

HORSESHIT
and
COBBLESTONES

DEDICATION

To Mike

Comrades of the battlefield --- Perhaps it is because everything in battles --- the ground, the weather, the enemy --- is so against him that the soldier develops a deep affection for those that are working with and for him in an atmosphere of common danger, exertion, uncertainty and chance. It has ever been the way of men to band together to withstand misfortune and outwit fate, and war binds men more tightly together than almost any other branch of human activity. To share your last crumb of bread with another, to warm your enfeebled body against another in the bleak and barren mystery of the night, to undergo shame, fear, and death with scores of others of your age and mental coloring --- who, indeed, would trade these comrades of the battlefield for friends made in time of peace ?

Duncan - Chapman - Paris - Heidt

Lyons - Varella - Enochs - Doyle

McClure - Johnson

The writer wishes to express his thanks to these kreigys for making the following story possible. Altho many incidents are left out, it is my hope that the ensuing pages will help to recall the most cherished ones. You will find the story for the most part centered around Mike and myself, much as I have tried to incorporate all of us. In spite of this I think you will find it most interesting and worthwhile in years to come. On behalf of all of us, a second thanks to Big Glenn Chapman who actually recorded the data, only to lose his record at Hammilburg. Fortunately a copy was made prior to this time and the pages that follow are the result.

"Come on, you Ruskies !"

This was the most familiar phrase for days at Schubin, Poland where 1400 American Ground Force Officers were being held prisoner by the Germans (or Goons as we lovingly called them). Our secret radio, termed THE BIRD for security purposes, gave up-to-the-minute news of the rapidly advancing Russian Army, and excitement ran high in anticipation of our liberation. For some time we had expected orders moving us away from the battle zone, but by January 19th, 1945 it was clearly evident that the German High Command had delayed too long and the Russians would be upon us at any minute.

January 20th the order came that we would walk five miles the next day to Exin where trains would move us farther West, IF the Russians were not here by then. The entire day was spent preparing for our departure. For newcomers to Schubin like Mike and myself, it was only a matter of minutes to pack, for we had not been there long enough to accumulate anything. But the old kreigys (short for kreisgefangenan or prisoner of war) who had received parcels from home had books, letters, pictures, extra clothing, and even musical instruments. I went to another barracks and watched a friend of mine, Carlos Burrows, pack his belongings.

Carl was an old kreigy with over a year and a half at Oflag 64, the camp's proper name. He was down on the floor with everything he owned in a heap. A wooden suitcase, a gift of the YMCA, was being stuffed with the articles he valued most. At the same time he was sorting pants and shirts onto piles before ripping them into the desired shape to be used as a makeshift pack. Up and down the room everyone was engaged in the same mad scramble of disposing of excess articles and preparing what they wanted for their departure. The excitement of these old kreigys disturbed me because I didn't share their enthusiasm and I wondered why.

I had just arrived at Schubin three weeks before, after eight days of living in one third of a boxcar with 23 others. We had been bombed by the RAF and 60 fellow officers in other cars had been killed. I, for one, was not eager for any train rides.

I questioned Carl as to why he was so excited. He looked up from the floor, and I saw what I hadn't noticed before. His eyes were full, and his whole body was quivering. "I don't know about you, but I'm getting out of this place," and he went back to his task. I understood now how these men felt, and I couldn't blame them. A year and a half as a prisoner of war in the same place gets pretty monotonous.

You get sick of looking out the window, or watching the guards. You get sick of just plain thinking or letting your mind wander. You get sick of the same faces, the same talk, the same thoughts food food food . All of these men had been in this same enclosure over a year, and now they were leaving. What the outside held for them was of little concern --- they were leaving. Many had studied Russian and Polish day after day, this might be the chance they had prepared for --- they were leaving. I left them and returned to my barracks where activity was normal.

Some men were perched on their bunks reading, sleeping, or just staring in meditation. Some were crowded around the oil-barrel stove heating a crust of bread saved from the night before. A few were playing cards or just talking. Nowhere was there any evidence of the bedlam that was occurring elsewhere. In a few minutes Mike came in and I suggested that we go for a walk.

Just inside the barbed wire enclosure was a path which every man was to walk daily for one hour by order of Colonel Goode, the S.A.O. (Senior American Officer). In the event that the Goons marched us out of Oflag 64, he wanted no one to fall by the wayside for lack of being in condition. There was no such thing as being in condition with the diet we were on, but at least the exercise would keep our muscles from going stale. The path took about eight to nine minutes for one complete turn. It was a good order and for our own benefit.

The day was clear and brisk as we started to do a turn on the snow covered path.

"Them Ruskies better get the lead out of their ass or we'll all be gone."

"At the rate they're going, they could be here today. 60 miles away yesterday, I heard 42 this morning. Boy, 42 miles, oh."

We walked on in silence along the portion of the path that was near the main road. For three days the road had been lined with an endless crawling caravan of refugees (all German this time) perched on their horse drawn carts. Wagons of every construction loaded with the most valuable of household equipment such as pots, pans, mattresses, a chair or two, a bicycle, moved slowly down the road. Most were covered with canvas or large rags thrown over a ridge pole as a tent top, and the rest were without overhead protection. The people, all very young or very old, remained huddled together for warmth while the horses plodded on snorting steam under their heavy loads. We had watched this procession begin almost a week before with only a few carts, but for the past three days it had multiplied into a double file which creaked onward day and night.

"We're really seeing something. Remember the newsreels of refugees in France cluttering up the roads? I certainly never thought that I'd ever see it, but there it is."

We followed the path around a turn away from the main road and continued on. I began to think about Carlos and the old kreigys wanting to leave, and how Mike and I would be content to stay, even if the Russians weren't so close. The Oflag to us meant regular Red Cross parcels, the most important item in a prisoner's life. At Limburg, a transit camp before Schubin, Red Cross parcels were scarce and each man received an equivalent of 1/5 of a parcel a week. At Limburg I lost 35 pounds. Here each man received a full parcel per week, and the stock was high enough to last for six weeks. I hadn't lost any weight here yet. We were both thinking --- the war will be over in six weeks anyway. And it's safe here too. No barrages to sweat out, no fields to cross in night attacks, and wonder if the next mine is for you. Remember the German machine gunner that played tag with you in that open field for two hours one day? How you laid there alone in that shell hole and wondered if he was still watching you. And when you sprang up and dove for the next hole, how he marked your path by spitting up dirt behind you and then ahead of you. Down in the

new hole breathing twice as hard you thought 'If I ever get out of this one'. Well, here you are, you're out of it. No one is shooting at you now. You had your neck up for a target long enough, and they missed. That's their tough luck. Let someone else be the target for awhile. You've got a place to sleep, and you get something to eat. You're content to stay here till it's over. And that won't be very long. These old kreigys have forgotten the war and all that's in it. That's why they're eager to leave.

We passed a guard tower and noticed the soldier on duty watching a fellow guard who was posted along the fence. We watched him too. He took three or four steps, stopped, clasped his hands behind his back, and peered over the snow horizon to the East. He repeated this routine several times. Then Mike called to the guard in the tower, "Ruskie comin' - ya !" The guard laughed, pointed to his worried comrade, struck a pose of sighting off into the distance and laughed again. We walked on.

