

THOMAS MICHAEL HOLT – Autobiography Revision  
31 Timber Ridge Drive  
Brandon, Mississippi  
(Retyped in its entirety by Elodie Caldwell)

I, Thomas Michael Holt, was born on the fourth day of July 1919, in the Presbyterian Hospital, Charlotte, North Carolina, the second son of Colonel Earle Pendleton Holt and, Mary Eugenia Harris Holt. My parents lost their first son, John Allen Holt, named for our grandfather. My older brother died of diphtheria in September 1920. A third son, Earle Pendleton Holt, Jr., was born on the tenth day of April 1922.

My father, a two-letter graduate, class of 1904, the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, was captain of the 1904 class football team and captained the UNC varsity baseball team and, could have gone into major league baseball, but a broken ankle, which never healed properly, prevented his playing professional ball. He did, however play semi-professional ball in the eastern North Carolina League and, in the Lynchburg, Virginia League. My father became President of the Oak Ridge Military Academy in 1921, and guided the academy, both in scholarly and military pursuits, until the year 1965. During his baseball coaching years, he was greatly responsible for having his players in the lineups of the Cleveland Indians, the New York Yankees and, the St. Louis Cardinals.

My mother, Eugenia Harris Holt, was the second daughter of Eugene Lewis Harris and, Lena Foust Harris, and was born on the first day of April 1885, two years junior to my father, who was born in 1883. My mother and her sister, Lucy, both attended the local one-room school in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. My mother matriculated in Peace College, Raleigh, North Carolina, majoring in piano, in the Department of Music. She and her sister both studied, in New York, with the world famous piano pedagogue, Rafael Joseffy. She became Head of the Piano Division, Department of Music at the “Normal”, later to become The Women’s College of the University of North Carolina. She filled this position from 1909 until 1912.

I must add here a few notes regarding my mother’s father, Eugene Lewis Harris. Mr. Harris was the first Registrar of the University of North Carolina and occupied that position from 1875 until 1905. He was also an outstanding artist, architect and painter and, had many of his works on display in an art museum in New York. It was Mr. Harris who designed the old well, which became over the years, the focal point for many returning alumni.

What halcyon days these were for me and my brother, Earle Jr., to grow up in Oak Ridge, North Carolina, the site of the Oak Ridge Military Academy. We made many friends with the cadets, we watched them as they paraded into class, we were much enthused to observe the corps as they paraded over the parade ground, the band sounding out smartly in a military march and, the flags flapping jauntily in the breeze. During the summer months, our dad had us begin to help him with our garden, in which we grew most of the vegetables we had on our table. After the garden work, planting, watering and gathering the vegetables, we spent much time in the Oak Ridge Lake. There we swam, boated, and fished for bream to our heart's content.

Both my brother and I attended the local primary and secondary school, not too far from our home and, to which each school day, we rode our bicycles. I finished the seventh grade, in 1932, and dad moved me to the academy; of course, my brother Earle moved with me. I completed the high school in June 1936 and, immediately enrolled in the junior college division, the academy then having the junior college. I received my junior college diploma in June 1938, and prepared to enter the University of North Carolina in September 1938. I registered at the university to begin studies in the French language and literature in August 1938, to begin my junior class curriculum. I remained at the university until June 1939.

At that particular time, I had done the majority of my military work at the Oak Ridge Military Academy to qualify me for the wearing of the gold bars, to signify me as being a second lieutenant, with my army branch as being that of the infantry.

I had yet two obligations to fulfill: a six week summer encampment with the reserve officers, which I did at Clemson University, Clemson, South Carolina. I completed this duty on 1 September 1939 and, began the second obligation at Fort Benning, Georgia on 15 September 1939. This was to last for a period of four months, until approximately 5 January 1940. Having successfully completed this tour, I, with one hundred other ROTC candidates, each man held up his right hand and took the Oath of Allegiance "to the United States of America and to defend our country from all dangers, foreign and domestic". At that point, we were officially second lieutenants, and the gold bars were fastened to our collars.

In 1940, the war clouds were hanging heavily over the continent of Europe; the German Wehrmacht had overrun many European countries and, was attempting to bomb England into submission. The world was in a very tense situation.

The United States Army was in desperate need of lieutenants of infantry, artillery, and armor. I was then assigned to an ROTC unit in Greensboro, North Carolina, until orders were received for further duty. I received my order to transfer me to Fort Bragg, North Carolina. In July 1941, I learned very quickly that the Ninth Division, Sixtieth Infantry, to which I was assigned, was already in the field on maneuvers, just south of Rock Hill, South Carolina. A full colonel, in the headquarters at Fort Bragg, who had just completed his tour of duty as the Professor of Military Science and Tactics at Oak Ridge Military Academy, grabbed me and gave me the duty of commanding the convoy of men and supplies from Fort Bragg to Rock Hill, South Carolina. I huddled with my sergeants with their maps, did much figuring, and, away we went toward Rock Hill, South Carolina. The convoy arrived in proper order. I located my company, Charley Company, First Platoon, Sixtieth Regiment, Ninth Division.

During these maneuvers, in the Fall of 1941-September, October, November, the 60<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, as part of the 9<sup>th</sup> Division, maneuvered over much of the land area of the states of North and South Carolina, and a part of Georgia. The 9<sup>th</sup> Division, during this time frame, was involved in every operation, from squad through corps and army maneuvers operations.

By the fifteenth day of December, the 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division dismantled its tents and returned to Fort Bragg, where we found, on December the twentieth, that the Eighty Second Airborne Division was occupying our former division area; so the 9<sup>th</sup> Division went into tent city, on the sprawling Fort Bragg post.

Sunday the seventh of December 1941 arrived with the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The hierarchy at the War Department became highly nervous over the bombing of Pearl Harbor by the Japanese Air Force. The order went out from our Ninth Division Headquarters to dispatch troops immediately to protect dam sites and other major civilian facilities. My good buddy from the adjacent platoon and I set out, with our platoons to protect a dam area on the North Carolina/South Carolina border. We remained in this protective position for approximately one week and, were then ordered back to Fort Bragg, where orders awaited me to pack up my gear and be on my way to my new division, the Thirty Fourth, at that time being partly overseas in Ireland and a small detail remaining at Fort Dix, New Jersey.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> day of December 1941, we sailed out of New York Harbor on the Queen Mary, bound for Northern Ireland. The Queen Mary was part of a much larger convoy and took a zigzag course every fifteen to twenty five minutes to protect us from any lurking German submarines.

After a full week on the Atlantic, we landed in Londonderry, Northern Ireland, on New Year's Day, 1942 and, were transferred by lorry, to our new camp, right on the edge of the Irish Sea, a very beautiful place. Since we were not on an American express tour, we had only a very short time for gazing at the lovely Irish Coast, as training schedules came out in short order and, training increased with every passing day. Tactics were mostly for squads and platoons, and company officers were put to the test.

In April, 1942, a notice, posted on the company bulletin board, gave the information that all those men who had an interest in the formation of a provisional unit, should report "front and center" to one Major William G. Darby, in his headquarters in Carrickfergus, Northern Ireland. Major Darby would then conduct interviews with candidates and, later, would announce the names of the selected officers who would fill his manning tales for this provisional unit. Approximately six weeks after my interview, I received my orders to report to Major Darby for assignment and duty with this unit. I said my farewells to my platoon and company and reported to Major Darby on the 12<sup>th</sup> of June, 1942. On the 19<sup>th</sup> of June 1942, the Chief of Staff of the United States Army declared the name of this provisional unit to be "The First Ranger Battalion", under the command of Lieutenant Colonel William O. Darby.

