

A KRIEGIE'S LOG

By Lt. Henry 'Dusty' Dangler, Co-Pilot 464th Bomb Group, 777th Squadron

Preface

The story told here by Henry Dangler of the 464th Bomb Group, 777th Squadron, begins with a June 26th, 1944 mission to the Florisdorf Oil Refinery and marshaling yards. The complex was in the Vienna, Austria area and was destined to be a rough target. The first attack unit was led by Major Harold Blehm, while Colonel Marshal Bonner would lead the second attach unit. Over the target the group dropped their seventy-two tons of bombs into the smoking target and continued their flight thru heavy, deadly flak. B24 Liberator 42-50401 YELLOW-Z piloted by Lt. Lamar J. Dunn with Colonel Bonner in the right seat and regular Co-Pilot Henry Dangler standing between them on the flight deck took a devastating direct hit in the nose. The blast blew the nose wheel away killing the navigator and bombardier.

A Kriegie's Log is the story told by Lt. Henry 'Dusty' Dangler of that fateful day in June 1944 as they embarked on their twenty-fourth mission flying from Pantanella, Italy. The story begins with the personal account of the mission and takes the reader thru the prisoner of war experience. A Kriegie is what the POWs called themselves. It is short for Kriegesgefangenen which is the German word for prisoner of war. Lt. Dangler's personal diary was provided by Mark Dunn, son of Lt. Lamar J. Dunn, Pilot.

A Kriegie's Log

The night before that memorable day crew #11 had hit the sack at an early hour for we had had a tiring day. A nine-and-a-half-hour mission had taken us to the coast of south France. Though uneventful, the flight had left us somewhat weary. I might note the splendor of the cloud formation on our return over western Italy. It is always a thrill for me to fly in amongst heavy cumulus clouds.

A pilot's meeting kept Lamar and I from retiring as early as we desired. The exact hour of our arising has skipped my mind. I believe it was in the neighborhood of 2 AM. Rushing through the usual breakfast of hot cereal and powdered eggs, we made our way to the huge briefing tent – we being Lamar, Larry, Mike and myself, the enlisted men having been briefed at an earlier hour. I don't recall anything out of the ordinary in the briefing, so I shan't put down the details. We were scheduled to lead the 2nd attack unit with our C. O., Col. Bonner, riding as co-pilot. This position in the formation is designated as 'Dog 11.' Our target was the R. R. marshalling yards on the northeast side of Vienna well known to us for its heavy flak.

Gathering up our pertinent data we drove down to the 'Flight Line' in the back of a G. I. truck. We always said that if one could survive that rough ride, one could survive anything – a bit of irony, eh what. We picked up our gear at the parachute department and were then driven out to our ship at the far end of the runway tucked away on its 'hard stand.' At this time day was breaking permitting us to pick out other ships. There was Casey to our right and further down the taxi strip to our left we could see Luque's ship, our great friend.

Unloading our parachutes, we found our crew waiting for us under the wing of our comparatively new ship '401.' Immediately we went about our duties checking the ship for flight. The Colonel had not yet put in his appearance. Shortly before taxi time, he arrived via command car dressed for a cold trip in his heavy flying clothes which Lamar and I found too bulky and warm to use. Upon seeing me, the Colonel asked in an amazed voice what I was doing there. When told that I always went along as eleventh man, he firmly said that it was not S. O. P. or against the policy of the group. But as I was already there and ready to go, he would not order me on the ground. That conversation shall remain with me for a lifetime!

Takeoff and form up went off as per schedule with the usual milling around before squaring away. Slight radio trouble bothered us but little. From the group rendezvous to the I. P. (initial point), all went well; in fact, I amused myself by listening to an excellent program of music on the liaison set. The radio operator had gone to his station in the waist. Watching the Colonel, I would switch to interphone whenever he pressed the 'mike' button.

