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BARBED BOREDOM

by

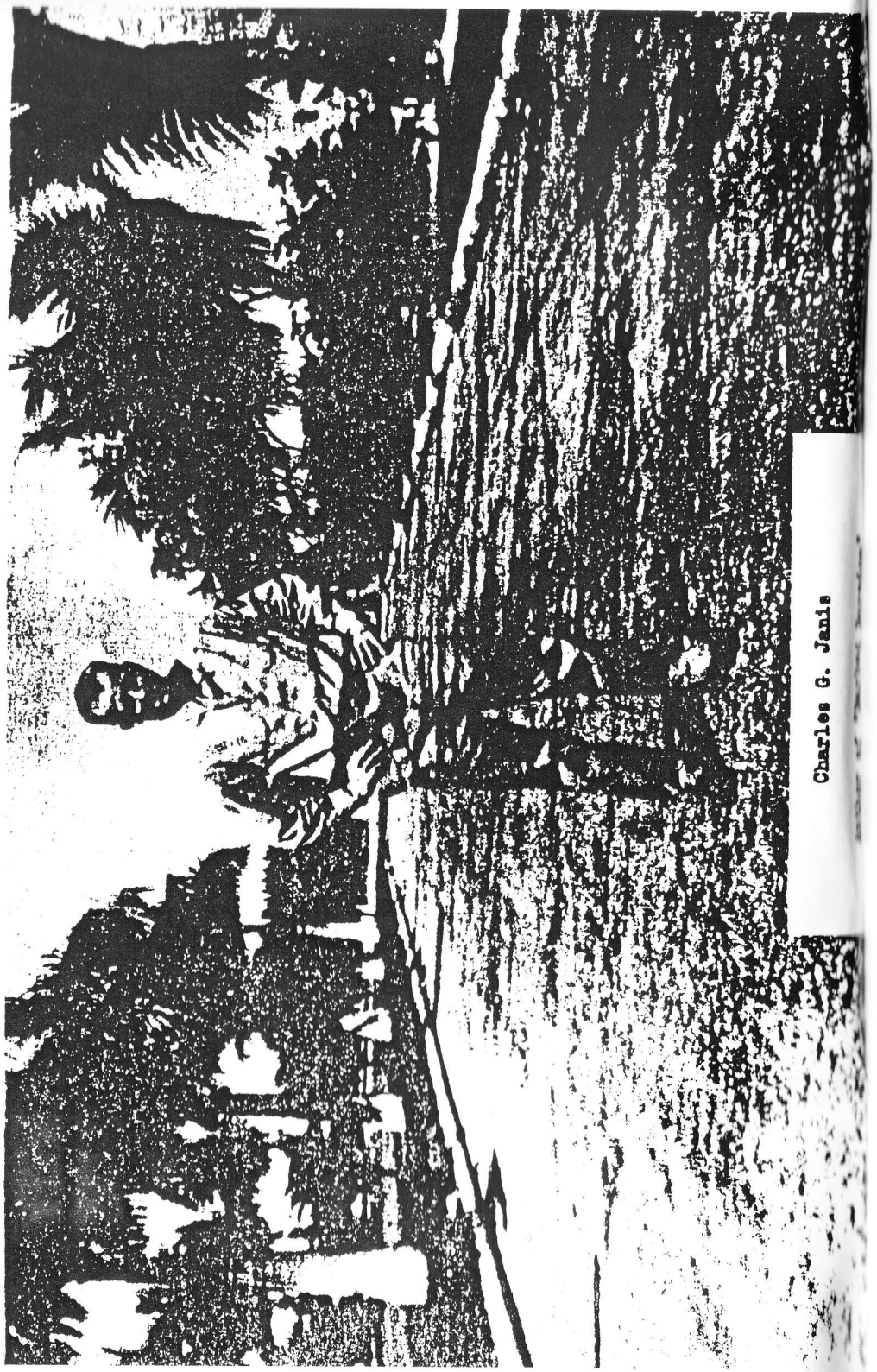
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Charles G. Janis

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MEMO TO THE READER

This book has been written not to revive painful memories but as a gentle reminder, lest we forget the terrible price war demands in human lives and misery. In this unsettled post-war world, we are all apt to be a bit hasty with our accusations - too quick on the tempermental trigger. During the war, we fought side by side because we had a purpose, a goal to reach. It is understandably more important that we, in peace, transfer this zeal toward the building of a better world for our children and not waste our time with bitter invective. We have seen how the rest of the world lives and we have returned to our homes with a new appreciation. It is our duty to keep our country the shining light it is, to defend its principles and to keep its heart free from dishonesty and corruption. The rest of the world will follow our example when we show them how democracy really works and how groups of people from every walk of life can live together harmoniously in the true spirit of democracy. Co-operation and team work enabled the Allies to win the war - and peace, always more difficult to maintain, will require greater doses of the same.

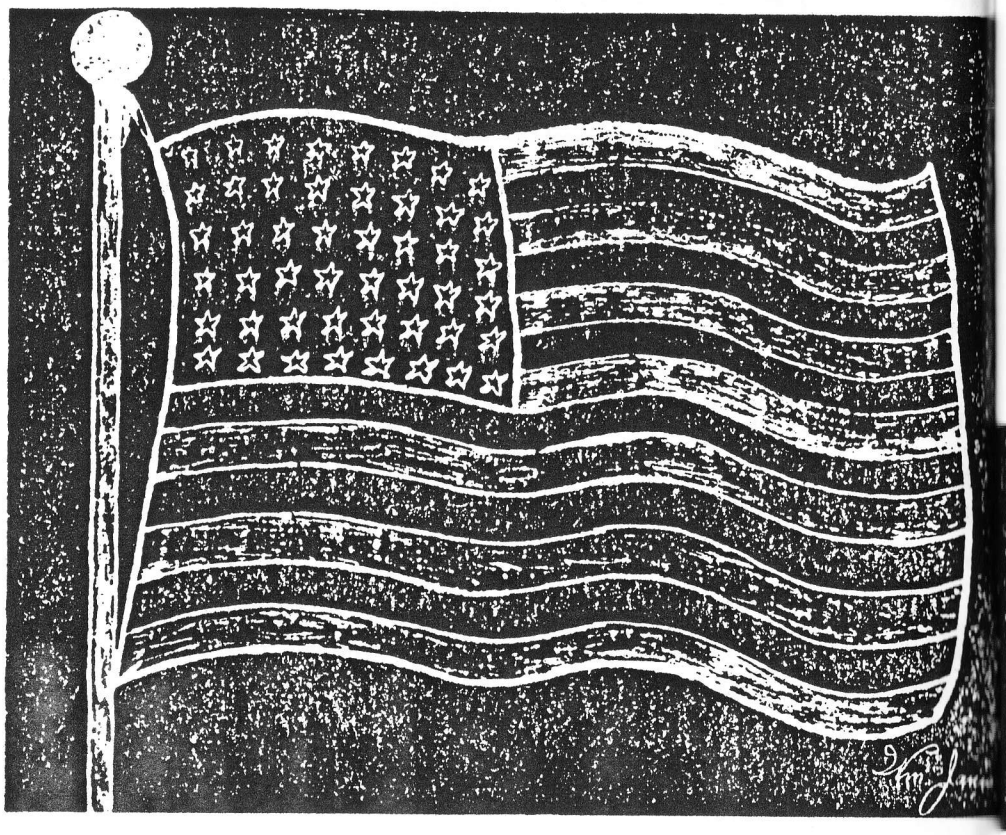
The material herein contained represents the personal opinions and view point of the author. There will probably be variations between this presentation and other versions, but please keep in mind that these articles depict prisoner life as seen from Lager D, the lager of my incarceration. The routine in other lagers varied in minor details but in most respects it coincided with that of Lager D. It is not the intention of this book to argue merits or policies of the United States or any other country, this is merely a documentary report of Prisoner of War life during my year of membership.

The roster section of this book is the most complete record of prisoners confined at Stalag Luft IV to date, as far as I can determine. This is largely due to the co-operation of the Prisoner of War Casualty Branch of the War Department, Wash-

ington, D.C., to w hom I would like to extend ry most sincere thanks.

I would also like, at this time, to express my grateful appreciation to Mrs. Lewis F. Ozinek and William Janis for their able assistance in data research and in assembling and editing the material and Roster Section: to Frank Mizer, of Cleveland, Ohio - a fellow ex-P.O.W. and a fellow crew member on the ill-fated B-17, My Devotion, for his excellent original illustrations; to Myron Ihde, of Monona, Iowa, a former airman in the 8th Air Force, for the use of his 'on-the-spot' photoes of planes in combat; to Reverend T.T.F. Lynch, of Southhampton, England, padre at Stalag Luft IV during my stay there, for his inspiring letter to us; and to the Red Cross and Y.M.C.A. organizations for their generous permission for use of their material.

I hope this book meets with your approval.

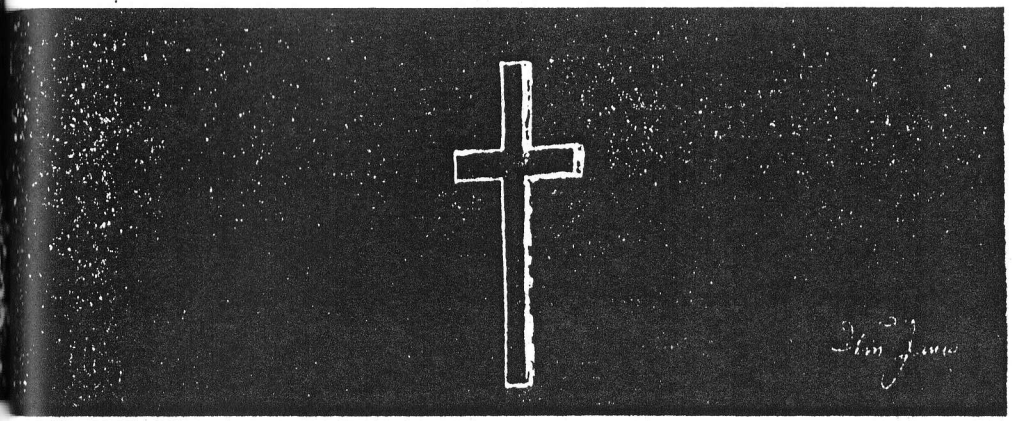


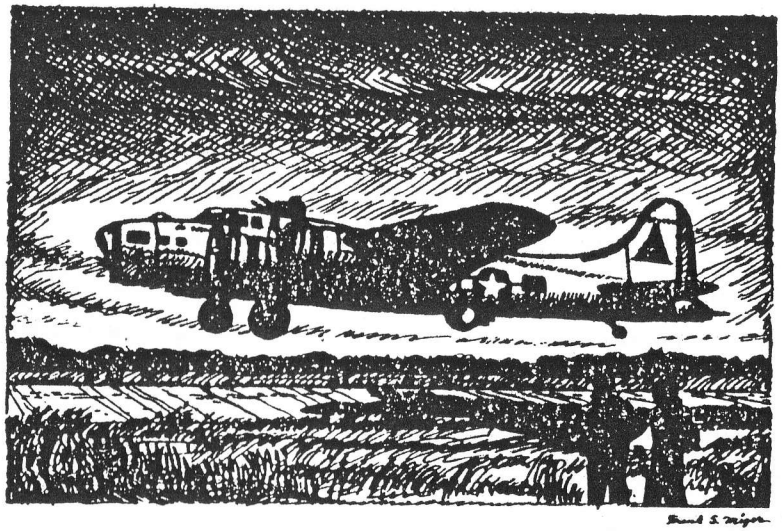
THE DAY OF INFAMY

It's December 7, 1941, as we look in on a scene in a typical American home. The family has just completed Sunday dinner, having, by now, become assustomed to the empty place at the table left vacant by the oldest son, who had been drafted into the Army. Mom is finishing up in the kitchen, Sis anxiously awaits her current beau, and Junior is listening to a professional football game on the radio. Dad, in his favorite chair, is reading the reports of the intended meeting between Japanese ambassadors, Namura and Kurusu, with members of our State Department to discuss negotiations for the continuance of peace between Japan and the United States.