In order to get the Rangers in fighting trim, Colonel Darby started the Rangers on speed runs, which ultimately turned into three minutes of four-hundred steps per minute, changing over to a very quick jogging step. Training became ever more intense when the Rangers were moved to Achnicarry, Scotland and the first British Commando training ground. Met at the station by British Lieutenant Colonel Charles Vaughan and, Bagpipers, the Ranger troopers were all in high spirits and ready to tackle the high ground leading up the mountain to the site of the first British Commando training area.

The first hour was pleasant, but then it got to be hard work with our back packs and rifles, no man fell out. Arriving at the camp, questions quickly arose: "Where do we bunk?" Came the answer from Colonel Vaughan: "In large pyramidal tents", which we were going to put up. Next Question: "Where do we wash up?" Again came the answer from Colonel Vaughan: "In that cold mountain stream, lads, that will toughen you up."

And the meals consisted of tea, fish, and beans for breakfast; tea, beans and bully beef for lunch (if we were lucky enough to get any lunch); and tea, beans and bully beef for supper. Howls came from the Rangers. "All part of your training, lads," commented Colonel Vaughan. And, the training schedule the Colonel had for us would have delighted a Napoleon.

The British Commandos were a tough group of men and they got along well with the Rangers. They did everything they could to help the Rangers in their preparation for battle. Ranger officers went through the same training as the enlisted personnel, (British word, "other ranks"). Even Colonel Darby, Darbo to the Rangers, did the same training.

"Come on, lads, you can do it; I want to give you the full course; you've got to be tough." Everything was done in full speed; speed marches, consisting of three minutes very quick jogging; three minutes picking up and putting down feet as fast as possible at 400 steps to the minute. All portable weapons, rifles, and machine guns were fired. "Depend on one another; good buddy system", said the Colonel.

Everywhere there were man-made obstacles to overcome, walls to scale, making use of our toggle ropes, tactical problems were always brought forth with which we had to deal; rivers to swim, cliffs to climb, slides to tumble down. And when that was not enough for us to do, bayonet training and, then learning the hand- semaphore code. Completing that, away we went on yet another speed march of 5, 7, 10, 12, 16, and 21 miles to accomplish. Realism in the training was the order of the day; stalking an enemy sentry, scouting an advanced guard, or patrolling to gain information.

On the 19<sup>th</sup> of August, 1942, 50 officers and enlisted personnel were transferred to a site hard by the English Channel, for the crossing. The purpose of the crossing was to enter the area around Dieppe, France, destroy what fortifications were there, and return to England as quickly as possible. This operation is known militarily as a reconnaissance in force.

I was not on this operation as Colonel Darby ordered me to take charge of a combined Ranger-British Commando Force of approximately 55 personnel, to go on a top secret mission into North Africa. There was also an additional force of British Commandos under the command of British Lieutenant Colonel Tom Trevor. My Ranger Force was attached to Colonel Trevor's force. Fifty officers and enlisted personnel made the cross-channel crossing and went into Dieppe, France. I, with my Ranger Force moved to Dundee, Scotland, where we were billeted in private homes all over Dundee and, assembled at a certain area at 0700 hours each morning to begin training with our commando team, which consisted of a British Captain, a Lieutenant, and six other ranks. Our training took us all over Northern Scotland. For approximately two weeks before embarking on our ship for the North African Invasion, we lived on board the ship in the harbor of Glasgow, Scotland, to become used to living on board a ship. Up and down the nets we climbed to go to our area for the operation for the day.

The British had a word for operations—"schemes". "What big scheme are we on for the day?" yelled the Rangers. Intense training was conducted without let up.

In late October 1942, we sailed out of Glasgow Harbor, sailing quite further north to avoid any Nazi planes which might be on the prowl. We were on our way to make our first landing – Algiers, on the early morning hours of 7 November 1942. The invasion force, with its ships, made a rather large convoy, sailing through the Mediterranean. The Rock of Gibraltar was shrouded in total darkness, while directly across in Tangiers, everything was in full light.

My landing craft, infantry (LCI) was equipped with collapsible bicycles, strapped to the sides of the LCI. There was quite a swell in the Mediterranean that night and our British Coxswain, new to his job, maneuvered the LCI in an incorrect manner and our LCI went onto the beach in a sideways fashion. I thought we would overturn, but, most fortunately, we did not. But it was enough to cause Rangers, bicycles, M-1 Rifles and other gear to go flying in all directions. Luck was with us as there were no Nazi or French bullets flying our way.

Before we had disembarked our main ship, the British Medical Officer insisted that we were to have Belladonna inserted into our eyes in order to dilate the pupils for night vision. I objected strongly but it had to be done. This, for me, and certainly for my men, caused the pupils of the eyes to open widely and we all wandered around for a time like zombies. It was impossible for me to focus clearly on anything.

My Sergeant and I and a few of the other troopers finally came out from our daze, assembled the troopers, got the bicycles operable again, rescued the M-1's and finally got on our way—wet, miserable Rangers all. It took us about an hour bicycling along a road running right along the Mediterranean to get to the small port which was the object of our mission.

We arrived at the port and a French General, General Mast greeted us and said: "I heard just tonight from your General Eisenhower that the American forces were on their way. Here are the keys to the fort; I have ordered my French forces not to fire on the American Invasion Forces." He was the only French General who gave such a command, as we were, much later, fired on by French troops.

At that point, we all had to sing the "Marseillaise" and "The Star Spangled Banner". "Victoire Aux Forces Des Etats-Unis, Et De L'Arme De France."

The Rangers and our small commando troopers attached, remained at the fort for about three days, then prepared for our second landing further east of Algiers. In a small Arab village named Bone, on the Mediterranean coast, we found a landing field and a small shack, which apparently had been used as an airport headquarters. The Rangers had a ringside seat for a couple of dog fights between some German Focke-Wolves and some British Spitfires. We held the small airport until another group of spitfires landed and took over the operation.

While bivouacking in Bone for a day or two, an American destroyer steamed off shore. The Captain of the American destroyer sent a small boat to shore loaded with sailors as well as several large boxes loaded with ground beef. When the Rangers saw this, they let out one earth shaking yell and, gave the Navy a loud "Hurrah". A fire was started at once and we cooked up the beef for hamburgers and had a royal feast. What a treat for the hungry Rangers and Commandos as all we had were our prepared rations which each man carried in a pack on his back.

The third landing was made yet further east of Bone—Tabarka. Another airport to seize and hold until another squadron of spitfires could take over. All the Rangers were hoping to see a squadron of American P-40's to come roaring in and land. Every evening, just as the sun's rays faded in the west, all ears heard the uneven throbbing of the engine of a German fighter-bomber, coming from Sicily, to light up the entire landing field with flares. Bone was also well lighted with flares. These German fighter-bombers were not dropping bombs, they were looking for either American or British fighters. One evening, right on time, from Sicily, the British planes hid in a cloud and, came blasting down out of the cloud formation and shot the German plane down, which crashed into the Mediterranean. The Rangers, again, had a front row seat for this air battle, and a cheer went out from every throat for the valiant British Spitfires.

Tabarka, the fourth landing from our LCI's, was the final staging area for the joint Ranger-Commando assault into Tunis-Bizerta. Twenty five miles northwest of Bizerta, soaked to the shoulders, after another unfortunate and unlucky landing from the sea, the Ranger-Commando force headed inland, at 0315 hours on 1 December 1942. After being assigned sectors on the map in which we were to operate, the forces split up. Lieutenant Colonel Tom Trevor and his Commando force veered a bit west and, my force headed for the air terminal complex in Tunis.

Within minutes, the Ranger-Commando forces discovered what no map had disclosed; the hills just off the beach were covered with heather so dense that one Ranger likened himself to "an ant in a hair brush," only by dropping down

on all fours and nosing along trails, made by wild goats, could the men cover even a mile in an hour.