At approximately 9:30 we passed over the I. P. and the target was clearly identified by the 'Flak' put up by the 448-A.A. guns in the Vienna area. We were to be at the target at 9:43 bombing from 22,500 feet from an axis of 273° but due to our position in the wing formation we were about ten minutes late. With bomb doors open and our 8 500-1b. demolition bombs poised for their destructive flight, we braced ourselves for our trip through 'flak alley'. For protection I wore my 64-lb. flak suit and helmet over my back pack. The weight was considerable but I wouldn't have traded it for the best tweed suit at that moment. Standing between Lamar and the Colonel I watched the black lethal puffs of exploding 'flak' which seemed to follow our every move. Between us and the lead Attack Unit the air was filled with the bright orange flashes and their resulting puffs of smoke. It really is amazing how any object human or otherwise could pass through untouched and yet only two ships from our Group were lost that day! As we neared the target the path of flak seemed to be creeping ever closer. Suddenly a hole appeared in the wind shield accompanied by a shower of glass particles. The slug of metal had missed Lamar's head by the proverbial inch. I felt my face for cuts and slivers of glass—lucky again, no blood.

'Bombs Away' – from the ships ahead we could see the 500 lb.'ers on their way. Almost immediately the Group began the sharp turn from the target. There was no doubt 'Jerry' had one of those 448 guns pointed in our direction for directly in our path a series of bursts could be seen and felt much closer than any previous.

'WHAM'—a direct hit below the flight deck. It threw me backward into the flames that instantly engulfed the flight deck. I took a quick look between the pilot's seats but saw no movement. Then began my fight for life! I have no recollection pulling the cord that released my flak suit. The oxygen hose passed beneath me and seemed to keep me from rising or moving in any direction. It was at this point that I gave up hope and ceased my struggles. Probably it was this that saved me for the intense heat from the blazing inferno and the all-too-realistic thought of becoming a human torch brought sense to my actions. With my gloved hands, I disengaged the hose from my mask; and through aching eyes – mere slits – I perceived a light spot where the hatch into the bomb bay should have been. Clamping eyes shut, I fought my way forward inch by inch. When my energy was about gone, I fell heavily. Just where I landed, I don't know; but I knew I couldn't be far from the open doors of the bomb bay. Exerting what little energy remained, I moved forward again. My next sensations were indescribable for I dropped, fell and continued to fall. The force of the air rushing past made breathing next to impossible. It was several seconds before I was fully aware of my situation. No more heat was my first coherent thought. How much of my parachute was burned? My hopes for it were slim. The least I could do was pull the rip cord and find out. Reaching around with my right hand, I pulled what I thought was the handle. Nothing happened. Try again. This time I felt the handle in my hand and gave it a mighty tug. Still nothing happened. Another pull and all went black. Myriad of stars and flashes of light passed

before my closed eyes. Then all was still. My parachute had opened, and I was floating peacefully earthward.

This may sound a bit on the dramatic side, but it is the closest interpretation of my sensations and actions possible for one who is definitely not gifted in the art of writing!

Now that the roar of my rapid descent had ceased, I began to take inventory. Opening my singed eyelids, I looked down and saw that my heavy leather flight suit was badly burned but not through. Next, I wiggled my foot and hands and found them all in working order. With the exception of a burnt face, I had come through unscathed. The Lord was with me. As I drifted down, I kept telling myself that I was alive. Exultation swept over me--it was unbelievable.

Floating lazily earthward, I watched the scenery enlarge until could make out moving vehicles; for remember this all took place 20,000 feet in the thin, cold air of the upper atmosphere. Slight nausea gripped my stomach. The smell of burnt flesh is not pleasant. Off to my left a bomber spun past me. I wondered if it were from my Group. I was told later that a JU-88 followed our crippled ship down firing 20 mm. into it until it exploded.

Nearing the ground, I tried to figure out where I would land; but the many air currents swept me here and there. A small forest seemed to be my ultimate target. In the center of it I could see where the bomber had crashed and burned. The last few hundred feet I seemed to drop at a great rate of speed. A stone cliff loomed in my vision, which passed quickly beneath me for I was drifting rapidly—toward the burning ship! The next thing I knew, I was crashing through the trees.