Will it be over in six weeks ? Damn it, sure it will. There's nothing holding us up now. If the Germans could see the supply dumps and piles of equipment behind our lines, and compare it to the meager few little ones they have. And their horse drawn artillery pieces. Practically a laugh. All we have to do is break thru their thin line of defense and then run wild. Yeah, but how about that Chapple fellow from Texas and what he said ? The kid captured in Africa that I talked to the first night here. Said he saw those same thin weak lines when they got him. And that was a year and a half ago. Damn, they sure as hell had something holding us up. Alright, maybe it will be two months, maybe even three. That still isn't so long. I'd like to stay right here and sweat it out.

During the afternoon Red Cross parcels were passed out --- one per man with instructions to save the D-bar (a concentrated chocolate bar used as an emergency field ration) because we didn't know when we would get the next one.

Contents of a # 10 Red Cross Parcel

1 lb. can of powdered milk - most common brand was Klim . These cans were the largest in the parcel, and for this reason we fitted them with makeshift

handles, and used them to receive our soup with. Hence, we referred to them as our Klim tims.

- 1 lb. can of Oleomargarine (Standard or Miami brand)
- 1 lb. box Prunes or Raisins (3-4% moisture added)
- 1 can Spam, Preme, Bully Beef, or equivalent (12 oz.)
- 1 can Salmon or Tuna (6 3/4 - 7 1/2) or 2 cans Sardines
- 1 can C-rations
- 1 small can Jam (Schimmel) or Grapeade (Welch's)
- 1/2 lb. can Cheddar Cheese or package Sheffards
- 1/2 lb. Sugar - Dots or Cubes
- 1 1/2 oz. can Soluable Coffee
- 1 small can Rose Mill Pate (Liver or Special Chicken) or small can Peanut Butter
- 1 box of 12 Biscuits (J.B.Carr) or box Premixed Cereal
- 2 D-bars, or 1 can Cocoa, or 1 D-bar and 1 pack M & M's
- 12 Vitamin tablets
- 2 bars Swan Soap
- 3 to 5 packs of Cigarettes --- depending on the other variables in the box.

Immediately after this issue, Mike and I like the rest, busied ourselves packing and repacking our loads that we intended to carry. The day before we had received the week's regular issue of a Red Cross parcel so now we had the equivalent of 3 1/2 boxes between us. Since arriving at the Oflag we had pooled our food together and shared every crumb (and the crumbs were important, too). So now we put all open or partly used tins into a "working box". Together with coffee, sugar and powdered milk we expected to use this parcel first. The remaining unopened tins were fitted into a single box which wouldn't have to be opened for several days or until needed. As the working box became lighter we would alternate the loads.

After tying all sorts of improvised rag packs to my back, Mike spotted someone whose idea we both agreed upon immediately. A long sleeved winter undershirt

tied in a knot at the waist section. The main body of the shirt was placed against the flat of your back. By passing one sleeve over a shoulder and the other sleeve under the opposite armpit, they could be knotted in front at about chest height. The neck of the shirt was the opening and just big enough to permit a parcel at a time. It could hold two parcels, and because of the give in the material, excess items could be stuffed in on the sides. The boxes in the pack laid flat against the back and the sleeves could be tied alternately on different shoulders. At the time we thought it was the best conceivable pack, and to date, I still think so.

What the temperature was that week I don't recall. Cold would only begin the description. And cold was how we felt most of the time at Schubin. That evening we assembled a wardrobe from the excess clothing that the old kreigys had discarded. The items of clothing that I wore were as follows:

- 1 suit long underwear (top and botttom)
- 2 pair O.D. wool pants (one on top of the other)
- 1 O.D. wool shirt
- 1 sleeveless sweater
- 1 high neck sweater with sleeves
- 1 field jacket
- 1 short wool jacket with high collar
- 1 wool knit hat
- 1 pair socks
- 1 pair leggings
- 1 pair shoes

In addition to this I carried a towel to use as a muffler, 2 pair of socks to use as gloves, and one extra cotton undershirt. Mike's apparel was similar except for a GI blouse and a long Belgian overcoat. Instead of leggings, he had combat boots.

Excitement was at a peak that night. The anxiety of the Russians anticipated arrival was like awaiting the end of a dozen 4 star movie thrillers rolled into one. This might be the climax we had waited for --- 24 hours each day. This could be it liberation food the trip home Oh God, HOME.

To add to these thoughts was the amount of food that each man had. Almost two full parcels. That much food was like waking up during a dream and finding it true. The food alone was enough to make everyone's blood run high. All these thoughts of food and liberation raced back and forth in our minds until the pace left us tired, and off to sleep we went.

Up with the dawn on the 21st, and disappointed that we hadn't been aroused during the night with the word we were waiting for --- the Russians. Mike started the oil-barrel stove with paper and cardboard, and we had a breakfast that was what we called a real bash ... a can of Preme sliced up and fried, 5 or 6 potatoes hash brown, and 3/4 of a Klim tin of chocolate prune pudding that I had made the night before. This was rapidly becoming my specialty.

Formation at 1000 ready to move. This information we were sure of, but the rumor was what we thought about. The Ruskies are only 23 miles away. 23 miles. Any minute they could be here. Wonder if they know we're here? Hope they don't blow this building to bits before they find out. 23 miles.

People were still trying their packs on and making adjustments when the call came to fall out --- everyone --- ready to move. We hoisted our packs and blanket rolls and left the barracks. It was clear and cold with about 2 inches of fresh snow. We were bundled up plenty warm, but after about half an hour of waiting around, the cold had begun to penetrate and we were ready to move or do something. The formation was by platoons of which there were 27 (50 men per platoon). All of the medical men were distributed throughout the platoons and we agreed to take turns carrying the small box that the medic with our platoon had. A group of men were being left behind in the hospital with one German soldier, and these people were waving out the windows that they'd see us in a few days again when we moved back in. No one felt that it would be more than 2 days before the Russians overtook us. Ted Palowski, a friend of Mike's from West Wyoming, Pa. (and a 2 year man) had told us that Captain Menter, one of the German officers in charge, had sold out to us.

He wanted to stay with the Americans when the last minute came and the rest of the Germans took off. He himself had said that it couldn't possibly be more than 2 days. Now he was making his routine count and at least ten men were not in ranks. Ted had also told us that some men were going to hid in a tunnel they had dug under the floor of the White House, our main building. The guards went around to look for them, and we stood in formation getting colder and colder, but happy for the delay.

This same secret tunnel holds many security items such as flags, flashlights, German uniforms, and compasses which had been smuggled in. The compasses were passed out last night, and Mike had one in his pocket. But why the hell hasn't Col. Goode and the rest of his staff devised an escape plan? They could use some of these things. They've laid here long enough to think of a plan, and a good one. Boy, if the Russians don't free us I'll never forgive our staff. Here we are, 1300 of us, and about 100 Goon guards. Rifles, or no rifles, we could overpower them if a plan had been coordinated. Goode told us that escape would be up to each man. Maybe he feels responsible and doesn't want anyone getting killed now, but we all took chances on our life or we wouldn't be here, and I'll bet the majority would be all for a mass escape plan. We could stay right here in camp and hold the Goons with us. Damn, we could do something.

Oberst (Colonel) Schneider, the Goon Commanding Officer, gave us a talk thru his interpreter. The gist of it was that we were officers and he expected us to act like officers. I guess he wanted us to be good little boys. He also said something about getting us transportation, and saving us from the horrible fate that would be ours if the Russians overtook us.