Finally, after about three and one-half hours, the Rangers broke out into a fairly large valley area, at approximately 0645 hours. Trees were on all sides and the ground was quite rough in places. We soon discovered a hard packed gravel track which made it easier to travel, so we moved along fairly rapidly.

I was up front with my point man and a runner when I spotted what appeared to be an Arab hut about a thousand yards in front of us. My Rangers were all strung out behind me. All of a sudden, across my right side, came two German soldiers, each soldier with his arms full of water bottles. They were as surprised as we were. I got my troopers up on line in firing position as we were beginning to take some ordnance from the "Arab hut". My men dropped down into a shallow depression in the ground and began firing. In the middle of all this, the two Germans with their water bottles, dropped the bottles and made a huge noise. The noise of the two Germans yelling to their comrades up the hill, brought more ordnance down on our position. The next moment, over on my left, I heard the rumble of a tank. It was a "Tiger" tank with the deadly 88-millimeter gun. It came up on my left and stopped. Almost immediately, on my right, I heard the roar of another "Tiger". It came up the track to my right, and stopped; I could reach over and touch the track. Two German soldiers (Feldwebel) leaped out of the turret, landing almost on top of me, grabbed my rifle and the rifles of all the Rangers near me. One squad, toward the end of the line, hid out in a deeper furrow and did manage to make a getaway, when darkness fell. We were then prisoners of war (Kriegsgefangenen).

We were taken by the Germans (Afrika Corps) to a building on the edge of the large air terminal at Tunis, questioned. I learned later that the intelligence regarding our landing site into Bizerta-Tunis had been breached by Arabs, loyal to the Germans. One of the questions asked me by a German Luftwaffe (Air Force) Major was: "Give me the position of all of the allied forces now in the Mediterranean. We knew of your landing this morning on the coast."

On 1 December 1942, after interrogation on the tarmac of the air terminal, Tunis, my Rangers and I were put aboard a German transport plane, which had, the hour before, brought in fresh German troops, combat-loaded with new rifles and equipment and, ready to go directly wherever they were needed, to strengthen the defenses around Tunis and Bizerta. Across the Mediterranean flew the huge transport plane, with the Rangers-now, prisoners of war. The plane flew, just barely skimming the water, in order to avoid allied planes which were now beginning to extend their range further eastward.



No allied planes were about that day, so we landed in Sicily, where the German Luftwaffe (Air Force) turned the prisoners of war over to the Italians for safe keeping. The Italians loaded us aboard an Italian transport, headed for the Italian mainland, and Capua, our destination, south of Naples. We were now, officially, Italiani prigionieri da guerra, Italian prisoners of war.

Upon our arrival at the Capua POW stockade, one of the first American POWs I met was Captain Joe Frelinghuysen, an artillery battalion captain, from the Fifth Field Artillery of the First Infantry Division. Into the stockade also came with Joe Frelinghuysen two artillery battery commanders, Marty Lawler, and Bill Freeman. A few more POWs arrived in short order, lieutenants Bill Hooker, Don Waful, and Art Bryant, all from the First Armored Division. Bill Hooker was in pretty bad condition as he was burned badly over arms and face. The Italians did get him to the hospital very quickly.

## **CAPUA-CHIETI**

We remained at Capua for about a week, until approximately the tenth of December 1942, and then were transferred, via train, to Chieti, across the peninsula from Rome, on the Adriatic, just ten kilometers from the sea. Here at Chieti we found about three-hundred British officers who had been captured by the Afrika Corps in the Middle East. The majority of these British officers had been prisoners for over a year, having been taken prisoner during the very heavy fighting in Tobruk and Bengazi. They were most anxious to hear details about our capture, and we, in turn were eager to hear about their POW exploits. We made fast and lasting friendships with our fellow "men in arms". The activities in the camp had been pretty well established and, we were all given a good meal, the best in many months, and, the best for a long time to come. We soon learned of their excavation operations and the secret radio, to which they all listened at night to the BBC. The British officers put out their own guards to watch for roving Italian guards. There was a watch tower at all four corners of the camp, and machine guns mounted in these posts and in the middle of the wall, surrounding the entire camp. The long, one-floored barracks in which the POWs lived, was centered on a long walkway down the middle of the camp and every evening all POWs were out in the cool of the evening, walking up and down the walkway until the whistle blew and we had to scramble and get to our barracks. The reason for the coolness was the fact that the Grand Sasso Mountains were just north of our camp.

There was a large loud speaker mounted on the roof of the Italian headquarters building, just outside the prison gate. As we walked up and down the middle walkway, the Italians turned on the program coming from the German radio and this program consisted of the singing of the best loved

German Song: “Lilly Marlene”, sung by a sultry voiced, beer-hall singer, accompanied by a trio of instruments and an accordion. On occasion, even Marlene Dietrich sang this song from Berlin, to the German troops. It was said that when “Lilly Marlene” was broadcast to the German troops, the Afrika Corps, to the Middle East, the war came to a complete halt.

*“Unsere beiden schatten, dann wie deiner aus...wie einst Lilli Marlena, wie eins Lilli Marleen.”*

It tells the story of a German soldier who meets his sweetheart under a lamp post just before going off to war.

At times, we even endured the rantings and ravings of Hitler and, Mussolini. Then at 7:00 PM, all POWs had to be in their barracks.

One morning the gates to the camp swung open and in walked, with the guards, no less a person, but Larry Allen, and American War Correspondent with the Associated Press. He had been on assignment with a British destroyer in the waters off Tobruk. An Italian shore battery had sunk the destroyer, and Allen was picked up by an Italian fishing boat and turned over to the Italian Army. And here he was in Chieti.

Six weeks earlier, Allen had been the AP Correspondent in Rome before going on the assignment with the British destroyer. It just so happened that Mr. Allen knew, in Rome, the Italian deputy for the camp commander, Capitano Croce who did everything possible to make life as miserable for the POWs as he could.

Larry Allen went right to work gleaning information about the war from newspapers, Italian, German, and French. The source of these newspapers, how Larry obtained them, we never uncovered. Larry called together all POWs who could help him translate the newspapers and, dig out articles which definitely showed that the American forces were over-running the enemy and, winning territory. Larry wrote his articles with a quill pen, fashioned by some POW, using a red berry juice as ink. The berries were grown on a bush which another American POW had growing in one corner of the camp.

In his inspection tours of the camp, Capitano Croce would read the reports Larry Allen had posted on the bulletin board, the end of a Red Cross parcel box, and would become quite agitated because these Allen reports were not in accord with the reports from “La Stampa Italiana” (The Italian Press) and, away to the cooler went Larry Allen to cool his heels for a couple of days. Three days ended and Larry Allen went back to his usual job, writing up reports regarding the progress of the American Forces. The box was obtained for us

by our “Porky”, a five by five German cook who became totally American; he liked the Americans and got many items for us when the German guards were not looking.

Together with our British POW friends and, musicians, we formed a small jazz orchestra; the British already had a number of instruments for a jazz ensemble. We finally received from the American Red Cross and, the Salvation Army, any number of musical instruments and, some music.

The British had received their musical instruments through the “NAAFI”, similar to the American USO. Of the Americans, Toby Sampson played first trumpet, I played second trumpet; Don Waful, Trombone, Clay Stevens, Drums; Irv Waldon, Sax, and Russ Ford, vocals. We spent as much time as possible practicing.

In this ever-increasing list of British and American officer POWs, one could find just about any avenue of learning which he wanted to pursue, in order to keep busy. And always in the mind of the POW was the thought: “How can I make my escape?” “I must be in the very best physical condition I can get in order to be able to endure perhaps, a very long and arduous journey, once I make my escape.”