All was quiet. A dog barked nearby. My faithful chute had brought me safely to earth. Almost, that is, for I was hanging 50 feet in the air, but within reaching distance of the nearest tree trunk. It wasn't long before I was perched on a limb from where I watched two elderly women and a man approach waving their hands shouting 'Nix, Nix.' They soon saw that I was harmless, in spite of my small arsenal. This I quickly tossed to the ground; for I was in no mood for anything but friendliness. Experimenting with my zippers, I found they could be worked with a little effort; so I shed my heavy flying clothes and slid to the ground. Before leaving my chute harness, I remembered to cut off the first aid packet. Those Austrian peasants, fortunately for me, were friendly. This was not true in many cases, which I later learned.

These people gathered up my equipment and started down a winding path which opened out into a beautiful glade with a small cottage in its center. This I could see despite my rapidly closing eyes. The simple beauty of the spot would be hard to duplicate in the States.

Guided into a small room, I sat myself in the nearest chair and ripped open the medical pack. As you might have expected, there was no ointment for burns. I did make good use of the morphine syrette and had the old woman get me some olive oil. Not five minutes later in walked a member of the Luftwaffe, some sort of 'Private' I believe. Yes, I was actually glad to see him for I was much in need of medical care.

Thanking these kind peasants, I picked up my jacket and headed down the hill in company of the soldier. Before we had gone far, another joined us with much wild talk. It was not difficult to gather that he had located the burning ship. What seemed a half mile further down the path, we were met by a large blustering Austrian garbed in a white smock. He addressed me in English asking me where I was from, etc. to which I gave my name, rank and serial number and sat down to await their wishes. As you can well imagine, he was not pleased with my answer.

At the bottom of the hill, a car filled with German officers awaited us. Again, we were interrogated only it was the soldiers who answered the questions for none of the officers spoke English. By this time, my legs were a trifle on the rubbery side so that when we continued our hike through the village streets, I wove from side to side. The Germans offered no help! Our walk ended at a local Luftwaffe station where my burns were treated and wrapped with paper bandages. Next, I was taken via motorcycle sidecar through the city of Vienna to another Luftwaffe post. This trip was made with the bandages covering my eyes so that I was uncertain just which side of the city this post was located.

Immediately on entering the building I was put with seventeen other airmen who had been shot down that day. None were from our Group nor did they have news of my crew members. I assumed the worst.

The room was small and lined with double decked wood bunks with straw mattresses. Several hours after my arrival a medical orderly and nurse appeared and redressed my burns. I must admit they did the job well and efficiently. Our food was limited to a form of gruel and black bread. This last I could not stomach for it was sour and hard as the proverbial brick.

That night I slept fitfully but felt much better the next morning. At noon we were taken to the mess hall and fed a thick potato soup—tasty and filling.

Towards evening as I lay on my bunk, I noticed the room became peculiarly silent. Next, I felt a pair of hands slide over mine which were crossed on my chest. Then I heard my name spoken as if from a great distance. Lamar had survived! Never have I experienced a more wonderful feeling than when I listened to L.J. as he recounted his story. He had stayed with the burning ship for 10,000 feet trying to regain control of it so that his crew members would

have enough time to bail out. Not 'til the altimeter read 11000 feet did he make a move to help himself! When he did start for the flight deck it was too late, for the plane exploded. The next thing he remembers is pulling the rip cord and watching parts of the ship float by him. He had been miraculously saved by an act of God! To my knowledge at the time of writing, Lamar and I are the only living survivors. I hope 'tis otherwise--time will tell.

That night I was in high spirits which helped me to forget my painful condition. The Austrian guards proved exceedingly friendly—even slipped us a glass of that famous German beer. They were amazed to hear that our large cities of New York and Washington had not been bombed. Some of the boys spoke fluent German and proceeded to fill them full of stories that will give them food for thought.

In the morning we were loaded on board an old coal burning truck with no seats and only a wire frame for support. Lamar and another chap were left behind. This caused much worry for I had vision of our being permanently separated but there was nothing I could do. Jammed in the back of this vehicle with our quota of guards armed with machine pistols – a very convincing looking weapon – we toured through the streets of Vienna. Unfortunately, the condition of my eyes prevented me from getting a good look around. My bandages had been arranged so that they had left my eyes free but a continuous flow of tears hampered clear vision. I did get a glimpse of a grey building – cold and formal - crowded streets and busy people. It made me want to see more – under different conditions.

