

## “MY YOUNGER YEARS” by F. Eugene Liggett

I was born on February 19, 1920 Northeast of Almena, Kansas on a farm known as the old Grose place. Mary Estella (Wendel) and James Ross Liggett were my parents. They were sure that I would be a girl and agreed that I would be named Frances after my mother's mother who had died a year or two earlier. So when I was a boy instead of a girl, they just changed the spelling and named me Francis Eugene Liggett. I had a brother, Harold Dean Liggett who was about 2 ½ years old at that time, having been born on July 5, 1917. Dr. Benny drove his buggy out to the farm to help me come into this world in the proper manner. Years later I was looking in an old account book that my dad kept and I learned that inflation was taking place after WW I.



Dr. Benny charged only \$14.30 for delivering Harold, but raised the price to \$15 for delivering me.

My parents bought the old Cooley Ranch over toward Logan, KS when I was nearly two years old. It consisted of about 900 acres and had more farmland and more pasture land. He had 8 or 10 head of mules to do the farming. Two events happened there that I remember, and several more that I have heard repeated over the years. One of those that impressed me was having my mouth washed out with soap - probably for saying something I shouldn't have. The other was when my mother was washing a pair of my pants and found a pocket full of baby mice. I guess I wasn't supposed to do that.

I had learned to walk pretty well and sometimes wandered off outdoors. One day my dad had gone out in the pasture to chase the mules in and I went out to the barn to wait for him. The barn door was open so the mules could go in, so I sat down on the step of the door, which was about 3 or 4 feet wide and waited. Of course the mules came in before my dad got there, so all 8 or 10 of the mules came right in the barn, stepping over me as I sat there. That was probably the first of a whole lifetime of events that my longevity could be attributed to luck or to somebody from above watching out for me.

On April 4, 1922 my other brother, Robert Merton (Bob), was born in Almena at the home of Grandpa and Grandma Liggett.... I think I was about this age when I started a lifetime trait of acquiring too much stuff, as I would "find" something and save it because "It might be hum dood hum day."

We moved again at the end of 1923 or early 1924 after my parents sold the ranch and bought a farm just west of the town of Flagler in eastern Colorado. I was older then and have a lot of memories of that place... Harold rode a little black Shetland pony to school when the pony wanted to go in that direction. The previous owners had left a pile of stuff out in the yard back by the chicken house. Harold and I had a lot of fun sorting through it and finding some of those "hum dood hum day" items. One that I still have is a Florida teaspoon. Another was a baby spoon with the name "Dorothy Jean" engraved on it. I always liked the name and many years later we named our first daughter Dorothy Jean. I gave the spoon to her several years ago. Mom still thought my mouth should be washed out with soap rather frequently..... One day we saw a prairie chicken fly into the yard and Mom got the old shotgun out and shot it.... We had an old rooster that chased us kids and one day Mom ran over him when she drove the car into the garage.... I had scarlet fever and remember our house was quarantined for a week or two, and

there was a big sign on the front door. I had to stay in the nearly dark bedroom for a week or two and watched the bedbugs crawl up on the walls. After the fever went down, the skin peeled off my lips and I had to put it in the stove to burn. On several occasions Mom had a bladder infection or something and had to go to Denver to a Doctor. My cousin, Esther O'Neil, who was a teenage girl then, came to stay with us kids while the folks were both gone. I got mad at her and threw a block through the window, breaking it out. When I was 4 years old I started milking "Old Jersey." She was a real nice little Jersey cow that had lots of patience with me as I learned to milk. From then on milking the cows was a regular part of the morning and evening chores we were expected to help with.

I think we only lived there a year or two before my folks sold or traded that place for an unimproved half-section several miles southwest of Flagler. At the same time we moved to a rented farm northwest of Flagler where we farmed it, as well as the cropland on the half-section about 8 or 10 miles away.... I started to school in Flagler in the fall of 1926. The model T school bus was driven by Alfred Dorsey who was either a junior or senior in high school, and lived at the far end of the route. That way he could drive the school bus home and the next day drive it back, picking up all the kids along the route. The heat in the bus was from the exhaust pipe that ran down the center of the bus just a few inches above the floor, and then out the back end of the bus. Being a Model T Ford, it had the coil box sort of under the dash and to the right of the driver. One of the older boys frequently took the cover off the box and by touching the coil and one of the kids in the line of adjacent passengers, all of them touching each other were really shocked if the last one on that side of the bus also touched the exhaust pipe or other metal to complete the electrical circuit. Of course the older kids thought this was lots of fun, but it wasn't for some of us who were smaller. A few years later my friend, Dale Walker, and I got a 'licken' at school for sticking our heads out the front window on the side of the bus and spitting so the wind would blow it back to hit the girls in the face as they had their heads out the windows toward the rear of the bus.

My first memories of wash day, was of Mom using a wash board until they got a washing machine that was operated by hand and had a hand cranked wringer. Usually Pop helped Mom with this job on wash day. They pumped the water and heated it on the kitchen stove. Then they carried it out on the porch to the washing machine. The clothes were hung outdoors on the clothesline to dry. A number of years later they bought a Maytag washing machine that had a gas engine to run it. The wringer still had to be cranked by hand. It was only natural that us kids were taught early on to take good care of our clothes and to be careful and not get them dirty.

During the late 1920s there were lots of wild rabbits - mostly blacktail or snowshoe jackrabbits. Hunting them was done not only as a popular sport, but also to reduce the competition with the cows for grass. I remember the comparison of 32 rabbits eating as much grass as one cow. We took the wagon and one of us kids drove the horses out around the pasture and the fields while Pop shot the rabbits. We fed the rabbits that we killed to the hogs to give them the needed protein.... Large scale rabbit hunts were also organized in different locations around the area. My dad, with his shotgun, joined almost everybody else participating by taking positions fairly close to another person so the rabbits couldn't dodge back between them and get away. At a given time they all started walking forward toward the center of the huge man-made pen that consisted of a block of land three or four miles on each of the 4 sides, chasing the rabbits toward the center where an enclosed wire pen had been erected. As the men closed in toward the center, the rabbits went into and were trapped in the wire pen. Thousands of rabbits were then clubbed to death by the men participating. They were then hauled into town and loaded on a railroad boxcar and shipped to Denver where they were skinned for the hides and the meat, which were sold.

The first rabbit I ever shot was when I was 6 or 7 years old. I took the 22 rifle and went out in the field by myself. As I came to a fence I saw a rabbit sitting by the fence post. I took a careful aim and shot. He didn't move so I shot again, and again. Then I walked over to him and he

still didn't move. Apparently the first shot had killed him. He was about as long as I was tall so I started dragging him home. About half way home I stopped to admire him and saw one eye open so I laid him down and shot him again just to be sure he was dead. Needless to say I was proud of my first rabbit.

One Christmas Eve it was real cold and snowy when Pop hitched up a team of horses and we all got in the wagon and bedded down in some hay to keep warm. We drove the 5 or 6 miles to town for the Christmas program at the Congregational church. The next morning I went outside looking for Santa's reindeer and sled tracks on the roof of the house and around the driveway. I knew he had been there that night because he left us a little red coaster wagon and other toys, but there were no tracks in the snow.



When I was 6 years old I started working in the field driving the horses to cultivate corn, harrowing, and various other jobs. I think my parents put me to work early to keep me out of trouble with Bob and Harold. During all my years of growing up, if my parents didn't give me at least one licken every day, I was probably sick. I still have that old razor strap as a memento.

On February 2, 1927 we came home from school as usual and Dr. Williams was there. He introduced us to our new little baby sister, Freda Dorinda Liggett, who had just been born.

Harold and I slept together in a bedroom that was sort of a built on enclosed porch. On numerous occasions we would get into fights when one of us got over on the other ones side of the bed.

One time we went out and got a big log chain and put it down the middle of the bed, fastening it at both ends to the bed, to separate us... In the room there was a tall chiffonier or dresser and a tall cupboard. I couldn't see what was in the top drawers or shelves so I pulled out a lower drawer and climbed up on it so I could look into the upper ones. Quite often the whole thing tipped over on top of me, and Harold usually rescued me.

When I was in the third grade I didn't like my teacher, Miss Wible. On at least one occasion instead of spanking me herself, she sent Dale Walker and me up to the Superintendent, Mr. McKinley, to get a licken. Before going though, Dale and I stuffed a lot of paper in the seat of our pants so it wouldn't hurt so much. We got our lickens, but he didn't say anything to us about the paper, although I am sure he could hardly keep from laughing.

In the wintertime I set some traps around the farm and checked them after doing chores in the morning and evening. One day I caught a skunk so I skinned it after school and cut out the scent bag and put it in a small glass vial with a cork in the top. Then after washing it off real good, I put it in my pocket and took it to school the next day. During the recess I walked over to the side of the room where the window was open and put a few drops of the scent on the windowsill and casually walked away. Either nobody saw me do it, or wouldn't tell on me, as I didn't get caught that time. It took several days for the smell to go away.

During the busy part of the summer, instead of driving back and forth each day, we set up a tent on the half section. That way we could stay there during the week to do the farming etc.

Rather than drink the water out of the spring that was there, we took it from home in cream cans.



Freda was just a baby and one day Mom left her in the tent alone for while. When she came back, a big

rattlesnake was right by the tent. Since there were a lot of rattlesnakes around there, Mom was more careful after that... We always killed the rattlesnakes whenever or wherever we saw one. Mom used the hoe when she found one in or near the garden. Out in the field we killed them with the whip or hitch rein with a snap on the end of it. The same was used to kill them if we were riding a horse and saw one. Sometimes if we were close to home and didn't have anything to kill them with, we put a clod of dirt in a handkerchief and threw it at the snake. They would strike at it and embed their fangs in the cloth and stay there for an hour or two until we could get back with a rifle or something to kill them with.

In 1928 or 1929 we bought a cook shack to live in temporarily instead of the tent, while we were working down on the half section or riding out on the range. The cook shack was sort of a forerunner of the mobile home or trailer. It had wheels etc. from an old threshing machine and a tongue on the front so that it could be pulled with horses to move it. It had two rooms. One was a bedroom with two beds and a cupboard and the other one had a table, chairs, a small wood (or cow chip) burning cook stove, and a cupboard. For a refrigerator, we made one - sort of a screened in upright cupboard with a couple shelves and a door on the side. On top was a place to set a big pan of water. With a cloth draped over the sides and with the top of it in the water, the breeze blowing through evaporated the water and did a pretty good job of keeping milk and butter etc. cool. This was set under the side of the cook shack and in the shade where the breeze could blow through it.

There was an old well driller in the community named Bill Holden. He also "witched" to locate the veins of underground water and find the best prospects for a well location. He came down and finally picked out the location for our well. Fred Page helped my dad dig the well by hand. They set up a tripod with a pulley and rope to pull up the buckets full of dirt they dug out of the 30-36 inch diameter hole they were digging. Freda had just learned to walk pretty well at that time and one day when nobody was watching her too closely, she picked up a hammer and threw it down the hole while Fred Page was down there digging. It just barely missed hitting him on the head. At about 32 feet down they hit a good vein of water. After digging a few more feet, they had a good reservoir of water in it. Next they set up a wooden tower and put a windmill wheel on top of it. With a pump and pipe etc., the well provided sufficient water for the livestock in the pasture and for watering the garden that Mom planted nearby-as well as good clear, cold drinking water for our own use.

Close by to the south of this half section, nearly all the land was open range where cattle or horses could go for 50 miles or more before hitting a fence. Everybody branded their cattle and horses, as it was almost impossible to keep them from mixing with other rancher's livestock. Our brand was L bar inverted L. During the summers after I was 9 or 10 years old when I wasn't helping with the farming, I was out riding on the range to keep track of our cattle and horses that were out there. One day I rode up over a hill and there was a herd of about 50 wild horses with a beautiful Palomino stallion leading them. What a beautiful sight! Usually I rode alone while out there on the range, but once in a while a friend of mine, Melvin Reeves, who lived a few miles from our cook shack, would meet me and we had our own little rodeo-roping yearling calves and riding them. I never did tell my parents about this, but since then I have often wondered what would have happened if one of us had got hurt out there on the range all by ourselves. We always stopped and killed all the rattlesnakes we saw. Mom got a little nervous when I brought home their skins as well as the rattles. After skinning one, we sometimes put the fresh skin over the cantle of the saddle (the top of the back of the saddle seat). It would dry and stick to the cantle--sort of a trophy ornament.

Dale Walker's birthday was on February 8th and mine was on the 19<sup>th</sup>. We usually stayed over-night with each other on our birthdays. He lived in a sod house three or four miles from our place. The walls of the house were at least 2 feet thick and it had cloth for the ceiling in the rooms. The house was very typical of those shown in some of the pictures taken of the early settlers. Rats and mice were always a problem in sod houses and at night there were noises of

them in the roof and some of the dirt falling down. They had a sod cutter that Dale and I hitched a horse to and cut some sod to make a little doghouse. During the summer we often rode our horses over to visit each other. His horse was named 'Diamond' and most of the time he could beat me when we raced with each other.

Shortly after moving to Colorado, our family became good and very close friends with the Fred and Agnes Page family. They had four girls and a boy, Don, who was a little older than Freda. Betty was the oldest. She was Fred's helper with all the farm and ranch work. Margaret was next, but more of an indoor girl helping her mother. Avis was next and about the same age as Harold. Agnes was the youngest girl and about six months older than me. She and Avis were outdoor girls too. We were about like brothers and sisters. They had a bobsled and in the winter when there was snow on the ground we hitched up the horses and rode all around over the pasture. About every Sunday after church we either went to their place or they came to our place for dinner. They had a ranch northeast of Flagler and had a big barn where us kids had a good time playing hide and seek. They also had an old pit silo that they filled with snow in the wintertime and covered it with straw so it wouldn't melt. The snow would keep all summer so we usually had some homemade ice cream when we went there for dinner. No rural homes had electricity at that time, but they had a radio that was operated on batteries. This was really a luxury as few people had one. Fred had a big Buick Touring car with a cloth top. Once when they were over at our place and Freda was about 2 years old, her pet Billy goat jumped up on top of their car and all four feet went through it, making it impossible for him to move or get out by himself. That summer the whole Page family drove back east for a month's vacation to see Niagara Falls and other points of interest. We drove our milk cows over to their place where we milked the combined herd of over 30 cows and separated all the milk with a hand-cranked separator. During the time they were gone, I milked about 10 cows every night and morning. My dad and Harold, and sometimes with the help of Bob and Mom, milked the rest of them.