1030 , the missing men were not found, and so we are to leave without them.

Damn, why didn't I hide somewhere? There were places. Yes, but then I'd be alone. Maybe Mike's right --- stick with the mob, they won't kill all of us.

Colonel Goode led the column out of the enclosure, and an able leader he was. Bagpipes in hand and his staff close by, he strode out of the gate and down the road with the platoons following in numerical order. Platoon 22 was formed near the gate

and while waiting our turn in line, we watched the men file out in a column of fours. Sleds, wagons, boxes dragging on the snow, two men carrying a long pole with their belongings tied to the center, every imaginable pack was here. Most sleds were nothing more than a box with one or two wooden slat runners tacked on and pulled with a cord. Platoon 22 at the last minute spied the remains of an old horse-drawn wagon inside the enclosure and took possession of it. The Goon guards didn't seem to care, so from that moment on this huge 750 lb. wagon was part and parcel of Platoon 22. Most all the men in the platoon piled their packs on the wagon and began taking turns, either pushing or pulling. Major Cassidy (CO of Platoon 22) had by far the biggest pack I saw that day. It was a blue and white checkered mattress cover. Half of his stuff was in one end and the other half in the opposite end. The middle was draped over his shoulder, and he literally sagged to the ground under the weight. Without the wagon that day Major Cassidy would never have gotten to the camp gate.

Mike and I elected to carry our own and not be burdened with pushing the wagon which got to be quite a task. We had only our undershirt packs tied on one shoulder, and a horseshoe blanket roll on the other. We had two blankets apiece, and our loads rode very well. Nothing was excess, and nothing would be thrown away.

Out on the road it was impossible to maintain the column of fours. The road was icy and rutted, and the caravan of refugees took the two center files. For awhile the horses and wagons would be stopped, and we would move on around them. A few minutes later something would be holding us up. Some men were walking on the paths at the side of the road with the guards. If it was too slippery there, then the guards walked with us in the middle of the road. Here and there someone stopped to adjust a pack, and before long sleds were toppling over in front of you or waving back and forth as they followed a rut in the road. People without sleds were cursing those with sleds, and the people with sleds were advising the others to "blow it". Before long the column was no longer a unit marching by platoons. It became a 3 to 4 mile long line of men strung out here and bunched up there.

At the side of the road a pair would stop to discard items that made their load

too heavy. An extra pair of shoes, a wad of letters, china cups from the Oflag, all of the non-essentials. Food and blankets, these were the only essentials. And each time a discard was made, someone else was ready to pick it up because it looked good to him. We spied a sled that had broken down due to its heavy load of books. The owners were sorting their young library and preparing to relieve themselves of many volumes.

"That's just what we need Vic, a sled."

"Just the thing. Don't know how we're getting along without one."

"A sled ... to carry all our good shit in."

During the day we managed to catch up with Ted and Steve. Ted could speak Polish and Slavish, and Steve could speak Russian and Ukranian. We wanted to stay close to them. In the event of excape making yourself understood becomes of paramount interest. For awhile we walked along with them munching on prunes from my side pocket. While we were walking Ted pulled out a loaf of dark goon brod (similar to our wheat breads), cut it in half, and stuffed one of the pieces in Mike's pack. He said they had enough and he knew we didn't have any. He was right about us, but dead wrong about himself because nobody with half a loaf of bread had enough when they didn't know where or when the next piece would come.

Their giving us that brod is something that I will never forget. Food was just something that was not given away. There wasn't enough of it, and here they gave us half a loaf.

Mike and I were in good shape and moved along at a regular pace trying not to step on sleds. Each time a sled got in our way we concurred again that a sled was just the thing that we needed. Some men stopped and took ten to fifteen minute breaks by the side of the road. The column was easily long enough to take an hour break from the front to the rear. The guards were having a rough time on their own and were not interested in making everyone keep closed up tight. They had full field equipment to carry in addition to their blankets and ration of brod. And most of them were 40 to 50 years old.

We came to Exin, a small town, and passed thru with all the Polish townspeople standing in doorways and at windows waving to us. We called "Polski" to them, and when they answered "Ya" we called back "Americanski". It was like liberating a town, only it wasn't. As we passed close to open doorways and high fences my eyes were constantly searching for a place where I could duck out of sight. There were opportunities, and lots of them, and many fellows took them. But I couldn't get Mike to agree to it, and we had promised to stick together.

Beyond the town was a long stretch of flat open country, and we marched on to an isolated group of barns by dark. Twenty two kilometers or about fifteen miles. As we stood in the dark waiting for our platoon to be assigned to a barn, we realized that we were plenty tired. While walking it's not hard to keep picking them up and laying them down, but when you stop you feel it, and we felt it. Finally Cassidy called out "over here" and we scrambled into a huge barn filled with cattle. The barn was divided into about five partitions. We picked out one that wasn't too crowded, and down we went on the straw. We had plenty of room on a manger between Paris and Heidt, and Dunc and Chappie. I took tins outside to get some water and found a spigit in another barn with only four or five men waiting in line. I filled our two tins and as I stepped outside I heard someone ask the goon guard if the water was okay to drink. At Schubin all water had to be boiled before using. The guard said no, but that they would boil some for us as soon as the wagons got there.

Those wagons will get here tomorrow, and I'm thirsty as hell. So back I went to our barn with the water and Mike made a thick creamy cocoa drink with plenty of powdered milk. What one drink can do for a person. We bashed the bread that Ted and Steve had given us and fell right to sleep. I woke up about 1 A.M. with sweat on my forehead, and removed both sweaters that I had on. We hadn't undone our blanket rolls, but instead used them as pillows. The straw was so soft and comfortable that I almost felt good. There were enough animals in the barn to keep us very warm, and I lay for a while still debating whether to try and escape or not, and cursing the staff for not having an organized escape plan.

The next morning I stepped outside and saw one of the most beautiful winter scenes that I can recall. The ground was covered with fresh snow, and the freezing weather had formed a layer of crust that glistened and sparkled in the sunlight. The trees and bushes seemed made of ice for everything was coated with this thin white cover of frost.

What a picture. This would be truly beautiful if a long line of white-starred tanks would come rolling down the road. What a shame that we can't fully appreciate this scene.

The word was passed around that anyone who was sick or couldn't march should come to the main barn and see the Medics. The goons had said that a few men from each platoon could be left if need be. At Mike's insistence we both went to see the Medic. We waited for the end of the line and then stepped up.

"What's wrong with you ?"

"Nothing, no one from our platoon is even over here, and someone might as well stay."

"Nothing doing. Col. Goode says only the people who absolutely cannot march will stay.. Everyone else goes."

I guess he was trying to do the fair and honest thing in hopes of receiving like treatment in return. So that was that.

We left at 0900 and the column was really jammed up. There was no system of breaks (rest periods) and so people were stopping and starting on their own volition all along the road. However, at noon the column halted and we moved off the road. Mike and I bashed a can of Preme by cutting it in half and putting the chunk between two slices of bread. I carried a small can opener (from an American 10 and 1 pkg.) and had to stop and warm my hands twice while trying to open the one can. To eat one hand held the food while the other was being kept warm in a pocket. Alternating hands while biting off pieces of Preme and thinking it was delicious. That was without a doubt the coldest meal I have ever eaten.