Joe Frelinghuysen was such an example; he kept up his exercises, he became very proficient in the Italian language and, he did make his escape with another POW. After the war, he wrote a very fine account of this escape and evasion of the Germans and Italians.

Captured British and American officers were being constantly brought into the camp, and one day, the gates opened and in walked an American Air Force Lieutenant whose plane had been shot down over Naples. He floated safely to the ground, was taken prisoner by the Italians and brought to Chieti. What did he have in his musette Bag? Ten Glenn Miller Jazz Orchestra scores with parts for all the jazz instruments: Sax, Trombone, Snare Drums, Piano, etc.

Already in the camp, a British tanker, Tony Baines, was the solo oboist and arranger for the London Philharmonic under Sir Thomas Beecham. Tony Baines, over a period of several weeks, wrote out from memory all the parts, the score for the first two Beethoven symphonies. In addition, he transcribed two of the Gilbert and Sullivan operettas, “The Trial by Jury”, and “The Pirates of Penzance”. We performed both of these two operettas in our little theater programs.

We even had a 15-piece concert orchestra which gave several programs of music, arranged by Tony Baines. In addition, we also presented several plays,

using whatever bits and pieces of cloth and makeup, given to us by our secret Italian “friends”. Ends and sections of Red Cross parcel boxes, painted, could make wonderful scenery.

To care for our souls, there were Presbyterian and, a Methodist minister, and a Church of England Padre (Father, Priest) from the British side, prisoners of war, also, and, included in this list of ministers was our much esteemed Catholic priest, the Rev. Fr. Brach, who was allowed by the Italian guards to go out the gate and say mass for a little Italian Catholic church, near our camp. The guards, of course, went with him.

On the medical side, we had two doctors from England and, one American doctor, Doctor Knowles. We even had an American dentist, of Italian parentage, who did manage to make his escape, got to the Italian village where his parents were born, attended the wedding of a friend, during his stay in the village, and was picked up by partisans and returned to the stockade.

Medical assistance by the Italians and, later by the Germans, was very meager. Our own doctors used their lessening supply of medicines to treat sick POWs. The doctors did the best they could with what was available. Fortunately for our POWs, there was no outbreak of any disease in the camp, this camp in Chieti, nor in any of the POW camps where I was held prisoner.

One might think at the moment we were living the life of Riley, but such was not the case. POWs, at this point were living, at the maximum, on approximately, 400 calories a day, if at all that number. This included the Red Cross parcels which two POWs shared, and, the very meager Italian ration, which daily consisted of ersatz (substitute) coffee and a small piece of bread for breakfast, maybe a piece of fruit, an apple, during the summer months, or perhaps, some figs; for lunch, and supper, another slice of dark bread, a cup of watery soup. We were never quite sure the consistency of that soup.

My buddy in the upper bunk, in our cubicle, shared a Red Cross parcel, which consisted of a tin of Spam, a tin of bully beef, a tin of fish, a can of margarine, a can of milk powder (Klim), sugar, salt, pepper packets, cigarettes, matches, a packet of tea, and a small packet of coffee, just enough for one cup. Pieces of wood to build fires under our “heatless smokers” were not easy to get, but when we were lucky enough to get them from a good buddy in the next bunk, we heated up our “homemade cooker” and had a brew of coffee. Cigarettes were the big bartering chip; one cigarette would almost purchase a castle on the Rhine.

## **MOOSBURG**

One fresh morning in late October 1943, we POWs came out the doors of the barracks, only to find that our Italian guards had disappeared from the four corners of the prison walls and, all in between. One Italian guard shouted: "Come with us". Rumor had it that British warships were in the Adriatic and were ready to take us off to freedom. It so happened that all this took place the week before American General Maxwell Taylor had parachuted into Rome to see if a peace settlement could be arranged between the allied powers and Italy; this plan did not come to pass and the General almost became a POW himself.

The Germans immediately took over the entire situation; a Nazi parachute company landed on our Chieti stockade and, before we could make our way out, we were POWs again. The Germans meant business and, on our way out the front gate every part of the roadway had guards and, machine guns poised to give the straight fact, that if any POW even thought about running, he would be shot in a flash.

We were marched to a temporary camp stockade thirty miles north of Chieti; temporary it certainly was, for one moment there were no signs of guards and no machine guns. It was at Sulmona, that a few POWs did manage to affect their escape; some were lucky, others were not so lucky. The guardless moments disappeared quickly and the Germans had men and guns in place all at once. Sulmona was a marshalling yard and, soon, we were on trains headed toward Rome and thence northward through the Brenner Pass and, into Germany.

Train, yes; we were in box cars, one hundred and twenty-five men to a car, with the doors wired together or, in some cases, padlocked. To get any rest, or sleep, one POW leaned against another POW, either standing or sitting on what small space could be found. Nearing Bolzano, in northern Italy, we crossed a long bridge which led the train into a large marshalling yard. The last car of the train had just cleared the bridge when an American B-17 blasted the bridge to bits. Fortunately, our train which had no identification logos on it at all was not hit by the falling bombs.

Some POWs were able to get out of their box cars and, run down the line of cars and open the doors to as many cars as they could. The thought in every POW's mind at that moment was that the American B-17 would come flying overhead and lay a stick of bombs right down the marshalling yard; the bridge was the target for the day for that bomber crew. Every POW on that train, I am sure, would have gladly given the Congressional Medal to that officer who had chosen that one target for the day, the bridge.

POWs were scattered all over Bolzano, Italy; the German cordon tightened quickly and, many of the POWs who were trying to make a getaway, were stopped in their tracks and, hustled back to the main body of POWs. Two air force lieutenants did manage to liberate two bicycles and, were peddling as fast as they could in a southerly direction. Over a period of a month, evading the Germans, they came within shouting distance of our American lines but were captured by German forces.

The POWs were rounded up, and spent a miserable night on the side of a hill, in Bolzano. The local populace, to a man, were Nazi sympathizers and, of course, gave us no help. No food. The following morning, back to the train we marched to be locked in, again. The train with its long line of box cars, moved through the Brenner Pass into Germany and Munich, Germany. Moosburg was the name of the new camp, just north of Munich. This camp was also known as Stalag VIIA.

## **OFLAG 64**

In the Italian camps, British Air Force Officers and British Ground Officers had all stayed together; the same with the American Ground and Air Officers. In Germany, this all changed; Air Officers went to "Luft" (Air) camps and ground personnel went to offizier lager (officer camps). The American ground officers went to a camp in the Polish corridor, to a small town named Poznan. This was Offizierslager number 64 – officer camp number 64. We were approximately 100 miles south of Danzig on the North Sea (approximately 150 miles west to Berlin and 150 miles east to Warsaw, Poland. Here, in Oflag 64, we found all the officers and some enlisted personnel, who had been captured, in February 1943, by the Afrika Corps, at Faid Pass and Sidi Bou Zid, in south-central Tunisia. The Germans had brought these American POWs straight from southern Tunisia to Oflag 64 in Poznan, Poland.

This was a relatively small prison camp, at one time a boys' school, located in the remote area of occupied Poland, holding only 200 to 400 American officers for most of the war. My own observation is that the number of POWs increased greatly at the end of December 1944 because of the Battle of the Bulge. The camp itself occupied a space of about 20-25 acres. I have attached a drawing of the camp area to this report.

The Oflag group was full of interesting persons (officers); the majority of them were young lieutenants or captains and, there were enough field grade officers to maintain discipline. The average age was 27; most were college educated, many with advanced degrees. They included men who in civilian life had been doctors, lawyers, engineers, professors, journalists, artists, ranchers, musicians and, even the commandant of a United States military school.