On the morning of Nov 18, 1930 it was snowing fairly hard when Harold and I got on the school bus to go to school. Bob stayed home. The intensity of the snow and the wind increased during the day. About 2 o'clock the Superintendent dismissed all of the country kids and we got on the buses to go home. After going about a half a mile, the driver decided that we could not make it because of the big snow drifts, and turned around and took us back to school. The teachers divided us up and sent each of us home with other kids. Dale Walker and I stayed with Larry Wold and his folks. Harold went home with his friend, Judd Baxter. The snow and wind continued for two days without let up. On the third day the snow was drifted so high that the only way to get out of the house was from the upstairs windows. We slept on the floor and spent the next several days playing card games etc. Finally we got out and Dale and I got a job shoveling snow for Ray Thompson, who was our rural mail carrier and lived close by. I earned 35 cents and later bought a small incense burner for Mom with the first money I ever earned. Finally after being snowed in for 10 days, a snowplow came out from Denver to open up the highway that also ran through town. But it wasn't until late in the spring of 1931 that the country roads were opened up. Fortunately the telephone lines were still intact so our folks knew where we were. The school buses were able to get out and drive on the highway taking us to John Polzin's place on the highway where my dad met us with three extra horses to get Harold and me, and Dale Walker. Dale went home with us and his dad came over across the pastures etc. to get him the next day. At home we had about 50 head of cattle in the feedlot and about 40 others such as the milk cows and calves and horses in other corrals and my dad had to scoop the snow away from the fences so they couldn't get out. He also had to pump the water for all of them by hand as the wind and storm had broken the windmill. He was glad to have Harold and me home again to help with all the extra work. That winter they carried the mail on skis until they could drive across fields or pastures to get around. In late spring the roads were finally opened again. We had an old sow with a litter of little pigs in a pen that included an old cave. It was covered up with snow for two

months and we didn't expect them to be alive. When we finally dug in to look at her, she was still alive but had eaten all of her little pigs to survive. What a blizzard!

On March 1, 1931 some of the neighbors brought their wagons and hayracks to help us move to a farm adjoining the east edge of the town of Flagler. Instead of separating all the milk and selling the cream, we started selling milk to some of the people in town. Then it was one of my jobs to help carry the milk in fruit jars to the customers each evening. This was the first time that I had ever gone to a dentist and he filled 4 or 5 teeth. For payment we delivered milk to their home every night.

We still had the cook shack on the half section and I spent most of the next 2 or 3 summers there. One evening I walked out in the pasture to get the cows as a thunderstorm was building up. A bolt of lightning hit me and knocked me down. Fortunately it didn't seem to hurt me, but I am still scared of lightening.

As we boys were growing up, my dad gave each of us a colt when it was born. Harold got the first one and named him Dusty, because he was about that color. He turned out to be a good saddle horse until a few years later when he got a front foot caught on a barbed wire fence and nearly cut it off.

A few years later my colt was born and I named him Corky. He was all black with white back feet. From the time he was born, he was badly spoiled by all of us, and me in particular. He was a nuisance and enjoyed attention. When he was a year old we turned him out on the range with some of the other horses. When he was nearly 3 years old we got him in again to start breaking him to ride. Harold got on him first and was immediately thrown off. That happened too frequently unless we snubbed him up to another horse so he couldn't get his head down. He was all right then, but he never could be trusted. On the morning of the 4<sup>th</sup> of July my dad and I rode out on the range to check on a few cattle before going back into town and home. Pop was riding Corky and we were galloping along when, without any warning, Corky took an extra long leap and hit the ground with all 4 feet with his head down. Pop went right over his head and landed in the middle of a big bunch of prickly pear cactus. To add insult to injury Corky stopped a short distance away and stood there watching me help Pop get up and pick out as many of the stickers as we could. Finally I walked over and got Corky and we managed to ride back to town. That was the last time we ever rode Corky before selling him to a horse buyer from Iowa. We heard later that Corky ended up as a rodeo horse and I don't think anyone ever did ride him.

Bob's colt's mother was called old Pet. She was an Indian pony that Pop had bought at a sale several years previously. She was blind in one eye and at the time she had a colt with her. We called him Lindy in honor of Charles Lindberg, who had recently made the historic flight across the Atlantic Ocean. The day after Pop bought her at the sale, Harold and I accompanied him back to the farm to get them. We had a Model T Ford touring car and Pop had a rope around Pet's neck to lead her behind the car. Harold was about 9 or 10 years old and was driving the car. On the way home the rope got tangled up in the car in Pop's hands and something happened to cause Pet to jerk back. The rope caught around his right thumb and broke it off at the joint. It was hanging with only a little skin on one side. Very shortly Joe Brown, our neighbor, came by and took him to town to the Doctor. Nighty was born in 1931 or 1932 and was another spoiled pet. When she was 6 or 8 months old, I put Freda on her and I rode another horse as we went out in the pasture on the run. Freda hung on, even though Nighty didn't have a bridle, halter, or saddle on. Later when we moved to Nebr. in 1933, we took her with us.

After we had moved to the place at the edge of Flagler in the spring of 1931, I started raising tame rabbits in the upstairs of the garage. By buying and trading, I acquired a buck and a couple does to raise rabbits. When the first litter of babies was born I was real proud of them as they grew up. When they weighed about 3 lbs each, it was time to kill them to eat. My folks made me kill and dress them. Killing my pets was a hard thing for me to do and I think it had an effect on my life - making me more indifferent toward death and easier for me to kill most anything.

Since we lived at the edge of town, I was able to participate in some of the "extra curricular" activities with other kids in town. Halloween night was one of these events. There were 6 or 8 of us together that night. Two kids brought their saddle horses and lariat ropes. LeRoy Cuckoo was an old Civil War veteran and he had a little auto repair shop on Main Street. He lived in the back room and had his outhouse out back by the alley. This had always been a favorite target on Halloween night. This time the two with the saddle horses tied a rope between the two saddles and came in fast with one on each side of the outhouse. It caught just under the roof and tipped the toilet over with the door on the bottom side. LeRoy was trapped inside as they dragged it out of the alley. LeRoy blasted away with his old shotgun through the two holes in the seat as he was being dragged up main street toward the schoolhouse. We left him on the street trapped inside and went on up to the schoolhouse. A couple kids crawled up the fire escape and took the hinges off the door and got inside. They went down stairs and opened up a window on the ground floor. A neighbor's billy goat was 'borrowed' and we took him upstairs and put him in the superintendent's office and shut the door. This was on a Friday night and on Monday morning the superintendent opened the door and found the goat with all the papers, and even the telephone wires all chewed up, besides all the stinking deposits on the floor. The next stop was down by Bill Malbaff's blacksmith shop. The County stored a lot of their road grading machinery etc there on the side hill above the street. With the two saddle horses to help, we dragged a lot of the machinery down and onto the street and at the intersection. The last stop for the night was at the International Harvester dealer's place. He was waiting in the shop and came out and gave us 75 cents to leave his place alone. That was the first time I ever heard of "Trick or Treat". Of course the city and the school did some questioning, but I don't remember of any of us being identified or caught because of all the mischief that night.

With the extreme drouth and depression on, we planted some cane for feed in the spring of 1932 and it didn't even sprout until September because the ground was so dry. That area of eastern Colorado was in the center of what became known later as the Dust Bowl. With out any feed for the cattle or horses, most farmers or ranchers were forced to sell their livestock and many moved away. Lots of cattle and horses starved to death that winter. Even yet there are some old cedar fence posts that show evidence of having been chewed up by starving horses. We shipped a carload of cattle to Denver to sell and they didn't even bring enough money to pay the railroad for shipping them. Pop had to dig up \$50 to help pay the freight bill.

In the summer of 1933 we started rounding up all of our cattle and horses out on the range so we could sell out and move to Nebraska. My dad and I spent many long days riding the range to get them all back and together again. I remember one day we rode at least 50 miles south hunting for some of our horses. That night we stopped at a ranch out there to stay overnight. The next day we rode around some more before heading back home. There were still some that we didn't find. A year or two later we got a letter from the State Brand Inspector of Colorado that some of our horses had been sold without a bill of sale. They had our brand on them so we got the money for them.

On August 10, 1933 we had a public auction and sold everything that we couldn't get into two big semi-trailer trucks. One truck was for the household stuff and the other for some of the cattle and horses. We moved to Shelton, Nebr. where Grandpa and Grandma Liggett lived. We rented a house in town and some pastureland out in the country for the horses and cows that we moved. Ray Poole from Gibbon had taken the two big trucks out to Flagler and moved us back to Shelton for \$800. When we moved to Nebraska, we left a lot of old friends and took with us lots of memories. Because my parents couldn't pay the taxes on the half section of land, we lost it. My dad cashed in all his life insurance policies and lost them too, in order to move and to start farming again on a rented farm north of Shelton in the spring of 1934.

Bob, Harold, Freda, and I started to school in Shelton in the fall of 1933. I was in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade and when we moved again on the first of March in 1934 to the rented farm north of Shelton, Bob, Freda, and I went to the Gardner country school. The teacher was Viola Moss. I

had to take both the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade county exams in the spring that were required of all the students in the country schools. There were about 15 kids in all the first 8 grades in the one room schoolhouse. We had to walk about a mile and a half to school. Harold continued going to high school in Shelton. At that time in Nebr. there were no school buses and students had to get there any way they could. The next year when I started to high school in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, I stayed with Grandpa and Grandma during the week or with Uncle Dwight and Aunt Etta Allen (Pop's sister) who lived on a farm about a mile from the school in Shelton.

In the 1930s during the depression and the drouth, the federal Government started programs to help those in need. My parents needed it as bad or worse than many others who were getting help from the WPA or other programs, but they were too proud to ask for it. We managed to survive the best we could by selling or trading the eggs and cream for the groceries and other essentials. I started raising rabbits again for meat, but mainly we depended on the beef and pork that we raised and butchered. Mom always raised a big garden and canned the vegetables as well as the meat. We also made a smokehouse and smoked the pork hams and bacon. I well remember many nights when Mom sat by the little kerosene lamp studying the Sears Roebuck and Montgomery Ward catalogs trying to save every penny possible to keep us in shoes and school clothes. When I started to high school I got a new pair of pants and I wore those same pants every day during the whole school year. Most of the time during my high school years Aunt Harriet, who lived in Atlanta, Georgia, sent some of uncle Ray's old shoes for us to wear. Of course as soon as we got home from school we changed our clothes to do chores. In the morning we dressed in our old clothes to do the chores and then changed to school clothes after breakfast. Mom always fixed our lunches to take to school, as there was no such thing then as the school lunch program.

During my freshman year in high school I took a class on woodworking in shop and made several projects. Among these was an oak kitchen stool that Mom used the rest of her life. Then Rosalie and I used it for many years. Now Dorothy has it, and it is still just as solid as when I made it. Many years later the school sold all the wood working equipment and the solid maple wood working benches or tables that we used. Henry Wendling (Bob's father-in-law) bought one. After he died, I bought it at his sale and still have and use it. At the beginning of my sophomore year, the school started the Vocational Agriculture program with Scott Wischmeier as the teacher. Being a farm boy, I liked that class better than all the others. We also participated in the Future Farmers of America (FFA) program with individual projects to learn how to properly raise and feed the animals and keep accurate records like successful farmers have to do. I bought a mare from Pop, so I had Dixie for my project. In the summer of 1936 she got sleeping sickness with no chance of recovery and I had to shoot her myself. That was even harder for me than when I had to kill my first pet rabbits that I raised. These incidents prepared me for and helped to prevent any reluctance toward my killing Germans during WW II.

Because of the many jobs to do at home after school and on weekends, I was never able to participate in any sports or other outside activities at school like most other kids did. Neither did I have any money to spend, so I had almost no social interchange that most kids now take for granted as part of high school. I never even had a date until the first year I was in college.

During the summers and weekends during the year, I always helped with all the farm work --- plowing, cultivating, harrowing, etc., all with horses. We fixed fences, harvested grain and feed, put up hay, filled the silo, picked corn, worked with the cattle and hogs etc. When I was 14, I started working on the neighborhood threshing crew with Pop and then later with a team and hayrack working by myself loading and hauling the shocked small grain and pitching it off into the threshing machine.... The summer of 1936 was exceptionally hot and also dry. When we were cultivating corn one day it was 117 degrees and the iron seat on the cultivator was so hot that it burned my butt. I cut some of the green corn to sit on to make it bearable. We cut some of the drouth stricken corn as well as Russian thistles and other weeds to fill the silo so the cows would



have something to eat during the winter. They ate it and must have liked it, as none of them ever refused to eat it. Nor did any of them starve to death.

In the spring of 1938 we moved to a farm south of Shelton and about a mile west and south of Denman. Here we had a pasture that included about a mile of the south channel of the Platte River with the adjacent farmland. Freda went to school in Denman and Bob and I rode to high school in Shelton with Lawrence Stade and his sister, Arlene. They lived on south of us. In the spring there were lots of Sandhill cranes as well as wild ducks and Canadian geese, rabbits, pheasants, raccoons and squirrels in the trees that we enjoyed hunting.



I graduated from high school in May of 1938 at Shelton and the next week I started working for Fred Schroeder on an irrigated farm north of Shelton. I got \$27 a month and my board and room and worked from daylight until dark 6 days a week. in Denman and Bob and I rode to high school in Shelton with Lawrence Stade and his sister, Arlene. They lived on south of us. I learned to use a tractor and to operate all the other equipment and machinery needed to farm and irrigate corn, milo, alfalfa, commercial potatoes, sugar beets, and wheat. I also milked the cows and fed the hogs. About the middle of July when we were digging and hauling potatoes, I decided that I didn't want to do that kind of work all my life, so I wrote a letter to the University of Nebr., College of Agriculture in Lincoln and asked about going to college. In September I quit my job and had \$90 saved up after spending almost nothing all summer. Harold and Leona had been married previously and were living and working in Washington DC. They had driven back for a short

vacation so Harold took me to Lincoln where I started to college.