At the station we were herded through hurrying crowds, who paused to give us a curious glance. In our special car which dated back to World War I, we watched these travelers. Obviously, many of the soldiers were returning from the Eastern front on furlough. They did not look happy! The colorful scene could have been taken from a Hollywood thriller. Our compartment was built for six, and there were eight of us—not too bad a ratio considering that many of the P.O.W.'s were conveyed through Germany in box cars. The guards arranged themselves in the aisle with one remaining in the compartment with us. The trip lasted three days and on the whole, was not too bad. Our food consisted of a highly spiced bologna sausage and black bread. Yes, we did have some margarine – hardly enough to disguise the bread. Water was obtained by the guards at each station – this they shared with us from their canteens. At night two slept in the luggage racks above the wood benches, two slept on the floor, and the rest of us made the best of it on the seats. My burns bothered me only slightly—though my eyes were thoroughly gummed up. In the morning I needed a coal chisel to pry them open. Once while pushing my way down the aisle to the washroom a metal gas mask container came crashing down on my head. The guard didn't even apologize!

At Frankfurt we viewed the results of our heavy bombing. Not a house was intact. All that remained in sight were mere shells—nothing more. Devastation reigned supreme! It seemed impossible that all the remote buildings would be affected—but they were! At the 'station,'

we were unloaded and moved to another platform where we spent several hours; or so it seemed, waiting our next train. A German Red Cross woman gave us all a cup of potato gruel. It helped for our rations had long since gone.

The next leg of our trip to Dulag Luft was relatively short as we arrived at Oberusel late that afternoon. Before continuing, I must comment on the beautiful rolling country through which we passed. It was easy to see that all landscaping had been carefully planned with an eye to conservation and intensive cultivation of all tillable land. Everything looked clean and neat and well-kept—a pleasant change from southern Italy. My compliments to the thrifty, efficient German farmer. Another point of interest was the great numbers of locomotives to be seen at every stop—all in good shape. It was hard to take for those fighter pilots who had been knocking out trains behind the lines.

From the station at Oberusel we were marched, crippled and all, some two miles to Dulag Luft our transient camp. On the way we passed through a rather pleasant residential district not unlike our suburban areas. The guards sent a detail to the local 'drug' store for a supply of ice cream. That hurt more than any injury or hard walking in the heat. We were a sorry site for few were fortunate enough to be wearing their uniforms when shot down. As for myself I had my 'summer tans' beneath my flying clothes; most of the others were clad in heated flying suits and coveralls some even had heavy flying boots and no shoes.

Dulag Luft was nothing more than a series of low wooden buildings similar to our Army barracks only enclosed in barbed wire. On our arrival we were grouped outside one of these 'shacks' awaiting our turn to be called. My burns had not been dressed nor bandages replaced during the trip so I asked the German in charge to see doctor. Shortly I was called, conducted into the 'shack,' and locked in a room with several others seeking medical attention. The 'cell' measured approximately 8'x10' and had a single barred window looking out upon an opening between two shacks. The furnishings consisted of three benches.

During the afternoon, many fellow airmen passed in and out. A group of ten men in civilian clothes passed through. They had all been in the hands of the Gestapo and were mighty glad to be at Dulag Luft. Some had reached within one mile of the Spanish border in the Pyrenees Mountains before being captured. Their stories were heartbreaking, unbelievable and nauseating in their vivid description of Gestapo methods. Some had been in these men's hands for five months or more. All were haggard and weak from lack of nourishment.

At every opening of the doors we expected the doctor—but none appeared. Toward evening we were brought blankets—one each for the five of us left in the room. (I am reminded at this time that before being placed in this cell we were stripped and searched) That night was not a pleasant one for us. We had had no food since the soup at Frankfurt and the floor is not the most comfortable of places to sleep despite the blanket.

The next morning, I was taken into a small room where a 'Jerry' N. C. O. was seated at a table. He promptly began to ply me with questions muttering something about the Red Cross. We had been forewarned by our S-2 about such a questionnaire so that I wrote in my name, rank, and serial number where designated leaving the rest blank. Up to this point he had been most courteous; but seeing that I had no intention of imparting any further information, he became very unhappy threatening the vengeance of his commanding officer. I almost laughed in his face.