Later in the day we caught up with Ted and Steve. Steve had a wad of cotton

stuffed in one nostril which had obviously been bleeding. He explained that while trying to go over a wall last night a guard saw him and swung with the butt of his rifle. However, Steve didn't seem too perturbed over his thwarted escape. Ted told us that Col. Millett, the American Executive Officer at Oflag 64, had taken off during the night with about 100 others, and they were headed back to the Oflag to await the Russians. As we finished off the prunes in my pocket I thought about the people that had remained in the barn we were in last night. They just hid in the straw and planned to stay there. But they could speak Polish and that made a lot of difference. After quite a discussion about the problems of escaping such as food, shelter and recognition by the Russians, I persuaded Mike to agree to escape at the next opportunity that looked promising. Also we concurred on trying to stick close to Ted and Steve with their linguistic abilities. The column halted in Wirnitz to wait for the stragglers to catch up.

The goon guards were much more tired than we were, and they decided to do something about it. We watched them ~~commandeer~~ several civilian horses and wagons, and then load their equipment on to ease their burden. This helped them considerably, and without it many of them would not have been able to carry on. Every time we stopped we had to continue moving our feet or lose the circulation in them. Usually it was ^a steady kicking of one foot against the other, and then change over to kicking the other foot. Up and down the column everyone was unconsciously involved in this method of keeping their feet warm. Here and there someone would be lying on the ground with upraised feet, kicking hell out of both of them.

After about a two hour wait, the column started off again. The goons must have ~~commandeered~~ a large stock of margarine for each four men received a one quarter lb. block as we moved out of the town. We began climbing a slow winding road, and my heart sank as we neared the top of the first of a series of small hills. The long column of refugees with their horses and wagons was having a hard time on the hill. Platoon 22 with its hugh wagon was also having a hard time, and rotation became very frequent for those pushing or pulling. But my hard time was caused by the sight of

about a company of Jerries digging in along the rise of hills. Zig zag trenches hidden in the snow and a long snaking line of barbed wire. This is what I had watched for, but knew that I would hate to see. I had known that we were between the Russians and the main body of Jerries. As long as we remained in that relative position our chances of seeing Tovarich were good. But Jerry was contemplating a new defense line, and no one knew where he would choose to stand. Well, here it was. The first indication of that line. Beyond would be more and more defense lines, as the Germans were masters at preparing this type of depth defense. If we continued marching we would be swallowed up inside Germany once more, and our chances of escape would be that much more difficult.

About two hours later we heard that old familiar rattle of machine gun fire. It was behind us and must have been a Russian patrol making contact with the Jerries we left on the hillside. What a helpless feeling that was to know that only 3 to 4 miles away was the end of all this damn business. And yet, on we marched, our long column inching forward in the snow. Across a bridge, the Bomberg Canal, guarded by a Jerry patrol, deeper and deeper inside his lines we moved. We turned off the main road and finally reached a very small town, Eichfelds. 26 kilos, 17 to 18 miles this day.

We were divided into groups and housed in small barns throughout the town. It was dark already, pitch black in the barn as we crowded our way inside and wedged into a spot in the straw. The first thing we did was make the "sack" so we could get in and warm our feet against each others bodies. The one GI blanket that I had was folded in two and sewed around the bottom and up half one side. A perfect sack when augmented with other blankets. Our blankets were laid in the following order : Mike's heavy small grey one, his big torn black and grey one, my GI, my brown hair one and then the coats. Mike's coat wrapped around the bottom portion and then my short coat was thrown on top. It really felt good. Next came the evening bash. We had no brod and could not build fires to heat anything on, so we spooned (i.e. ate alone with no side dishes) a can of strawberry jam. Sounds nauseating and it was, but we hit the sack and fell

right to sleep.

Next morning we were awakend with the news that the guards had taken off. We couldn't believe it at first.

Free. It's here at last. They've really gone. Hot shit. Come on, get up. Boy, wonder when the Ruskies will be here ? I didn't hear a thing last night. Oh God, this is it. It doesn't seem possible.

In a few minutes we got the word that we were to hold tight in town and we would wait for the Russians. Someone made a large vat of bean soup from the farmer's stock, good and hot, and we all partook of it. I was rolling our blankets up when Mike came in with a hushed "follow me". He led me around an adjoining barn and into the back door of a Polish house. He had just left the house a minute before and so he introduced me to the old woman there with the words "Comrade - Americanish". We jabbered back and forth in the few words that we knew such as Polski, dubja, soldat, Schubin and kreigsgefangenan. We each washed up and tasted some of her delicious cake. What it was I don't know, but it was good and certainly tasted like cake. I went out and brought back Ted and Steve. The rest of the household was now present, the old daughter and her husband, and their little girl of ten. Ted with his fluent Polish was greeted like a lost son. Tears in the old woman's eyes made me feel that she thought a miracle had taken place. She knew the Americans were helping them, but here was an American and he could speak Polish. Now she felt sure that the Americans were helping them. They were happy that the Germans were being driven out, but just as fearful of the approaching Russians. Civilians in a war area are treated pretty rough by soldiers of both sides. These people had gone thru this before and knew what to expect. Thoughts of this scared the daylights out of them. The old woman made us some potato soup that was thick and creamy. We all had seconds in addition to brod and sorgum. In turn we gave them coffee, cigarettes and chocolate.

About noon several Jerries came thru the town and said that our column was to begin marching at 3 P.M.

What the hell goes on ? What are we letting those boys run around for ? Why don't we pick them up ? If this bunch ever leaves town I sure as hell won't go with them. Where is the staff now ? Sit tight, shit. Why don't we grab those guards and their rifles, and take off toward the East ? Or just hold this town till the Russians come ?

By this time many kreigys were thinking the same thing, only they began taking off to the East across the open fields. That seemed silly to me because a lone man could die of exposure in a short while in that weather. The thing to do was to hide in town there until the column left, and then try to be sheltered by one of the Polish families. This shelter business was damn important. More guards came into town and began organizing the column to move. Ted asked the old lady if we could hide in her basement. She pounded her heart with a clenched fist and explained how frightened she was for her life. We all realized that these people in five years of Nazi domination had had the fear of a soldier put into them too strongly, and we could not trust them not to tell on us. In spite of this I persuaded Mike, Ted and Steve that we should let the damn column go, and hide in one of the barns. When the soldiers are gone someone in town would shelter us. We crouched low behind two large haystacks as the column marched down the road out of the town.

At last we're free of the column. Whatever the hell happens I'll at least be satisfied that we tried to escape. In about an hour we can hit one of these houses and I'll bet they'll fix us up in a basement and feed us. It would be suicide to strike out across the open fields. Just how do those clowns expect to make the Russians understand that they are Americans before they get shot ? We always shot first and then asked the questions. Well, it's their hides, not ours.

After the column had gone neither Mike or Ted or Steve looked too happy with the decision to stay. Ted said that we would have a better chance of staying alive if we were liberated with the long column than if we were found in a town by ourselves. He told us that someone on the staff had a large American flag ready to unfurl at the first sign of the Russians. Ted, Steve and Mike looked at one another and in unison said "Let's go". I went over my points again, but to no avail --

three to one, and off we went to catch the tail of the column. We all still believed that a day or two and we would be under Russian control. Seven kilometers to Charlottenburg and into hugh barns. I made the sack while Mike fixed a small bash -- one cold Preme sandwich, and that was the 23rd of January.