After paying my tuition for one semester, buying my books and a new pair of pants and shirt, I had enough left to pay for one month's board and room. Then I was broke. On the campus there was sort of an employment office run by an old WW I veteran, Chas. Booth, who had been pretty badly gassed in France. Residents in the area who wanted odd jobs done would contact him and he in turn would contact those of us who needed the work. I got 25 cents an hour and did about everything from baby sitting, mowing lawns, putting on storm windows, washing windows, painting houses, washing dishes, janitor work, etc. I soon found and moved into a basement room in a private home with Milo Howe. We worked for our room by baby sitting, washing dishes, cleaning the house, mowing the lawn, washing their car or whatever they wanted done. We 'batched' and had a gas burner for a stove, a refrigerator and a cupboard. There was a sink and shower and toilet in the laundry room. In the bedroom we had one bed where we slept together and a dresser, clothes closet, telephone and a desk where we could study. It was about 6 blocks from the campus. For the first three school years that is where I stayed. The third year Dwight Cherry moved in with me. We were roommates for 2 years, with the last year at a different location.

For the first year or two I didn't know what I wanted to major in, but finally after getting all the basic required subjects out of the way, I started specializing more in Agronomy and Botany. At the end of the first semester, I had been washing dishes at a restaurant until way after midnight before taking the final exam in Inorganic Chemistry the next morning. I went to sleep taking the test. When I got the results of the test back and did not pass, I went in to see the

instructor, Dr. Abbott. After telling him why I went to sleep and didn't pass the final, he agreed to give me a passing grade if I would agree to never take any more chemistry under him. Many years later when I was working for the Soil Conservation Service in Grand Island, I helped him reorganize the irrigation system on a farm that he owned in Hall County.

During the summer of 1939 I went back to Shelton and worked for Fred Schroeder and his brother Roy, on the farm again for \$30 a month this time. In September I quit to go back to college again. During the second year of college, I again managed to earn enough money at odd jobs to meet all my expenses. The first two years we all had to take ROTC, and in 1940 with the prospects of war looming up in the near future, I decided to sign up for the advanced ROTC Course. By doing this, I didn't have to register for the Draft. The Field Artillery unit was located on the Ag College campus and this would lead to a commission as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. at the end of the senior year. That year I also got a more permanent part-time job at the State Seed Lab in the State Capitol Building in Lincoln. We tested the seed for purity and germination that farmers and seed dealers from all over the state sent in. It paid 35 cents an hour and I could work as much as I wanted to during any spare time I had between classes.

That fall and during the previous summer my right ankle hurt me and the doctors said I had an extra bone in my ankle. After the end of the first semester, I contacted Dr. Teal, an orthopedic surgeon, and arranged to go into the Lincoln General hospital where he operated to remove the extra bone. I was in the hospital for 3 days and had to pay for all that without any help from anybody. The hospital bill was \$26.65 and Dr. Teal charged \$73.25. I had saved enough to pay the hospital bill and over the next three months I was able to pay Dr. Teal's bill. The cast covered my entire foot and up to above my knee. For the next six weeks I had to walk the six or eight blocks to school every day and up and down stairs to classes on crutches carrying my books etc. Sometimes there was snow and ice on the sidewalks. I could still ride the bus to work in the Seed Lab though, and fortunately I could sit down to work. The operation on my foot was very successful and has never bothered since.

I had joined the Alpha Gamma Rho fraternity in the fall of 1940 and although I never could afford to live in the fraternity house, I made a lot of good friends and learned a lot by socializing with others. Every week some of the Sorority houses had hour dances where we were invited and had the opportunity to meet a lot of girls. I learned to dance and really enjoyed myself while going to college, even though I had to earn every penny before I could spend it.



In the Advanced ROTC we were required to attend a 6-week summer camp in 1941 following our junior year. Riding in army trucks, we all went down to Ft. Leonard Wood in the Ozarks of southeastern Missouri. The Field Artillery ROTC units from the Universities of Iowa, Kansas, Arkansas, Missouri and Nebraska were together here. We got our first exposure to army life and lived in regular army barracks. We learned how to shoot and direct the fire for the artillery guns out on the firing range. Numerous classes, parades, and inspections kept us pretty busy for the entire six weeks. On the 4<sup>th</sup> of July some of us went over to the Lake of the Ozarks. Hardly any development had taken place around the lake at that time.

After we got back in Lincoln, I worked full time at the Seed Lab during the rest of the summer.

I also bought my first car- a 1930 Model A Ford two-door sedan for \$95. Dwight had previously bought one just like mine, so we called his Peter and mine Repeater. He worked for the Nebr., Crop Improvement Association and in the summer he went all over the state to inspect the fields in order for the farmer to be able to sell Certified seed when it was harvested. He also majored in Agronomy, so our interests were quite similar.

In the spring of 1942 Dwight graduated, but I still lacked about a semester of having enough hours to graduate. However I did receive my commission in June of 1942 as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt in the Field Artillery of the US Army. Even though we were in the war, they asked me if I wanted to stay another semester and graduate before being ordered to active duty. Merritt Plantz was in the same situation. My brother, Bob, had already joined the Marines. That summer I got a job with an engineering company painting bridges on the Union Pacific Railroad. We started at Grand Island and worked west. By September when school started we were at Cheyenne, Wyoming. Then I quit and went back to Lincoln to finish my college education.

Shortly after school started I met and started going with Enid (Skeets) Mundhenke, who was in nurses training at St. Elizabeth Hospital. We continued going together and by Christmas time we were getting pretty serious about each other, but decided to wait until I got back after the war to get married. I got my orders to report for active duty just before the final exams at the end of the semester. The college had a policy that if we had orders to go to the Service; we didn't have to take the final exams. I sold my books and my Model A so I could buy some army uniforms etc. and to pay for my diploma. It would be mailed to me since I would not be there for the graduation exercises. I now went to Ft. Sill, Oklahoma to the Field Artillery School and to spend the next several years in the army.

\* \* \* \* \*

From the time I graduated from High School in May of 1938 until I graduated from the University of Nebraska in December of 1942, I kept a record in a little notebook of every penny I spent each day. During my four and a half years of college I spent, and also had earned, a total of \$1,717.01 and ended up with a Bachelor of Science degree in Agriculture and a Commission as a 2nd Lt. in the US Army ---- and had a wonderful time doing it!

Please see "No, Not Yet" for the next Chapter in my life

## NO---NOT YET

*Military Memoirs by F. Eugene Liggett*

### CHAPTER I

In September 1938, I went to Lincoln, Nebraska where I enrolled at the University of Nebraska in the College of Agriculture. Participation in the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) program was one of the required subjects in all the Land Grant Colleges in the U.S. for the first two years of college. At the end of this period we had the option of signing up for the next two years of advanced training. This would lead to a Reserve Commission as a second lieutenant in the US Army. At the College of Agriculture campus in Lincoln, we had a field artillery unit, so that is what I was trained for. On the city campus there were infantry and engineering units. In June of 1941 we were required to attend six weeks of artillery training at Ft. Leonard Wood in Missouri. Here we got our first experience of being in the Army—living in a barracks with others and all the various rules and regulations other soldiers in the Army live by. In June 1942, after my senior year of college and four years of ROTC, I received a commission as a Second Lieutenant in the Reserves. My Army serial number was O-465104. Because I had had to work my entire way through college with out any financial help, I still lacked a few hours of graduating, so they gave me a deferment for one more semester to complete the requirements to graduate. Immediately upon graduation in January 1943, I was called to active duty and went to Ft. Sill, Oklahoma.

There I was assigned to a training battery to help train new enlisted recruits while I waited to attend an officer's class at the Artillery School. After some time, I attended a four months long Battery Officer's Course (BOC) which included about the same technical training as did Officers Candidate School (OCS), which commissioned officers from the ranks. The big difference was that we did not have all the BS that the OCS candidates were subjected to.

After graduating from BOC, my classmates and I got orders to military assignments all over the US. Most of us got two-weeks leave so we could go home, or wherever, before reporting to our new duty station. Of course I headed back to Lincoln, Nebraska, where I had left the girl I had hoped and planned to marry - Enid (Skeets) Mundhenke. She was in nurses training. My parents, Jim and Estella Liggett, my sister, Freda, who was still in school, and my brother, Harold and his wife, Leona, with their small daughter, Janice, all lived in Shelton, Nebraska. My other brother, Bob, was in the USMC. It was hard to tell all of them goodbye when I had to leave to go to Camp Shelby, near Hattiesberg, MS.

The 65<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division was being formed and there was a lot of competition among the officers for various positions and jobs. A good friend of mine, Merritt Plantz was also from Nebraska and had been with me in many classes at the Agriculture College since 1938. We were commissioned at the same time in 1942, and were both deferred to finish college. We were called to active duty at Ft. Sill at the same time. We were not in the same class but upon graduation, both of us were sent to Camp Shelby to be in the 65<sup>th</sup> Division. We were both assigned to the same artillery battalion, but to different batteries. I didn't particularly like the outfit and as a means of getting out, I applied for Liaison

Pilot Training. Liaison pilots flew the small Piper Cub planes used for observation and to adjust artillery fire. I had passed the physical exam and was waiting to be called to go to school, when the Battalion got orders to send a certain number of officers to North Africa and Italy as replacements. I was one of those with orders to report to Ft. Meade, MD to ship out.

I didn't have time to go home for another visit, but I did stop in Birmingham, Alabama to see my cousin, Esther (O'Neill) and Red Roberts and their small son. From there I went to Atlanta to visit Elsie (Van Winkle) Moye, another cousin. At Ft. Meade we had nothing to do but wait, so I went to NYC a couple times to visit Dwight Cherry, my former college roommate at NU. He was a medical student at Columbia Uni. and later became a doctor and surgeon. Also I got to go to Washington, DC and Baltimore several times.

On a November night I got on a train with several hundred other replacements and went to Newport News, Virginia where we boarded the ship, the *HMS Empress of Scotland*. It was formerly an English passenger ship and was now used as a troop transport ship. There were about 6,000 of us on it, with the officers having staterooms, and the enlisted men bunking down in the holds.

Because there was a significant threat from German U-boats, most ships crossing the Atlantic traveled in convoys, with navy escorts. However, as the *Empress* could steam at 35 knots, we went across as a lone ship. We went south to near the coast of Brazil, and then eastward along the Equator, and up the coast of Africa to Casablanca. However, out in the middle of the Atlantic we ran into nine German submarines. Our ship dropped a lot of depth charges. When these exploded, it sounded like someone on the outside of the ship's hull, hitting us with a big sledgehammer. At the same time our ship changed to a zigzag course, changing direction every seven minutes. As a result, the big ship rolled to one side and then to the other, causing a lot of people, including myself, to get seasick. This was my first ship ride.

I felt pretty lucky to be an officer, as we had a steward to wait on us in our staterooms- even to "draw my bath" as there was a big bathtub in my cabin. On the ship we had a big early Thanksgiving turkey dinner in the officers' dining room. I had never seen so much silverware as was spread out on each side of our plates, or as many fancy dishes and glasses as graced the tables. Naturally, the food matched the surroundings, so it was one dinner I will always remember - quite a contrast to the next Thanksgiving dinner I was to have in prison camp. I felt sorry for the way the enlisted men were fed and were crowded into the holds below deck with such poor ventilation provided. Nobody could go out on deck at night as everything was "blacked out".

Finally, we pulled into the harbor at Casablanca. Here too, I had a new experience, as I watched men unloading coal on a ship next to us. The stevedores were like a steady stream of ants, carrying fiber baskets full of coal on their heads from the ship to wherever they dumped it

We were taken outside of Casablanca to a "tent camp" surrounded with barbed wire fences. Guards continually patrolled to keep the Arabs from stealing stuff from us. They often shot several each night. The Arabs and kids were continually trying to beg, or steal whatever they could. It appeared that their most sought after clothing consisted of a

blue GI barracks bag with two holes cut in the bottom for their legs and the drawstring or rope around their waist. Usually there was a GI's name and serial number across his rear end. Another favorite, especially for the women, was a navy mattress cover with a hole cut in for their head and holes for each arm, with the mattress cover being worn as a dress.

One night I went into town to the Automobile Club, which was the Officers Club. Navy and Army personnel from all over the world were there drinking and gambling. MP's were stationed at about every gambling table, as the stakes were often quite high. I had learned my lesson and had not gambled any since first going to Ft. Sill. This lesson has lasted me a lifetime too. That night I got friendly with a Navy officer from Scotland. He was singing a song for what seemed like hours, with the last line of each verse ending with "there will always be an England for Scotland to defend".

From our camp outside of Casablanca we could watch the camel caravans coming in from the desert to the East of us. Here we had another Thanksgiving dinner with the cooks and help being Italian POW's. We all got a good case of dysentery as a "bonus".

Finally, we boarded a train and headed toward Oran. There were numerous delays as some parts of rail line used electric trains and parts used old steam engines. At each stop, either day or night, the native Arabs came with all kinds of knives and swords, which they tried to sell or trade. It was sort of scary the way they flashed them around at us to get our attention. Oran was another interesting place with all the underground tunnels etc. Most of these were "off limits", but down along the water (the Mediterranean) were the centuries-old places where slaves had been tied to iron rings fastened into walls of open caves in the rocks. Several of us went into a Muslim Mosque one day. We had to take off our shoes before going in. The women were on one side of the room and the men on the other side - all facing east and kneeling down praising Allah.

By this time the war had ended in North Africa, the Allies had taken Sicily, and the fighting had moved to Italy. The rugged nature of the terrain north of Naples, the poor quality and lack of roads, and the adverse weather conditions created enormous problems for the combat soldiers. The few roads that existed in the mountains became muddy quagmires in the constant rain and snow. In many places it was impossible to use motor vehicles to transport men and supplies to the front lines, or to evacuate the wounded. Supplies had to be carried on the backs of soldiers or mules, and the wounded had to endure lengthy and painful movement on unsteady, bouncing litters. Word that men were being worn to exhaustion by the awful environment even before they got into combat filtered back to the replacement centers in North Africa, and it was wisely decided that we should be in better physical shape before being sent up to Italy.

About 50 - 75 of us officers were sent out in the desert somewhere near Sidea-Bela-Bes, which was the headquarters of the French Foreign Legion. Here I learned a lot of the tactics used by the Infantry. We used live ammunition, which caused an occasional "unsafe" condition for the Arabs and their sheep or goats when we encountered them in our maneuvers. At night we slept in tents that we had erected. The training included a very difficult obstacle course, tougher than I had seen anywhere else. With a full pack and rifle, we crawled under barbed wire entanglements with live machine gun fire only

inches above us, over walls and through various other obstacles, and crossed a river on a rope with dynamite charges being set off in the water just below us. It was good experience though, and I am sure we were in much better physical condition when we finished this two-week course.