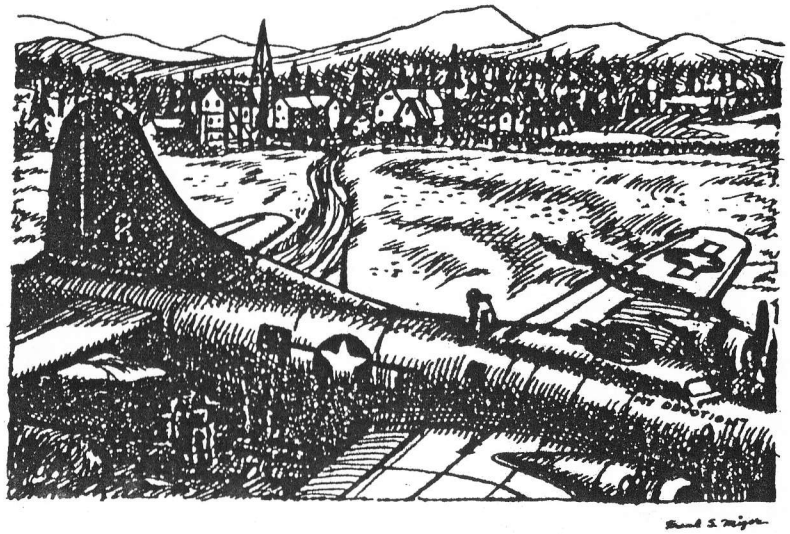
Suddenly, the broadcast of the game is interrupted by an excited announcer, "Ladies and gentlemen, a special bulletin has just been received in our news office - -." He pauses and then in an atmosphere of deafening silence, he continues, "The Japanese have bombed Pearl Harbor on the island of Oahu in the Hawaiin Islands at 2:22 P.M. E.S.T."

The nightmare started that afternoon and didn't end until August 1945 - four and one half long years. Millions of men answered the call of our country. Many did not return. Those of us who were more fortunate came back, older, wiser but with only bitter memories of years lost forever.





The beginning and end of a glorious ship,"My Devotion".



THE LAST FLIGHT

I was wide awake as I Lay on my bunk, my eyes fixed on the ceiling. The room was quiet except for the snores and mutterings of the sleeping men. The excitement of the trip overseas and the experience of my first three bombing missions made me restless making it impossible for me to sleep through the night. I felt alone with my thoughts in the darkened barracks, thinking of the next flight and our ship, My Devotion, ready on the runway to transport us to our next target. I was still a bit uneasy about my duties and envied the apparent nonchalance of the other gun-crew members. Those abstract and sometimes boring lessons of training camp had become serious responsibilities.

Suddenly the silence was broken by the shrill shriek of the C.Q.'s whistle, summoning the crews to prepare for their scheduled missions. The palms of my hands were wet as I hopped out of my sack and quickly dressed. The barracks, which just seconds before had been cloaked in the silence of slumber, was now noisy with the usual complaints about the ungodly hour. There was a lot of small talk among the men while they made their way to breakfast, rehashes of previous missions or speculations as to this night's destined target. There was nothing unusual about that morning, no hint of things to come. Statistics had shown that a certain percentage of men and planes was lost in each raid but the mere thought that my name would be posted as 'missing in action' along with the other members of my crew seemed fantastic. Each and every one of us had complete faith in our pilots and our ship, those things only happened to 'the other guy'.

The men at the breakfast tables created a study in moods and personalities. I wasn't particularly struck by this at the time but I had literally thousands of hours in which to reconstruct every minute of that flight from beginning to end. Some of the men gave the appearance of enjoying themselves immensely. They ate with gusto,



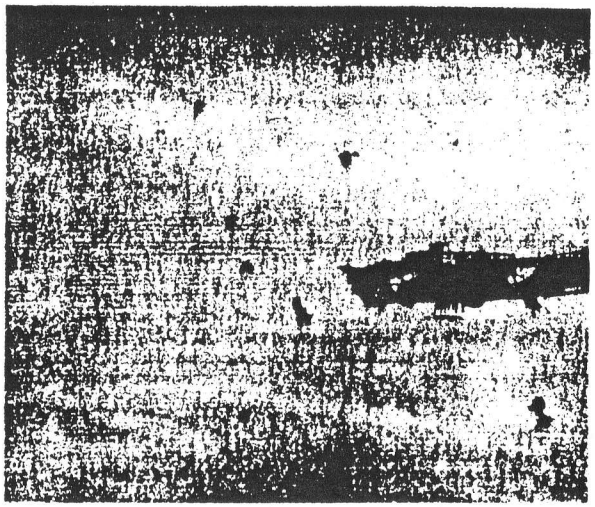
B-17's flying high above cumulus clouds in staggered formations; on way to targets.



joked and laughed, and, in general, seemed to be having a great time. Some merely made a pretense of eating, abstractly picking at the food, while sunk deep in thought, whereas others were too sleepy to notice much of anything. I guess I was in a category somewhere between the first two, automatically eating with an occasional attempt to engage in the talk at our table or to half-heartedly laugh at a stale joke some comedian had resurrected. Judging from the continuous stream of men in and out of the mess hall, we assumed that a big raid was scheduled for that day. The question uppermost in our minds was 'Where?'.

With breakfast over, most of us used the few minutes before take-off time to write a hasty letter home. The officers left to be briefed and they in turn passed the word on the members of their crews. My plane was assigned to a group designated to bomb the industrial sectors in the Munich area. After receiving our instructions, we picked up our flight gear and proceeded to our planes. Not being very familiar with the layout of the airfield, I remember losing my direction to the plane but with the help of a group of mechanics I was soon standing alongside 'My Devotion'. Before crawling in, I looked around. In all directions, as far as I could see, thousands of planes, like mammoth birds of destruction, were lined up poised for flight. I entered and took my station. Before I was settled, the cool morning air was shattered by the tremendous noise of planes warming up, taxiing into position and taking off. With gas, oil, oxygen, guns and armor checked and bombs and men in position, we were ready. We were given the high sign and soon the countryside flitted eerily by in the grey light of dawn. I could feel the rise of the ship in the pit of my stomach. Another raid had started.

We climbed to 24,000 feet and there we stayed in formation with the other plane of our group. Our position in the formation was generally referred to as the Purple Heart Corner, which didn't help my peace of mind one bit. It was 5:30 A.M. I watch the sunrise and the incongruously peaceful clouds gliding by as we passed over the channel. Soon we were over the beautiful countryside of rural France. To this poi the flight was mere routine flying.



Actual photos of B-17's in action.
Picture above shows a Flying Fortress, it's bomb bay doors open, approaching target through moderate bursts of flak. Photo below shows bombardiers "trailing" their bombs by instruments, due to dense cumulus clouds. White pufflike cloud with streamers is the signal bomb dropped by lead bombardier to signify target below.



As we entered the battle-area, a voice cracked in our ears, 'To your stations, men. Keep a sharp lookout.' Everyone became tense, diligently scanning his sector of sky for a trace of enemy planes. All was quiet for a few minutes and then things began to pop. Scores of fighter planes zoomed and weaved about us appearing as out of nowhere. We were a perfect target for them as we held our course, like a gliding duck to a hunter. Suddenly the sky became alive with bursting flak from the anti-aircraft ground batteries and tracers from the fighters' spitting machine guns. I was nervous and hoped that my guardian angel was in his usual place on my right shoulder. I saw a plane of another group go down in flames and prayed. Then a speck on the horizon was sighted at ten o'clock off the tail. The speck grew and materialized into a plane roaring towards us with murderous intent. I started pumping lead at him, certain that each bullet was finding its mark. But still he came on. We all watched breathlessly as he veered, went into a dive and returned for another try. Suddenly the entire plane was shaken as we were struck by flak from below and by machine gun fire from that persistent fighter. I was thrown to the floor with the wind knocked out of my sails. I lay in a daze until the earphones screamed in my ears, 'Number one and number two gone, bail out men, we're losing ground fast. Good Luck'.

The noise was deafening and the smoke was so thick it stung my eyes. There was a hissing in my ears and my head felt light. I pushed and fought my way to the door against the terrific pressure in the cabin, ignoring the debris strewn along my path. I felt for my chute and after one look down into the emptiness, jumped. As I floated down past the flak, I was conscious of the noise of the fight above me - the steady hum of the bombers, the high pitched drone of the fighters and the crack of exploding shells. It was as close to hell as I ever hope to get. The ground came up and met me and as I lay engulfed in my chute, I saw My Devotion come hurtling to the ground. After plowing up some of the countryside, she came to rest. We had finished our flight together.

From silk to wire.
A "kriegie" is born as this parachutist descends into a thickly wooded section of enemy territory.



THE BIRTH OF A KRIEGIE

On the ground, fallen fliers were apprehended and taken into custody by members of the local home guard. They were marched through the streets of the town to the accompaniment of jeers and insults from the townspeople and interned at the local jail until the Luftwaffe authorities claimed them. They were then transferred to the Luftwaffe's interrogation center at Frankfurt on the Rhine. There a prisoner officially became a 'Kriegie'. He was given a number, stripped of his uniform, papers, personal possessions and pride and finally led to a cell.

The building which housed the interrogation headquarters was a mouldy relic which had seen better days. It was dark and gloomy and a nauseating stench permeated every inch of it. The cells were crawling with lice and rats. They were bare except for a wooden bed, a stool and a pan and the only light was furnished by a heavily barred, frosted window. Left thus, with only the sounds of marching guards in the corridors and scurrying rats in the cell to distract his thoughts, a prisoner waited his call to the 'question chamber'.

His solitude was broken only at chow time when a scowling, menacing guard would unlock the door and throw the food at him. I use the term 'food' loosely, our meal consisted of two slices of hard, dry bread and a cup of ersatz coffee. This was served twice a day whenever the guards felt inclined to bring it to us and was the only food received during our stay at the interrogation center. The average amount of time spent at Frankfurt varied from a week to a month, depending on the moods of the officer in charge.

I believe, that of all Prisoner of War phases, this stay at Frankfurt was, by far, the most harrowing. The conditions were most unpleasant; the food and lodging were the worst possible and the menacing attitude of the guards greatly contributed to the mental unrest of the prisoner. Most unnerving, however, was the suspense be-

fore the actual questioning. Despite the official lectures and pep talks on Prisoner of War interrogation given at the U.S. Army bases in the United States and England, the prisoner usually could think of nothing but the lurid rumors circulated at camps. By the time he was summoned, the nervous little Kriegie didn't know which end was up.

The actual inquiry was the most thorough conceivable. A panel of Gestapo and German Army men hurled a barrage of questions at the prisoner in an effort to glean some information from his answers. They questioned him about nationality, family and relatives, civilian occupation, Army background, equipment, bases, etc., and various other questions, seemingly irrelevant. The prisoners who were not detained for further questioning were herded into an assembly compound to await consignment. When the quota of a prisoner shipment was reached, the Kriegies were marched to the train station, sardined into box cars and transferred to Durchgangslager, a transit camp commonly referred to as Dulag Luft, located near Wetzler.

Dulag Luft was a welcome change from Frankfurt. The friendly hand of an ally could be detected immediately upon arrival. Camp routines ran smoothly under the capable management of Colonel Stark, American senior officer-in-charge. He assumed the task of rebuilding prisoner morale and lecturing on routines and procedure at Dulag Luft and the permanent confinement camps to which the men were being sent. The camp was kept spotless by the Kriegies. They had lavishly decorated the walls with caricatures of familiar cartoon personalities. The atmosphere at Dulag Luft was almost cordial and the men were reluctant to leave its hospitality. Here the prisoner received the first real food he had had since leaving England and, in addition, he was presented with a Red Cross Capture Kit containing necessary toilet articles.

Transportation to the permanent camps was by train. Officers and non-commissioned prisoners were separated; the officers were sent to Stalag Luft I at Barth on the Baltic Sea and non-com's to Stalag Luft IV near Kiefheide in Pomerania. Upon arrival at Stalag Luft IV, the men were given another screening by German camp officials and then assigned to one of the four completed lagers. Many of the men were

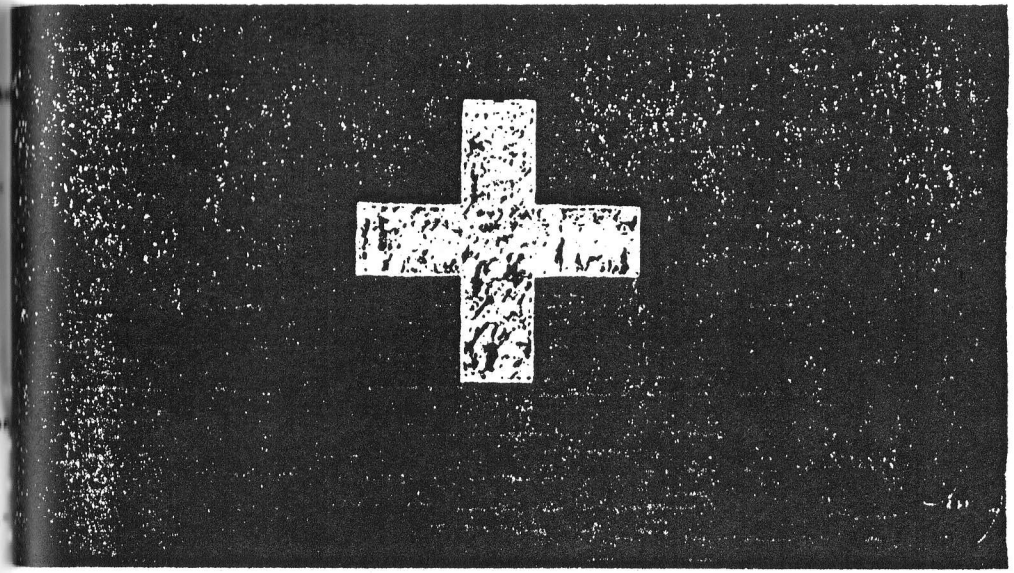
separated from crew mates but new friends were soon found and all settled to the job of sweeting out the war.

