but you had to get rid of the lice. They were going to take our pictures for our records. I could sympathize with the citizens because we did look like Chicago thugs. The next day we were back on a train to Budapest. We arrived in downtown Budapest and the guards were trying to put us in a prison there, but it did not happen. While we were waiting, a city policeman tried to stir up a group to hang us. After an hour or two we left on a train back to Vienna. Budapest and Vienna were both prime targets because of their manufacturing. Two or three miles before we reached Vienna, the train pulled up to the base of a small hill and stopped. The entire train was evacuated and we ran out in this open field and got down in a dry creek bed. Soon another train that was going to Budapest tried to hide beside our train. Then some of our P-38 fighters came zooming by, treetop high, and firing at the locomotives. The planes had 20-millimeter cannons in the nose. They hit the engine of the train headed for Budapest and it blew up. The high-pressure steam boiler blew it to smithereens. I am glad it was not our train. Off in the distance, our bombers were hitting the Vienna area again. The fighters left and we boarded our train and continued on to Vienna.

I cannot recall the exact details of our capture at this point of our journey. We rode in a World War I boxcar. These old cars were called "40 and 8", as they could carry 40 horses and eight men. We were on our way to Stalag Luft IV. We stopped occasionally and were let out of the car to relieve ourselves, and sometimes we were allowed to look for some grain on the ground left after a harvest. We passed the time picking lice from our clothing. Our scraggly crew would soon arrive at our home away from home. The camp was near the German occupied town of Grosstychow, Poland. The guards took us off the train and proceeded to walk us out of town. As we approached the camp, our escort made us run or trot as best we could. At this point, we didn't care much what happened; just get somewhere! It was a huge camp, approximately three or four compounds with a thousand to fifteen hundred airmen to each compound. Later on, I met a POW who had spent a week in the same stockade in Yugoslavia that we did. He told me that the Yugos executed the old lady and her son.

Two if us from my crew were assigned to a room in one of the barracks. There were bunk beds and a crude wooden table. All of the bunks were taken. My friend and I took turns on the table and the floor. We each had a couple of blankets. The toilets in each barrack were like outdoor privies with a big room with several seats. They were well vented so it wasn't bad except on one occasion. Some guys had escaped by making a hidden trap door in the floor and digging a tunnel about 3 feet square under the barrack, out and under the warning wire, and another 15 feet to the fence and then into the woods. It was a very difficult chore to get rid of the dirt without being detected. During the day, these men walked around the compound with dirt in bags under their overcoats. Hundreds of men dropped a little dirt as they walked, day after day. A lot of dirt was also put in the attic very carefully. You could not leave a spec of evidence.

On one occasion, men had tunneled out under the fences and were headed for the woods. The "Honey Dew Wagon", a large tank on a wagon drawn by a double team of horses, came around. It was manned by Russian POWs who were forced to work emptying our toilets. The wagon was traveling the fence and it caved in the tunnel. Lots of excitement! The Commandant decided he would have the tank emptied right there in the tunnel, and the cargo ran back under our barrack. This was bad news for the room over the tunnel.

Our main activity was exercise such as walking around the compound. We had to be outside early every morning for a head count. After that, we could go about our hobbies until the next headcount that evening. We were given a big pot of soup that was like a pig slop, but good. When you are hungry, anything is good. They brought that pig slop in a big iron pot that was like an old fashioned washbasin. We also split a loaf of black bread, four men to a loaf. Each cut was measured with a ruler under watchful eyes.

We also got some Red Cross parcels. There was supposed to be one parcel per week for each POW, but this did not happen. We split the parcels when we got them. The US Red Cross met the German Red Cross in Switzerland and brought in the treasure. The parcels were great with chocolate bars, crackers, canned meat, canned cream cheese, powdered coffee, etc. You could make many things by dreaming up combinations such as a special spread with milk and coffee to make caramel.

The YMCA sent in recreational equipment through a similar system as the Red Cross. We had bats, balls, musical instruments and books. There was every kind of talent you can imagine: musicians, ball players, drama professionals and students of various levels. There were also men who had not finished high school. Some of the airmen had been in these camps for a long time. Our compound leader had been a POW for two and a half years. You were quickly told to be careful of what you say or do. Snoops and spies dressed like us were hiding under the floor and in other places, so you had to watch your step at all times.