There was much talent everywhere and, much of it was utilized in one form or another as the camp activities were organized and carried out.

What we did have was a disciplined organization within the walls and barbed wire of our camp. The discipline was run along the lines of the United States Army and, headed initially by a tough, no-nonsense United States Army Colonel, by the name of Colonel Thomas Drake, a veteran of World War I. It was he who set the tone of our relations with the Germans right from the start.

Here is a story concerning Colonel Drake's relations with his opposite number, one Oberst (Colonel) Schneider, the German Commandant. Colonel Drake was called one day, to a conference with Oberst Schneider, in his office, immediately following the arrival of the American POWs into Oflag 64. Colonel Drake entered Oberst Schneider's office with his interpreter and stood in front of Oberst Schneider's desk. Oberst Schneider began to speak to Colonel Drake in a very commanding tone of voice; whereupon, Colonel Drake and his interpreter did an about face and headed for the exit door. Oberst Schneider was very startled and remarked: "Was ist los?" (What's the matter?) Colonel Drake's reply came very quickly: "I am a Colonel in the Army of the United States of America; one does not use that tone of voice to address an American Colonel. When you have learned to act and speak as an officer and a gentleman, I will return for a proper conference."

Oberst Schneider never again raised his voice in speaking to Colonel Drake. Our Senior American Officer had established a control which turned out to be of great benefit to us in the nearly two years which lay ahead.

All the Oflag 64 camp activities were designed to keep the restless young officers occupied and to preserve sanity. A remarkably professional theatre group was formed, which performed Broadway-type plays and concerts. Taking the name of "The Theatre Group", these officers were: Frank Maxwell, Russ Ford, Bob Rankin, John Glendinning, Dick Van Syckle, "Boomer" Holder, and Larry Phelan. These POWs set about arranging a general schedule of plays, skits, concerts by the orchestra or the jazz combo, revues and camp celebrations which would provide a regular weekly schedule.

It was a rewarding task to select the plays to be presented, choosing the producers to cast and direct each play, picking men who would create skits and revues, build the sets, develop the costumes and makeup, schedule rehearsal times and, set up a schedule of "opening nights". At first, there was just one performance a week, but after D-Day on 6 June 1944, the camp grew so fast that every performance required four nights to allow everyone a seat in our homemade "Little Theatre".

The handiest POW in the theatre group was the very talented set builder, Lou Otterbein. What he could do with Red Cross boxes, pieces of cloth, anything the POWs contributed to the effort, was simply "ausgezeichnet" (outstanding).

Dozens of other POWs (Kriegies) worked hard to make the theatre presentations as popular as they turned out to be. Among them, making contributions to the effort, were characters such as Lew Lowe, Jim Bickers, Verris Hubbell, Carlos Burrows, Kermit Hansen, Tom Holt, Ormand Roberts and Sid Thal. Tom Holt, I, performed a solo "Liederabend", a song recital of arias, German art songs and American songs. In the corner of the camp was a small Catholic church with a piano, in fairly good tune. That was where I practiced. No heat.

Musical performances were especially welcome and, highly professional. Bob Rankin with his trumpet, put together a "Big Band", using as his theme song, Harry James; "You Made Me Love You". Members of the band included Tom Holt, Tex Chappell, Don Waful, Irv Yarock, Ken Goddard, Jack Cook, Sammy Saxton, and Jim Cockrell. Later, we expanded into a symphonic sound and violinists Joe Friedman, Lou Wilcox, and Ted Pawlowski were included.

The band shows were called "Danceland" and featured ballads, swing, our vocalists Len Vaden, Frank Maxwell, Russ Ford, and Don Waful, and sometimes, a trio.

## **OFLAG 64**

Oflag 64 is situated in Poland, two miles northwest of the railway station in Altburgund, the new German name for the old Polish town of Schubin. The grounds and, the buildings were those of a Polish boys' school. The Oflag was opened on 6 June 1943, as a Prisoner of War camp stockage, with just a small number of American and, British ground force officers. In October 1943, the Red Cross reported 224 American officers and 21 enlisted personnel in the camp. Almost all of these officers and enlisted men had been taken prisoner in North Africa, southern Tunisia and, had been held in other camps prior to the opening of the Oflag 64 camp. By July 1944, the prisoner population had increased to 620 officers and 57 enlisted personnel. At the time of the evacuation from Poland on 21 January 1945, the camp strength was quickly reaching the 2000 plus number.

The camp was composed of a main stone building and six barracks; only four of these barracks were in use, until the last few months of the occupation. The barracks were 120 feet long and 40 feet wide and were subdivided into cubicles 7 feet by 10 feet, which quartered an average of eight officers. The POWs slept in double-tiered wooden bunks, equipped with straw mattresses,



a pillow, one sheet, and one pillow case of very rough material. The Germans supplied two thin blankets which were totally inadequate for the cold climate. Latrines were located in separate buildings adjoining the barracks. At first, the latrines were pit-type, but later were equipped with cesspools and pumps. The latrines were most inefficient in number.

The daily German rations during the majority of the time we were POWs, consisted of the following:

Meat	35	7/10 grams (1.26 ounces)
Cooking Oil	9	7/10 grams (0.34 ounces)
Barley	25	grams ((0.88 ounces)
Cabbage	200	(7.06 ounces)
Dried Vegetables	6	2/5tbs grams (0.23 ounces)
Margarine	21	4/10 tbs grams (0.76 ounces)
Potatoes	353	(12.45 ounces)
Carrots	100	grams (3.53 ounces)
Turnips	400	grams (14.11 ounces)
Sauerkraut	25	(grams (0.88 ounces)
Jam (Beet)	25	grams (0.88 ounces)
Soup Powder	3 ½	grams (0.12 ounces)
Sugar	25	grams (0.88 ounces)
Ersatz Tea	1	gram (0.48 ounces)
Bread (Black)	318	grams (11.22 ounces)
Ersatz Coffee	2 ½	grams (0.09 ounces)

This diet sapped the POWs energy, and it made the cold winter temperatures even harder to endure. The only warmth provided by the Germans came from large European-style porcelain stoves, placed in each barracks. The American POWs were given pressed peat bricks which they ignited and placed inside each stove. The tiles on the outer side would then become only slightly warm, but never hot. It was said that it was the POWs huddled around those stoves that kept the stoves warm.

The cold and hunger reinforced the urge of all the American POWs to attempt to escape from the camp and, somehow get out through Russia or, north to the Baltic, or somewhere. There was an escape committee which redoubled its efforts, while the POWs came up with all kinds of clever, unique and, sometimes desperate plans for approval by the committee.

A tunnel was the obvious answer, and that project involved almost everyone in camp to some degree. The engineer POWs in the camp devised an ingenious plan for the tunnel to start inside one of the barracks and wind deep underground beneath the wire fence, surfacing in an unlikely place on the outside. The project took many months, digging began and, the Germans sought in vain to find it, even setting off dynamite blasts at various points around the camp in order to create a cave-in, but they never discovered our tunnel. This tunnel was used on one occasion to affect an escape; several POWs did escape but were later caught and returned to the camp.

Probably the most memorable show was presented by our theatre group on D-Day, 6 June 1944, and the landing in France. It was by an unbelievable coincidence, the anniversary of the first American arrivals at Oflag 64, the year before. It was also happenstance that Henry Soderberg, the Swedish representative of the American Red Cross, was in Oflag 64 on that day of the invasion, and reported to us that the invasion had begun.