- - - - - - - - -

TRANSIT CAMP KIT

(Joy or Capture Parcel)

1. Case (Locker Type)
2. Comb
3. Toothbrush & Powder
4. Soap
5. Towel & Face Rag
6. Shaving utensils
7. Underwear
8. Knitted sweater
9. Stockings
10. Shoelaces
11. Pajamas
12. Shoe Polish
13. Pencil & Paper
14. Cards
15. Games
16. Story books
17. Religious books



EVOLUTION OF THE P.O.W. REGULATIONS

In ancient times, nations fought wars of extermination in which no prisoners were taken and those who surrendered or were captured were promptly put to death. As men became more civilized, prisoners were taken by warring nations and, as customary of the times, sold into slavery. During the Middle Ages, it was common practice to ransom prisoners for the personal profit of the captors.

When modern armies were established, prisoners were considered the property of the detaining power and were ransomed back to the opposing belligerents on a scale of prices agreed upon in advance. Such an agreement was concluded between England and France as recently as 1780. Very soon thereafter this practice was banished and a system of exchange was inaugurated. Exchange of prisoners was sometimes affected while the war was in progress but difficulties arose in determining the military exchange value of prisoners, with the result that in no war since the American Civil War were any prisoners exchanged in large numbers during hostilities.

Regulations for the treatment of prisoners of war were included in the first codification of rules of land warfare, prepared in 1863 by Francis Lieber, at the request of President Abraham Lincoln, and issued by the War Department as, "Instructions for the government of Armies in the Field". This standard manual was adopted by Germany in the Franco-Prussian War but neither in that conflict nor in the American Civil War were the human provisions, relating to the treatment of prisoners, fully maintained. Rules on the subject were not embodied in an international convention until 1899, when a chapter of the regulations was devoted to the treatment of prisoners of war. In the Hague Convention of 1907, this code was again included with several amendments.

The 1899 Hague Convention was ratified by the Great Powers, including the

United States, as well as many smaller countries. Its statutes were carefully observed by both Russia and Japan during the War of 1904-05. The 1907 Convention, which supplemented but did not cancel the 1899 Convention, was not formally in effect during World War I because it had not been ratified by all of the belligerents.

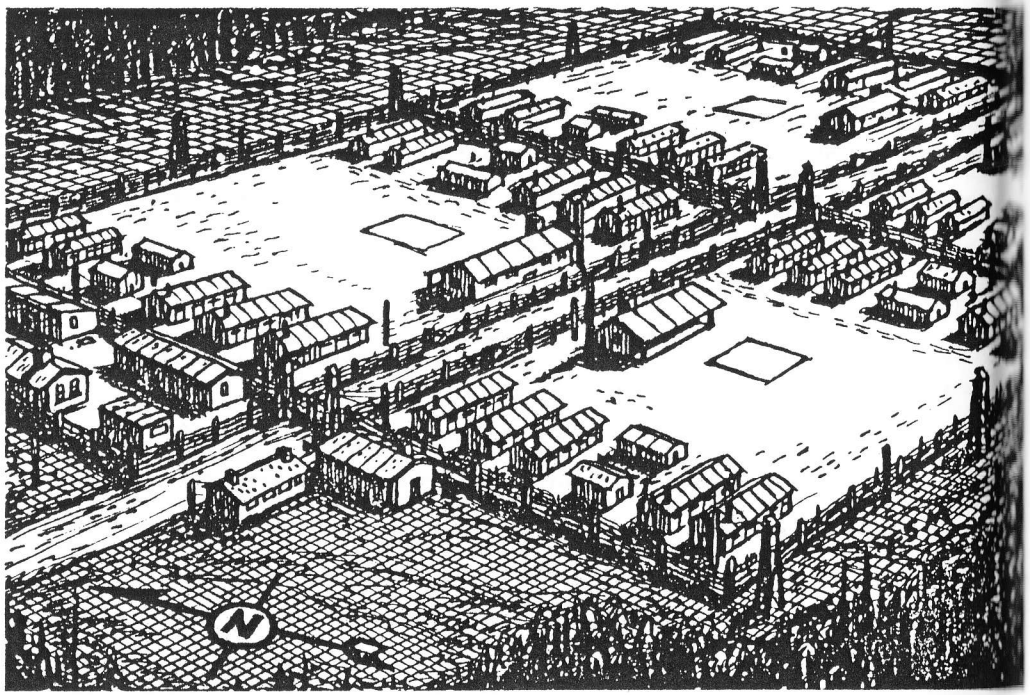
The treatment of prisoners of war by a detaining power was prescribed in greater detail by an international treaty concluded at Geneva, Switzerland on July 27, 1929 and signed by 47 nations. The United States of America ratified these laws in 1932. Japan and Russia were the only major nations which did not sign. While some nations failed to sign, and were not legally bound by the Geneva provisions, it was to their advantage to observe them to assure reciprocal treatment of their nationals in enemy hands.

The Geneva Convention ruled that belligerent nations keep record of the identity, place of detention and physical condition of prisoners and to provide all such information to the Central Agency maintained by the International Red Cross at Geneva, Switzerland. It also provided for established standards of housing, food and clothing for prisoners; specified the conditions under which their labor might be utilized; provided periodical inspections of prison camps by representatives of neutral nations and the Red Cross; stipulated privileges to which prisoners were entitled, such as :- rest, exercise periods, dispatch and receipt of correspondence and parcels; and insured repatriation of seriously sick and wounded prisoners. In general, provisions for the physical welfare of prisoners were supposed to equal those afforded troops of the holding power at each base camp. Officer prisoners were to be given separate quarters and were not to be required to work. Men of the ranks could be employed in work not directly connected with military operations but must be paid for services rendered.

The 1929 Geneva Convention dropped the general participation clause of the Hague Convention and provided that its terms must be observed by opposing belligerents which had ratified it, even if other powers, participating in the war,

were not parties to the convention. The principles of the Hague Convention were adopted by the Geneva Convention with application prescribed in much greater detail. The new instrument comprised 97 articles in comparison with 17 in the old. This treaty safeguarded the welfare of prisoners by removing, as far as possible, any loopholes permitting evasions or dereliction of duty.

The Geneva Convention strongly emphasized the importance of all provisions and committed each of its members to show cause for any discrimination against prisoners of war at the end of hostilities.



STALAG LUFT IV

Stalag Luft IV was situated approximately two and a half miles south of Kiefheide in Pomerania. It was activated in April of 1944 but was never actually completed, despite intense German effort, due to the pressure of the war. The first group of prisoners were transfers from Stalag Luft VI at Hydekrug in East Prussia. The majority of them were Americans but also included were 800 R.A.F. non-commissioned officers. From that day in April, the flow of Kriegies was heavy until, upon evacuation, they numbered almost 8500, a number far in excess of that for which the camp was designed. There was continuous construction in the camp, both indoors and out. Indoors, the prisoners were trying their utmost to make their meager quarters more habitable and outdoors, the Germans were feverishly working to complete additional barracks.

The camp was set in a forest clearing about one and a half miles square. That particular forest was chosen because the dense foliage and underbrush served as an added barrier to escape. There were two barbed wire fences ten feet high completely surrounding the camp. Rumor had it that the outer fence was electrically charged, but I can't vouch for that, I had no desire to test it. Between the two fences was another fence of rolled barbed wire four feet high. An area 200 feet deep, from the fence to the edge of the forest, was left clear, making it necessary for anyone attempting escape to traverse this area in full view of the guards Fifty feet inside the wire fences was a warning wire. A prisoner could expect to be shot first and then questioned if he stepped over this wire. Posted at close intervals around the camp were towers which were equipped with several powerful spot lights and bristled machine guns.

The camp consisted of a Vor Lager, for staging and screening new prisoners; administration buildings; a post office; hospital and a building purported to be

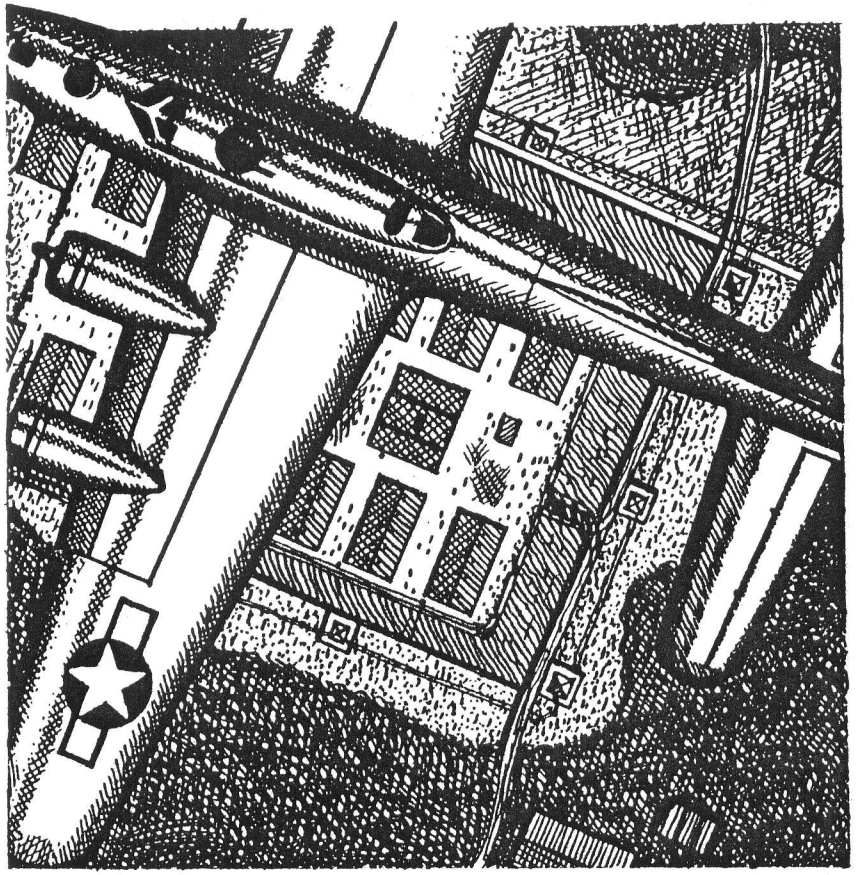
a delousing center, however, no one was ever seen going in or coming out. There were four lagers, or compounds, for housing prisoners. At the time of evacuation, a fifth lager was nearing completion and several others were in the first stages of construction. Each lager had ten barracks, a mess hall and quarters for German camp personnel and the prisoners' man of confidence. This man of confidence was elected by the prisoners and acted as mediator in all camp transactions between Kriegies and Germans. The barracks had one wash room, one latrine and thirteen rooms each of which was furnished with wooden slat beds, a stove, table and several benches. The rooms were designed to house sixteen men but usually averaged twenty to twenty-five. The extra men were forced to sleep two in a bunk hardly wide enough for a child. This one room served as living quarters, church, recreation room, court, library, school and work shop.

The Kriegies did everything in their power to make their room more livable. The discomfort of sleeping on slats covered with a thin sack of wood shavings was alleviated by stealing barbed wire, removing the barbs and stretching it for springs. Removable ventilation boards were cut in the walls for badly needed air. Cardboard from Red Cross and Y.M.C.A. cartons was used to patch broken windows and to make shelves and storage cabinets for personal belongings. Heat was furnished by one ancient pot-belly stove set in the middle of the room. Only the area around the stove was warm so the men built tiny portable stoves to heat the far ends of the room. Oil lamps, made from tin cans, lard or wax, and bed webbing, were used to supplement the single 25 watt bulb allotted each room.

Each lager boasted a 'cooler', a room used expressly for solitary confinement. It was bare except for a wooden bunk and a stool and had no heat, light nor sanitary facilities. The most minor infraction of any of the many German camp regulations was punished by a minimum sentence of twenty one days in the cooler. The sentence was solitary confinement on bread and water with smoking and correspondence privileges revoked.

The staff of German personnel consisted of a Lieutenant Colonel, a group of

non-descript medical men, who at any other time or any other place would have been barred from practice on appearances alone, several officers and squadrons of men. They always seemed more confused than the prisoners. They had nothing to do but lounge, deny all requests and count Kriegies.



Aerial view of a B-17 flying over a German P.O.W. camp.

THE ORIGIN OF THE RED CROSS

During the American Revolution associations were organized by sympathetic women of the colonies to aid the soldiers. The women of Philadelphia, for instance, bought material and prepared quantities of sheets; a New York association knitted socks. After hearing Lafayette say that he could enter into the gaiety of a ball because he was too conscious of the suffering of the soldiers, the women of Baltimore hurried to make them clothing. But such aid was painfully inadequate. The men were clothed in tatters and often without food. Barefood, they were forced to make long marches and often slept in the open fields without blankets. A condition of actual famine existed during the winter at Valley Forge; at times it was difficult to find men strong enough to stand guard or to carry on even the regular camp duties.