From this 'interview,' I was led to another cell at the end of a long hall with numbered doors on each side. This next cell was about half the size of my former enclosure but was furnished with a wood bunk and straw mattresses (am now very familiar with both), stool, and 'cuspidor.' The window when opened, looked out upon another part of the compound. Shortly after the door was closed, I was brought a slice of black bread and a pitcher of ersatz tea. I suppose you might call it 'herb tea.' In any case it was unpalatable. Surveying my chamber, I found the walls were covered with initials indicating that I was not the first occupant.

Later that morning I was conducted to the first aid room where my burns were dressed again using paper bandages. While waiting my turn I spoke to a Polish flyer who had been in solitary confinement for six long weeks! Try it sometime!

About mid-afternoon I was taken from my cell along with the other boys I arrived with. We were returned our personal articles--watches, rings, etc. and marched across the road to another compound awaiting transit to our next dulag. This camp was nothing more than two wood buildings in a wire enclosure. We were permitted to walk about at will and to wash in cold water—the first opportunity since Vienna.

Toward evening they brought us a thick potato soup--eaten with relish because most of us had had little nourishment since the day before. The next morning, we were routed out at an early hour and marched back to the station. I joined the injured who were taken via the local trolley. I noted the ticket takers were women.

Travelling from Oberusel to Wetzlar we were jammed in small third-class coaches many standing all the way. About 2 PM they unloaded us where the wounded were transported in the back of an open truck up to another Dulag Luft several miles out of town. There we were deloused and received our first hot shower. Never realized how good a little hot water can make you feel! Our quarters were nothing more than captured British tents filled with straw mattresses laid end by end. The compound was staffed by British and American P.O.W.'s who gave us royal food thanks to R. C. parcels. Wetzlar seemed to be a gathering place where groups of a hundred or more were shipped out to permanent camps. Also, the enlisted were segregated from the officers.

My stay at Wetzlar was almost pleasant considering the situation. I met several officers with whom I had much in common. Everybody seemed relaxed and resigned to their fates. The German medical sergeant did a fine job of dressing my burns. My eyes still drained continuously but it didn't hamper my vision quite as much. I could just make out an old castle outlined against the sky. On the second day, Lamar joined us and also Bruno Berselli our squadron bombardier officer. This was the first news of Major Carter's capture along with Tom Locke, Squadron Operations Officer, Bob Ladig, Squadron Navigation Officer, and Bill Booker. That left the 777th Bomb Squadron without its C. C. and flying staff.

The third day all the officers were to leave for Stalag. That morning, Sgt. Mack from Chicago and myself were singled out to return to Oberusel – but why neither of us knew. Taken under heavy guard, five soldiers and same number of machine pistols, we made a hurried trip back to solitary confinement. I felt sorry for the sergeant because he expected the worst of treatment. As for myself I was so happy to be alive to care about what might be in store for us.

(Am writing this to the tune of heavy bombers from Fifteenth Air Force passing overhead on their way to Munich—almost daily schedule.)

Only incident worth commenting on was the guards reaction when told we came from Chicago. One made gnus of his hands and gave his impression of a 'gangster,' Another asked me about Al Capone. You can see how well informed the German civilian is on the American way of life.

At Dulag I was returned to my cell and kept guessing about my fate for several days. The mental strain of not knowing why I should be singled out was terrific. It grew as the days went by. On the fourth day I was escorted to another building and brought before another interrogator who greeted me most cordially with outstretched hand. It was the old story—soft soap, 'know it all,' and finally threats of concentration camp and being shot as a spy unless I identified myself with an outfit.

On the sixth day after several sessions such as previously described the interrogator proceeded to give me all the answers to his questions. It seemed that he had mentioned my name to one of Major Carter's crew and the rest was easy. He even told me where the boys in my crew were buried—Hadersfelt, Austria near Vienna. His manner had completely changed. Escorting me to the door of his office he shook my hand as an old friend and, hoped that I was not offended by anything that took place, intimating that the War would soon be over.