Back in Oran in Dec. 1943 I had my picture taken at some little studio by a French lady. One pose - one shot, and that was all. I paid her and gave her the address to send one to the folks and one to Skeets. Later I was surprised to find out that she did, indeed send the pictures home instead of just pocketing the money. I now have the original picture she sent my parents.

On New Years eve, 1943-44, several of us who had been together since we were at Ft. Meade, got some Pink Champagne, and I think that was the last time I ever got drunk. Shortly after that we got on a Liberty ship bound for Naples. Because so many ships were being sunk by German submarines, we were in a big convoy and sailed east along the African coast to Bizerte, and then past Malta and over to Sicily where we stopped shortly before going on to Naples. At about this time, Mt. Etna in Sicily was erupting and sending up a lot of black smoke and ash. Going through the Straits of Messina (between Sicily and Italy) the water was the roughest I ever saw. Our old Liberty Ship rolled from side to side and end to end. The screw (propeller) came up out of the water and it shook the whole ship. At the same time the bow went under water—then the reverse, with the bow up out of the water and the stern under. All the time it was rolling side to side. For some reason I did not get seasick though. Nobody could stand up or even walk around. We crawled, if need be, to get some C-rations to eat. All of us were glad to get off the ship. It had taken us 21 days to cross the Mediterranean from Oran to Naples.

In Italy we went to a Replacement Depot north of Naples. From here we got to watch all the planes going to and coming from the bombing of the Monastery. We saw some of the B-17's or B-24's being shot down and also got to see several good dogfights between US and German fighter planes.



A short time later several of us got orders to go up to Anzio as replacement officers for those who had been killed or wounded. The four of us who had been close friends since we first met at Ft. Meade were included in this group of replacements. Lt. Olsen and I went to the 45<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. Lt. Hoffman went to the 36<sup>th</sup> Division and Lt. Hood went to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division. Later Hood and Hoffman were killed, Olsen was badly wounded and I was captured. This was typical of most all of the

60 or 70 officers who had come over together.

We were taken down to the docks at the Naples harbor to load up on assigned Liberty Ships to go to Anzio. I was walking along the dock when I met Warren Pavlat, a close acquaintance from the Agriculture College in Lincoln, Nebraska. He was now a naval officer on one of the Liberty Ships. He asked me to ride up to Anzio with him, so I went back and got permission to get off the ship I had been assigned to and to ride up with Pavlat on his ship. We sat up all night talking and renewing our friendship. The next morning, as we sat at anchor in the Anzio harbor, the Germans came over and bombed us. The ship that I had originally been on got a direct hit and, having been loaded mainly with gasoline and ammunition, it blew sky-high! This was the first of many lucky events that enabled me to come home later.

Lt. George Olsen and I were taken to the headquarters of the 158<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battalion of the 45<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division where we reported for duty. As we walked into the command post (CP) we could hear a desperate report coming in over the radio from one of the FOs (forward observers) up with an infantry company. He was in a building and we could hear the Germans breaking into the house and shooting him! There were several lieutenants in the CP, along with Captain Beverly Finkle and Lieutenant Colonel Dwight Funk, the battalion commander. These lieutenants immediately started dividing up some of the valuables that had been collected by the officer who had just been shot. Then they looked at what Olsen and I had brought with us, and started dividing up the things we had--what a nice welcome!



45<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division Patch

Both George and I were assigned as Forward Observers to C Battery, which normally fired in support of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Battalion of the 157<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment. As FOs, we would usually work with the three "line companies" (Companies I, K, or L) of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion. Our mission was to call for and direct artillery fire on targets ahead of them. Along with our assignments, we received the news that the life expectancy of a forward observer was about six weeks. It seemed that our destiny for the future was to be killed, wounded, or captured, or any combination of these. What a future with my first real job after graduation from college!!

Olsen and I were each given a jeep and driver, a "710" radio, a radio operator and two men to carry the radio and batteries when we dismounted from the jeep. Our men were also replacements, but had been there for some time and were already settled in with other jobs in and with C Battery. Now, when not up with the infantry as part of our FO party, they would continue living with the firing battery. Due to the small size of the Anzio beachhead, Olsen and I would billet ourselves with Service Battery instead of with C Battery to help relieve some of the congestion around the firing battery while we were on the Anzio beachhead.

The first job that Olsen and I had was to dig a hole to stay in and to get situated. Everybody lived in dug out holes, which were covered with earth for protection against the German butterfly bombs, with which the German Air Force repeatedly attacked the beachhead. These bombs, each weighing 4.4 lb. were packed inside canisters, which



opened after being dropped, scattering the bombs over wide areas. When the bombs were ejected from the canister, small wings deployed, which stabilized and slowed the bomb and also set the fuse. The bombs could be set to explode on contact with the ground or as an airburst. Over time, the fragments from the thousands of butterfly bombs dropped at Anzio damaged or destroyed just about everything above ground.

We dug a hole about eight feet square and about 6 feet deep with a dog leg entrance. We went into Anzio (town) and got doors and other timbers etc. to cover our hole, making sure the cover was strong enough to support at least two feet of dirt on top of it. We had a bulldozer from Service Battery dig holes for our jeeps so the tires wouldn't get hit by the steel bomb fragments. Then we ran a wire from a jeep over to our hole and hooked up a light in our hole. All the comforts of home! The toilet was out in an open area where there was a shovel with a roll of toilet paper so each person could dig and cover up his daily contribution to build up the fertility of Mussolini's soil.

Then it was about time for us to get to work doing what we came to do. My FO party consisted of Dick Borthwick as my radio operator, Charles Smith could also operated the radio, but his and Herman Rodriguez' main jobs were to carry the "710" radio and batteries. Carter was my driver for the jeep. Olsen had a similar crew. To begin with, Sgt. Walt Schumaker, who was an original "Thunderbird", having been in the Oklahoma National Guard when the Division was called to Federal Service. He had been through Sicily and Italy before Anzio and had been out with a number of other Forward Observers and was well acquainted with how things were done in combat. He helped me get acquainted with their method of calling for and adjusting the artillery fire. Needless to say this was a lot different procedure than they taught us at Ft. Sill. It was much more practical and easier. After a couple times up with Walt's help, I was on my own from then on.

At Anzio I had a lot of interesting events that happened and will try to relate a few of them to help the reader better understand what life was like in what had been described as Germany's largest concentration camp—the Anzio Beachhead.

One night I went up to relieve another FO at an outpost. Before he departed, he showed me a piece of shrapnel that had landed by his feet. It had his initials on it! (German ordnance and other military items were marked with a three-letter code, such as "cda" or "fzo" to identify the manufacturer. Apparently the shell fragment that had landed at his feet had a manufacturer's code that was the same as his initials.) Right in front of us was a barbed wire entanglement between us and the German's front line. I was told that we had received an intelligence report that the Germans were expected to drop paratroopers that night. Naturally we all were extra alert. Along in the night we heard a big commotion in the barbed wire in front of us. I directed some artillery fire in and behind the barbed wire and the Infantry shot it up good with their machine guns and other weapons. Then all was quiet again. In the morning we saw a dead cow that had got tangled up in the barbed wire out in front, instead of what we thought were German paratroopers.

Being in a defensive position, we had telephone wires to the various units instead of depending entirely on radios. However, the Germans soon found our telephone wires and tapped into them and we tapped into theirs. Over the telephone we enjoyed listening

to “George and Sally” on the German radio propaganda programs that were designed to make the Americans and British homesick by playing all the current popular songs. Either we had to check our wires quite often or use radio for official calls. The Germans also dropped the propaganda leaflets to help destroy our morale. At least that was their intended purpose, but we found them quite amusing.

On March 4<sup>th</sup> I had a close call. I was back at the firing battery (Battery C) and they were getting a lot of counter battery fire, i.e., the German artillery shooting at our artillery positions. I had gone from the Command Post (CP) to the kitchen truck to get a can of C rations for lunch and was on my way back to the CP when a German artillery shell just missed my head and landed about six feet on the left side of me. I was lucky that most of the fragments went out away from me and all I got was a few small pieces of iron and lot of sand etc. embedded in my skin—along with a bleeding and broken left eardrum. Back at the CP it took a couple of people with tweezers, two or three hours to pick all the stuff out of me. Lady Luck had smiled on me again.

The British were on our left flank and back at Service Battery we were fairly close to some of them. After getting acquainted, we visited back and forth. We didn't get a liquor ration and they did, so one evening they invited Olsen and me over to drink and visit. Their hole lived up to their motto - “As long as you have to go, you just as well go first class”. They had dug a hole about 10 feet deep and had about four feet of dirt over the top of it. . Also electric lights like we had, powered from a near by vehicle. While sitting down there, we heard a loud thud up above and dirt started shaking down on us. We went outside to see what happened. On top of the hole lay a huge projectile from the big (280mm) railroad gun that the



Germans had up near Rome - the “Anzio Annie”, as we called it. It had apparently hit a tree that deflected its trajectory so it landed on its side without hitting the fuse on the end of it, which would have caused it to explode. Had it exploded, it would have made a hole big enough to bury a truck in. Lady luck smiled on me again!

There had been quite a few trees around the Service Battery area so when a German ME109 fighter plane was shot down close by some of the enterprising soldiers took the machine guns out and mounted them on about a four-foot stump of a tree they had cut off. By late spring there were at least six or eight of these mounted and used every time a German plane came near. I don't know whether they ever shot down a plane, but they had fun trying.

One evening the Germans hit a large ammo dump about a mile from Service Battery. The resulting explosions would put all the 4<sup>th</sup> of July fireworks displays I've seen to shame. For about an hour and a half it literally rained red-hot pieces of steel all over the area.

Lt. Colonel Funk had Service Battery build a still to take the alcohol out of the

Italian cognac and Vino that the GI's liberated. Otherwise it was about like drinking gasoline and very likely could have been detrimental to the health of the men. They had the kitchen order lots of orange juice, pineapple juice, etc. to mix with it. This was then distributed to the men in the firing batteries. This was just another example of Colonel Funk's dedication to the welfare of the men in his Battalion.

On Easter Sunday I was up with the Infantry in their trenches next to no-man's land. The Germans were on the other side of it, about 300 feet away. A rather unusual thing happened. The Germans were not shooting at us, and they were acting a little strange in that they were crawling back and forth to men in other trenches or holes. Before we knew what they were doing, we shot several of them with rifles. After capturing one or two, they told us what was happening and we quit shooting them. Because it was Easter Sunday, they were given a liquor ration and orders not to shoot at us. The men closest to us were mostly Polish or other nationalities the Germans had taken as prisoners and forced to fight us. In fact some of them still had on their original uniforms instead of the German uniform. Behind these frontline men were the German non-coms, whom the front line men were more afraid of than they were of us. If they retreated from us they would be shot by the non-coms. Behind the non-coms were the German officers, so the non-coms didn't dare retreat either. After that we aimed for the ones behind the front lines. To punish these front line men, the Germans had sometimes sat in their holes and gave the men close order drill, hoping we would shoot them.



### **German 88 Artillery Fuse**

In April it was warm and sunny - absolutely beautiful weather—but we didn't get to enjoy it much, as the fighting went on without let up. One night when the moon was not shining I went up with the Infantry where I relieved another FO. I only took two men of my FO party with me—Dick Borthwick and a new man, Homer Smith, who had been an infantryman in the 180<sup>th</sup> regiment and had gone AWOL to come over and join our artillery outfit.

We, and some of the infantry men, occupied a house that was nearly surrounded by the Germans; it was sort of like being out on the small end of a piece of pie jutting into the German lines. The enemy was all around us, and even occupied a neighboring house next to us. We could only get to or out of our house in the black of night or there was a high risk of getting shot. Even after we got into the house safely, it proved to be a dangerous place, as the Germans shot at us from the neighboring house every time we moved by a window

Just outside one of the windows were two dead Germans that had probably been there for two weeks. With the warm weather they swelled up and really stunk! In addition, there were about 40 head of cows close by that had been killed by artillery fire a couple weeks before and they, too, were really stinking.

As if we didn't already have enough to worry about, one day one of the infantry soldiers went nuts. He was subdued only when a GI put a hammerlock on him. We had to take turns holding the man in that way all day and part of the night before he could be safely evacuated.

One day I was directing the fire of one artillery gun around the house next to us. One shell landed out about 30 feet north of this house and I saw the legs and arms of a man fly up when the shell hit what was apparently the hole that one of their observers was in to watch us. From there he could relay the information to those in the house. Anyway I was glad to get him.

The replacement for the soldier, who had gone nuts and had been evacuated, came up during one of the nighttime re-supply patrols. He had been wounded and had just returned from the hospital. He had a big stack of letters that had accumulated while he was gone, and at daylight he got up to start reading them. That's when the Germans decided to make another effort to destroy our house. One of the first shells the Germans shot at us made a direct hit on this man and killed him as he was sitting in a doorway where he could get more light to read.

The house we were in was a big square house made with thick stonewalls and stone interior partitions. As the Germans continued shooting at our house with either a big mortar or 88, or both, Dick Homer, and I knocked a hole in the concrete floor and dug back under the big stone stove that was in the interior corner of the room. We finally got a big enough hole under it for the three of us to get in to protect us from the explosions and fragments of the incoming shells, the falling masonry, and the collapsing roof. I counted the shells as they exploded, and there were about 160 shells fired at our house that day, one at a time, rather than in salvos. Over 80 of them direct hits on our house. After the roof was knocked in, the shells landed and exploded in the room with us. The concussion was terrible as were the fumes and smoke from the shells.

When it got dark, the Germans stopped shooting at us. Fortunately, there was no moon so we were able to get out of the house early that night, and made our way back to our lines. The week we had spent in the stone house had been a very draining experience. I had gone seven days and six nights without any sleep. We didn't dare go to sleep as the Germans could have come and killed us all before we knew what was happening. The shelling on the last day, however had been the roughest on us. Although Homer had been in the middle when we huddled under the stove, he suffered the worst effects of the shelling. The concussion had torn all his insides loose, and he died from it. Dick and I survived, but with very sore lungs for a week or two. Later I attributed my two episodes of pneumonia to the damage that the exploding shells had caused to my lungs.