Three quarters of a century later, during the Crimean War, London was shocked by correspondents' reports on the conditions of the English and Russian wounded who had been evaguated to Scutari, a suburb of Constantinople. They were crowded into hospital barracks which were staffed by incongruously few doctors and nurses, and lacking in medicines, surgical instruments and even soap. Under these conditions fever, dysentery and gangrene spread, and cholera and typhus took a heavy tool of victims. The people of England demanded that the situation be remedied. Florence Nightingale accepted the challenge, and, with a group of English nurses, went to Scutari in November of 1854. In the vast barracks, they found four miles of human misery, more appaling than the newspaper accounts had described. Before she could complete re-organization - for certain members of both the military and medical staffs opposed her changes - almost half the wounded brought in during one month had died. But eventually, through her reforms, the death rate at the hospital was reduced to only 22 out of every 1000. Florence

Nightingale's work at Scutari greatly influenced early programs of nurses training and hospital management. It also influenced the founders of the Red Cross.

Foremost of the founders of the Red Cross was Henri Dunant, a successful young banker. Born in 1828 at Geneva, Switzerland, of a wealthy Franco-Swiss family, he was reared in the tradition of philanthropy and devoted his life to a pursuit thereof. Three years after Florence Nightingale's report on her work in the Crimea, Dunant went to Northern Italy where the united forces of King Victor Emmanuel of Sardinia and Emperor Napoleon III were fighting young Emperor Franz Josef and the Austrian Army. Travelling as a neutral in the war zone, Dunant arrived at Solferino on June 24, 1859, during one of the greatest battles of history. He was dumstruck at the sights which confronted him. He was impressed more with the aftermath of the battles than the actual fighting; the thousands of killed and wounded scattered over the field and heaped into the ravines; the hasty burials; the haphazard evacuation of the wounded and the lack of supplies and planned medical care. He did what he could to aid by organizing the local women into a corps of nurses, by enlisting boys to carry water, by buying and distributing bandages, food, drink, drugs and tobacco, and by working himself as attendant and nurse. But the task was too great for him and his untrained, unprepared group of volunteer workers. Months later, haunted by the memory of the men he had seen die needlessly, he wrote a detailed and passionetely honest account of the battle.

In this account, "Un Souvenir de Solferino", Dunant told of the hardships endured by the soldiers of this ghastly war, and the insurmountable obstacles he and his band of volunteers encountered in their effort to aid the wounded. Dunant's book aroused public opinion, favorable to his plan for a world conference. In his book, he fostered the plan 'to found and organize, in all civilized countries, permanent societies of volunteers which, in time of war, would render aid to the wounded without distinction of nationality'. In his third edition of the Souvenir, published in 1863, he advanced the idea that, 'these societies could even give great service during periods of epidemics or in disasters, such as, floods and fires'.

Dunant followed up the success of his pamphlet by visiting many European countries to enlist the patronage of influential people. Also, at his request, in 1863, a Geneva philanthropic society called an international conference of 36 experts and government delegates representing 16 European countries to discuss the plan. The conference received Dunant's proposals favorably and passed resolutions recommending that, in each country adhering to the proposed agreement, organizations be formed to cooperate in times of war with the Army Medical Service; that each volunteer society wear, as a distinguishing mark, a red cross on a white background, (the reverse of the Swiss flag); that hospitals and their personnal be neutralized; and that during peace their efforts be devoted to preparing materials and training volunteer nurses. This was all that could be accomplished, for the delegates did not have the power to bind their governments to any agreements.

Meanwhile, in America, a volunteer organization called 'The United States Sanitary Commission', which was founded in New York shortly after the outbreak of the Civil War, was performing services for the troops and caring for the wounded of both sides in much the same manner which Dunant had proposed in the Souvenir. The Federal Government had sanctioned the creation of the Sanitary Commission without lending financial support. The Commission made its first appeal for funds to life insurance companies which promptly responded. Other funds were solicited by appeals to the public, by the sale of stamps, booklets and other articles, and by conducting social affairs and rallies. Supplies, such as hospital supplies and knitted wear came from the many Ladies Soldiers Aid Societies, who worked in almost every community as the local Red Cross Chapters do today. During the latter part of the war the Auxiliary Relief Corps of the commission made the first use of the Red Cross emblem as adopted at Geneva.

A second convention was planned in August, 1864 to officially adopt the resolutions among the member countries. The United States was represented by George C. Fogg, U.S. Minister to Switzerland, and Charles S.P. Bowles, European agent of the Sanitary Committee. The outcome of this meeting was a treaty, officially known as

the Geneva Convention which instituted a permanent covenant of rules and principles. This treaty was revised and completed in 1906 and the conferences held at The Hague in 1899 and 1907 extended the rules to include sea warfare. The 1929 Geneva Convention established standards for treatment of prisoners of war.

In 1866, an association was formed by former heads of the Senitary Commission for the purpose of securing United States ratification of the Geneva Convention. After numerous futile appeals to Congress and to the public, the association disbanded. Meantime, Clara Barton, who, during the Civil War, had worked independently of the Sanitary Commission for the care of sick and wounded soldiers, visited Switzerland for her health and there learned of the new Red Cross movement. After witnessing Red Cross work during the War of 1870, Franco-Prussian War, she became an enthusiastic advocate of the organization. In 1877, on her return to America, Miss Barton carried a letter to President Hayes from M. Moynier, president of the International Red Cross Committee, asking once more that the U.S. accept the articles of the convention. The letter was referred to the State Department where it was shelved because of the belief that this country would never again engage in a war.

Encouraged by President Garfield's promise to recommend ratification, the committee re-organized and in 1881 was incorporated as the American Association of the Red Cross, with Clara Barton as president. Garfield did not live to carry out his promise but, in March 1882, President Arthur and Senator Blaine secured ratification of the treaty by the Senate without a single dissenting vote.

The first local chapter of the American Red Cross was formed at Dansville, New York and named in honor of its founder, 'The Clara Barton Chapter, No. 1'. In June, 1900, the Red Cross Association was reincorporated by congressional act as the American National Red Cross. From that day forward, the association inaugurated and put into effect its wonderful job of mercy. We hope there will never be a day without the Red Cross.

FOOD

A Kriegie's stomach suffered most during his stay in Prisoner of War camp.

In direct violation of the Geneva Convention, the German ration to the P.O.W.'s was just a hair short of a starvation diet. The average loss of weight per prisoner has been estimated at twenty five pounds.

The food served was without variety and almost completely inedible. Each morning a prisoner received one cup of ersatz coffee, so foul that it took a few weeks for the stomach to become accustomed to the shock. Lunch and supper usually consisted of either three potatoes, the size of golf balls, or one half cup of thin soup made of kohlrabi, cabbage, turnip or potato. Actually it wasn't soup, merely a vegetable plus the water in which it had been boiled. Besides being tasteless, everything served was ice cold. Understandably, a great deal of time was spent either daydreaming about favorite foods or pointedly trying to avoid any thought of them.

In the first few months of the camp's institution, the Germans blamed lack of kitchen facilities for the garbage they served; in the last months the excuse was 'transportation difficulties'; in between, they didn't bother to explain.

The Red Cross was aware of conditions in camp and did its utmost to supplement the prisoners ' diet. Early in the war they obtained permission from the governments of all warring nations to operate ships for prisoner relief. These ships displayed prominent Red Cross markings and sailed under the protection of neutrality laws. All nations had to be notified of both course and timetable six days in advance of sailing and the Red Cross had to assume full responsibility of loading, unloading and distribution of the cargo.

With funds raised in Red Cross drives, food was bought in quantities directly from the manufacturers under the supervision and guidance of the United States Department of Agriculture. Volunteer workers sorted and packed approximately one million standard food and clothing parcels every month in the main packaging centers at Philadelphia, New York and Chicago. Each parcel weighed eleven pounds. These were then loaded and shipped either to Marseilles, France or Lisbon, Portugal; from these ports, by rail, to warehouses at Geneva, Bienne or Vallorbe, Switzerland to await consignment. The main storage depot for parcels in northern Germany was at Lubbeck. A parcel packed in New York, travelled to Marseilles, to Geneva; from Geneva to Goteburg, Sweden then on to Lubbeck and finally into the hands of some down-in-the-mouth Kriegie to make at least one day a month different from the others. This trip took approximately six weeks.

It was the intention of the Red Cross to furnish one standard food parcel a week for each prisoner. We, at Stalag Luft IV, were fortunate if we got one a month. We didn't wonder long as to the source of the American cigarettes the German guards smoked and very conspicuously enjoyed. Each parcel was inspected by the Germans before distribution and all cans were punctured to discourage hoarding but meanwhile greatly contributing to the dangers of contamination. Before handing it over to the prisoner, they confisceted whatever appealed to them.

Parcel days were the most exciting days of camp life. Everyone was happier with visions of treasures before his eyes. The barracks had a party atmosphere and there was more laughing and less sneering among the men. When the parcels were distributed, the first to be put away for safekeeping were the packets of cigarettes, after which the prisoners could concentrate on the food items. Each package of food was fingered, inspected for leaks, smelled for freshness and pinched to see if it were real.

A new prisoner easily surrendered to temptation and, throwing discretion to the winds, indulged in large feasts. He soon learned that the few minutes of feasting couldn't compensate for the long hours of fasting. Some of the prisoners ate the food just as it came; others, not content to let well enough alone, invented many and varied recipes for preparing their food into a glorious 'piece de resistance' or devised detailed diets designed to stretch the contents of their parcel to its utmost.

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FOOD-ACCO EXCHANGE

Cigarettes in P.O.W. camp were priceless. Their convenient size and universal addiction made them an ideal commodity for camp trades. The treasures of a Red Cross parcel or possibly a package from home were often sold for a few cigarettes. Upon receipt of a package, the Kriegie carefully deliberated as to which item was to be sacrificed on this altar of smoke. Once the selection was made, a buyer had to be found. There was usually a great deal of heated bickering over the exchange values before a deal was made. The market fluctuated, of course, and inflation set in during the dry spell before the arrival of a new shipment of parcels.

A non-smoker was easily distinguished. He was better fed, cleaner and didn't wear the harassed look of the puffer who was constantly devising new schemes to outfox a hoarder. Doubts and resolutions filled our minds as we enviously watched a prosperous, non-smoking business man contentedly munching some delicacy, but with the arrival of a new parcel, we were again caught in the same vicious cycle.

Listed below is a table of typical barter rates on the 'food-acco' exchange, subject, of course, to change. The food entailed in these exchanges was the amount contained in one Red Cross parcel.

FOOD	TOBACCO	FOOD	TOBACCO
Milk	60 cigs.	Raisins	60 cigs.
Cheese	30 "	Biscuits	60 "
Oleomargarine	60 "	Chocolate, D-Bar	30-60 "
Corned Beef	40 "	Coffee	30-60 "
Lunch Meat	40 "	Salt & Pepper	5-20 "
Pate	20 "	Jam	60 "
Tuna or Salmon	30 "	Sugar	60 "
Prunes	20 "	Multivitamin tablets - No Market Value	

TABLE OF OVERALL DIET

	Average daily requirements for men in sedentery work:-	Average daily contribution of Red Cross standard food parcel:-
Calories	2500	1939
Proteins, gms.	70	80.5
Calcium, gms.	0.8	1.2
Iron, mg.	12.0	11.1
Vitamin A, I.U.	5000	8920
Thiamin, mg.	1.5	3
Ascorbic acid, mg.	75	90
Riboflavin, mg.	2.2	5
Fat, gms.	55-77	106.5

The German rations per man for one month as cabled to Red Cross representatives are as follows:-

1. Bread---------- 21 lbs. 6 oz.
2. Meat or fish----- 2 lbs. 4 oz.
3. Fats---------- 1 lb. 15 oz.
4. Sugar---------- 1 lb. 9 oz.
5. Potatoes--------- 33 lbs.
6. Marmalade-------- 12 oz.
7. Cheese---------- 9 oz.
8. Tea---------- 2 oz.

CONTENTS OF PRISONER OF WAR PARCELS

The following two itemized parcels are standard Red Cross food packages.

Package No. A-1

1.	Milk, powdered	16 oz.
2.	Prunes or Raisins	15 oz.
3.	Corned beef	12 oz.
4.	Pork, luncheon meat	12 oz.
5.	Cheese, processed	8 oz.
6.	Peanut butter	8 oz.
7.	Salmon	8 oz.
8.	Chocolate bar (D)	6 oz.
9.	Sugar, lump	8 oz.
10.	Army spread	7 oz.
11.	Biscuits, type K-3	7 oz.
12.	Jam	6 oz.
13.	Eggs, whole dried	5 oz.
14.	Coffee, soluble	2 oz.
15.	Salt & Pepper	1 oz.