The next day I was called again to face my questioner. This time he quizzed me about a mystery ship which I was supposed to be flying. It struck me so humorously that I laughed in his face. It must have convinced him for he immediately returned me to my cell.

Finally, on the eighth day I retraced my trip to Wetzlar. Of course, Lamar and those I had come up with over a week ago had been sent off to their permanent camp. Three days later I was on my way with a group of some one hundred officers, English and American, for Stalag Luft III located at Sagan. We made the trip in comparative comfort traveling in 2nd class coaches converted for the purpose by barring the windows. Lt. Col. Tyrrell, a fighter pilot, acted as C. C. and proved very interesting to converse. Before leaving Wetzlar we were given a R. C. parcel so that food was no problem. I rode in a compartment with a B-17 crew who had crashed landed in Holland. A newly graduated West Pointer, Lt. Whittmore, completed the group. They were a jolly bunch and made good companions for the three days it took to make the trip. Again, I was unable to enjoy the view of the German countryside as well I might. Though what I did see made me want to come back when conditions permitted.

On the morning of July 15th we were detrained in the Sagan freight yard and marched about a mile to Stalag Luft III; my future place of residence for seven months and a day. In the vorlager they searched us, took our pictures, gave us a shower, and clothing. Then 'into the gates of hell we went. (This term should rightly be applied to Moosburg)

I list here some old acquaintances imprisoned among the 1800 kriegies of Center Compound: Major Carter and crew, 777th Bomb Squadron; my pilot, Lt. Dunn; Lt. Bill Metz, L.F.A. student; Lt. Ted Hinckley, Asterville; Capt. Don Merchant, 42-F, San Diego; Capt. Bill Forsythe, 18th Bomb Squadron, engineering officer 34th Bomb Group, Spokane; Lt. Dave Love, Mountain Home, Idaho; Major Hackett, 43rd Bomb Squadron 29th Bomb Group, Boise, Idaho.; Captain Leaverett, 464th Bomb Group, Lt. Jack Westlake, 464th Bomb Group and many others.

Sagan to Moosburg

Jan. 27 - received word at 7:30

Jan. 28 - 4:30 out of barracks

7:00 left Sagan - 15 Kilos to Halban

Jan. 29 - 8:00 left Halban - 18 Kilos to Barnsat

Jan. 30 - Layover

Jan. 31 - 5:00 left Barnsat - 88 Kilos to Nuskan

Feb. 1-2 - Layover

Feb. 3 - Left Nusken 17 Kilos

Feb. 4 - 8 Kilos to Spremburg

1800 boarded box cars, travelled 3 days and 3 nights to Moosburg.

Sunday morning at 4:30 we fell out with loaded packs – a cold and snowy morn with several inches of snow on the ground. At midnight they had called us out but only a false start. This was fortunate for me for I made some radical changes in my pack and added my suntan shirt and trousers. The final tally in clothing was as follows: 3 undershirts, sweat shirt, 2 shirts, 1 winter underdrawers 'long johns,' 2 trousers, sweater, scarf, field jacket, heavy overcoat, and stocking cap. Added to this I carried a few personal items and all the food I could hold in a pack made out of a C. I. suntan shirt. (A change of underwear and a pair of shoes were carried in a blanket roll over shoulder).

The cold was so intense that my fingers were unable to open a R. C. food parcel issued to us at the gate. We left our 'Combine' completely wrecked with hoarded food strewn over tables and floors for the remaining Goons to scrounge. Lt. Steve Souris was released a few hours previous to our departure. He had been in the 'cooler' for several days since his capture. He had almost made his escape good having reached Breslau before giving himself up because of a wounded leg.

Leaving the Center Compound, we stood at the gates of Stalag Luft III for several hours before moving off. A fire could be seen in the North Compound where the British had done a little dirty work. While waiting, I chatted with a young 'Yeltwiebel' (sergeant) who spoke excellent English and sincerely believed that the Russians would be thrown back before reaching Sagan. I wonder what he is thinking as I write this?