**German Wooden Bullets**

Sometimes the Germans were using wooden bullets in their rifles. These were not very accurate but if they hit a man, they would penetrate and splinter up. As they couldn't be detected by x-rays, they started an infection and the person would die, but with a very

painful death. Therefore we inspected the rifles of all captured German soldiers and killed them if they were using wooden bullets.

On May 22 I had my first airplane ride. They took me up in a Piper Cub liaison plane to look over the area we would be attacking the next day. Ordinarily the Germans didn't shoot at these planes, as the pilot could see where the shooting came from, and would direct our artillery fire on them if they did. He could see where the shooting came from. However, on this occasion we must have gotten too close, as they started shooting at us before we could turn and get away. It was a very helpless feeling, being up there in an unarmed and unarmored, slow moving light airplane while the Germans shot at us. It seemed like we were sitting still while they were shooting at us. I was glad to get back with my feet on the ground again.

The next morning the breakout from the beachhead began. We got up early and went with the Infantry to our position to start the attack. Getting ready and waiting for H Hour (the time to shove off on our attack) was the worst part - anticipating what will, or what might happen, and wondering which of us will get killed or wounded before night. To add to our discomfort, it rained a little to make us cold and shivering as we waited to push off. At H hour, 6:30 am, every artillery piece on the beachhead (640 guns) started continuous firing right in front of us. There wasn't any place larger than 10 feet square that wasn't hit by at least one shell.

After the artillery pulverized the German positions awhile, we moved out in the attack. The first thing we encountered was a German minefield. I was following one of the platoon leaders and was close behind him when he stepped on a mine, which blew off one of his feet. I took his platoon on through. We had just gotten past the minefield when the platoon leader of the following platoon stepped on a mine, so I went back and led his platoon through. Luckily I didn't step on one.

Most of the Germans were still in their holes and either too scared to come out or too shocked from all the artillery fired on them to offer much resistance. We hollered at them to come out and if they didn't immediately comply, we threw hand grenades in and went on to the next holes. As we advanced we radioed back and lifted the artillery barrage so that it stayed ahead of us-a rolling barrage. By about noon we had gotten ahead of the units on either side of us, so we stopped just over the top of a long hill and occupied some of the shallow German trenches while we waited for them to catch up.

While my men took cover in a trench, I was standing in the trench and looking around to see any activity that might be taking place ahead or to the sides of us. Obviously a German spotted me and they fired a single round from an 88 that landed to the right side of me. A fragment from the exploding shell hit me on the right side of my



head - coming through the steel helmet and the plastic liner and hit the little metal clip holding the headband in. This little clip was bent almost double where the piece of steel had hit it. It did fracture my skull as it hit just in front of and at about at the top of my right ear. If I had had my head turned an eighth of an inch either way it would have missed this little clip and killed me instantly. Once again Lady Luck had a big smile on her face.



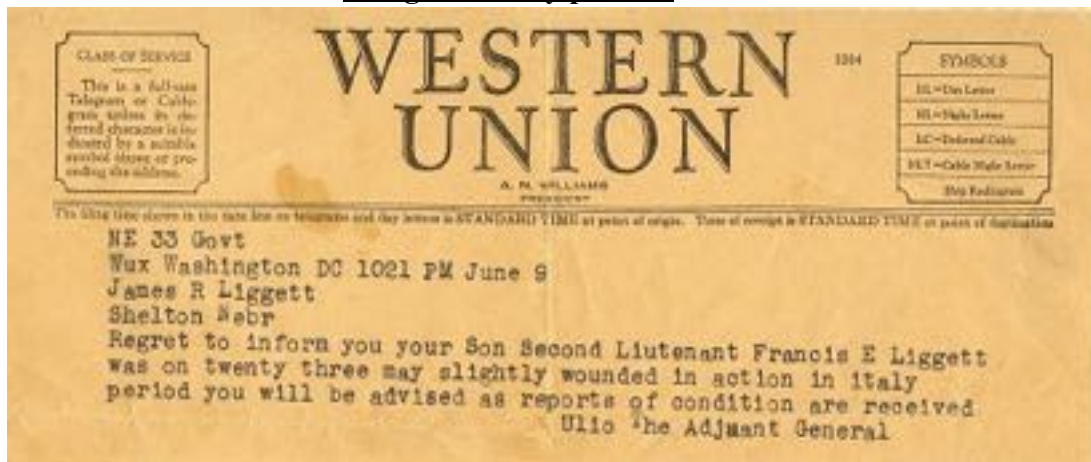
About an hour later after I had recovered somewhat from the concussion and the initial shock from the near-miss of the 88 shell, six German Mark VI tanks started up the hill toward us. When the closest one was about a block and a half away, he spotted us. In my mind's eye I can still see him lowering his 88 down. The first three shells he fired missed me by about a foot or so directly above me. I could feel the heat from them as they went by. Then he lowered it down a little and nearly buried us with the next three shots fired. All the time the tanks were advancing and shooting at us, I had been trying to get some phosphorous artillery shells on them. Finally it came. I got two tanks and I think the others pulled back, but we didn't stick around there any longer to find out. I didn't know what the next move for the Germans would be, but it was clear that we were in an exposed position well ahead of our flanking units, and just staying there didn't appear to be a good option. Also, I wasn't in very good condition from the head injury and all the recent excitement and we were in a hurry to get back over the hill and away from them.

I shot out my radio, as it was too big and heavy to carry and didn't want to leave it so the Germans could use it. I had emptied my carbine on it to completely destroy it and didn't take time to reload before we left. As we came up to the top of the hill, I looked up to see a German standing at an intersection to the trench we were in. My gun was empty! I looked at him and he looked at me. Neither of us bothered the other and we kept on going. I'll never know why he was there or where he came from, but he must have been lost, or like I was, too dazed to do anything.

We kept on going back, looking for an Aid Station or medics. We followed one of Mussolini's big drain ditches where there were lots of dead and badly wounded men, both German and Americans. The little stream of water from the previous night's rain was red with blood. Eventually, somehow, I ended up in a hospital tent that was so crowded I had to sleep on a cot with another wounded soldier.

The next day the medics took us to the Anzio harbor and loaded us up on a hospital ship. What a wonderful feeling it was to be on this clean white hospital ship with lights on at night and a bed with clean sheets to sleep in—away from the war. We went to Naples where I spent two or three weeks in the 45<sup>th</sup> General Hospital. The doctors looked at my helmet, and looked at me, and marveled at the fact that I was still alive. Lady Luck had smiled on me again! (I felt luckier than ever after seeing how badly some of the other soldiers were wounded. The fellow in the bed next to me had been hit in the back with shrapnel and kept begging the doctors to let him die.)

### Telegram to my parents



Finally, about the second or third week of June, I was discharged from the hospital and along with Frank Mathers, a 157<sup>th</sup> Infantry lieutenant, and others, boarded a ship and went to Civitevetchi, on the coast just north of Rome. While on this ship, German planes come over to bomb and strafe us and again I wished I were back on land where I could dig a hole to get in. It was a helpless feeling sitting out there in the bay, with enemy planes coming at us. Fortunately, this time we did not get hit.

After getting off the ship we were met by a 45<sup>th</sup> Division truck and were taken to the Division bivouac area. (While I was in the hospital, the 45<sup>th</sup> Division had advanced on to Rome and a little farther, before they were relieved and taken out of the line.) On the way we passed right by and saw the big railroad guns the Germans had been shooting at

us while we were on the beachhead at Anzio. These huge guns were on a railroad track and when not firing they were pulled back into tunnels for protection. (Later, one of these two “Anzio Anne” guns - the one named “Leopold”—was taken to Aberdeen Proving Grounds, in Maryland, where it is still on display at the US Army Ordnance Museum.)

After getting back to the 158<sup>th</sup> FA I got together again with Dick Borthwick, Charlie Smith and Herman Rodriguez. For the next three days my men went sightseeing with other Battery C men. With my jeep and Carter driving, Lt. George Olsen and a Lt. Grabowski, and I went sightseeing in Rome. (Carter had the uncanny ability to never get lost and to always be able to get back from wherever we were.)

We went to the Vatican and St. Peter’s, but not being a Catholic at the time, I didn’t understand the full significance of all there was to see. Of course, the Swiss guards at the entrance were quite impressive. All the paintings and mosaic pictures were very interesting, but I was surprised that there were no seats or pews to sit down. I thought it odd that everyone had to remain standing. We also went down in the catacombs and I remember the sort of shelf with St. Cecilia’s body on it. It never decomposed; she was lying there as if still alive. We didn’t see the Pope, but there were lots of Cardinals, Bishops, and Priests and other religious figures to be seen, and lots of visiting GI’s, too.

Another place we visited was the old Coliseum. It was easy to visualize what it had looked like so many centuries before when the Romans used it for their amusement by watching all kinds of fights to the death by both men and animals. We saw the balcony where Mussolini made many big speeches - lots of old statues all over Rome - other churches and many government buildings. The streets were crooked and very narrow, making driving or walking difficult or hazardous. One day we went to the big Rome Opera House where Irving Berlin and others with the USO show were entertaining the American and British soldiers who had fought so long and hard to get there. It was a beautiful building.

In Rome the general population was somewhat different than those down in the southern part of Italy or Sicily. Here most were bigger people, more blondes and blue-eyed people, where in the south they were smaller, with dark hair and dark eyes.

While I very much enjoyed my time in Rome, the visit had to be a short one, since the division was preparing to move. After three days of sightseeing, the division’s vehicles were all lined up in convoy formation for the long drive to our new bivouac area near Salerno, south of Naples. Though we didn’t know it officially, we were being assembled to prepare for the invasion of southern France, which was to take place in August.

At Salerno we recuperated from the long fighting at Anzio, replaced those men who had become casualties, and began training for the invasion. Amphibious training was part of the schedule, so it was clear to us that another landing was to be in our near future. Numerous times we practiced climbing down the rope ladder-like nets on the side of ships into small landing craft below. We also spent a lot of time riding around in the landing crafts, as we would do later when we landed on the beaches in southern France. The old-timers in the Division well remembered the bloody battle at Salerno nearly a year earlier, when our forces assaulted the Italian mainland - and this was after having taken



Sicily.

After our move, Olsen, Grabowski, and I lived in a tent in an Italian orchard. The weather was warm and we enjoyed not having to fight for a while. A couple times we went to Pompeii and it was very interesting to see the way people lived about 2000 years before. They died when Mt. Vesuvius, the volcano, erupted and covered them up with hot ash.

While here I got to go on R&R (Rest and Recuperation leave) to Sorrento and stayed in a hotel taken over by the Army. It was a well-deserved week of vacation and relaxation. I went to the famous Isle of Capri one day, and spent some time swimming in the blue Mediterranean. It was here that I lost my high school class ring as it came off while swimming.

One nice afternoon, back in the orchard, I stayed in our tent to write some letters while Olsen and Gabby went someplace. While I was sitting there alone, a garter snake about two feet long came across the ground floor in our tent. I grabbed him by the tail and with a quick movement like cracking a whip; I broke the snake's neck without popping its head off. I coiled the dead snake up on Grabowski's pillow. That night when Gabby came home - drunk as usual - he saw the snake, pulled out his .45 caliber pistol, and emptied it on the snake while I pretended to be asleep—until then. Grabowski was one of the few people who had an air mattress in his sleeping bag. Needless to say, his air mattress was well ventilated. He always thought the snake was alive when he shot it and I never told him otherwise.

By the second week of August all the equipment was loaded on the ships and on August 13<sup>th</sup> we headed out to sea. After the ships were organized into convoy formation, we sailed west, going between Corsica and Sardinia. I never minded riding on the Navy's ships, as we officers were always given nice beds and had good meals with the navy officers. The trip was uneventful.

Early on the morning of August 15 we ate breakfast and put on our backpacks and prepared to leave the ship. My FO party embarked in a landing craft with Lt. Van Barfoot's infantry platoon of I Company, 157<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment. With a full pack on our back and carrying our guns, we climbed over the side and down the nets to the small landing craft below. The water was sort of rough with large swells. That made it difficult and dangerous going from the more stable big ship with the nets to the small boat that was bobbing up and down far below. We were two or three miles from shore when we got into the landing craft and it seemed like we traveled awfully slow toward the shore.

Massive firepower was applied to the beaches, even before we got into the landing craft. The Air Force had bombed the beaches and the area immediately behind them. Then the Navy fired their big guns at previously known targets. All the while we were headed toward the beach, the navy fired small rockets over our heads. Some of them were defective and landed in the water near us, but again we didn't get hit - just scared. When we got close to the beaches the offshore fire support ceased. Now it was up to us. With me and my FO party was a navy officer who was supposed to direct the fire from the ships after we landed, and until our artillery got on shore. Then I would take over.

We knew there was a sea wall where we were supposed to land at St. Maxime so

we took along some dynamite to blow a hole in it to get off the shore and on to the beach. We also took some ladders in, just in case we needed them. The dynamite had got wet and wouldn't explode so we set up the ladders. Lt. Barfoot climbed up and sat there for a few seconds and looked back and said "Come on, they didn't shoot me!"

The Navy and Air Force had done a good job of getting rid of most of the Germans in our sector, so we had little trouble getting into St. Maxime. Once in the town, however, we encountered numerous snipers who had to be cleared out of houses, buildings, and other structures. The Navy officer with me was shot by a sniper. We left him to be taken care of by the medics. Now I had the job of directing fire for the naval gunfire support too. With our artillery fire direction center personnel working directly with the naval fire direction center, I could use my 610 radio to communicate with them and direct the adjustment of the shells in my usual manner. They would convert this to the navy's method of directing their gunfire.

After securing the town, we turned to clear out the German positions along the coast where we soon encountered a high hill with Germans in deep holes and tunnels. We went around the backside of it and I directed the fire from the battleship "*Texas*" and several Destroyers. Since we were directly in line with the ships and the hill, if any of the shells would have come over the top of the hill we would have been hit. So instead of using the standard practice of adjusting fire by using the first two shells fired to get the target bracketed, I was real careful to creep up on the other side of the hill with one gun to get to the top. Then I called for "Fire for effect" and all the guns assigned to this fire mission fired on the target at once. With those big 14-inch shells, the hill shook and sort of settled down. It was a lot different than shooting the 105's of our artillery.