PACKAGE No. 10-1

1.	Milk, whole, powdered	16 oz.
2.	Oleomargarine	16 oz.
3.	Prunes & Raisins	15 oz.
4.	Corned Beef	12 oz.
5.	Pork, luncheon meat	12 oz.
6.	Cheese, processed	8 oz.
7.	Tuna or salmon	8 oz.
8.	Sugar, lump	8 oz.
9.	Biscuits, type 1 or 2	7 oz.
10.	Chocolate bar, Ration D	8 oz.
11.	Liver pate	6 oz.
12.	Jam	6 oz.
13.	Coffee	2 oz.
14.	Salt & Pepper	1 oz.
15.	Multivitamin tablets	16

If a prisoner of war was a hospitalized casualty, he received an 'invalid parcel' which was basically the same as the standard food package but contained foods especially adapted to the needs of the sick. These usually arrived in bulk form.

Upon release from P.O.W. camp, a prisoner was given a special Home Coming kit. It contained the necessities usually taken on an average business trip, such as, toilet articles, hygienic equipment, underclothes and other small articles. It also held several games to help pass away those last few days before heading home.

ARTS AND CRAFTS

A new prisoner usually spent the first few days at camp alternately sleeping and feeling sorry for himself. After recovering from the shock of capture and realizing the futility of brooding over the situation, he sought company for his misery and made a conscious effort to fit himself into the routine of prison life. Duties, as such, were practically nil, since by international law, Air Corps prisoners of war from the rank of sergeant, are not required to participate in any form of manual labor. Each prisoner was requested to clean his bunk and all shared in the general clean-up of the barracks. This consumed just a few short minutes of the long day and the men were compelled to find other means of occupying themselves.

Old timers at camp heartily welcomed each new recruit both as a fresh audience for stories the others had already heard too many times and as a messenger of the latest news of the progress of the war and the world outside. Still there weren't stories or news enough to fill the hours of all the days. The prisoners recognized the necessity for some form of creative or relaxing recreation as a relief from the tension of prison life. Time was cheap and many of the prisoners took advantage of the opportunity to catch up on studies or pursue hobbies. The Kriegies formed classes, clubs and teams. All were conducted according to the rules of fair play and in a spirit of intense but congenial competition.

A library was established with books which were supplied by the Y.M.C.A. and in spite of the rigid German censorship on all literature coming into camp, there was quite a good selection from which to choose. A few prisoners volunteered as librarians to insure proper distribution. They also supervised repairs on worn out copies and inflicted fines - suspension of library privileges - for books withheld beyond the specified time.

Classes, which were well attended, were conducted in the barracks by some of the more learned prisoners. Courses in various languages, sciences, art and business were offered to those interested. All tests and examinations were given orally since paper and pencils were seldom available. Discussions about the state of the union, politics, religion, sex and various other subjects were conducted both informally and in debates.

Outdoor sports were limited due to a lack of equipment. Several shipments of packages containing sports paraphernalia were sent to the camp by the Y.M.C.A. and Red Cross but these were confiscated by the Germans for their own amusement. Football and softball were most popular since these required the minimum in equipment. Bed slats were used as bats and, when a ball was not available, a rolled-up shirt or jacket was substituted. The non-participants in the games lined the field and cheered as though they were watching a World Series play-off or a Bowl game.

Indoors, a sort of pingpong was played. Wads of paper were batted across an imaginary net with paddles improvised from a piece of somebody's bunk. And of course, there were the card and game enthusiasts. Poker, pinochle, bridge and hearts were the predominent card games played, and chess, checkers and cribbage also claimed an avid following. The badly ventilated barracks were shuttered at dusk during the long winter nights and while the close quarters magnified faults and failings of roommates a competent effort was made to overcome unfriendly relations by means of bridge tournaments and chess matches, which managed to keep everyone interested. There were no material prizes awarded, the victor had to be content merely with the knowledge of his superior prowess, at least until someone could prove otherwise.

It seems everyone, P.O.W.'s included, believes himself a genius, just loaded with talent and waiting to be discovered. They had a golden opportunity to indulge their whims and either prove or disprove their artistic powers. Many novels, short stories and poems were written, some good, some bad and some indifferent. The budding author or poet was quite a pest with his constant demand for an audience.

Some days no one would listen while on others everyone in the barracks would pitch in, listening with critical attention, correcting and passing judgment. However, many of these stories and poems have survived the Kriegies' mauling and have since been published.

The theater played an important part in the prisoners' program to overcome ennui. Some plays were taken from books but many scripts and musical scores were written by the men themselves. Stage settings and backdrops were created by the Kriegies out of cardboard, glue, burlap, straw and scraps of wood. And, when the play was presented, everyone, both actors and audience enjoyed it wholeheartedly.

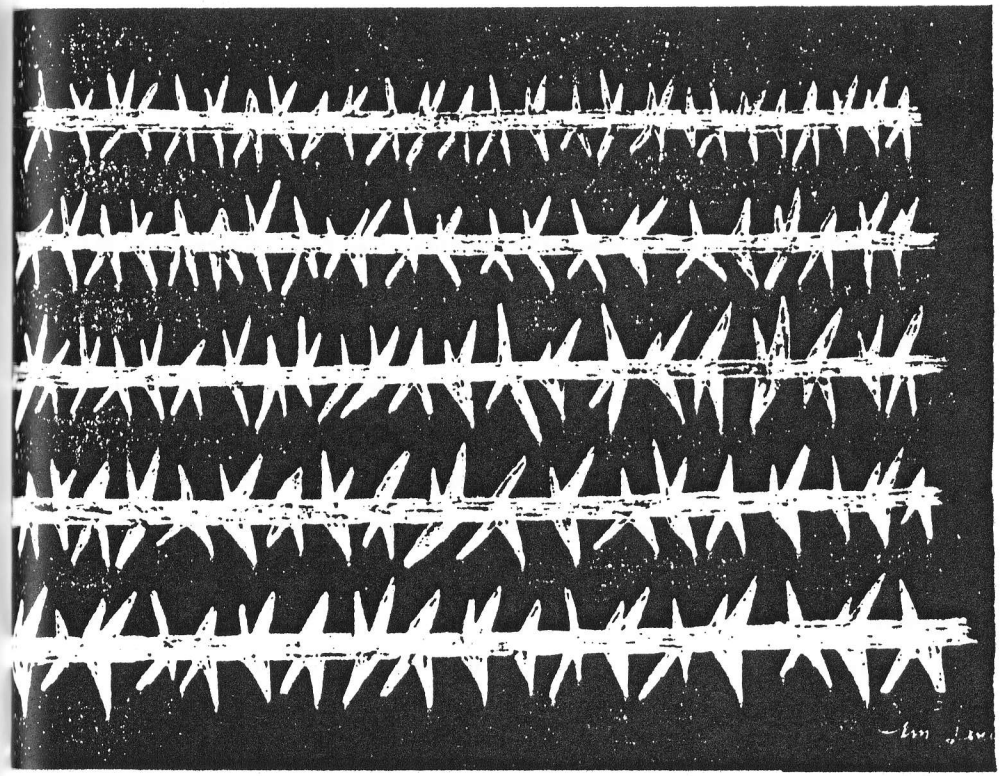
The artists were, by far, the most absorbed in their work, sometimes even foregoing eating to put the finishing touches to a masterpiece. This was easy to do since their art was much more satisfying than their food. They had none of the necessary materials and were constantly seeking substitutes. Charcoal artists were always on guard to save their implements from being confiscated to the pot bellies. The barren rooms were made even more bare by whittlers and wood carvers who seized every scrap of wood not securely nailed down. Sculptors hoarded precious soap from Red Cross parcels which they moulded into busts and statues of famous people, fellow Kriegies or loved ones at home. Ship and plane models were created with meticulous precision from both wood and soap. In the field of relief art, every piece of trash found around the lager, such as chewed gum, sawdust or scraps or paper, was saved to be incorporated into three dimensional maps and landscapes.

But, it was the pencil and brush artist who really had to draw on his powers of imagination to devise his equipment. More time and effort was spent in assembling the materials than in the actual working. Cardboard from parcels was used as canvases and drawing boards. Colored food wrappers were laboriously soaked in water to furnish the pigments for oil and water colors; the oil was rendered from wax paper or shaved from shoe polish and melted down; human hair was used for the bristle in paint brushes.

Despite every possible handicap, beautiful works of art were produced in all

fields. They were exhibited so that all might appreciate them and a selected board of judges rewarded theoretical blue ribbons to the best in each display. One, in particular, was outstanding, in my estimation. It was a clock made by a Polish airman, which recorded accurate time. He had constructed each can, wheel and spring from tin cans.

In civilian life, these efforts would be classified as spare time hobbies but in prison camp, they proved to be life savers for these men who were alive but not living. Their wholehearted efforts to surmount the obstacles and abuse given them was more evidence that though a man's body be held in bondage, his mind and heart and irretrievably his own.



HOSPITAL

The Germans allocated a building in the Vor Lager for hospital use but only prisoners in critical condition checked in. The majority of the P.O.W.'s either treated themselves or used the facilities of the First Aid room. These were regular barracks rooms which were reserved for medical use. They were furnished with a cot, a table, bench, a few chairs and a cabinet for supplies. The Germans, though usually deaf to all requests, made one concession for the First Aid room, they allowed a double ration of briskets, an inferior type of fuel, for the stove. Consequently, it was the warmest room in the barracks and therefore the most popular. Prisoners with First Aid experience volunteered their services as custodians of the sick room, a thankless job with many headaches. A German doctor occasionally held 'sick call'. His treatment was usually a perfunctory glance and a curt nod of dismissal. But nods and glances didn't cure sick Kriegies.

In 1943, British doctors, captured at Dunkirk, arrived at camp with orders to establish dispensaries. They were allowed only the barest necessities but performed miracles of medicine despite the lack of trained staffs, drugs, dressings and other equipment. The Red Cross did their utmost to supply them with some of this equipment. They periodically dispatched special medical kits which were designed to supply the medical needs of one hundred men for one month.

The doctors chose their staff from among the prisoners, who were selected for their honesty, courage and ability and although inexperienced proved indispensable. All were volunteer workers and received no extra benefits or rations for their services.

Headquarters for all doctors was in the Vor Lager hospital. From there, the doctors made daily rounds to all the compounds to check on conditions and the general health of the men. Although they lacked the means to completely sanitize the camp, they managed to avert all major epidemics by checking every possible source of infection and isolating prisoners with contagious disease. Water and food supplies were tested for signs of contamination and the men were given periodic check-ups.

Before the arrival of the British doctors, the prisoners were reluctant to check in at the hospital because of the German staff. As soon as the British staff was organized, there was a sudden rush of requests for admittance to the hospital. All of the prisoners were eager to be accepted as patients since each hospital case was entitled to the special Red Cross Hospital Parcel in addition to the regular parcels. Also, the German daily ration, though not worthy of mention, was a considerable improvement over the usual. However, only cases requiring complete bed rest, isolation or special medical attention were admitted. Amputees and surgery cases were sent to hospitals outside the prison grounds. All other ailments were treated in the barracks.

The most common complaints of the Kriegies were Athlete's Foot and lice but, because of the crowded living conditions, there was no complete cure for either affliction. Skin rashes and swollen joints, attributed to a dietary lack and physical inactivity, were also very prevalent.

The Red Cross, very opportunely, delivered a large supply of typhoid antitoxin a few weeks before the Black March. When the doctors were informed of the impending evacuation, they worked furiously, in a race against time, to inoculate all the Kriegies. At least this disease was avoided on the march.

Mere words cannot express our gratitude to the camp doctors. Their task was huge and the going was rough. They received nothing but abuse from the Germans in return for their efforts. Lonesome and despondent, just like the rest of us, and despite overwhelming fatigue they saw us through to the bitter end. We proudly salute and acknowledge all of them.

CHAPEL

Although the Germans employed every means at their disposal to discourage religious services, they could not completely drive out man's need for divine guidance and solace in time of want. Needless to say, when the camps were originated no facilities were reserved for religious services but the men conducted bible classes and religious discussions among themselves. The Bible proved a great boon to the prisoners, many of whom spent hours reacquainting themselves with its many inspirational stories. At times, the rooms resembled a monastery, with various groups of Kriegies, sporting monk-like beards, reading and discussing the tales of the Bible.