The morning of the 24th was bitter cold outside. Mike stayed in the sack while I sweated out a line 150 yards long to get half tine of pea soup for us. This was the first food that the goons gave us with the exception of the piece of oleo. During the night someone stole a Red Cross parcel from another man. Several announcements concerning it and much mumbling by everyone. Pretty damn low trick, but it made Mike and I glad that we had eaten most of our food. We knew that it can't be stolen when you carry it in your stomach. We left at 0900 and arrived at Lobsen that afternoon.

Word came that we would take a short break in town. In about five minutes everyone had learned that it was a Polish town and very sympathtetic toward Americans. The waiting column literally dissolved into the alleys, doorways and stairways. The townspeople gave us most all that they had in the way of a fast bite to eat, and everyone enjoyed a brief interlude of genuine hospitality. Mike picked up a full loaf of brod and I got four sorgum sandwiches. An abundance of cheese was passed around but we missed out on that. We just weren't at the right place at the right time. Finally everyone was routed out and we were on our way again. We arrived in a barn area, and there was Col. Schneider and our old guard company, the ones who had taken off a couple of nights before. We were formed into a compact group and the Col. talked to us. He said that we hadn't been acting like officers, and that he had requested SS troops be assigned to guard us. Immediately after his talk we were put into barns for the night.

Mike and I got a good spot on the main floor of the barn. Next to us was Capt. Austin (of "suffering the torture of the damned" fame) and his buddy, an Englishman. The contortions and discussion that they had before finally getting settled gave us a good laugh. Before hitting the sack we warmed ourselves around small fires which were permitted for the first time.

Up the next morning and around the fires to wait for the chow line to get smaller. Feeding 1000 men poses quite a problem especially for the men when they knew as we did that there wasn't enough food to go around. To get in the first half of the line you had to start running before they finished announcing where the line would be. To be in the last half meant being at the mercy of the man serving who continually kept cutting the size of the portions to make the food last. And then if you took the chance of being at the tail end they might have a little left and really fill up the last few men. And then again, they might run out. As they would say in the Russian army - tough shitski . Finally we took up a place in line and began sweating it out while trying to keep our feet warm. We received about half a tin of oatmeal to which we added sugar and it was pretty good. After much commotion we formed into our platoons at about 0830 and were issued a loaf of brod for each five men, some margarine and a finger of cheese. The guards fired into the straw where we had slept to see if anyone was planning on staying behind as so many had done the night before, only to be rounded up later. By 0900 we began another day's march.

Throughout the day we heard continuous artillery fire. The wide open snow covered plains made it difficult to estimate the range, but to hear it kept our hopes of liberation alive. We passed thru Flatow which was a fair sized town where civilians were being issued Army equipment for the defense of the town. Some time during the day we learned that Ted and Steve had remained in Lobsen.

Why the hell couldn't we be with them ?

Cold, it was plenty cold. Mike stopped to relieve himself during a ten minute break, and his hands were too cold to button his pants in one operation. So he stood there as the column moved on holding his pants up and warming his hands in his pockets at the same time. A few minutes later he caught up to us again, and returned to me our one roll of toilet paper which I always kept handy in my big side pocket. We made 23 kilometers before stopping in a large barnyard. This barnyard was about average for size. It had 4 or 5 large barns in addition to 2 or 3 buildings which were used as living quarters. The whole area was well stocked with slave labor,

and each farm area had about 20 to 30 people. The goons usually took over the living quarters where it was warm. Our staff would pick a small shed where they would have plenty of room and maybe a light. The rest of us (about 1000) would be crowded into the barn lofts. The main floor of each barn was occupied by the animals, usually horses, cows and pigs. On these main floors there were always a few cubby holes where a dozen or so fast actors could find room and enjoy the warmth of the animals. They would also evade the long line on the single ladder leading to the loft. This particular night, Mike and I, by leaving the line at the right minute got ourselves established in the corner of a goosepen on the ground floor. We found some slats for the wet floor and others to make ourselves exclusive from the geese. Dunc and Chappie were right behind us, and the four of us had a right handy spot. We made the sack up and got right in. At 10 PM barley soup and back to the sack. First thing in the morning everyone would roll their blankets, adjust their packs and be all set to go. But Mike and I too thoroughly craved the warmth of the sack to get up more than five minutes prior to departure time. This morning, the 27th, we laid there watching others prepare to move when word came that it would be a day of rest. Well alright ! So we stayed in the sack all day and rested. We both believed in conserving all possible energy. If blankets would keep us warm then our bodies would not have to produce that heat, and we could get along on less food. We were figuring it just that close.

About three in the afternoon they started to feed, and after a freezing two hour wait we got ours - - soup. The staff was still not able to convince all of our people that we could be fed the goon rations in an orderly fashion with only a few men at a time having to wait in the cold. We were all too fearful of not getting any, and so it was each man for himself. And EVERYONE stood in the cold.

During the day Col. Schneider announced to us that Russia had recalled her ambassadors from the U.S. and from England. What it meant we didn't know, and I guess he thought that he was scaring us. Speculation ran wild on the subject, but most of us were concerned with a far more important subject - - how to make food go farther. The owner of these barns was a Swiss, and we had quite a chat with him in

our broken Polish and German. He said that the war would be over in five days.

It was - - - for him.

That evening one of our medics tried to help a Russian PW who had fallen out of his column that had passed thru the day before us. The goons wouldn't allow us to help him and made the starving Ruskie stay outside in the cold by himself. By morning he had frozen to death, and the guards had thrown him in the "shizzan area". Shizzan area means latrine and is quite a site after 1000 men have used the same manure pile as a backlog. In this particular barn area the shizzan area was a large chicken pen formed in part by two adjoining barns. The two barns touched at one corner making two sides of the pen walled in. The wind would come whipping into the corner formed by the buildings and then sweep upward in a whirl taking vast quantities of used toilet paper with it. By morning the shizzan area beckoned only the brave men and the one fallen Ruskie.

Thin soup in the morning and on our way again at 0800 on 4 inches of freshly fallen snow. Sleds were still prevalent and Platoon 22 plodded on with their enormous wagon. In Jastrow we by-passed a resting column of British, French and Russian PWs. We slipped them cigarettes as we passed and learned that some of them had been in the bag for six years.

Six years is a long time, but they seem to be going it OK. They certainly will be glad when it's over. The cigarettes that we gave them were the one item that we had in abundance. Before leaving Schubin the entire store of personal cigars and cigarettes from private parcels was distributed among everyone. Mike and I started with about 30 packs and with me not smoking we still had plenty. The weather was too cold to smoke on the march, and in the barns it was verboten. In spite of this, butts were never thrown away. Our men had seen a time when tobacco was scarce, and now they were reluctant to throw any away. On the ride from Limberg to Schubin 23 of us were caged in one third of a 40 by 8 boxcar. Butts were saved and rerolled into new cigarettes over and over until one butt may have been thru 4 different cigarettes. Eight days like that and I was certainly glad that I didn't have the nicotine habit.

These poor Ruskies really look like they've caught hell. Giving them a few cigarettes is OK because they're hurting worse than we are, but to throw tobacco away - - never .