Christmas Eve, Nineteen Hundred Forty Four, I got sick with severe pains in my chest. One of my roommates let me have his bunk and reported to our barrack leader that I was sick and needed a doctor. There was a small clinic with two doctors, which was fenced off and gated near our compound. One of the doctors was my flight surgeon, Captain Leslie Caplan. The other was a British doctor. Leslie checked me out and would get me over to the clinic. I thought I had died and gone to heaven. A warm cot, clean sheets and some medicine! I don't remember how long I was there, maybe a week or so. Shortly after that, our hosts decided they should evacuate the camp.

I missed the terrible march and went by train to Stalag Luft I at Barth. We were put in "40 and 8" boxcars, and there was just enough room to sit side by side. We had to leave space for the very sick so they could function properly. At night when it was time to sleep, each one lay down on their sides and when it was time to turn on to the other side, everyone had to turn at the same time. This was a chore we could handle. Our main concern was being in rail yards when our bombers came over. We were lucky. After a few days, we arrived at Barth, on the Baltic Sea, in Poland. It was an officer's camp where some of our ranking commissioned officers were interned. We were trucked out to the camp and put into a large room. We had a charcoal stove and straw mattresses on the floor, and blankets. In our Red Cross parcels, when we got them, were good old American cigarettes that were just like gold. You could trade them for anything. Some of the airmen traded the guards these precious weeds for a radio, or parts to make a radio. We were really living. We could get the hit parade from the US through the BBC. We could also get the latest war news. A lookout was posted on the door and if some guards were headed for our room, the lookout would shout "goons up". The guards would enter the room, look around and we would exchange pleasantries. God bless them. They did not want to be in this war any more than we did, but they had a job to do. Now, the SS, that was a different ball game. By the later part of February, we knew the war was ending. Our guards also knew this, and I was sad for them in a way that's difficult to describe. There was no place for them to go; this was the end for them. The Russian front was nearest us. They would be our liberators. The Germans had ravaged Russia and the guards were very concerned for their safety. One day there was a lot of activity and the Germans started leaving rather quickly. The next morning, May 1, there were no Germans there when we woke up. This was a weird feeling. The camp was on the edge of the Baltic Sea and some men went out to catch some fish. They saw a baby buggy with a baby in it there, along with a young wife, a soldier and an older woman. All of them were dead, killed by a Russian soldier.

About an hour later, a Russian soldier rode in on a horse and we were liberated. He had a machine gun strapped to his shoulder ready for action. There was also a tank up the road headed for the camp. Our officers had set up a command post like a military base. The Russian officers were directed to our headquarters. The Russians tried to get our officers to march us out to our own front lines, but there was no way we were going to do this.

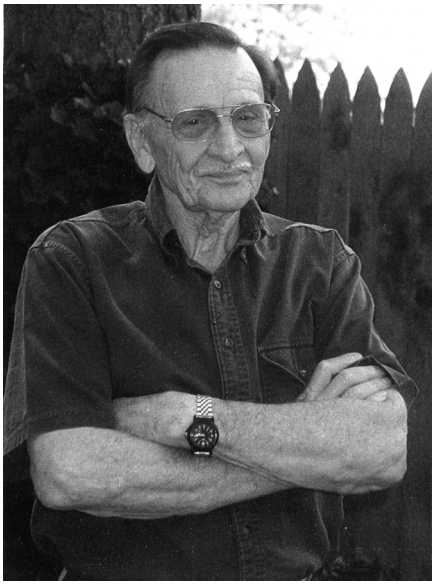
The city of Barth, had a large airport with runways long enough to land our bombers, which meant that we could fly out to France. We tore the barbed wire down and went into town. Needless to say, there was much celebration. A few days later, the 8th Air Force, out of England, flew into Barth and carried us to Camp Lucky Strike. I left France on July 13, 1945, and arrived at Norfolk, Virginia seven days later. The ship I was on was the "Gen. Butner". When I arrived at home in Arkansas, I was given a 60 day furlough; 30 days of which was for POWs. The Japanese surrendered while I was on this leave.

I went to San Antonio, Texas, to be discharged from the service. There I received my battle campaign medals for Rome Arno, Northern Appennines, South France, Rhineland, Central Europe, and Air Combat Balkans. At this time I also received my declarations and citations. Eame Ribbon with six bronze stars, Purple Heart, and an Air Medal with two Oak Leaf Clusters.