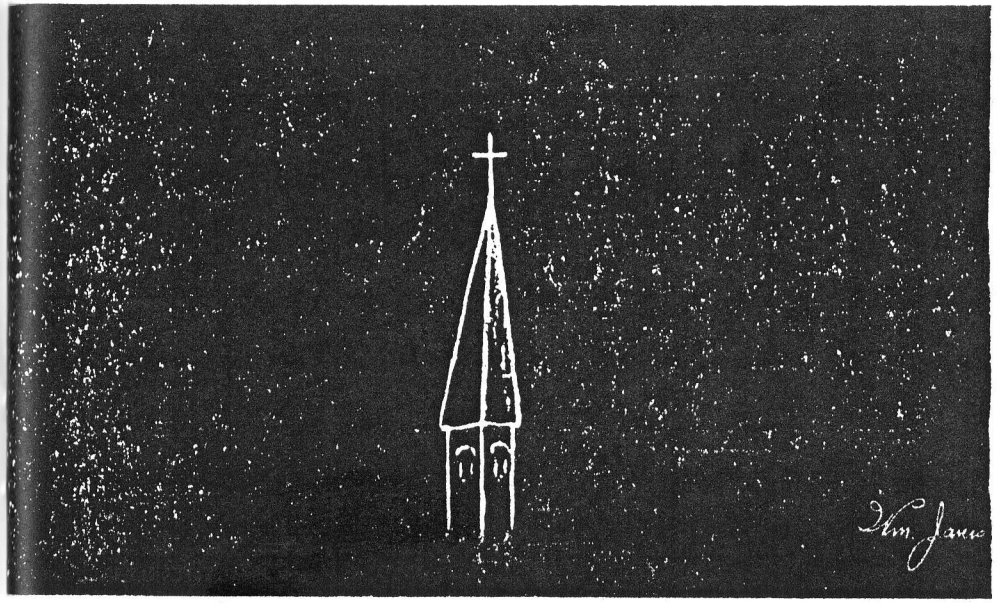
The padres confined at Stalag Luft IV were Englishmen captured at Dunkirk. Their work was most commendable. They bitterly opposed and finally overcame German disapproval so that they could openly attend to the spiritual needs of the prisoners. Some necessary religious articles, such as prayer and hymn books, candles and vestments for priests and ministers, were supplied by the Y.M.C.A. The prisoners built an altar from scraps of lumber and slats from their bunks. Other equipment was built or improvised by the men.

Services were held both daily and Sunday with a very good attendance. As at all other prisoners' gatherings, the Germans posted a sentry in the room at religious meetings. These guards quite openly admired the spiritual fortitude of the men, who even under those adverse conditions, enjoyed the comforts of their respective religions while the Germans were denied this privilege by virtue of their party and political affiliations.

High holidays of the Church, such as Christmas and Easter, were particularly lonesome days. The hours seemed longer and more empty because of the many happy memories associated with them. Our padres did their best to help fill the void by organizing choral recitals and pageants to supplement the regular camp services. They weren't very professional performances but they made the holidays seem more real and brought the spirit of the day into our dismal barracks.

Many men may have considered themselves religiously agnostic or athiestic previous to their Prisoner of War days, but after their close brush with eternity, the number of doubting Thomases was reduced to a negligible number. Even the hardest of heart bent the knee in humility in the face of his insignificance as a mere man. After all human efforts were spent, the prisoners had to place all their hopes and trust of deliverance in the hands of the Almighty. Many hours were devoted to settling the score with Him.

I'm sure that all the prisoners of Stalag Luft IV will join me in extending my most sincere thanks to the Reverends Anthony H. Jackson, Rex Morgan and T.T.E. Lynch who, through their tireless efforts, helped us enjoy the comforts of spiritual guidance and leave camp, upon liberation, with a new realization of God's magnanimity. Promises were made of life long devotion but how many of us still remember our promises. Have YOU forgotten?



St. Joseph's
Bugle Street, Southhampton
31st. October, 1948.

My Dear Friends,

Charlie Janis asks me to write this little letter to former P.O.W.'s of Stalag Luft IV.

I don't know whether you find it as hard as I do to realize that four years ago we were inside the barbed wire at Christmas. Time heals most things, and it is as well that we don't think too often or too easily of those days. Still memories do sometimes come back to me, some sad and some to raise a smile.

What a camp it was ! There was the terrible experience that most of you had on the long way up to it from the station; and then the gradual getting things organised to make our life bearable, and how we cheered when those American parcels came, with the all-important cigarettes inside.

I have lost touch with most of the gaol-boys of Luft IV. Once we moved from Keifheide (or was it Grosse Tische?), I never saw again nor heard from Padre Morgen nor Padre Jackson who both suffered with me in our little room in the Hospital Block. They were great men. Captain McKee sends me a greeting every Christmas, but he doesn't put his address, so I can't answer. He and I stayed to the bitter end, with the worst of the Camp Staff there to worry us. We faced some tough situations together. I shall never forget how hard the Doc worked with his medical boys in those last weeks. Maybe they gave him some decoration when he got back to the States. He deserved one if any man ever did. I take this opportunity to take my hat right off to Captain McKee.

Some of my Catholic boys send me a card 'round Christmas time, and those are the only links that remain with our days of 'gefangenschaft'. As for memories, it

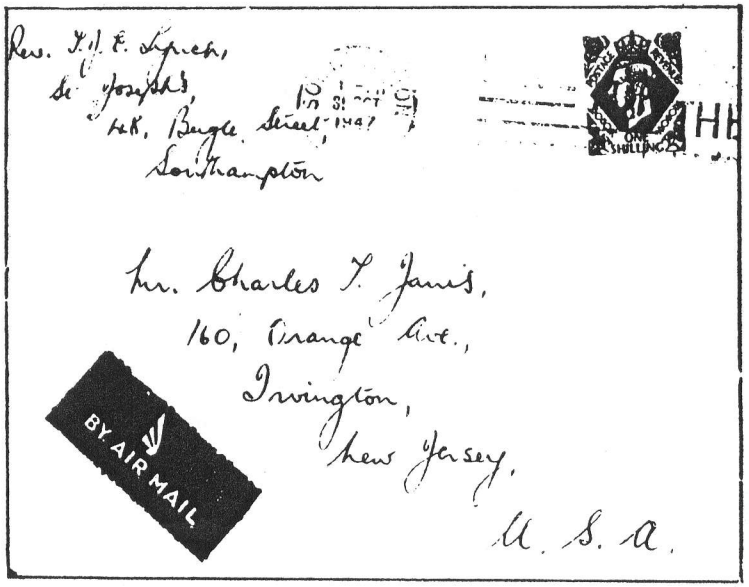
is the Christmas of 1944 that fixes itself in my mind each year. I think of the boys who helped me, especially those who sang in the compound choirs and how hard they worked to make the Christmas music good. Whenever I hear the hymn, 'Still the Night, Holy the Night,' or its tune, my mind goes back to the camp and the boys who sang there. There were the servers too, and others who helped me do my job. Perhaps some of you can remember Ingersol Joe, my little bodyguard. For all his faults, he was a good friend and helped me a lot. God bless him, wherever he is.

I am wondering, as I write this, whether all my Catholic boys who were at Christmas Mass in 1944 are still going, now that they are back home. Please God, they are; and perhaps some of those who never came for me are going now.

I have very clear memories of many fine boys who weren't Catholics who were very good friends to me. The friend in need is the one that counts, and I don't forget them and what they did.

I pray that Our Lord will bless again this Christmas of 1948, the men of Luft IV - all who dwelled therein.

Your devoted padre,



MAIL

All prisoners soon became familiar with the Kriegsgefangenenpost, the German word defining the department governing incoming and outgoing mail. Despite the complicated spelling and pronunciation of Kriegsgefangenenpost, broken down, and it was, it merely means Prisoner of War mail.

The first thought of every prisoners, after his capture, was to dispatch mail as soon as possible to relieve the worry of those at home. This was done, more or less, at the convenience of the Germans. This news was sent on a German form card with spaces left blank to be filled in with only the most pertinent information and a small section reserved for personal remarks. The German censors carefully sifted through these remarks in an attempt to uncover useful information. In some instances, weeks passed before the prisoner was permitted the opportunity of sending his card.

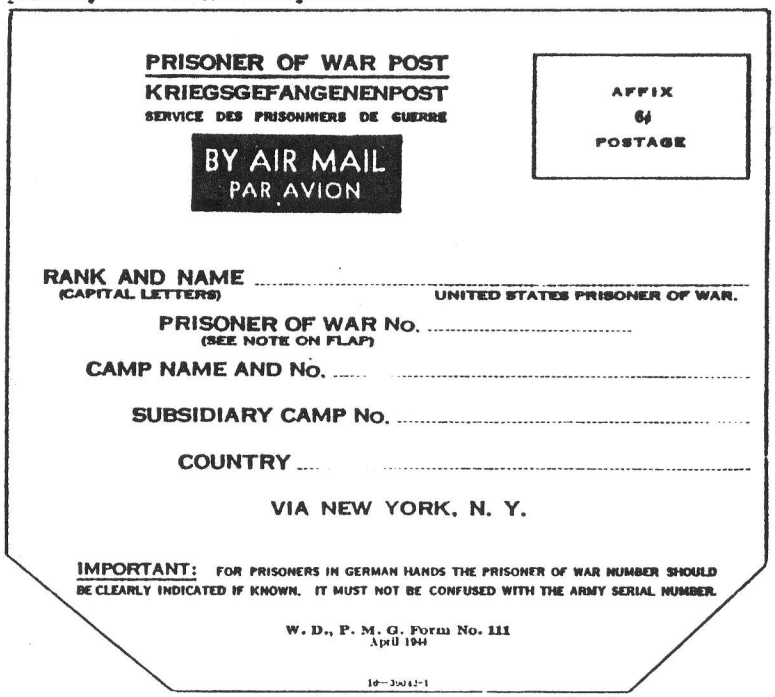
The P.O.W.'s were allowed to write four folding-type cards and two letters each month. At first, the number seemed inadequate but as the months passed and no mail was received and with no insurance of delivery of letters written, mail writing lost its interest.

However, the men looked forward to mail call with undying hope. All who could be were present. After repeated disappointments, a prisoner might have stayed away a few times but he soon resumed his place in the ranks if not to receive mail at least to share the luck and happiness of those who did. The fortunates, who hit the jackpot on mail day, were 'Kings for a Day'. They held court, and surrounded by the men in the compound, read and re-read their letters until all were satisfied. It was like manna from heaven to the men, starving for news from home. They handled the envelope and letter and read the contents countless times until finally the words became illegible from constant folding and handling.

The lack of mail broke down the morale of the Kriegies faster than any other single factor. The Germans made use of the psychological effect of this lack of mail to maintain a proper subjugation among the men but they were defeated in this plan because the prisoners tried to forget by occupying themselves in other pastimes and camp activities. Nevertheless, they greatly resented the absence of word from loved ones, particularly when they watched bales of mail being burned in the lager incineretor.

All mail was severely censored almost to the point of complete disintegration of all news leaving nothing but the salutation and signature. Various methods of disguise were tried in an effort to sneak some news of camp life through the censors. Some used a code or a 'read between the lines' system, others tried using exaggerated slang which they hoped would stump the censors. There were no recriminations from the Germans nor any answering letter from home so there was no way of knowing if they passed the censors.

The letter which follows this article closely resembles a letter the Germans would probably have termed acceptable.



PRISONER OF WAR POST
KRIEGSGEFANGENENPOST
SERVICE DES PRISONNIERS DE GUERRE

BY AIR MAIL
PAR AVION

AFFIX
6¢
POSTAGE

RANK AND NAME .....
(CAPITAL LETTERS) UNITED STATES PRISONER OF WAR.

PRISONER OF WAR No. .....
(SEE NOTE ON FLAP)

CAMP NAME AND No. .....

SUBSIDIARY CAMP No. .....

COUNTRY .....

VIA NEW YORK, N. Y.

IMPORTANT: FOR PRISONERS IN GERMAN HANDS THE PRISONER OF WAR NUMBER SHOULD BE CLEARLY INDICATED IF KNOWN. IT MUST NOT BE CONFUSED WITH THE ARMY SERIAL NUMBER.

W. D., P. M. G. Form No. 111
April 1944

16—30043-1

LETTER FROM A KRIEGIE

Place: Who Cares?

Date: Ditto

Dearest One;

After leaving where we were before, not knowing we were coming here, we could not tell when we would arrive. Nevertheless, we are now here and not there. The route by which we came is the same one everyone uses. Despite our transportation we had a fairly good trip.

The people look and act somewhat similar to those at the other place. The weather is just as it always is at this season but quite unlike the weather where we were before. We had to take everything we had with us for we wear the usual outfit worn here which is different from that worn back there.

This is a new experience for me and very different from my usual routine. It is now time, in all probability, to stop this somewhat too newsy letter.

Love,

Joe

ESCAPE

On the trip to camp, the prisoners were so closely guarded that they had no opportunity to study the territory surrounding the compsite. However, this did not discourage the Kriegie's dream of freedom. From his first day in prison to his last, he continually planned ways and means of escape. Every likely route was investigated and all available information concerning previously attempted escapes was garnered and inspected for flaws. Many escapes were planned by those of us in the D compound but, to my knowledge, none progressed beyond the planning stage.