A happier group of POWs could hardly have been found in any POW internment camp. An all-day celebration show was presented and at the end of the show, the actors spread across the stage of our make-shift theatre, each holding a part of the large banner, with large letters inscribed thereon: "Let's Go Ike". The Germans never did believe that we had already heard about the invasion and this was the reason for our tremendous celebration. The German guards were extremely nervous that night.

As we entered the first weeks of January 1945, the POW ranks increased greatly, due to the influx of POWs, many of whom were regimental commanders from the 102<sup>nd</sup>, the 103<sup>rd</sup>, 104<sup>th</sup>, and 105<sup>th</sup> American Infantry Divisions which General Eisenhower had ordered in to the battle in order to close off "The Bulge" which the German Wehrmacht (Army) had made in its

attempt to reach the port of Antwerp, Belgium, a major port facility. Our roll calls became more frequent, standing long hours in the snow and biting cold. Word went throughout the ranks of the POWs, “wear every stitch of your clothing; the Germans will take everything you leave behind.” I had on three pairs of socks, all my underwear, my heavy British battle dress and my Ranger thick-soled boots.

## **ESCAPE-FINAL WEEK OF JANUARY 1945**

On the eastern front, the Russians had overrun Warsaw, crossed the Vistula River, and were pushing westward very rapidly. The Russians would pull up all their artillery on a straight line, extreme north to extreme south and pull the lanyards of all the guns at the same time; the earth shook at this awesome blast. The rumor swept through Oflag 64: “Be ready to move out on a moment’s notice; Take everything with you, what food you have been hoarding, and all your clothing.” Colonel John Waters, Patton’s son-in-law, stated that he would lead the POWs back into Germany; it would be impossible for him to think about a long trek through eastern Russia.

Approximately 75 to 100 POWs, including LT. Thomas M. Holt, decided that this march back into Germany was not for us; so, 75 POWs hid out in every conceivable place in the camp. The German guards blew their whistles, lined up the approximately 1500 to 2000 POWs who were left and, out the main gate they walked, in a blinding snow storm. The German guards had made no attempt at calling the rolls.

Approximately 24 hours after the main body of POWs had departed, the first Russian tanks rolled up. Slowly, the few POWs remaining in the camp, I was included in this group, broke up into smaller groups of twos, threes, even sixes, and out of the gate we went, never stopping to look back. One member of my group was named Vic Danylik from New York, and Vic spoke fluent Polish and Russian. What an asset to have this POW along. We combined our parcels, there were five of us in this group, built a homemade sled, packed our meager rations on the sled, but kept out, for each POW, the excellent D-Ration bar, which was a chocolate bar loaded with vitamins and minerals and, could withstand cold and hot. That is what kept each of the POWs moving along; the Russians gave us absolutely nothing but a small bowl, about two tablespoons amount of a very coarse cereal, which was very much like the American hominy grits, only much thicker.

By my calculations, the route we took northeastward, covered approximately 750 plus miles from Poznan, Poland, to Odessa, in the Ukraine, on the Black Sea. In the time frame of approximately two and-one-half months, from the final weeks of January 1945 to the end of March 1945, we journeyed from

Poznan to Warsaw, to Brest, (not France), to Lublin, to Lvov, to Odessa. Our modes of travel were divided into three types: (A) pedal extremities, by far the major manner of travelling, (B) by train; and (C) by truck.

In the most desolate section of Eastern Russia, we came upon a train locomotive with full steam, with an attached passenger car and two boxcars. There was not a Russian soul in sight. It did appear that the train was almost ready to move out. All four POW buddies and I were eager to get half-way cleaned up in some manner, so we drew out enough hot water for each of us to shave and, to get clean, as much as a small can of hot water, for each man would allow.

All of the sudden from out of nowhere appeared a Russian man, seemingly the engineer for that train. Our Russian-speaking interpreter explained that we were Amerikanski escaped POWs; whereupon the engineer told us to get in the box cars and we did without hesitation. Moments later, a few Russians showed up with their baggage, climbed into the passenger car, and we were soon on our way south. Fortunately, that was the way we wanted to go, so we traveled approximately 100 miles, where we disembarked because the engineer now aimed the train in a northerly direction.

Before proceeding, I want to say something about the Russian people we met along the way. Certainly, in Western Russia, the distances are great, the villages few and far between. We soon found out that the Russian peasants were much afraid of the Russian soldiers. On occasion, in several of the small areas through which we traveled, a Russian woman would approach us with a large pot of "kasha" which is similar to our hominy but much courser. We were also offered fish heads, eyes and all.... it took some doing.

## **ODESSA**

Our third form of travel, by truck, occurred, when all of the sudden, a small convoy of trucks with Russian drivers, appeared on the scene. We loaded up and off we went, the final leg of our Russian tour to Odessa. In Odessa we were billeted in the barracks of a deserted Russian Army camp.

At first, the Russians would not allow us to board our own naval transport then in the Odessa harbor. A rumor went around that the State Department in Washington, and probably one of our diplomats in Moscow, had demanded that the Russians collect all Allied prisoners wandering around on the Russian landscape and get them out immediately. To put emphasis on this order, two American Major Generals arrived from the Middle East to ensure that the Russians carried out these orders. Seeing two Americans Generals issuing orders for the relief of the prisoners of war, made the Russians quake

in their boots. Allied POWs must be returned immediately to their own governmental authority. The Russians moved quickly and we were soon on board the transport, headed out through the Black Sea, into the Aegean Sea, into the Mediterranean Sea to Port Said, Egypt. There all the American POWs came under American control. The following is the order in which things began to happen in Port Said, Egypt:

- All POWs were deloused and all the clothing we had worn was burned.
- We all received thorough medical exams including dental work.
- The POWs were issued new records.
- We were fed. On board the naval vessel from Odessa, the mess personnel were eager to feed us, anytime a POW wanted something to eat. I did not want one item of food. Over a period of thirty-three months, as a POW, I had lost approximately, somewhere in the 85-95 lbs.
- It took a long time for me to realize that I was “free”. “Freedom” what is that?”
- Interrogation of all Ex-POWs was now begun, questions ranging over our entire Prisoner of War experience.
- Partial pay was issued.
- Leave was granted , but to what place? I did manage to ride a camel and see the Sphinx.

### **CAPUA REVISITED**

Back on board the American naval transport, we set sail for Italia (Italy) and Naples. Anchored in Naples Harbor and taken where? Could it be that we were right back where we started the life of a Prisoner of War (una prigioniera da guerra) in Capua, Italy. Yes, indeed, this was Capua, but the buildings had all been destroyed and the barbed wire removed and here was once that place which had been transformed into an allied transient headquarters.

More interrogations and then, more leave time. Several buddies and I commandeered a jeep and took off for Rome and, La Citta Eterna (the eternal city). Back to Naples after a grand Roman tour, we boarded our transport ship, bound now through the Mediterranean into the Atlantic and, on our way to Boston.

We disembarked in Boston the day that word was broadcast to the country that the President of the United States, Franklin Delano Roosevelt had died at Warm Springs, Georgia, the fourth of April 1945.

The ex-POWs disembarked from the navy transport and went immediately on board a hospital train with the Red Cross logo on every car and, away we sped, all the way to Miami Beach, Florida, where every hotel and inn had been

taken over by the Defense Department. Because of my continuing inability to take care of any item resembling food, I was transferred to the Army Hospital where I remained. All the POWs had lived, as had I, on a daily maximum calorie count of approximately somewhere between 500 and 600 calories daily. There were many times during my 33 months as a Prisoner of War that I did not receive even that much.