In 1946, I enrolled at Louisiana State University along with over one thousand G.I.s. What a blast for the male starved campus and the Federal money that came in. I met my wife to be at LSU. We were married and reared four sons. We have six grandchildren and one great grandchild. My oldest son was in the Vietnam War and flew a C-141 cargo plane.

I worked for City Service Oil Company in Shreveport, LA. The company moved to Tulsa, OK and we went with it. I retired in 1982 in Broken Arrow, OK. My wife and I grew up as Methodists and we both sing in the church choir. I helped build our church with my hands, heart and soul.

Leslie was one of the greatest men I have ever known, as hundreds of others would testify. He was a medical doctor and a prisoner. You can't do much better than having your own doctor with you when you are captured. I can't begin to describe what an angel of mercy this man was. He literally saved thousands of lives and relieved untold suffering. He was a quiet unassuming person, very humble, and always smiling and cheerful. He was also a very demanding, unrelenting person to our captors. Even they respected him. He never stopped helping POWs, even after he came home. He was a giant among men. God had a plan for this man. To me he is a saint.



LESLIE CAPLAN, M. D.
340 LASALLE BUILDING
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA
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Dec. 6, 1949

LETTER I RECIEVED FOR V.A. COMPENSATION. I ALSO WROTE HIM WHEN HE WAS IN HOSPITAL IN DENVER, CO.

CERTIFICATE

SOMMERS, Thomas W.
C-6-452-039

This is to certify that I rendered medical attention to S/Sgt. Thomas W. Sommers, formerly an aerial gunner with the U. S. A. A. F.

Sgt. Sommers was a member of the 719th Bomb. Squadron while I was the Squadron Flight Surgeon. Prior to his capture by the enemy, Sgt. Sommers was in excellent health. He was known as a reliable, stable man who had performed his military and combat duties well.

On 13th Oct. 1944, Sgt. Sommers, myself, and others were on an aerial mission over Austria and Yugoslavia. Our plane was crippled by enemy flak and we were forced to bail out. Sgt. Sommers sustained multiple bruises and contusions in the bail-out and one of his feet was painfully injured. Sgt. Sommers and I were captured by the Germans and after many fantastic adventures together we both reached Camp Stalag Luft No. 4, in Eastern Germany.

During the six weeks it took us to reach this camp, we were subject to considerable danger and hardship. At all times, Sgt. Sommers conducted himself in a commendable manner and often supported and aided his fellow prisoners in spite of his own injuries.

In the Prison Camp, I would see Sgt. Sommers occasionally. The unsatisfactory conditions there, affected his health for he changed from a cheerful, healthy person to a nervous one. He suffered considerable weight loss, headaches, he would startle very easily and had a tense, frightened look. He slept poorly. Sometimes around Dec. 1944, Sgt. Sommers was brought into the Prison Hospital. There had been a marked change in his health. He was suffering from acute pleurisy which was thought to be pneumonia or tuberculosis. X-ray facilities were not available. Sgt. Sommers failed to improve very much. By this time he had obviously lost a lot of weight and was noticably nervous.

In addition, like most of the men at the camp, he suffered from dysentery and from dermatitis secondary to lice bites.

Around 1st Feb. 1945, the Russian Offensive threatened to engulf Stalag Luft 4. The Germans decided to evacuate us on foot but Sgt. Sommers was too weak to march. He and many others of our sick and wounded were evacuated by box car.

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I never saw Sgt. Sommers again, but I know from other other sources that the group in which he was evacuated from suffered from exposure and malnutrition.

I therefore certify that Sgt. Sommers suffered the following ailments:

1. Wounded in action.
   (a) Multiple, generalized bruises and contusions-severe.
   (b) Injury of one foot - side forgotten-severe. Incurred in a bail-out over enemy territory.
2. Malnutrition and exposure.
3. Psychoneurosis-anxiety state-secondary to combat and the rigors of P. W. life.
4. Respiratory infection with pleurisy-probably pneumonia, suspected tuberculosis.
5. Dysentery
6. Gastritis
7. Dermatitis-secondary to lice bites.
8. Joint pains - secondary to exposure.
9. Frostbite of extremities and Trench Foot.

All of these ailments were incurred in Line of Duty and were incidents of service in the Army of the United States while engaged in combat - with the enemy. I felt at the time, that prolonged disability might result from these ailments.

Leslie Caplan
Leslie Caplan, M. D.
Formerly, Major, M. C.

ASN O-413-434

Subscribed and sworn to this 8th day of

December, 1949

[illegible]
Notary Public