To forestall any such possibilities, compound and tower guards patrolled the grounds twenty four hours a day, working in eight hour shifts. By night, huge, trained dogs prowled the grounds. As a final precaution, the prisoners were herded into the barracks at sunset and all doors and windows were securely bolted. The Germans constructed their camps as nearly 'escape-proof' as possible. The ground at Stalag Luft IV was of a sandy composition making tunneling an impractical but not impossible means of escape so the Germans built the barracks on three foot posts to discourage anyone foolish enough to make the attempt. Tunneling, in the few building which were built on the ground, could have been possible if tools and a means of concealing the sand were available. Also, wooden braces had to be made to prevent the tunnel from collapsing, but, there was no source short of tearing down the walls of the barracks, which could have provided enough wood for this purpose. At any rate, in the event of an escape by tunnel or otherwise, the Kriegies were much worse off outside the barbed wire than behind it. The compsite was smack in the middle of a section of Germany which was notoriously nationalistic and patriotic and, if apprehended a second time, a prisoner's chances of survival were nil.

In view of the fact that escape from Stalag Luft IV was so difficult, the prisoners, realizing that the Germans would be compelled to transfer them to another camp when and if the Allies drew closer, shelved all escape plans for future use during such an evacuation. In the meantime, the men studied all the German books at hand to provide themselves with at least a working knowledge of the language and customs of the people of Germany. The ability to speak German could easily help procure food, clothing and possible aid in leaving the country, and would undoubtably determine the difference between life and death.



A typical German guard.

THE BLACK MARCH

On February 5, 1945, the German camp officials were forced to evacuate Stalag Luft IV before the rapidly advancing Russian Army could reach the camp. This decision transformed the routine of camp into a bedlam of confusion.

Previous to the official declaration, rumors ran rampant among the prisoners. Under the uncertain conditions and with no definite word, the men surrendered their rationality to wild conjecture. Some predicted a mass desertion by the Germans, abandoning the Kriegies to fend for themselves until they could be liberated by the Russians; or forced to fight their would-be liberators or possibly being backed to the wall and mowed down like just so much grass. At any rate, the Kriegies were left to draw their own conclusions as the frenzied guards and leaders scurried mysteriously about the camp. The suspense was finally relieved when, on the night of February 3rd, word was passed that the order for evacuation of camp had been received. The time designated was eight o'clock on the morning of the fifth. This news started an orgy of preparation for both the prisoners and guards.

Each prisoner hastily prepared for the trip. Some expected a march of a month or two at most, while others predicted a short jaunt of a few days. The camp was a beehive of activity as the prisoners raced about scraping together provisions for the march. Every scrap of food and clothing was packed. The Germans frantically organized schedules for the marching formations of all those physically able to move. The warehouse was opened and Red Cross food parcels were distributed to the Kriegies just before the march began. Only the hospital cases, along with a few padres were being left behing. They were left with no provisions and only the most meager rations

February 5th dawned cold, wet and gray. The 'big day' had come, that mythical day all had dreamed about and planned for had finally arrived and it was a solemn one.

Prisoners were torn between elation at leaving the discomforts of camp and the uncertainty of prospects of hardships yet to be endured on the march.

It was a motley crew indeed that started out that day. Many of the Kriegies were wearing two or three complete outfits of pants, shirts and sweaters, and carrying several extra food parcels, which had been begged, borrowed or stolen from the Red Cross warehouse.

At the onset of the march, the prisoners rejoiced in the mere freedom of motion after long months and, in some cases, years in the apathetic atmosphere of camp where no one indulged in exercise more strenuous than that required in attending to his daily needs. However, after a short time, muscles unused for long periods, collapsed under the strain of hours of marching in the cold, wet weather of the German winter. Bones and joints ached mercilessly and all were seized with fierce attacks of cramps when a halt was called and tired, pain-wracked bodies were finally allowed to rest. The mens' distress was increased by the numbness and swelling of frostbite. And, due to the lack of sanitation facilities, the ever-present lice which infested every man, introduced typhus. Dysentery marched along with them to add more misery to the already unbearably miserable men. Some unfortunates were plagued with all simultaneously - men who struggled to keep up the pace with bodies weakened by the fevers of typhus, the bodily disorders of dysentery, the pains and cramps of frostbite and, exposure and complete fatigue. It was a fight uphill in a stiff wind all the way.

In the beginning, a day's travel averaged seventeen kilometers. The Germans considered this pace too leisurely and soon stepped it up to twenty and sometimes twenty-five kilometers a day. When the quota in miles had been reached, the prisoners were herded into deserted, rat infested barns and left to lick their wounds. There was little or no shelter from the freezing cold and wind since many of these buildings were lacking a wall or roof. When the barns or similar structures were unavailable, the nights were spent where the men dropped, in ditches, fields and forests. After a night spent on the cold, hard ground with no protection whatsoever,

the comparative warmth of some ramshackle hut was welcomed.

Before dropping off to sleep, each man prayed for strength to hold on just a while longer, since each sunrise brough new hope. All physical and spiritual resources were mustered at the start of a day's march and a little determined spring could be detected in the step of the men, but by nightfall the lines were once again reduced to straggling wisps of crawling men, begging only for a place to rest.

After a few weeks on the march, the old familiar food problem started to hound the hapless marchers. Even those who had supplied themselves with extra rations felt the gnawing pangs of starvation soon after the last precious morsel was eaten. Bodies which were ravaged outwardly by all the scourges of the march were now being attacked from within by this most insidious of attackers. The sight of the well-fed guards drove many to frenzy. With the fortification of a little food, the prisoners somehow found the strength to endure a day's march, but without it, everything seemed futile and the end too far and too indefinite to compensate for the struggle and misery entailed in achieving it.

With no prospect of receiving food from the German guards, the men were forced to find food wherever and however they could. Occasionally, they encountered someone with whom a trade could be consummated. More than likely, this someone was a slave laborer, who was actually hardly better off than a prisoner. However, some had access to food and after all lingual difficulties were overcome a trade was made. With no money nor anything of value for barter, these deals were made in an exchange of food for cigarettes, which many foresighted Kriegies had hoarded for just such an eventuality. The amount of food procured in this manner was inconsequential, it could not be stretched far and only served to whet the appetite, not to satisfy it. Other sources of food had to be found. Fields were dug up in the hopes of locating a forgotten root or two left from the previous summer. Only too often, a prisoner received nothing but cracked and bleeding hands after hours of digging in the frozen ground. Forests were

stripped bare in the hunt for acorns and berries. In desperation, many Kriegies ate even the bark and leaves. Here was man lowered to the level of animals, human scavengers, fighting for the chance to eat and to live that they might be men again. Asking only for perseverance to live through the terror of this march. The morale of the marchers had scraped the bottom. The shining lights of faith and hope were growing dim.

The scars of sickness, starvation and despondency could be detected in the thinning lines. Each day, untold numbers were left behind. These were men whose will to live had been squelched under the duress of intolereble misery, men, who had drained the dregs of human endurance. Others attempted escapes on the assumption that nothing could be worse than the tortures of that walking death. But the majority abandoned in barns and along the way were those who could no longer crawl or drag their weakened bodies in the lines. They pleaded piteously to be carried until some strength could be regained but no-one could muster enough energy to bear the extra burden and these pleas had to be ignored. Some of the men left behind caught up in the last days of the march, but the whereabouts of many is still unknown and we can only speculate as to their fates.

Days lost their identity and weeks crept by in endless monotony. What were petty gripes at first, were now serious complaints. Two long months had already been spent just marching. All rebelled but to no avail since there was no alternative, and an attitude of dejected resignation was adopted. The men doggedly plodded along in completely mechanical routines of marching through all the hours of daylight and getting what rest they could in the few hours of night. It was during the third month of the march that a Red Cross unit was met and the dire food situation was somewhat relieved by the distribution of much needed food parcels. It was a red-letter day in the lives of the Kriegies.

At about this time, a change in the routine was noticeable. The ranks of German guards developed gaping voids in their midst. Many of them deserted in view of the obvious end of their reign. The remaining guards became more lenient and almost friendly. They no longer forced the P.O.W.'s to march in unfavorable weather. Rainy days were spent in the shelter of the barns and the daily quota of marching miles was reduced considerebly. And for extra assurance that the prisoners' stay in purgatory was truly drawing to a close, the sounds of the Allied big guns were coming closer and the number of Allied planes overhead was increasing daily.

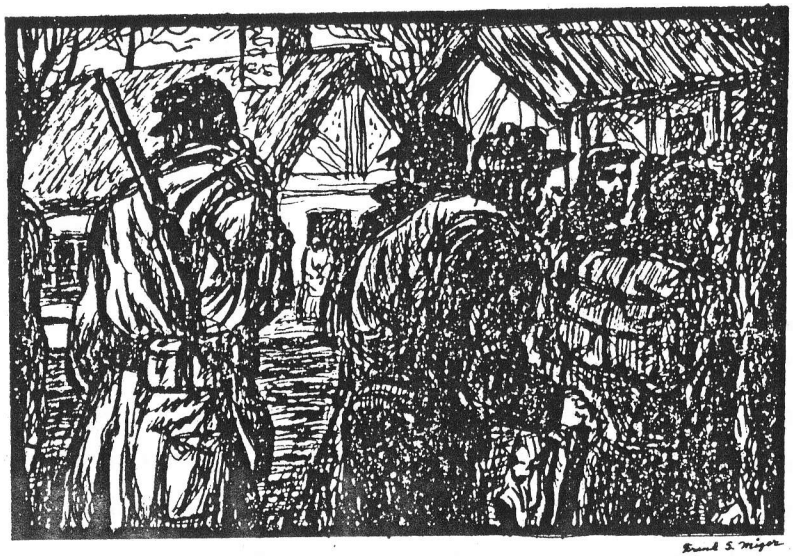
The night of April 30th had been no different than countless other nights. The men were bedded down under cover in various barns scattered within ten miles of each other. At dawn on May 1st, the air was suddenly rent with a terrific roar which brought every man to his feet and out into the road to investigate. The sight which greeted them brought their hearts to their throats. The road was aswarm with men from a Canadian tank and paratroops division which had broken through the German lines and was now being swamped by hoards of hysterically screaming Kriegies. The Canadians were happily throwing boxes of rations to the ragged men about them. Most of the boxes went unnoticed by the men who were too entranced with the glorious vision of their liberators. They gazed reverently at the Canadians through eyes blinded with tears of gratification and joy. Nor could they speak over the huge lumps lodged in their throats but there was no doubt that they were really among friends and finally free. Men alternately cried and laughed as they unashamedly hugged each other. A prayer of thanksgiving welled up in every heart and many fell to their knees to beg forgiveness for doubting Him, for what greater proof of His presence and mercy was there than that glorious day.

After the Canadians had passed, the men had yet to reach Luneburg, where, in the hands of the British, their liberation would be official. Even on this short hike, from Zarrentin - their liberation point - to Launenburg, they were hounded by the fear of recapture since they were marching in 'no-man's land'. Upon arrival at Launenburg, they were transported by trucks to Luneburg and freedom. Some came straggling in as late as May 10th, with arms loaded with souvenirs which had been appropriated along the route.