In the Army hospital, I had to start from scratch, food-wise. I was down in weight to about 125-130 lbs. My daily ration for many months to come was, in my words, "strained baby food", strained carrots, strained applesauce, strained peaches and diluted orange juice. About once every three weeks, the nutritionist would try an egg, or, perhaps a bit of steak, very small, or a very small hamburger. Sometimes it worked and other times it did not work. I was given a vitamin pill four times daily and, the strained food, six times daily. Milk I just could manage and I soon slowly began to gain a little weight and, I was beginning to feel better, though I still had to remain at the hospital.

There were several other POWs experiencing the same trouble I was experiencing, the difficult time with food. The doctors and the nutritionists were beginning to learn much more about what it was like to live on 500 or less, calories per day.

### **ON LEAVE IN OAK RIDGE, NORTH CAROLINA**

After my hospitalization in Miami Beach, Florida, I boarded a plane bound for Greensboro and Oak Ridge, North Carolina, on an Air Force plane. I was very eager to see my dad as we had carried on as much correspondence as we could. Dad had been notified, just after New Year's Day, 1943, by the Catholic Diocese in Raleigh North Carolina, that I had been taken prisoner by the Germans, and, that I was doing well and had not been wounded. No purple heart for me.

After much time with my father, my mother having passed away in 1938, I toured down to Durham and Duke University where my brother, Earle Jr., had just finished his medical work, had his medical doctorate degree, and was headed to Barnes Hospital in St. Louis, Missouri, to begin his residency in Orthopaedic Surgery. I must mention here that my brother was number one in his medical class in Orthopaedic Surgery at Duke. We had a ball, and, I watched him assist in a major hip surgery, keeled over and found myself being picked up from the floor and wheeled out of the surgery door on a dolly.

## **NEW YORK – 1945**

‘Back to Oak Ridge where I found a lifelong friend of mine, Benbow Merriman, who was home on leave from his duties as a teaching fellow at the Hun School, the preparatory school for Princeton University. One day, Ben said to me: “Tom, let’s get some gas coupons and tour up to New York City and find you a proper voice teacher and coach.” I still had much leave time remaining and, Ben Merriman knew of my longing, after the war, to pursue a singing career, as I had sung many a song to his violin accompaniment, on several occasions. Gas was, of course, still being rationed at that time, but when I told the coupon lady that I had been a prisoner of war for almost three years, she handed me a bunch of coupons, enough as I counted them to take us from Alaska to Miami, Florida and back.

Our plans for the New York sojourn bore fruit and we were on our way, stopping off, near Philadelphia, to visit some Quaker friends of the Merriman family. This family near Philadelphia, owned quite a large farm with many cattle. One morning, chatting with the family, they produced a lovely cut glass container with some 100-year-old Scotch. I was offered a glass of this 100-year old Scotch, but immediately replied: No thank you. Just give me a large glass of milk.’ I drank milk like the milk business was going to run dry. My system still needed what milk had to offer; I could not get enough and, and I was now beginning to feel one hundred percent better. I had had no milk or milk products for three years.’

On we went to New York City where we stayed with Great Aunt Bessie, who turned over to us a large section of her apartment on upper Manhattan. Beforehand, while still back in Oak Ridge, North Carolina, I had prepared some songs for future use and now I was most anxious to sing for anyone who would listen to me. At the beginning, I went to Juilliard where I sang for two vocal teachers. Then I performed several songs for the private vocal coaches in mid-town Manhattan, but I still had the urge to enter a music school with a prominent vocal teacher and receive my music degree.

Fortune must have been smiling on me, for within a couple of days I got word to go to an address on West 61<sup>st</sup> Street. Ben Merriman went with me; we entered an apartment at that address, and it was so large, I imagined myself on the stage of the Metropolitan Opera House. The owner of that apartment was none other but one of the greatest Wagnerian bass-baritones of all times, Mr. Friedrich Schorr, who for his magnificent singing and portrayal of the roles of Hans Sachs and Wotan at the Metropolitan and also at the Wagner Bayreuth Festival in Germany, was world famous.

I was accepted by Mr. Schorr and, entered the Manhattan School of Music as a degree student, in Mr. Schorr’s studio, in December 1945 and completed

the Bachelor of Music Degree in Voice with Mr. Schorr in 1949. Unfortunately, he passed away during my fifth year under his tutelage. Another first-class baritone, Mr. John Brownlee, took over and I completed my Masters' Degree in Voice under his direction. Mr. Schorr was superb in the German Repertoire and Mr. Brownlee, superb in the French Repertoire. I completed the Master's Degree in Voice in 1951.

### **BACK TO THE ARMY—KOREA 1951 - 1954**

I still had an army contract to fulfill. At that time, I was stationed with the G-2 Section, 1<sup>st</sup> Army, on Governor's Island, New York. In May 1951, the G-2 Section was called up for duty in Korea. Before heading eastward, I was posted to the North Carolina Military District in Raleigh, North Carolina.

The colonel commanding the military district, assigned me the position of beginning and administrating the ROTC Unit at Wake Forest College, north of Raleigh. This ROTC Unit was basically a chemical warfare unit; someone in the Raleigh headquarters had taken note of the fact that I had done a college year in chemistry at Oak Ridge Military Academy.

### **JAPAN AND KOREA 1951 - 1954**

Eight months administrating this ROTC unit at Wake Forest terminated and orders received dispatching me to Japan-Korea, via the Canadian IR transport system. What a plush way to go to war; a large commercial plane with an upstairs bar, stocked with any wines and whiskeys you could wish for.

Landing in Tokyo, Japan, I was assigned to the Korean Military Advisory Group (KMAG), and away I flew, via United States transport to Pusan, South Korea. Further assignment brought me to the G-2 Section Advisory Section, advisors to the First Republic of Korea (ROK) Infantry Division. Captain Chung, a Korean Captain, was my Aide. He spoke excellent English and had a good hold on the English vernacular. He was a Korean graduate of the Artillery School at Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

It became my duty to make scheduled visits to the ROK Battalions and Regiments, First Division to check on compliance with United States Army G-2 (Intelligence) rules and regulations and, to answer questions, translated by my Aide, Captain Chung. In my tours around South Korea, I traveled over much of the country from Seoul in the north to Pusan in the south.

### **AROUND THE WORLD THEN HOME**

My duty in Korea came to an end, approximately in the month of January 1954. To complete my round-the-world trip, the US Naval Transport sailed



out of Pusan Harbor on 5 January 1954, on a southerly course to Singapore; Bombay, India; then northward through the Suez Canal. There were on board the US Naval Transport, not only American officers and men, but troops from India, Turkey, Greece, Norway. We stopped in the ports of each of these nations in order to allow the troops of that country to debark. From Port Said (what memories this brought back) we sailed north to Izmir, Turkey, thence to Athens, Greece, where we had a wonderful tour which included the Acropolis, from Athens to Naples, Italy, and this time we did not go back to Capua. From Naples we set the compass heading toward Hamburg, Germany; then on to Norway; from Norway, across the Atlantic to New York Harbor.

### **ARRIVAL IN THE CONTINENTAL UNITED STATES**

I needed medical attention and spent the next week in the Second Army Hospital, Baltimore, Maryland. Released from the hospital, I traveled to Raleigh, North Carolina, to see my bride-to-be, who was head of the Music Education Division, of the Department of Music, Meredith College, Raleigh, North Carolina. I had courted Miss Forrestine Whitaker, while I was stationed in Raleigh with the North Carolina Military District. Due to the bad sanitary conditions in Korea, and my continuing bouts of stomach problems, all due, I believe, to my three-year POW incarceration, and as a reminder that I was still ill, I came down with Mononucleosis and my vocal cords became paralyzed.