We arrived in a barn area but had to wait two hours before getting inside. The platoons were assigned barn space in a numerical order and we were near the end. Add to this a little quibbling here and there about who is going where and how much room they'll have , and Platoon 22 was the last one in. While standing and waiting, my shoes, socks and feet became soaking wet. While walking the activity and heat from my feet would keep them dry, but two hours of standing on ice and they were really miserable. It actually hurt when you had to take a step after they were in that condition. That night our only consolation was getting into the sack. We finally made it inside and took the last available spot on top of the highest level of straw against the ceiling.

Mike's feet were in pretty bad shape, so I sweated out the chow line with two tins. After 45 minutes of waiting in soaking wet feet , I finally got two tins of soup and started back to the barn. Inside, I set one tin on a rafter so I could crawl over another, and cautioned the man next to me to "watch the tin here" . I turned back just in time to see someone else accidentally knock the tin over. "Son of a bitch, I just said watch the tin here". Back I went with my wet feet to wait in the line again. Maybe there would be a little left over.

January 28th - Up in the morning and into wet shoes and socks. To start right out walking wouldn't be bad as the shoes would slowly dry out from the activity, but our column took about an hour to get organized. Everyone out of the barns, platoons lined up, all equipment shouldered and ready to go - - at least one hour. And during that hour we stand and hit one foot against the other to keep the circulation going. This morning in particular we had an exceptionally long delay as 120 men were allowed to remain behind - - - sick and unable to walk any further.

The heavy snow loomed as too big an obstacle for the tremendous wagon of Platoon 22. One mad scramble and everyone was carrying his own equipment leaving

the cherished piece for someone else. We made 18 km. thru a severe blizzard dreaming all the way of that ONE and ONLY consolation - - - the sack. We all had towels up around our heads and over our faces leaving just a slit for our eyes. It was flat country and the wind literally "swept across the barren plains of Poland".

The drippings from my nose froze there until Mike would knock them off.

Anyone ever mentions Poland to me - Ugh !

We made it to the shelter of a small town called Zeppenow and paced back and forth in the street for 1½ hours till they found places to house all of us. The Oberst, a man of at least 60, had been outranked out of his car a few days back and was making it on foot too. There was no prior planning or coordination for this trip, and if there had been, the swift changing situation would have thrown it out of balance anyhow. As a result we were being housed on a catch as catch can basis, and fed the same way. This day we got nothing to eat. One large group was bedded down in a church with Mike and I in the main aisle. We got straw from a large barn a few blocks away, and at least we were out of the wind. Earlier in the day Jim Henderson was about to discard a canteen. It was full of water, frozen and as a result, heavy. He asked if anyone wanted it, and I quickly inherited one GI canteen. That night in the church we had hot cocoa, heated by dropping canteen and all down in a stove. We decided not to eat our last can of tuna or the last spoonful of cocoa in the can. These would be kept for a "liberation feast".

Next morning we got a tin of thin soup each and were soon back in the street getting lined up. Mike disappeared for a few minutes and came back with a bulge in his coat that betrayed a loaf of bread.

"How'd you get it ?"

"See the alley there ?"

"Yeah."

"Around the corner of the big house. A couple of old women. They both had bags with bread in them. I said 'Haben ze brod ?' with a real pitiful look on my face. They said something back and forth and then one gave me this."

"Let me see it again."

"It's a full one. Not one of the dinky small ones."

"Boy. It's solid too."

As we started walking again I looked at Mike and studied him.

'A real pitiful look on my face' he said. If Margaret could only see him now. Nine days beard, shabby coat collar up around his neck, hair hanging all over, knit hat pulled down over his ears. He sure looks the part of a bum - - but, boy that loaf of bread.

It was another blizzard we were in and my feet were soaking wet. While walking I could stand it, but each time we stopped the wet penetrated all up thru my body. Only 4 km., but miserable ones, and we arrived at an abandoned camp named 2 D. The camp was a newly furnished enclosure for French PW's and they let roam the entire compound. There was plenty of room for all, and we grabbed one of the rooms that had 16 bunks in it. We found brand new stoves piled up in the snow, and immediately dragged a complete unit back to our room. In another room we found a tremendous pile of brickets. We made several trips carrying as many of the brickets as we could. Not that we could use that much coal in a week, but being so cold so long and those brickets represented heat and lots of it. Exemplifying the same idea was the kreigy who first uttered one of the classic remarks of the trip. He had found a basement full of potatoes, and was frantically looking for something to carry the entire basement in when a second kreigy happened on the cache and endangered his take. Falling to his knees with his arms stretched as wide as he could he cried "From here.. ... to here.....is mine".

In a few minutes a roaring fire was going, coffee was put on to boil, and wet socks were hanging over the stove. We sat and rotated out bodies to absorb the heat. We toasted slices of bread one after the other and prayed that tomorrow would be a day of rest. The men needed it, and Col. Goode said that he would try to get it for us.

Boy, a spot like this to have a day of rest. Wow.

Here we met Jim Doyle and Eddie Varella. But too many things were happening to pay much attention to other people. Bread to be toasted. A warm fire, and then

later there was a watery cabbage and potato soup , but lots of it. To bed on straw ticks with a blazing fire in the stove. Mike thinks he has lice.

Next morning up early to enjoy the hot fire. More toast and then on to the potatoes which we had stored up the day before. We washed and shaved for the first time since leaving Schubin. Still hoping to stay for a day of rest. Rumor put the Russians in Jastrow about 14 km. away. At 1100 more soup. Mike snooped around and brought back some pickles. Pretty classy we are -- pickles . At noon word came that we are to leave at 1300. All sick people report to medics. After much dickering about 100 men who were too sick to go on stayed at the camp as the rest of us left.

I wrapped my feet in burlap sacks that were stuffed with excelsiore hoping to keep them dry. It lasted about an hour when the water finally penetrated through, and away went the burlap. In the evening it got so cold that the soles of my shoes froze solid while I was marching. The dampness within the sole had frozen and the warmth of my feet was not enough to keep the leather pliable. We kept thinking of that nice warm building that we had left, and if and when we would ever get to another one. Well, even if we didn't get a building we still had the sack to look forward to. Night came on and we were still marching. The Goons got lost in the dark and we took a wrong turn. When it was discovered we had to backtrack about a mile. Made 15 km. thru Rederitz to Machlin. Waited for two miserable hours with cold wet feet for the housing situation to be solved. Finally in groups of 50 we were led away to various barns. Mike and I were near the end of the line, but happy to get even the loft next to Dunc and Chappie, until we realized that it was dripping and our sack was directly below the biggest and heaviest drips. The hell with it. In the sack for me. Mike threw some straw down thru a loft opening to Paris and Heidt who were on the ground floor with the cattle. Capt. Gleason started bitching because a few strands were falling on him, but quickly shut up when Mike told him off. Mike was pretty bitter at this point. After this Mike went down and with the barn owner's permission heated some water in his kitchen for milk. I stayed in the sack and drank the milk which was wonderful, but still went to sleep swearing about my wet feet.

Jan. 31st. Mike up early and down to the kitchen again. I rolled the blankets and joined him. The owner was pretty good to us , letting us heat water and we all stayed in the warm kitchen until time to leave. While waiting we had a pickle sandwich with memories of the day before. On the way out of town we were issued a full loaf of brod per man. A miracle , but we took it without any questions. And there is such a nice comfortable weight to the burden of a loaf of brod. During the day we made 18 km. into Templeburg. We are now over the German border, and dreams of escape or liberation are becoming fewer and farther between. For the night we are divided into 100 man groups , and housed over about a three mile area. Our 100 man group had one small set of farm buildings where Mike and I acted fast in getting settled. No loft tonight. Paris, Heidt, Belleau , and the two of us in an exclusive little feed room adjoining the barn. Plenty of straw and I am getting to be an expert with the sack. Making it just big enough to get into and still not big enough to allow any air pockets to be present. Late at night soup was to be about 200 yards away. I tramped down thru the snow and brought back two tin-fulls as Mike wasn't feeling very good. We were lulled to sleep by the vocal ramblings of the one and only rambler , G. Frank Heidt. This nights episode was about the comparative merits of a paratrooper as against an Infantryman.