The order to march came at 7:00 AM and off we trudged some 1800 men in columns of three headed by Gen. Vanaman and staff. Our line of march took us by the burning North Compound—a typical Hollywood setting. Our guards were a motley lot—some had beautiful Police dogs on leash. I pitied these poor animals for they suffered horribly from the cold. The guards had to beat them to keep them in hand. During the first few hours we had a human atom for a guard. He couldn't have been over 5 feet and with the huge pack he carried he seemed to be walking on his knees. Later a wagon picked up their packs making their march an easy one—comparatively speaking.

Almost immediately after leaving the gates we met our first of many refugee wagons fleeing the advancing Russians. It was a pitiful sight—something I had read about and never expected to see. This first day I continually passed castoff articles. I am proud to say that I arrived at Moosburg with all I started with—though there were times when I very nearly didn't.

Several busses forced us off the road loaded with soldiers in white uniforms headed for the front. At 1430 we arrived at Halbert 17 kilos from Sagan. It wasn't 'til late afternoon quarters were found for us in an unheated church and high school building. While waiting the majority of us acquired sleds from Polish and French workers for cigarettes.

I stayed in the school building along with 'Red' Hanson, my food partner, Chuck, Joe, and Stew. The rest of the Combine stayed at the church. This night was to prove our most comfortable abode during the entire trip. With the little heat in the radiators I managed to dry my freshly laundered underclothes.

Six o'clock the morning of the 29th, we were routed out. By 0800 we were loaded and on our way. Our sleds made marching considerably easier though nothing could alleviate our miseries from the falling snow and bitter cold. The refugees passed on the way had caught up with us as was seen from Halban's crowded town square. I counted 60 wagons and carriages of all descriptions piled high with personal possessions. I might mention the comical sight one of the goons made—affectionately called 'Hoiman'--he was loaded down with all sorts of booty including Y.M.C.A. hockey gloves and G. I. shoes.

At 1500 we halted at the small town of Solingersruh about 18 kilos from Halban. After being counted by the goons we were taken into a large country estate and billeted in several colossal barns. By the time we (Lamar, Bruno, Al, Stew, Chuck, Zoe, Bill, Lawless, Springer, Perky, Len, Red, and myself) had found a spot and put down some straw it was dark, so much so, that one could not see the person next to you. We slept side by side in two rows so that those in the back row had to climb over those in front in order to get out. Several times I was awakened with a hand or foot in my face! Before retiring we were told that we were to have a day of much needed rest. Incidentally, the Goons did not issue any German rations 'til two days later. Latrine facilities were non-existent. They did manage to issue hot water from the farmhouse. Women and children brought it down to the barns in pails. They were a cheery lot—mostly Polish workers. The guards were feeling the effects of our march more than the majority of us though they did not complain.

The 30th was spent in resting, drying clothes, mending packs and sleds, etc. Food had become a serious problem for the R. C. food each of us carried was to last only one day. At that time, we had no idea when our next German issue would be given out.

Wednesday, January 31st we packed our blanket rolls in the dark and were ready to move off by daylight. They had told us we were to take a train at Muskan for a camp at Nurnberg. Most of us did not put much stock in this – though we hoped for the best. By 1100 we had reached Priebus with still many kilos to go. Fortunately, the snow had ceased to fall and the temperature had risen. But this brought on a new problem of ruts made by the heavily laden refugee wagons. In the afternoon the temperature dropped forming a sheet of ice on the roads making the footings on the roads most uncertain. Many fell including myself. Al, Len, Perky, Lawless, and myself carried our packs on one sled while the others had two smaller sleds. In spite of the five-minute rests every twenty minutes, it was all I could do to keep up. I heard many comments, so I knew I was not alone. During some of these rest periods, Vince Shank would haul out his trumpet and give us a tune or two. I wonder what

the Germans thought when they heard the clear note of American folk melodies ringing through the trees. It did much to raise our morale and made a lasting impression on me. Muskan came in sight at about 1700 and a mighty welcome sight it was. Then came the long wait while they found quarters. This proved to be a brick kiln in full operation which we proceeded to take over bag and baggage. On the 3rd floor our Combine found its allotted space jammed between empty drying racks. Before we could find floor space, it was necessary to move a pile of fresh bricks four feet high. It was at this time I found out that no matter how tired one feels, one always has a reserve energy supply.