### **MARRIAGE AND FUTURE ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

Miss Forrestine Whitaker became Mrs. Thomas M. Holt, on the 6<sup>th</sup> day of September 1954. We were married in the Church of the Good Shepard, Raleigh, North Carolina. At the time of the marriage, I still was not able to speak above a whisper. My brother, Dr. Holt, my best man said: "I didn't hear you say 'I do'." "I am not sure you are properly married." "I did say I do!" Mrs. Holt, Forrestine and I had a lovely honeymoon in Montreal, Canada, in a beautiful inn, in the Canadian Mountains.

Return to our apartment, just across the George Washington Bridge, in New Jersey, I picked up the threads of my Master's Degree work in Voice, at Manhattan School of Music. My recuperation was due, in no small part to a top Otolaryngologist on staff of the Presbyterian Hospital in New York, and on loan to the VA Hospital in The Bronx. Dr. Jones had me as a patient, doing phoradic stimulus several times a day, to the vocal cords; this consisted, with the aid of a technician, in applying an electric stimulus to the vocal folds. Miraculously, the lower portion of the vocal cord began to vibrate; the top portion did not begin to vibrate so quickly. Dr. Jones, the Otolaryngologist, advised me then to go to my vocal instructor, Mr. John Brownlee, to have him give me some easy vocal exercises, to begin with. I did get back into Mr.

Brownlee's vocal class and he did give me many exercises which helped me immensely.

Forrestine was organist and choir director at a small Lutheran church just north of us, up the Hudson River, from Fort Lee, New Jersey. It was there, on Thanksgiving, 28 November 1954, that I was able to tune up and perform a sacred solo.

I completed all the master's Degree work, with emphasis on the German Lied (song) and the French Melodie (art song). I secured a church position agency, secured a regular bass position in the choir of the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church. With these positions in hand, I was called upon for solo work in special choir and synagogue services and programs, such as Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah services, in some very large Jewish Temples in New York and on Long Island.

I was also invited to join the Schola Cantorum of the City of New York, under the direction of Mr. Hugh Ross, who was at that time, conducting a series of six concerts, performing large choral works, with the New York Philharmonic. What a thrill it was to be singing with this august symphonic organization.

Mr. Hugh Ross did much to help further my musical career. He was one of the most complete musicians with whom I have ever had the pleasure of working. He was also the head of the Music History and the Vocal Arts Programs at the Manhattan School of Music and, his knowledge of music history was amazing and phenomenal.

The following is the resume of my teaching positions:

1954 to 1959	Head, Voice and Opera Departments, Department of Music, Catawba College, Salisbury, North Carolina
1959 to 1962	Doctoral student in voice, with Elena Nikolaidi, Department of Voice, Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida
1963 to 1967	Lenoir Rhyne College, Hickory, North Carolina, Head, Voice Department
1967 to 1970	Montevallo University, Montevallo, Alabama
1970 to 1973	Millsaps College, Department of Music – Voice, Jackson, Mississippi

1973 to 1982	Pelahatchie High School, Pelahatchie, Mississippi, French and Spanish
1979	Retired, 4 July 1979, Lieutenant Colonel, Aus
1980 to 1986	Forrestine and I did private coaching in voice

Brief resume of my wife, Forrestine Whitaker Holt:

1941 Music	Longwood College, Farmville, Virginia, BS Degree, Education
1941 to 1944	Hampton, Virginia High School, Director of Choral Activities
1945 to 1949 Music	Teachers' College, Columbia University, New York New York, Master of Arts and Professional Degrees in Education
1946	Private organ study with Carl Weinrich, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey
1947 to 1951	Private organ study with Earnest White, New York City, New York
1949 to 1954	Head, Music Education Division, Department of Music – Meredith College, Raleigh, North Carolina

Thomas Michael Holt, Baritone  
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## RESUME

### Education

Bachelor of Music  
Voice

Manhattan School of Music  
New York, New York

Master of Music

Manhattan School of Music  
New York, New York

Doctoral Study

Florida State University  
Tallahassee, Florida

Certificate

Mozarteum  
Salzburg, Austria

### Artist/Teacher

Friedrich Schorr

John Brownlee

Elena Nikolaidi

Erik Werba  
Leo Taubman  
Paula Lindberg

### Teaching

Jackson State University  
Jackson, Mississippi

Assistant Professor

Millsaps College  
Jackson, Mississippi

Associate Professor

Lenoir Rhyne College  
Hickory, North Carolina

Associate Professor

### Professional

Robert Shaw Chorale  
Schola Cantorum of the City of New York  
Scholarship winner – Berkshire Music Center  
Opera with Boris Goldovski  
Leading Baritone – Charlotte Opera Company  
Solo Recital – Carnegie Recital Hall – New York  
Solo European Concert Tour  
J. Beek, Management – Amsterdam  
Registrar – American Institute of Musical Studies  
Graz, Austria – Summer 1974  
Vocal Study – Andrew White  
American Institute of Musical Studies – Summer 1974

Requests for the final burial service:

RESUME:

Thomas Michael Holt

Born: 4 July 1919

Son of Colonel Earle P. Holt and Eugenia Harris Holt of Oak Ridge, Guilford County, North Carolina

Colonel Earle P. Holt was a former President of the Oak Ridge Military Academy, Oak Ridge, North Carolina

EDUCATION OF THOMAS MICHAEL HOLT:

Oak Ridge Military Academy, Oak Ridge, North Carolina

The University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina

The Manhattan School of Music, New York City, New York

Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida

The Mozarteum, Salzburg, Austria

TEACHING POSITIONS HELD BY THOMAS MICHAEL HOLT:

Catawba College, Salisbury, North Carolina

Lenoir Rhyne College, Hickory, North Carolina

The University of Montevallo, Montevallo, Alabama

Millsaps College, Jackson, Mississippi

Jackson State University, Jackson, Mississippi

Pelahatchie High School, Pelahatchie, Mississippi

# War Prisoner Kept Singing

By MARIE ADAMS

THOMAS MICHAEL HOLT is a person who lets nothing get him down. He always comes up singing!

In town from Tallahassee, Fla., Tom is visiting his uncle and aunt, Dr. and Mrs. Othe B. Ross, at their home on Selwyn Ave.



MARIE

Singing is like breathing to Tom Holt and his lovely voice not only raised his own spirits while a prisoner of war during World War II, but was an inspiration to his fellow prisoners. Even the prison guards came under the spell of music that "hath charms to soothe the savage breast" when Tom sang from behind the bars in their native tongue.

Tom was a prisoner of war in both Italy and Poland and his musical psychology so impressed those who heard him that he was written up by war correspondent Larry Allen. He received a personal letter of commendation from the great Toscanini. Later he carried his voice to the trenches of the Korean conflict.

As a small boy Tom loved to listen to good music—a taste probably inherited from his mother, the former Eugenia Harris of Chapel Hill and a teacher of piano at the North Carolina State Normal, now Woman's College at Greensboro. He now sings in four languages: French, German, Italian and Russian.

Mrs. Ross ("Aunt Lucy" to Tom) is like a second mother to the young baritone, as he was reared in the Ross family along with their own boys after the death of his mother.

As a younger boy Tom visited at "grandmother's" when Mrs. Ross' mother, the late Mrs. Lena Harris of Chapel Hill. Mrs. Harris made her home for nine years with Dr. and Mrs. Ross at their former home, 305 East Blvd. Here Tom was born. His father, now retired, is Earl P. Holt of Oak Ridge, formerly president of Oak Ridge Military Academy.

At Tallahassee Tom is a member of the faculty of Florida State University. He sang today at the luncheon meeting of the Kiwanis Club and will be presented at the Mint Museum of Art Friday evening. The Mint concert will be followed by a reception at which the visiting artist's aunt, Mrs. Ross has been invited to pour coffee.

During four years when Tom taught at Catawba College he was a member of the Charlotte Opera Association.