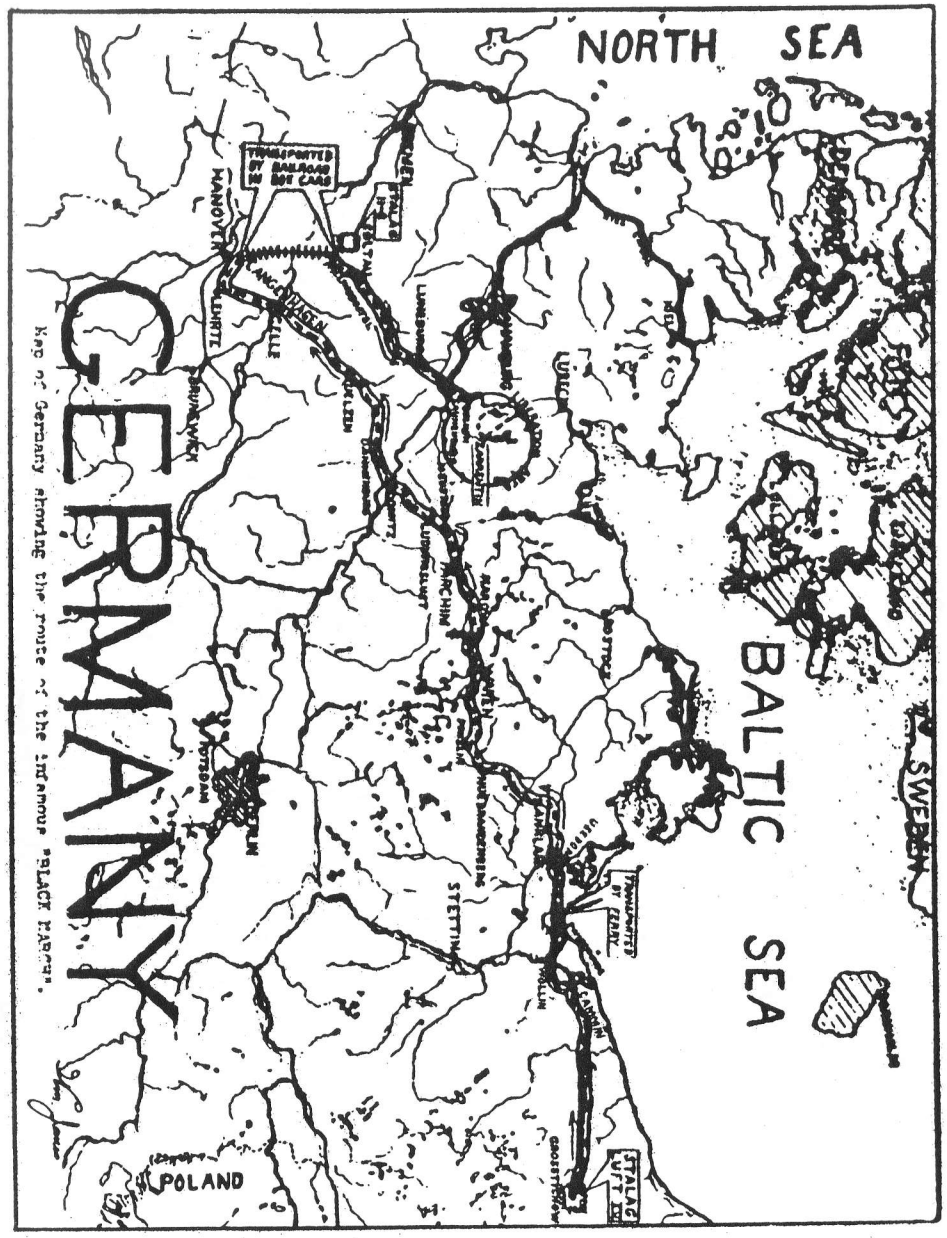
The march had been a desperate struggle from beginning to end but it had been most bitter in the last few weeks. In three months, the men had covered approximately 500 miles, a remarkable feat when the physical condition of the men and the circumstances of the march are taken into consideration. A tour of Germany on foot, but what a price in human lives and suffering!



P.O.W.'s ploduing their weary way on Black March. German guard in rear.



P.O.W.'s passing through German village during Black March.



Location of German Camps and Hospitals Where American Prisoners of War and Civilian Internees Are Held

(Based on information received to December 31, 1944).

PRISONER OF WAR CAMPS

CAMP	NEAREST TOWN	MAP SQUARE
Stalag II A	Neubrandenburg	B 2
Stalag II B	Hammerstein	C 1-2
Stalag III A	Luckenwalde	B 2
Stalag III B	Fürstenburg/Oder	C 2
Stalag III C	Alt-drewitz	C 2
Stalag III D	Berlin-Steglitz	B 2
Stalag IV A	Hohnstein	B-C 3
Stalag IV B	Mühlberg	B 2
Stalag IV C	Wistritz	B 3
Stalag IV D	Torgau	B 2
Stalag IV D/Z	Annaburg	B 2
Stalag IV F	Hartmannsdorf	B 3
Stalag IV G	Oschatz	B 2
Stalag V A	Ludwigsburg	A-B 3
Stalag V B	Villingen	A 4
Stalag VI G	Bergisch-Neustadt	A 2
Stalag VI J	Krefeld	A 2
Stalag VII A	Moosburg	B 3
Stalag VII B	Memmingen	B 4
Stalag VIII B	Teschen	D 3
Stalag 344	Lamsdorf	C 3
Stalag VIII C	Sagan	C 2
Stalag IX B	Bad Orb	A-B 3
Stalag IX C	Bad Sulza	B 2
Stalag X B	Bremervörde	A-B 2
Stalag X C	Nienburg	A 2
Stalag XI A	Altengrabow	B 2
Stalag XI B	Fallingbostel	B 2
Stalag XII A	Limburg	A 3
Stalag XII D	Wahbredsbach	A 3
Stalag XII F	Preinsheim	A 3
Stalag XIII C	Hammelburg	B 3
Stalag XIII D	Nürnberg-Langwasser	B 3
Stalag 383	Hohenfels	B 3
Stalag XVII A	Kaisersteinbruch	C 4
Stalag 398	Pupping	B-C 4
Stalag XVIII A	Wolfsberg	C 4
Stalag XVIII C(317)	Markt-Pongau	B-C 4
Stalag 357	Gerbke	A 2
Stalag XX A	Thorn	D 2
Stalag XX B	Marienburg	D 1
WK 8—BAB 21	Blechhammer	D 3

CAMPS FOR AIRMEN

Luft I	Barth	B 1
Luft III	Sagan	C 2
Luft IV	Grosstychow	C 1
Luft VII	Bankau	C-D 2
Stalag XVII B	Krems/Gneixendorf	C 3
Dulag Luft	Wetzlar	A 3

NAVAL AND MERCHANT MARINE CAMPS

Marlag-Milag	Tarmstedt	A-B 2

GROUND FORCE OFFICERS' CAMPS

Oflag IV C	Colditz	B 2
Oflag VII B	Eichstätt	B 3
Oflag IX A/H	Spangenburg	B 2
Oflag IX A/Z	Rotenburg	B 2-3



Oflag X B	Nienburg	A 2
Oflag XI (79)	Brunswick	B 2
Oflag 64	Altburgund	C 2

LAZARETTS (Hospitals)

	NEAREST TOWN	MAP SQUARE
IV A	Res. Laz. Elsterhorst (Hohnstein)	C 3
IV G	Leipzig	B 2
V B	Rottenmunster	A 4
VI C	Res. Laz. Lingen	A 2
VI G	Res. Laz. Gerresheim	A 2
VII A	Freising	B 2-3
IX B	Bad Sodon/Salmünster	A 3
IX C	Obermassfeld	B 2-3
IX G	Meiningen	B 3
IX C	Hildburghausen	B 3
X A	Res. Laz. H, Schleswig	B 1
X B	Sandbostel	A-B 2
XIII D	Nürnberg-Langwasser	B 3
XVIII A/Z	Spittal/Drau	B-C 4
Marine Lazarett Cuxhaven		A 1
Luftwaffen Lazarett 4/11 Wismar		B 1
Res. Laz. II Vienna		C 3-4
Res. Laz. Graz		C 4
Res. Laz. Bilin		B-C 3
Res. Laz. Wollstein		C 2
Res. Laz. II Stargard		C 2
Res. Laz. Schmorkau		C 2
Res. Laz. Königswartha		C 2
Res. Laz. Ebelsbach		B 3

CIVILIAN INTERNEE CAMPS

Ilag Biberach	B 4
Ilag Liebenau	B 4
Ilag VII/H Laufen	B 4

(Reprinted by Permission)

Key

- Prisoner of War Camps
- Camps for Airmen
- Officer's Camps
- Civilian Internee Camps
- Hospitals (Lazaretts)
- Marlag and Milag

Scale: 72 miles per inch.

Published by
THE AMERICAN
NATIONAL RED CROSS

INCIDENTS NEVER TO BE FORGOTTEN

Do you still remember:-

-----the day you were captured and how it felt to be in enemy territory as some glory-seeking Kraut strutted and preened before you.

------the horse drawn carts, box cars and trolleys used as means of transportation to the transit camp for air crews.

-----your stay at Frankfurt and your uneasiness as you anxiously awaited the call to the conference room for interrogation.

------the train ride to Stalag Luft IV and your amazement at the destruction our bombers had left behind on their forays.

-----the initiation into camp life, the period of adjustment to your bunk, the food, your room-mates and trying to settle peacably into the dull routine.

------the hours spent in discussing, planning and thinking about food. Your envy while watching another Kriegie munching on a hoarded bit of food after yours was all gone.

-----the careful dividing of camp and Red Cross food with your room-mates and the squabbles over the size of the cubes being cut.

-----our room-mates who gambled their food away and depended on handouts to survive. Remember, "Shoot the coffee for your D-Bar"?.

-----the careful check the lager chief kept on all tin cans going in and coming out of our compounds. All had to be returned or else - 'no cans, no food'.

-----the traffic in the water lines at the pumps and how certain you were that all of Germany would run dry before you filled your drinking cup.

-----the very fitting handles we gave the German guards, such as, Big Stoop, The Green Hornet, Rifle Butt, Dirty Gus, Twenty Kilometer Joe and Crowbar Mike.

-----the inescapable roll calls, particularly the days when they held seven or more.

-----the confusion at roll calls because the German guards couldn't count over ten, and how, after much intense debating, they would surmise that someone was missing.

-----that marvelous 'goon' invention, jokingly called 'the latrine refuse cleaner'. If you got too close you were permanently impregnated with the aroma of Taboo No. IV.

-----the long tresses and beards we tolerated because we didn't trust the Kriegie barbers with their hand-made barber tools.

-----those four German planes that used to fly over the camp showing off their mastery of the sky maneuvers and our glee when one crashed near the hospital.

-----those tower gun practising sessions the Germans held in the compound and how adept we became at dodging bullets because they had a playful preference for the moving targets in our lagers.

-----the tough job assigned to Tech. Sgt. Frank Pauls as intermediary not only between the Germans and prisoners but also as referee in all our misunderstandings.

-----those minstrels held in the Red Cross theater and the good time we had either applauding or hissing as the show merited.

-----the lumps in your throat and your pride when our planes flew overhead to their targets and how you silently offered your prayers to the boys in the planes.

-----the sound of the big guns as the Allies approached positions close to our camp.

-----how we wondered as to actual source of the up-to-date war news which we received daily, both in camp and on the march.

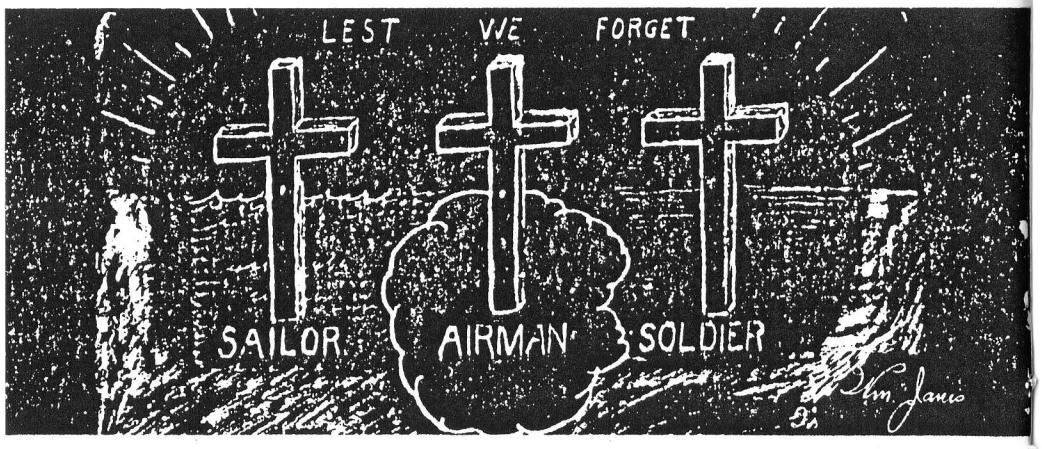
-----the March across the wilds of Germany and the tired ache all over your body when you finally rested for a while.

-----those fuzzy insects we all had as uninvited guests and the wonderfully clean feeling after being deloused.

-----the glorious day of liberation and the joy that enveloped all causing many to shyly hide tears of relief while others laughed, cried and yelled hysterically.

-----last but not least, the trip home and the big leap into the arms of loved ones.

THE END



ROSTER

The ex-P.O.W.'s listed herein are those who were interned at Stalag Luft IV. They were aerial gunners on heavy and medium bombers of the United States Air Forces and held the rank of non-commissioned officers. The majority came from the 8th A.A.F. from British based fields and the 15th A.A.F. from bases in Italy. Others came from the 9th and 12th A.A.F.'s. Although this roster lists only the American Prisoners of War, the complement also included British, Canadian, French and Polish airmen. The author and staff are deeply indebted to the many ex-P.O.W.'s who submitted names and addresses for this roster.

STALAG LUFT IV CAMP LEADERS

Rev. T.T.E. Lynch c/o St. Joseph Church, Bugle St., Southampton, England

Rev. Rex G. Morgan Trehyfryd, Swansea, So. Wales, England

Rev. Atherley A. Jackson, 9020 Clarence Ave., Clapham Park, London, England

Henry J. Wysen, 346 E. Ravenwood Ave. Youngstown, Ohio (M.D.)

Wilbur McKee, 1462 So. 7th St., Louisville, Kentucky (M.D.)

Julius Boggess, Rt. 1, Macon, Mississippi (M.D.)

Ray R. Pollack, Re Downs, England (M.D.)

Richard Chapmen, Daytona Beach, Florida (Compound Leader)

Frank Troy, Ohio (Compound Leader)

W.B. Miller, Carencro, Louisiana (Compound Leader)

Frank Paules, 600 York Ave., Lansdale, Penn. (Homme de Confidence)