Next morning a real find - an inside one-seater alongside the back of the shed. We all took turns just to loll in the luxury of an honest-to-goodness one-seater.

Off again at 0900 . Only 6 km. to Heinrichsdorf and into hugh barns. In the sack by 1130 and out only once for the next 24 hours - for soup that night. Our platoon was first for chow and we were right up front. We were waiting in the dark for soup to be brought out when a large truck loaded with brod pulled up to the doorway where we were standing. The fates were with us - the one gas lantern the Goons were using, and the only light , went out for 30 seconds. In that 30 seconds I had 3 loaves of brod - one to Mike , one to Paris , and one in my jacket. We'd have been shot if caught, but brod is the staff of life. Just a case of being at the right place at the right time. It was a fairly thick soup and so our visit to the chow line was well worth while. We munched brod and margarine in the pitch black barn, and got

crumbs in the sack. Plenty of rest in spite of the fact that our sack was at a bend in the aisle and Mike took a few stray feet in the back during the night.

Feb. 2nd. - A second miracle , another loaf of brod per man. Just before this issue Paris tells us that the Goons are searching for the stolen brod (at least 25 loaves must have disappeared when the light went out) , and they can tell which are the stolen loaves by the date mark which is impressed on each loaf. We cut slices which included the date lines from our loaves and consumed them immediately. This eased our minds but we wound up pretty stuffed. However nothing ever came of it. We didn't leave until noon, and received soup again just prior to our departure. The column had stayed there from noon till noon and Mike and I had spent 23 hours in the sack. We felt rested as we left for Zulshagen 18 km. away.

Thru Falkenburg and Mike's left foot became painful as hell. We're never told how far each day's march is to be, so we exist on rumors. Three more kilos to go, we hear. And after we knock that off and find ourselves still marching, we hear that it's just three more kilos to go. Fortunately I felt good and carried Mike's blankets as he limped along on his increasingly painful foot. He said that it felt like his toes were all cramped up. It was dark when we turned into our new barn area, and I was worried by thoughts of Mike having to stay behind because of his foot. It meant a hell of a lot to have someone looking out for you when you didn't feel good, and know that the support was mutual.

We groped our way into a barn and up the loft ladder. Mike gently removed his shoe and found that the cardboard insole had come loose and worked it's way forward so that it was all bunched up under his toes. Well , he had said his toes felt cramped, and I guess they were. We lost no time in throwing the sack together and diving in for our only consolation. Mike is bothered by lice.

Feb. 3rd - And a day of rest. The sun is out strong but the cold air kept me in the sack. Soup at 1400. Our men are trading with SS troops who are stationed nearby. We all have cigarettes and coffee which are the most valuable items of exchange. For these we would receive brod, meat of any kind or cheese. During the

day a woman from a nearby house told a Goon officer that 3 of her chickens were missing , and later showed him the head and feet from 2 of them. Oberst Schneider yelled about 10 minutes over this and we all stood and listened. Had we been Russians they would have shot 3 of us. Later that night we heard that they found a Russian, accused him of the act, and did shoot him. In the evening Mike picked sow beans from the hay in our loft and boiled up a big "sow bean bash" . Not bad. More lice for Mike.

Left at 0830 the next morning. It was windy, cold and frozen over, but turned out to be the nicest day yet. We made 17km. to Genow with Mike and I discussing food over the entire 17 km. What meals we liked (we liked them all), and how we liked them fixed. Breakfast menus, dinner menus and raiding a bakery shop. In our new barns Jim Lockett (our new platoon leader - platoons 22 and 23 having been merged) assigns each man the spot where he sleeps and no one beds down until everyone has a space. Only one ladder for 150 men in a loft, but we do have room. Major Hazlett with two Goons had gone ahead of the column and divided all the barn areas equally among the platoons. As we marched into the area we were told exactly where to go and everyone had to stay in line. So now we have a billeting officer, and thus ended our scrambles for the choice spots. That night we got a thin soup and each man had to be in line with his platoon. At last we had acquired some organization. We were allowed fires for an hour and just before dozing off that night Lockett passes on what he remembers of the BIRD from the platoon leaders meeting. BIRD is our term for the BBC News. Our little radio as big as a match box is back in operation and it was a flock of eager ears that heard something beside rumors that night.

Feb. 5th and a change in the menu. Ersatz (or synthetic) coffee and about three boiled spuds for breakfast. Something new has been added. The ersatz we've had before, at Limburg, and it was just as bad. But it was hot and that made it good. We left at 0900 on slushy roads and passed thru Wangerin which was being evacuated. Road blocks were being erected in the streets and everywhere the people were hurriedly loading wagons. For a change it was nice to see store windows in spite of the empty carton displays. Up to now everything had been barren farms or wasteland and I began to look

forward to what could be seen as we passed thru the towns. Here was something to break the monotony of staring at open fields while plodding along. Cobblestone streets and road signs. The only shops open for business were the "Fine Bakieris" and we looked longingly at these. Somewhere about this time the Oberst acquired an auto by use of his rank. His guard had also managed to increase the size of their wagon train. By now they had 4 or 5 wagons to carry their equipment and a few of our very sick people. We finished 20 km. to Zeitlitz and I thought that we would never stop. I made the last hour in a semi-conscious state, and as we entered the barn I woke up to all that was around me. We hit the sack immediately. Later there was a chow line, cabbage, noodles and meat soup with spuds and ersatz. Sounds like a lot, but for every piece of meat the size of a small radish there was a gallon of water. Two or three boiled spuds didn't last long, but it was better than we had been getting.

That night they announced that about 100 men could be taken by train and I contemplated going. I felt sick and yet I wanted no part of a train ride. I recalled the eight days from Limberg to Schubin in a boxcar. The first three days we didn't move because the track had been bombed out. And where were we when the track was being bombed? On the train listening to the rising crescendo of the falling bombs. Many were hurt and 60 American officers were killed by a direct hit on the one-room building that we had been quartered in for three weeks. And only 2½ hours after we had left the building. No sir, no train rides. I'll keep walking.

That night 180 men left to board trains.

Next morning I felt much better and stood in line for thin oatmeal and a few spuds. We left at 0900 and paced off another 20 km. to a slave labor camp at Regenwalde. Our days have been pretty well regulated lately. We take ten minute breaks every hour while marching, and thirty minutes at noon. Our pace is about 2½ to 2¾ miles an hour. The deep snow is past us altho it is still wet and plenty damp. We still look forward daily to our ONE consolation - the sack. That they can't take away from us. No matter how miserable the day, no matter how thin the soup - our sack, that we have in all its glory.