We rested the 1st and 2nd of February on the Brick Kiln receiving one loaf per man, half a can of barley soup--the first of two hot meals given us by the Goons. We were also issued 1/5 of R. C. parcel--which was a blessing as most of us were out of food. In the basement of the Kiln, I located a modern shower room minus hot water--cold or hot it felt wonderful. Took advantage of the facilities to wash socks and underclothes.

On the second floor above the furnace we were able to heat our food utilizing the hot air vent for stoves. It was a weird sight and most awkward, but better than nothing. The second night Bob Ironton gave us a news summary obtained from a radio in a nearby house. Rumors of important advances flew like mad—per usual.

At this time Stew, Zoe, and Chuck withdrew from our old combine group. It seems they liked to work by themselves and we were glad to have them leave— though there was no hard feeling. This left Al, L. J., Bruno, Red, Bill, Parley, Len, Joe Lawless, Spring (who worked alone) and myself.

On the 3rd we arose early and moved off without the help of sleds to ease our burdens. The guards had not fully recovered from the first few day's march. In fact, they were in worse condition than most of us in spite of our heavy loads. They made a comical almost pathetic sight as they trudged along. Most of them did not care how much trading we did and a lot was done.

Around noon our heavy bombers gave us a grand show leaving contrail all over the sky. It eased our march considerably. Bombs could be heard in the distance—don't know what their target was. I warrant there was not much left of it.

By late afternoon we had marched 19 kilometers to the small town of Greustien where we were quartered in small barns. Our combine found a spot in the hay loft of the barn designated to our Group. Hot water was provided from a crude boiler. For a few cigarettes some of us bought potatoes from the farmhouse. These we roasted in hot coals and ate for breakfast—skin, ashes, et. al.—most delicious! It is surprising the amount of dirt a human can consume and thrive on it!

Sunday February 4th we were up at 0600 to march 7 Kilos to Spremberg where we were to catch a train for Nurnberg so we were told but did not believe! By 1030 we had unloaded our packs in empty garages situated in an Wehrmacht camp converted into a hospital. It was here that we received our 2nd hot meal, or I should say potato soup. Also General Vanaman, Col. Spivey, Col. Kennedy, Capt. George and Lt. Brown left us to go to Berlin. We hated to see them go because there was no doubt that the presence of General Vanaman saved us much unpleasantness and hardships. An example of this was our comparatively short daily marches. While walking around our area L. J. met our former Deputy Group C. O. – Lt. Col. Hand. He had been forced, to bail out after a collision over Italy during our second mission. We exchanged news; and I learned about many friends imprisoned in his camp, but nothing had been heard of our crew.

At 1500 we moved off with Colonel Smith as S. A. O. (Senior American Officer). The R. R. station was a good 4 kilos from the camp on the far side of the city; thus, our line of march took us through the main streets. Looking into the store windows, I could see that Germany did not have much to offer its people. That little merchandise displayed was a low grade 'ersatz.'

Before boarding our box cars, for that was our mode of travel, we watched a troop of Hungarian cavalry go by. They must have traveled far because the majority of them were on the ground leading their horses.

Staff - Stalagluft #3 - Sagan

Gen. Arthur W. Vanaman

Col. Delmar T. Spivey

Col. A. Y. Smith

Col. William L. Kennedy

Col. Daniel W. Jenkins

Col. William A. Hatcher

Col. Kenneth R. Martin

Lt. Col. W. R. Purinton

Lt. Col. R. H. Saltsman

Lt. Col. Normand

Lt. Col. Dix

Lt. Col. Tyrrell

Block 55 - Staff

C.O. - Capt. B. H. Rawlinson

Adj. - Capt. H. B. Rodgers

Combine "H"- Staff

Capt. R.,S. Allen - p

Capt. L.J. Dunn - p

Capt. B. Berselli - b

2nd Lt. S. Souris - b

2nd Lt. J. LaSpada -

2nd Lt. C. A. Dubinski

2nd Lt. W. Hoffmeyer -

2nd Lt. R. Perkins - n

2nd Lt. C. Stewart - p

2nd Lt. C. B. Hanson -

2nd Lt. H. A. Dangler -

Capt. Blank