There were still a lot of Germans in holes on and around the hill despite the heavy shelling. So after the Navy stopped firing, Lt. Barfoot and his men moved up. The hill had a barbed wire entanglement around the upper part of it, so with a bangalore torpedo, the infantry opened up a gap in the wire to go through. Lt. Barfoot had gotten rid of his gas mask and filled the bag with rifle grenades that were his favorites. He went in alone and it reminded me of shooting prairie dogs in Nebraska. One would pop up out of a hole and Van would shoot him. Then another, and another, until he had killed seven or eight of them. Then all of the platoon went in and finished the job. A German captain, a sergeant, and one or two others surrendered. I helped search them and I took a really neat safety razor from the captain. The sergeant was a mean looking guy and he had a pair of brass knuckles in his hip pocket. One of the Infantrymen took it and tried it out on the German to show him how it felt. (That is why we had been advised to never carry a big knife.)

That night we were tired and I slept outside on the sidewalk by a house that had been destroyed. From then on we walked and cleared the retreating Germans who would stop and fight and then we would chase them again. Lots of times they would fight almost to the last man for some important road intersection or some other key piece of terrain that could be defended. Our artillery had a hard time keeping up and having the guns in position to fire at all times. On one of these occasions my driver, Carter, had done some trading with the French people and we started cooking a rabbit stew that included some potatoes and carrots. We had just got started with the cooking when we had to pack it up and move. Again we got it all out and started cooking again, but before it got done,

we had to move again. The third time we finally got it cooked so we could eat it. During these fast moving situations I usually had Carter bring my jeep so we could ride instead of walking until we engaged the enemy again. Otherwise he stayed with C Battery until we needed him.

As we went farther north, generally following the Rhone River, we got into areas where there were lots of good ripe tomatoes and then into the grape vineyards with lots of delicious ripe grapes. They were welcome supplements to our C or K rations. The French civilians were very glad to see us come and always gave us a big welcome. They dug down in the dirt floors of their cellars and got some of the best wine they had buried to hide it from the Germans. Since the Germans had taken all their livestock and most everything else they could, these people had been hurting for food. Our chocolate bars (D-bars) were some of the things they hadn't seen for several years.

The Germans had thousands of troops back inside France, and we in the Seventh Army pushed north up the Rhone Valley, while Patton's Third Army was pushing eastward from the Normandy beachhead. A large German army was at risk of being trapped behind the two American armies. The tighter we closed this gap, the harder the German rearguard fought so their main body could escape back into Germany. Here was where we had some real hard fighting.

Our American OSS (Office of Strategic Services) officers had been helping to organize resistance groups with the FFI (Free French of the Interior) as well as the Marquis (the Communist French) to fight the Germans. Arms, ammunition, explosives, etc. were dropped to help these Resistance Fighters to sabotage and otherwise harass the Germans. Occasionally we would overrun an area that they worked in and an OSS officer would join us for a while. Some of the French also worked with us as they could contact the local residents who knew the land and could move through the German lines with relative ease and were able to monitor and report on German activities ahead of us.

Many times we just took the main towns and bypassed some of the smaller ones to the sides as the Germans seldom stayed back where they would be trapped. One day a young lady came running over to us and was so hysterical she could hardly talk. Finally somebody understood French and could make out what her problem was. We had bypassed a small village over three or four miles to the side of us where the civilian FFI had been supplied rifles and ammo. They got real brave since we were close, and chased the Germans out of the town. Then they ran out of ammunition and the Germans came back. They tied the French men up and put a stick of dynamite in their mouths with a long fuse so the individual could watch the fuse burn until it blew his head off. The women and kids were treated even worse. Their eyes were poked out and their fingers chopped off. Since no artillery was thought to be needed, so I didn't go over there. However few, if any, prisoners were taken in this case. This was a good example of what the Germans were capable of doing to other people they controlled.

One night my FO party and I were waiting beside the road under some bushes for our Infantry to meet us before crossing the Daubs River. The Engineers were finishing building a pontoon bridge across the river. As we were sitting there under some trees and bushes, four trucks loaded with Germans came up the road and stopped right in front of us. My initial thought was to open fire on them, but after a moment's hesitation, I came to

realize that there was no way the four of us with Carbines could kill or capture all those Germans. I decided that I would rather be a live coward than a dead hero. So we sat there watching them. After a few minutes they drove on across the pontoon bridge. They were the first ones to cross it after our Engineers built it. Maybe the Engineers saw them and felt the same way I had - or they didn't recognize the fact that they were Germans instead of Americans. Later, our infantry arrived and we all went across.

One day we were supposed to attack and while we were waiting to push off, the Germans decided to attack us. They started out with a lot of artillery firing on us while we were getting lined up. It is nerve wracking waiting for the next shell—wondering where it will hit and who will be the victims. Finally we pushed off too - with me directing our artillery fire on them ahead of us—with them trying to do the same to us. We finally made some progress, and my FO party and I got in an old stone house, from which I had good observation of the enemy from a window. The Germans were circling around from one side trying to get us surrounded. I fired over 1,000 rounds at them and finally succeeded in chasing the Germans out of the trees, forcing them to retreat across an open area. I had already adjusted on this area and had established a Concentration Number for it, so once the Germans were out in this open area, all I had to do was call for this concentration number and the whole battalion of our artillery would immediately blast the area. Then I could shift back to the trees to chase out another bunch. I killed at least 100 or more of them, and no doubt wounded three or four times that many more.

However, just when things were going pretty well for us, several Mark VI tanks and supporting infantry, attacked toward my house. While I was looking out of the window and adjusting fire on the Germans, I was hit in the forehead by a fragment from a shell that exploded nearby. Again, my helmet saved me as it just made a big dent in the steel helmet but didn't come through. Lady Luck had smiled on me again, but I wondered how much longer this could go on. The Germans pressed the attack despite the artillery fire, and it looked like they were going to get through to us, so I took a chance and brought the whole battalion of our artillery in on our position. While it was hitting all around us, my men and I ran out and got away from them without getting hit. The Germans had sense enough to keep their heads down while the artillery was coming in. Lady Luck was still smiling, as my men and I got away without being killed or captured or wounded that day.

Print the complete address in plain letters in the space below, and your return address in the space provided on the right. Use typewriter, dark ink, or dark pencil. Faint or small writing is not suitable for photographing.



TO  
Mr & Mrs James R. Liggatt  
Shelton,  
Nebraska

FROM  
Lt EE Liggatt OY6 S/OX  
D Coy C. I SB FA Bn  
APO 45 To PM NY NY  
31 Aug 1944  
(Sender's complete address above)

SEE INSTRUCTION NO. 2

Southern France

Dear folks,  
I'll have time for another short letter & hope there's not much to write except that I'm still ok & going good.

A few days ago we had it pretty rough as we hit a strong point & were supposed to attack. About that time the Germans attacked too & had a bunch of tanks & I was out ahead of our dug & a couple tanks got behind me cutting me off. I had pretty good observation & really threw in the artillery. I fired well over 1000 rounds - some of it on myself to chase them back. Rifle fire & all sizes of artillery was hitting around me & pieces coming through the windows of the house I was in. With the artillery I succeeded in knocking out a big tank & a big mortar & killing between 50 & 100 of their men & wounding lots more. More important than that I chased them back & kept from being captured or killed. It's pretty rough at times but a day's work. They've been strafing us & bombing some but so far I've been pretty lucky. Sure wish this would end pretty quick because a guy's had can't hold out forever. After listening to the news it does sound like it will last much longer but meeting up with them it looks a little different.

I was sorry to hear the wheat wasn't any better than it was & hope you get some rain to help the corn along so it will make a crop. Also I hope left for school yet? It will probably be pretty lonesome around there now with all of us gone, but you still have Harold & Don & Janice there close which will help.

I'll I'd better quit & sleep a little while & have a chance as you never know what is coming up.  
Love to all,  
Gene

HAVE YOU FILLED IN COMPLETE ADDRESS AT TOP?



HAVE YOU FILLED IN COMPLETE ADDRESS AT TOP?

The weather here is almost like back there towards  
the land of Egypt. The nights are so cold that it almost  
freezes. I already put on my winter undercoat. It  
rained for about 3 days & nights & we all were soaked  
clear through & cold as the devil. The worst part was that  
we had to keep right on fighting & it was plenty rough  
too. One night I checked off 500 Hunies & 15 Mark II  
tanks with artillery alone. If I'd known what was there  
I really have been scared but didn't until the next day  
when the French told me. It's been about 4 days & nights  
since we've slept for more than a few minutes at a time.  
Sometimes they stand & fight like the devil & then take  
off & we drive for hours trying to catch them.

Sanggon by this time Jude has gone to school.  
oh yes, tonight I got another letter from Viola Mae.  
It's nice to hear from other people too.

I'll give God to go again & come home so  
I'll write more when I can.

Love,  
Gene

**September 4, 1944, -last letter home.**

After a few more days of minor skirmishes with the Germans, we had advanced to

the edge of the Alps, and were getting fairly close to Switzerland. The land was characterized by long sloping hills with most of the higher area forested. The ground on about the lower third of the hills was cleared and provided grass for livestock. Usually in the bottom was a little stream and an occasional village or town - very picturesque. While back at the battalion headquarters, preparing to return to I Company again, I jokingly told Col. Funk that I was going over to Switzerland and they could go ahead and fight the war without me. I was never to see the Col. again, but I never got to Switzerland either.

On the night of September 10, 1944, I was with Lt. Van Barfoot and his platoon of I Company. We knew the Germans were up ahead of us, but we didn't know where. Leaving my FO party and Van's platoon behind, he and I took a sound-powered telephone and strung a wire as we went. In the middle of the blackest, darkest night imaginable, the two of us moved cautiously through the forest to see where the Germans were. Every little twig we stepped on sounded like a herd of elephants out there. Once we saw a small luminous spot ahead and Van raised his gun to shoot, thinking it was a man's wristwatch - and it did look like it could be. However, I had seen this type of thing before and thought it was probably some free phosphorous from an old dead and decaying tree. Luckily, I grabbed his arm and stopped him before he shot. Going up toward it, it did turn out to be phosphorous, so we avoided alerting the Germans by shooting at the tree.

We kept going until we came to the edge of the clearing and though we still hadn't encountered any Germans, we waited there until it started getting light. Down the hill and about 500 yards from us was the little town of Abbenans. There was the usual cleared area below us with a stream in the bottom. There was also a road with a bridge that crossed the stream and led into the town. We could see a lot of Germans in the town so, using the sound-powered telephone, I started firing artillery on them. All the houses had red tile roofs and the artillery shells hitting them sent up a cloud of red dust. One Frenchman came out waving a sheet indicating he didn't want us to shoot up his house, and I really couldn't blame him. After firing around and on the town for an hour or two, suddenly about 60 to 70 ambulances left the town. We had our doubts that they were all carrying wounded people but we didn't shoot at them. About that time a tree that was right out in front of us, only about 200 feet away started moving. It was a well camouflaged anti tank gun with a five-man crew. They pushed it down the hill and, as they were crossing the bridge, I got a direct hit on them. They flew in all directions. The bridge was also pretty well demolished.

At about noon we didn't see any more German activity in Abbenans so we called my FO party and the platoon of infantry to come and join us as we went into town. There were no more Germans there. Lt. Barfoot's platoon was then relieved and they went back in the company's reserve. After having been with Barfoot's platoon most of the time since we landed in France, this was the last time I was to see him until many years after the war.. A few weeks later Lt. Van Barfoot was awarded the Medal of Honor for extraordinary heroism while at Anzio and was sent back to the States to receive it from President Roosevelt. He was a remarkable individual and excellent soldier. Van was half Choctaw Indian and about 6 ft. 6" tall. He would rather go prowling around at night behind the German lines than stay back on our side.

My FO party moved out with the rest of I Company and headed out across the clearing on the other side of Abbenans and up the slope toward the wooded area at the

top. Some of the Germans who had withdrawn from the town had taken up positions in the woods above us where we couldn't see them, and were firing down on us. As we advanced up the hill, I walked along beside the company commander, Frank Mather, whom I had known since we were both patients at the same time in the hospital in Naples.

He always carried a pistol instead of a rifle. I always carried a carbine. I remarked to him that someday he would be identified as an officer because he carried only a pistol and might get shot by a sniper. It wasn't 15 minutes later that, as we walked side-by-side talking to each other, he stopped right in the middle of a word. I looked over at him as he fell to the ground. He was dead - having been shot by a sniper from the trees above.

The rest of us kept going and late in the afternoon we got to the top of the hill. Lt. Howard Litske's platoon was supposed to be out ahead of us. I joined the battalion commander, Major Merle Mitchell, who had come up to temporarily take command of I Company since Lt. Frank Mather was killed. Other officers with him were Captain Henry Huggins, and another Lt. and a Frenchman. With them, we looked at our maps and tried to find a road that went down on the other side of the hill, but couldn't find it. After deciding what to do, I left Major Mitchell and the other officers all standing in a group, and started walking back to my FO party. About 10 or 15 seconds later, I had gone only 50 to 75 feet when the Germans opened up with a machine gun, firing in our direction. I assumed that Major Mitchell and all the other officers who were standing there with him were killed because they were not taken as prisoners, and the Germans had occupied the area.

Right where I needed it, and when I needed it, there was a shallow depression inside of where the walls of an old building apparently had been. My FO party was already in it when I jumped in with them. The Germans continued firing directly over us while our tanks from behind were shooting back over us at the Germans. I set up the radio and was directing artillery fire in a semi circle in front of us just by the sound, as I didn't dare stick my head up. As it got nearly dark our tanks pulled back, which was customary, and the Germans quit shooting too. A few minutes later when everything was quiet, we heard a German tank coming toward us real slow and with very little noise. All we could hear was the clank-clank-clank of the track as it came closer. I told my men that it was time we were getting out of there and that I would try. If I made it, they were to follow.