On this day something new was added. During the noon break an old two-wheeled boiler with a belching smoke stack comes rolling up behind a pair of skinny steeds -- the Goon mess truck. Lo and behold, we are served ersatz on the move, $\frac{1}{2}$ tin per man. Hereing began the era of "Ersatz Charlie". With a grin like Scurvy's and a coat that swirled and swayed to the ground he was a welcome sight at noon each day bringing hot coffee. Ersatz or not, it was coffee. Well, at least it was hot.

We were plenty tired by the end of the day from all the sloshing around, and glad to finally grab a bunk in one room of these one-story slave barracks. Jim Doyle stole some wood from the camp supply which was off limits, and had the canteen inside a blazing stove in nothing flat. There were about ten of us in the room and we dried our socks and feet, had toast and a hot milk drink. Inside four walls -- prima! Found the latrine building and had to hang from and between the booth partitions to stay high enough to clear an overfilled bowl. And this was the cleanest stall. The Germans were leaving nothing but decay for the Russians. Ya.

Had soup and $\frac{1}{6}$ of a loaf of brod issued in the morning, and then after standing around until 1000 so our feet got thoroughly soaked we took off. Thru Plathe 20 km. more to Lubbin. Day after day, kilo after kilo, and there is no end in sight.

Today - 20 km. - soup - sleep in a barn and dream of food. Tomorrow - 20 km. - soup - sleep in a barn and dream of food. When will all this end? It can't go on forever. Wonder where Ted and Steve are? Bet they're on a plane headed to the States. Why the hell didn't we take off that night the Goons were gone? Why didn't the staff have an escape plan? Why couldn't the Russians have gone North from Staggard? We were headed there and they took the town while we were still 50 km. East. So we turned North and got around them. The Germans sincerely believed that they were saving us.

We were housed in a newly constructed barn this night. Mike and I try to kid about how wonderful it is to sleep in a barn. I relate to him my Dad's desire to recall boyhood days by sleeping in a barn; and how he would always say "nothing like sleeping in a barn". We agreed. There is NOTHING like sleeping in a barn.

We had had soup in the morning , so there was none that night.

February 8th - same pattern as the days before - a few boiled spuds and ersatz for breakfast. We left at 0900 and made 20 km. to Stuckow. Getting damn tired of boiled spuds and watery soup , but we are so hungry that it always tastes good. Also getting tired of Jim Lockett and his lack of push. He is so tired himself that it takes him an hour to get us all spread out or rather jammed in for the night. He moves us back and forth trying to see which way will allow the most room. As a result, our platoon, the Lockett's Rockets , is always the last one bedded down. Seems like every night we get assigned to a loft and Jim never bitches about it. Other platoon leaders are always sticking up for their men to get them the best , but Lockett is just too pooped out. When it comes to passing around the BIRD each night Lockett forgets half of it and then wind up by telling us "no change" or "about the same as last night". Waited till after dark in a long line for carrot soup and cartofels (spuds). Mike's lice are worse.

Next morning Dunc and Chappie tell us about how they were at the right place at the right time last night. They happened into a doorway looking for a trade and got invited in for dinner with one of the Polish slave labor families living there. They were feted with pancakes, syrup and baked beans - all they could eat. A kreigy's delight - the right place at the right time . How we drooled as they told their tale. Talk like this passed the time of day and I always welcomed it. With Mike I discussed food, families and past experiences. For sports, Tom Paris was the man to stroll along side of. Whether it was baseball, football, bowling, boxing, racing or what have you - Tom knew the past, present and future stars. Frank Heidt -- Frank was in a class by himself. Regardless of subject, Frank was willing. No one else was quite like Frank. On cold days he walked with a towel wrapped around his head shielding his eyes like blinders. He walked with Tom and often he would call out "Tom , Tom Paris ? " without looking around. Tom was right along side of him and would answer "here I am, Frank". "Oh" was Frank's reply. He was always watching out for all of us. Racing to get a good spot in a barn

for Dunc and Chappie or Mike and I. Or running to get us when a wagonload of milk was found and about to be passed out (to the first comers) as occurred on this afternoon. We had just finished 14 km. in a drizzly rain and entered a barn area.

Frank was off like a flash to look around as was his custom. He believed that if he got around to a lot of places he would be at some of them at the right time. And this was one of those times. He found a wagon loaded with 25 large milk cans that the old watchman didn't care if we took. Now that was a dangerous place to be with the stampede of about 600 men that was ready to take place as soon as the word spread. But Frank was back for us with a hushed "follow me", and we all got about 4 or 5 tins of skimmed milk. We left the wagon and the still growing mob bloated with milk and carrying one full canteen. Yes, there was no one quite like Frank Heidt. Boiled cartofels and gravy from the Goons that night and into the sack. Nothing like sleeping in a barn.

Rumor had it that we would arrive at an Oflag on an island in the mouth of the Oder River by nightfall. It was also rumored that we would get Red Cross parcels. This one undoubtedly arose straight from the shizzan area and we knew it, but still it plagued us. The thought of parcels - and we killed time debating the possibility of receiving them. We walked thru Stresow to Dievenrow from where we could see the Baltic Sea. Wild escape ideas filled my brain. Hiding on a boat and going to Norway. Anything that led to home was worth thinking about, and we had nothing else to do but think as we marched along. Many seaplanes were overhead as we passed thru a very modest looking resort community. Across a large wooden bridge and into a Luftwaffe camp. Our platoon got wooden barracks and we grabbed a room with Doyle, Enochs and six others. It had an electric light that worked and a stove which we immediately fired up. An electric light bulb is truly a wonderful thing. For the past three weeks we were accustomed to groping our way in the pitch blackness of barns.

We had learned from experience to cooperate when choosing a spot to sleep so as to leave aisles leading outside. In the beginning it was each man grab a spot

for himself near the door and the hell with the others who will have to sleep back in the corners. But those few near the doors found themselves stepped on all night long and usually with pretty heavy boots. Not intentional, but when a man has to get outside fast he cannot stop to grope for aisles that aren't there. Those first hard days produced some of the classic remarks of the trip. Late in the night and out of a coal-black barn came the pathetic wail " I don't mind you stepping on my face, but DON'T STAND THERE ". By now we had all learned to take our shoes off at night. If the shizzan area beckoned, we crawled along on our hands and knees feeling our way in the narrow aisles so as not to disturb the sleep of others. We were bitter enough under the circumstances without fighting among ourselves.

Inside the barracks we each had straw ticks to sleep on and the forthcoming night loomed as a pleasant one compared to our consolation in cold dark barns. We stood in line for soup and watched the Nazi Junior birdmen marching and singing on the parade grounds. Soup was the best yet with boiled cartofels, gravy and a few real chunks of meat. I sweated out seconds. Later we were issued a loaf of brod per man. Even in Deutchland the Air Corps had a better setup than the Infantry. We sat up till midnight toasting brod and baking cartofels, but mostly reveling in the luxury of being inside, having an electric light and dreaming of the rumored Red Cross parcels. During the night a very unexpected discovery was made. I, too, have lice.

Next morning we shave, again the first time in ten days. Toasted more brod and listened attentively to a fellow Timberwolf relate his war stories. We marched out at noon feeling very revived and thankful for the dry weather. Our route was along a double lane cement highway which was used as an emergency runway for the airfield. Camouflaged planes were dispersed in the edge of the woods along the road. Jerry infantrymen were conducting problems in the area and we watched squad after squad marching back toward the camp. The area was a great deal like Camp Blanding, Florida. It was flat, half marshy and had many tall trees. I recalled some of my training days there.