## **NO---NOT YET**

### **Prisoner of War**

#### Chapter II

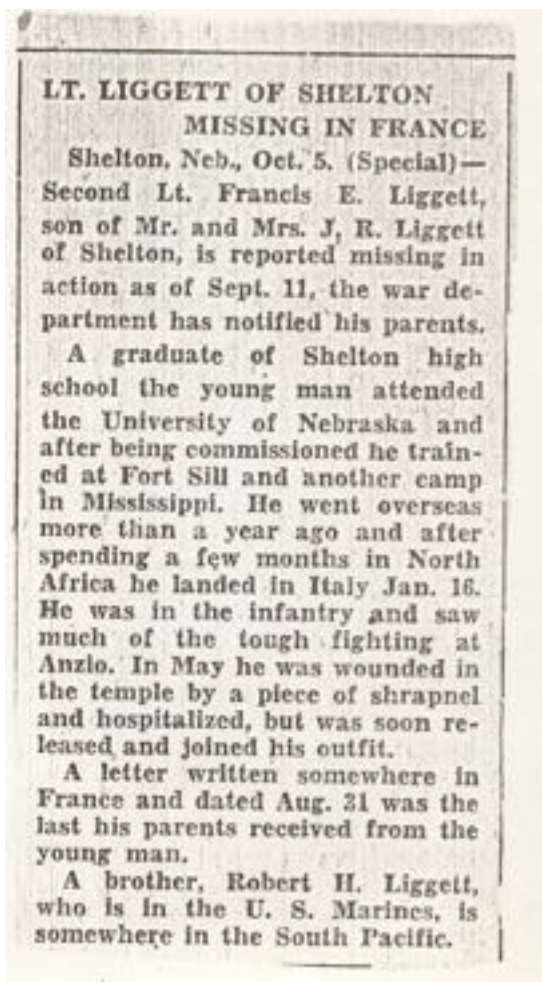
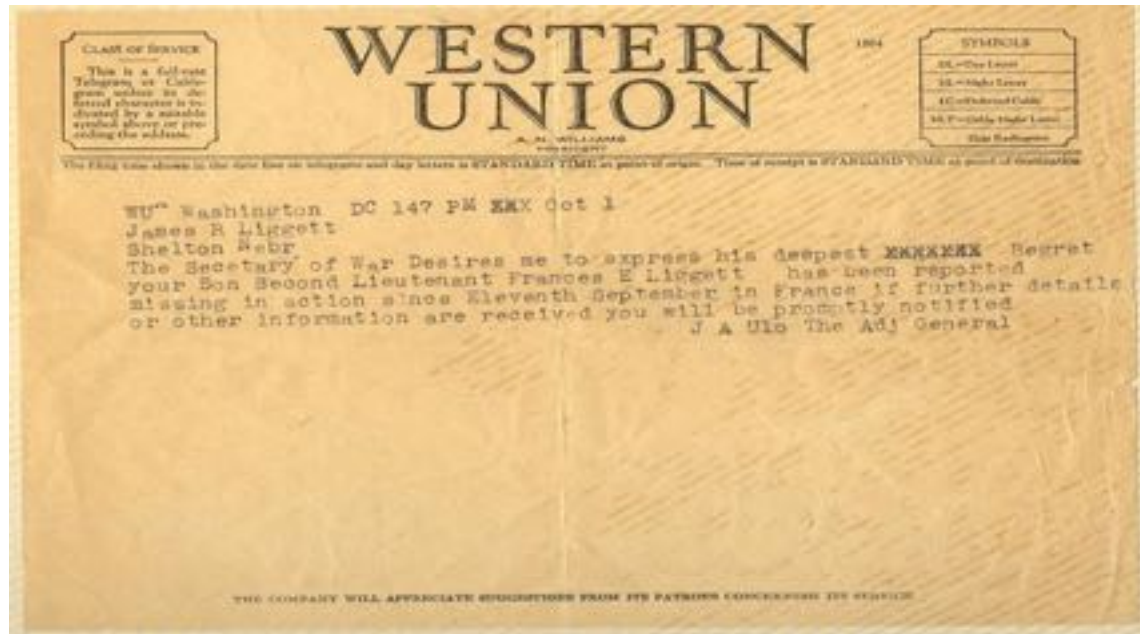
I got out and had to go across an open area of about 150 feet to get to the trees beyond the clearing. It was practically dark then. When I got out in the open, they started shooting at me from all across the front of the trees ahead of me as I headed back toward our lines. I raised my hands and gun and hollered at them to stop shooting. They answered back in German! There I was out in front of a whole line of Germans and in the open with no place to go or way to get there. I had no choice except suicide or be captured. They came out after me and took my carbine out of my hands. Believe me, that was a traumatic experience with a feeling of helplessness when they took my gun away from me. A couple of nights before, I had lost my binoculars so borrowed a pair of real good German binoculars from one of the infantrymen. I had them around my neck. Also I had a little German pistol on my belt. If we ever caught a German with any American equipment on him, we killed him, and they normally did the same thing. Having no time to get rid of them, I figured this was going to be the end. However, to my surprise, they acted like a bunch of little kids to see who was going to get them. Later I found out that they were some of the German Luftwaffe ground force that were put up in the infantry and this was their first fighting. Again Lady Luck looked at me and smiled from ear to ear. One of the first things the Germans did was to take my glasses off and stomp on them to break them. After finishing searching me and taking my cigarettes and lighter, money, and jack knife, they made me lay down with my head on a big rock. A rifle was held against it on the topside until they finally captured the rest of my men.

Later, Dick Borthwick told me they didn't know that anything had happened to me, and came out one at a time only to be captured too. None of them were wounded, but the Germans did shoot through the radio while Smith had it on his back. After they got all of us, they fed us some real good beef stew with potatoes, carrots, onions, etc. that they, too were eating. This was probably the best meal I was to get from the Germans while I was a POW. My Lt. bars and insignia were on my shirt collar, but I had them covered so they didn't find out that I was an officer or I might not have been treated as well.

Lt. Howard Litske, a platoon leader, and one of his men were also captured, apparently before I was, as his platoon was supposed to have been out ahead of us. A German soldier had been shot through the stomach and without a stretcher, the six of us had to carry him about  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile down the hill on a shelter-half, holding it tight so his middle didn't sag down. Every time we let it sag down, a guard would jab us in the back with his bayonet. The Germans took us down a trail on the back side of this hill to what appeared to be like a Regimental Headquarters. When they had searched me, they had failed to find my map that I had inside my shirt next to my chest. It had our unit's location etc. on it. As we were going down the hill, I managed to hide it in some bushes next to the trail. At the headquarters we were turned over to an old German Captain. He had learned to speak English while he was a POW of the English in World War I. With

an English accent along with his German accent it was rather comical, but he was a pretty good old guy and gave us some good advice on things not to do. Then we were put in a truck and taken to a schoolhouse where we slept on the floor that night.

### Telegram to my parents:



The next day they took us to another town some distance away where they put me in solitary confinement for a couple of days. Then they took me in another building for interrogation. The officer took me down a hall to a room and showed me a technique they used to get people to talk. Here was an oversize bathtub next to the wall. A sort of post was across the top of the bathtub with one end of it in a hole in the wall on the other side of the tub. On our side, at the end of the post was a crank. The officer indicated they would put a person on this post and tie him down like a chicken put on a rotisserie for a barbecue. The bathtub was filled with water and stinking human excrement. They could then turn the crank and hold a person's head under this crap in the tub for as long as they wanted to, and bring him up when they wanted to. The thought of this technique was very unsettling, as I'm sure it was intended to be.

Then he took me to another room where

I sat by his desk, while he tried to visit a little. After only giving him my name, rank, and serial number, he picked up a big black book, about 12" by 15" in size, and about two or three inches thick. He opened up the book and found my name. He told me where I came from in Nebraska; when I went into the Army; and every place I had been stationed in the States, when I left the States, and every place I had been since going overseas. I was amazed! Obviously they had this same information on thousands of other Americans. (Even today, I don't know how they got all that information, and much less how they kept it up to date - and without computers. The only explanation I have ever heard was that they had enough people in the U.S. reading newspapers and keeping track of every one in every small town in the U.S. and forwarding the information to Germany somehow.) I had given my name, rank, and serial number, and the officer did not press me for any more information. Thank God they didn't put me through the bathtub torture.

The next day we were taken over to Mulhouse, France, arriving there just in time to be rushed into an air raid shelter during an American bombing attack on the town. When that was over, they put us on a boxcar, We were each given one loaf of German bread to last us until we got to wherever we were going. The train headed north, but of course we didn't know where we were going. We traveled at night and sat in the railroad stations during the day to avoid being bombed or strafed by our own American pilots. Their favorites were to catch a train going into a tunnel and bombing the other end of it shut so it would pile up the train in the tunnel. Occasionally we could peek through the cracks of the boxcar and knew we were going north up past the Siegfried line as sometimes we were able to see parts of it.

Our destination turned out to be Limberg, Germany. They let us out of the boxcars and marched us to our first POW camp, Stalag XII-A, which was a distribution center for POW's. This was the last time I was to see Dick Bothwick or Charles Smith. Later I got to see Herman Rodriguez. We were registered into the German POW system and with the International Red Cross in Switzerland. They in turn notified our government in Washington D.C. that we were POW's. The registration process gave us a certain measure of relief, since we were now officially "on the books" as POWs and the Germans had acknowledged responsibility for our care. Until this time there had been no official record that we were in German hands, and they could have denied responsibility for anything that might have happened to us. Each of us was issued a German metal "dog-tag" which was perforated so it could be broken in two, permitting one part to be left with a body and the other half taken for the records. My POW serial number - 87959 - was stamped on both halves of the tag. We officers were photographed with a card showing our serial number and the picture, which was glued onto the identification card. We were instructed to carry this at all times.



German Identification Card

Dog Tags - WW2 - German & American, also Korean Conflict:



As this was in September, the Germans had lots of cabbage available, and apparently little else, for all we got to eat was purple cabbage soup. (I had never eaten anything that would cause more gas on ones stomach than this did.) Every morning and night we had to assemble outdoors for "Appel" - a muster and prisoner count. We formed up in blocks of 50, (10 wide and 5 deep) to be counted. One guard

went down the line counting us --- then he would click his heels and raise his arm in a "Heil Hitler" salute as he reported up to the next level of command. This heel clicking and saluting went on at each echelon until all reports had been satisfactorily made. Each

time they clicked their heels and raised their arm to “Heil Hitler” all of us would make an effort to fart as loudly as we could. It made the Germans mad, but there was nothing they could do about it. At least it gave us a little satisfaction to get rid of some of the gas from the cabbage at an opportune time.

I was only in Stalag XII-A for a few days, but it was long enough to witness some rather unpleasant incidents. One day hundreds of American bombers went over heading north east to bomb some other city. A couple hours later they came back over us. A few of them had some bombs left, which they dropped on our camp. Some of the bombs didn't explode, so they made some of the American POW's go out and dig them up so they could dispose of them. On another occasion I watched as a work detail of Russian POWs came back into camp after a day's work, when I saw a German guard hit one of the POW's in the head with a shovel and kill him.

**Prisoner of War Camp**

Date 20 Sept. 1944

No. of Camp only: (as may be directed by the Commandant of the Camp.)

I have been taken prisoner of war in Germany. I am in good health — ~~slightly wounded~~ (cancel accordingly).

We will be transported from here to another Camp within the next few days. Please don't write until I give new address.

Kindest regards

Christian Name and Surname: Francis E. Liggatt

Rank: 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt.

Detachment: \_\_\_\_\_

(No further details. — Clear legible writing.)

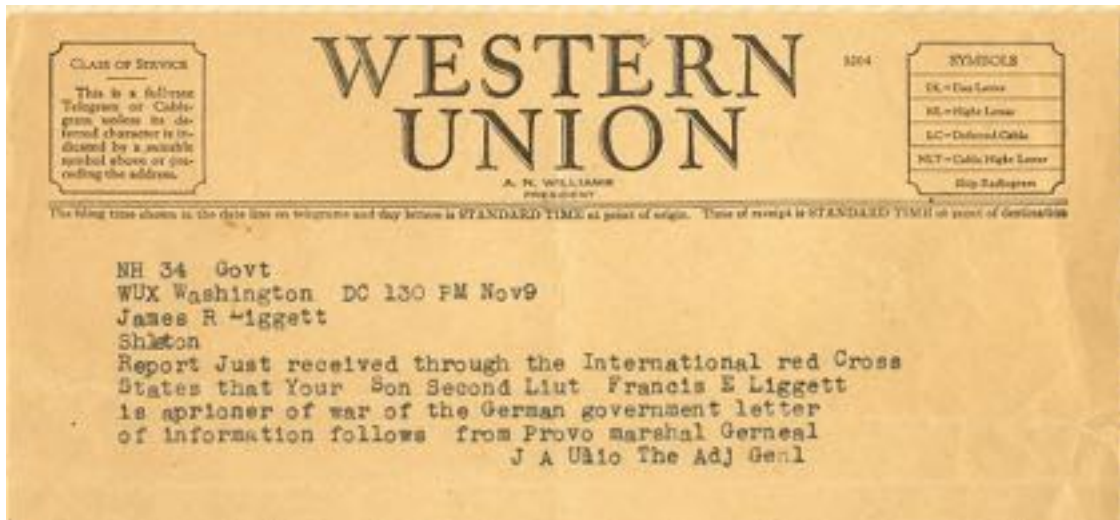
## Notification of Prisoner of War Status

After several days of processing by the Germans in Stalag XII-A, the officers were loaded into boxcars for another train ride. A gain, we were each given one loaf of black bread - which was about one-third sawdust - to last us for the duration of our trip. We had no idea where we were going, but we could tell we were headed east. I remember stopping in Leipzig.

Three guards rode in the car with us. They put what looked about like a five-gallon bucket of water in the car for us to drink. The guards told us that after the water was gone, the bucket was also to be our latrine. Most of us had dysentery by then. We had no toilet paper, no way to wash up, and of course no change of clothes, only what we were captured in. One of the guards was an ornery devil and didn't like us - and we didn't like him any better. (In looking back, I will have to admit that we probably acted like little kids do, in that they are continually trying different things and testing their parents

to see just how much they can get by with and where the limits are.) When the train stopped this one guard supposedly emptied the latrine bucket and refilled it with water to drink without even rinsing it out. However he often left various amounts of the crap in the bucket before refilling it. A person has to be pretty thirsty to drink it, but being the latter part of September with warm weather, and shut up in the box car, we did what we had to do to survive - - no matter how disagreeable.

**Letter to Parents:**



**Official Notification of Prisoner of War Status**

On September 30 our train pulled into the station in Schubin, Poland, and we were ordered out of the boxcar. After a short march we were at our new “home” --- Officer Lager (Officers Camp) 64, or Oflag 64. This is where all the American ground force officers were kept. (The American Air Force personnel went to separate camps under the control of Herman Goering and the German Luftwaffe.) Our camp was located north west of Warsaw and south of the Baltic Sea - a long way from the American lines. There was virtually no chances of escaping and getting back to our lines. At the time I arrived, there were about 350 American officers there. Most of them had been captured earlier in North Africa or in Sicily or at Anzio.

Oflag 64 had initially been a boy’s school before being converted into a POW camp. Then it was used to house POWs of other nationalities before being designated as the primary camp for American ground force officers. It was said that Stalin’s own son, who was a pilot and was captured after being shot down, was held here for a while and Hitler had tried to trade him to Stalin for a German General that had been captured by the Russians. However, Stalin had no use for any prisoner as he thought they should all die fighting instead of surrendering - even his own son, who ultimately died from mistreatment in another German camp.

Dear Father,

1 October 1945

Undoubtedly the "missing in action" notice caused you some concern, but hope that by this time you have received word that I am a Prisoner of War and not wounded. The past few weeks have been so different and exciting that time has passed quite fast for me. I am now quite safe and we have a nice camp with a big library and all kinds of athletic facilities - also picture shows about every night. The Red Cross is doing a wonderful job of helping us. Now please don't worry too much about me as I should get along all right from now on.

I hope the corn came through the dry weather and is making a good yield. I'd sure like to hear how everything is and whether or not you are going to move, but have my doubts if I ever get a letter until after the war. My address is Lt. Francis E. Higgott 87959, OF 129 64, Germany, via New York, New York. Write anyway though as it may come through. The number of letters we can write is very limited and this is the first one so please notify Skantz. I'll write her next time I get a chance. Also please notify Nebraska Alumni to stop sending the paper. Write to the outfit I was in telling them I was captured and to send my clothes

MIT LUFTPOSTE  
NACH NORD AMERIKA  
Per Payion

Kriegsgefangenenpost

Taxe parcoure

RM 41 RPF



An Mr + Mrs JAMES R. LIGGETT



11076  
Gebührenfrei

Empfangsort: SHELTON,  
Straße: NEBRASKA  
Kreis: USA.  
Land: \_\_\_\_\_  
Landesteil (Provinz usw.)

Deutschland (Allemagne)

Lager-Bezeichnung: Kriegsgef.-Offizierlager 3011

64

Gefangenennummer: 87959

Vor- und Zuname: LT FRANCIS E. LIGGETT

Absender:

Tell Harold, Leona and Janice and Freda and Bob  
hello for me. I hope Bob is still getting along all right  
and that this whole thing ends soon so we  
can all come home again.

Love,  
Gene



For the first few days after our arrival at Oflag 64, our reception by the other POWs was pretty cool. We learned that the Germans often attempted to slip in a stooge with the incoming POWs, and as a result, there was a committee of officers who interviewed each of us to determine if we were in fact legitimate American POWs. It makes no difference where in this world you go, there is always someone who knows someone you know, or some common place or names that both are familiar with. After we were “cleared”, the old POWs were very helpful and friendly. We were put in an empty barracks up in the Northwest part of the camp. Since this place was only for American officers, there were no separate compounds as in most other camps, to separate different nationalities or ranks. There was only a double barbed wire fence around the entire camp - along with the guard towers and guards.

In our barracks we had wooden bunk beds with one above the other. These were placed end to end from the center aisle to the wall. By leaving a space between rows, this formed sort of an enclosure or room. With me, in our little cubicle was Edward (Bud) Fairchild, Dr. Edward McGee, Dr. Monahan, Bill Boucher, John (Tex) Williams, Orville Simmons, and Bill Pryor. Boucher was an Artillery Liaison pilot with the Third Division and had been shot down and wounded. He and I had come up from Southern France while the others were some of the early ones from the Normandy invasion. They were all infantrymen except for the two doctors. Our armies from the south and those from the north had not closed together yet when I was captured. Dr. Monahan got sick and was taken out and we never saw him again. Dr. McGee was later transferred to some other POW camp as a doctor to help other POW's - even though they had very little to work with except giving advice.

In the German army, rank was highly respected and some of it was carried over to showing some respect to us as officers. As such, they had brought in a number of American Enlisted GI's as our orderlies - mainly to do the cooking and kitchen work. They had their own separate living quarters.

Until just before my arrival at Oflag 64, Red Cross food parcels had been issued fairly regularly and the POWs had been receiving letter mail and packages from home. Supplementing the German “rations” with the contents of the Red Cross food parcels and packages from their families had allowed most of the POWs to get along pretty well. By the time I got there, however, the Allies were closing in on the Germans on all fronts and things had taken a turn for the worse for the POWs. Allied bombers, and even fighters, had begun a campaign against the German transportation systems that would continue until the end of the war. Railroad lines, marshalling yards, rail and road bridges, tunnels, individual trains and convoys and even lone vehicles were singled out for continuous attack. Consequently, the Germans' abilities to move supplies, troops and equipment were seriously degraded. In this atmosphere, care of POWs became a very low priority. I never received any mail and only a few Red Cross food parcels while I was a POW.

With our meager diet, I, along with the others, started losing weight. Dysentery had been a problem most of the time after I became a POW - especially after that train ride to this camp. For breakfast we had “tea”. They raked up tree leaves and boiled them for tea. At least it was hot and provided some liquid other than cold water which was available only from a faucet between two barracks that were end to end. For lunch, there was usually some kind of soup or sauerkraut. I never did like cabbage anyway, but here

there was no choice or substitute. For dinner we had some boiled potatoes - sometimes having been frozen and black. Also we got about a 1/8 of a loaf of their black bread, which contained about 1/3 sawdust for filler. Once a week we got a little dab of margarine and a tablespoon full of sugar. There was seldom any meat, but if there was, it was in the soup at noon. Each of us had been given a German knife, fork & spoon.



**Razor**



**Silverware**



**Swastika on Handles**

I was given a razor and five blades and they lasted me as long as I was a POW. We learned how to sharpen and re-sharpen them. About once a month one of the POW's who had a pair of hand clippers gave us haircuts. There were no showers so we had to wash the best we could with the one cold-water faucet when we could - usually after standing in line. The only soap we had came from the Red Cross food parcels. While I was a POW I had no toothbrush or dental care. The only medical help I received was from Dr. McGee before he was transferred to another camp. However, all he could do was suggest simple home remedies with no medications.

Our latrine was in a separate building that was also used by most of the other barracks in the camp. Occasionally the Germans brought in a "Honey Wagon" and pumped the pit out, as there was no sewer system

Every morning and evening we had to line up for Appel where they counted us. If anyone was not there, we all had to stand there and wait until all were accounted for. Nobody wanted to stand out there in the cold or snow in the morning waiting for someone who had a hard time waking up, so we always made sure everybody was up and out there on time.

At night the lights were shut off about 9 o'clock and everybody had to be inside until morning. No radios were permitted, and the only authorized news we had was German news that was posted on the bulletin board by them. When a new group of POWs came, they of course could tell us what was happening in the outside world up until they were captured. However, some of the older POWs had been able to put together a secret radio that could get BBC from London. During the day, with someone guarding, the radio was turned on and the news copied on slips of paper and distributed to each barracks to be read that night. Then after the lights were out, with somebody standing guard to prevent any German from catching us, we listened to "the Bird". The slips of paper were then destroyed immediately.

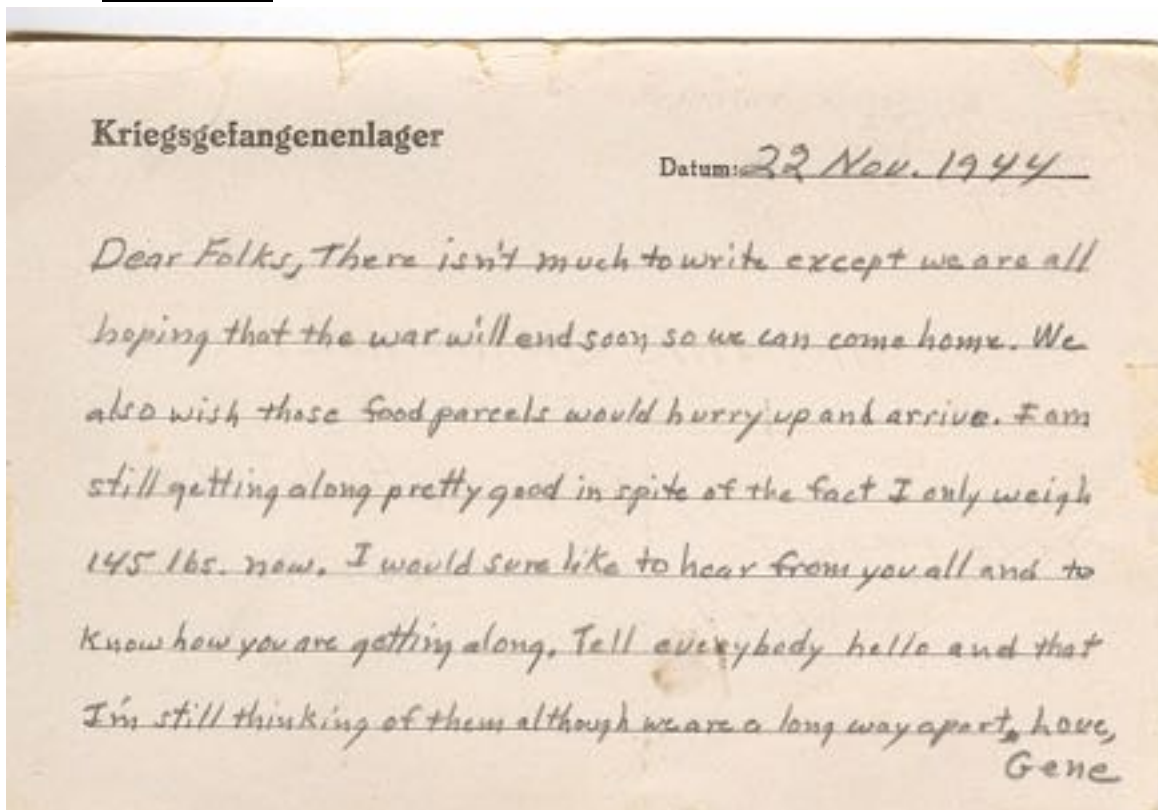
The Senior American officer, Col. Paul Goode, and his predecessor, Col. Drake - both West Point officers - dealt with the German camp commander, Col. Schneider, to settle any problems that developed between the POWs and the Germans. From the

beginning at this camp the senior American officer had set up a typical military staff to run the camp somewhat like any Army unit, with pretty strict discipline for all those in the camp. This prevented the problems of mob rule as happened in some camps and with some nationalities.

In the camp we had a library. Some of the books were there previous to the arrival of the first American POWs and others were brought in later by the YMCA representative from Sweden. He also brought in various equipment for athletics, as well as some musical instruments and playing cards. I couldn't use the library because the Germans had broken my glasses when I was captured. I did spend lots of time playing cards and just visiting. I don't know how it got there, but there was a pet Raven in our barracks most of the time. It often landed on the table where we were playing cards and would pick one up and fly over to the other side of the room with it.

Most of the POWs here were college graduates or had been in college and were from all professions and all parts of the U.S. Some had been college professors before being called for active duty. They, as well as other POWs, taught college level classes on subjects of their expertise. At night the lights were shut off about 9 o'clock and everybody had to be inside until morning.

**Card Home:**



One day in October or November the Germans got everybody out for an extra Appel while they went through all the barracks and took all the parts of uniforms they could find. I had all mine on that I was captured in, so I didn't lose anything. Later we found out that these uniforms were used by Otto Skorzeney's SS commandos to impersonate American soldiers in the Battle of the Bulge.

Another secret that the Germans suspected, but never could locate, was a tunnel that was dug from one of the barracks to escape through. It extended under the fences and beyond. One of the POWs was a mining engineer and with a lot of ingenuity and help, they had dug down and out through the sandy soil by shoring it up with the bed boards. By taking a few from each of about all the beds in camp, it wasn't too noticeable as long as our so-called mattresses were held up and we didn't fall through. Had the Germans missed these "extra" bed boards, we could have been charged with destroying German property, which was a capital offense and punishable by death. Other works of engineering ingenuity resulted in electric lights in the tunnel and an alarm to warn the one digging in the tunnel in time so he could get out and look presentable if a guard came close. Other people disposed of the dirt from the tunnel by scattering it outside over the compound or hiding it in the attic in Red Cross food boxes.

In early November winter was coming on and I had gone from about 175 pounds at the time I was captured down to about 140 pounds. In addition to the weight loss, I began to suffer medical problems, which were attributable to a lack of vitamins and other nutrients. I kept getting styes on my eyes and in the latter part of November I caught a cold that settled in my chest and developed into bronchitis and then into pneumonia. I couldn't even talk for a week or two. I am sure this was a result of the damage to my lungs while at Anzio. I finally got over it about Christmas time.





Christmas Card sent home.

One morning I slipped on the ice, hurting my back. For the next several days I spent most of my time in bed, not only because it was cold, but because of my back. Fortunately it got better before we had to march out of Oflag 64, but I have had back problems ever since that incident.

DEAR FOLKS,

25 DECEMBER 1944

I AM HAVING A VERY ENJOYABLE CHRISTMAS THIS YEAR IN SPITE OF WHERE I AM. WE GOT OUR RED CROSS CHRISTMAS PARCELS WHICH INCLUDED PLUM PUDDING, TURKEY, CANDY, NUTS, GUM, GAMES, PIPE AND TOBACCO, CIGARETTES, HONEY, GATES BUTTER & AN EGG FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MONTHS AS WE SAVED UP TO HAVE A BIG FEED TODAY - WHAT A GOOD FEELING! BEING HERE GIVES A PERSON THE ENVIRONMENT AND TIME TO LOOK BACK AND THINK MORE WHAT A REAL CHRISTMAS SHOULD BE AND WHAT IT MEANS. WE MAY BE BETTER FOR THE EXPERIENCE WE GET HERE. WE HAVE A WHOLE BUNCH OF CHARLANS HERE SO WE ARE HAVING SOME VERY GOOD CHRISTMAS SERVICES. IT HAS BEEN TERRIBLY COLD LATELY BUT WARMER UP LAST NIGHT AND IS SHOWING SOME TODAY. NATURALLY I CAN'T HELP THINKING OF ALL THE CHRISTMASSES SPENT AT HOME AND WONDERING HOW YOU ARE SPENDING THIS ONE. I HOPE FRED GOT HOME TO BE WITH YOU AND THAT NEXT YEAR WE CAN ALL BE THERE. I THOUGHT PERHAPS BY THIS TIME I WOULD HAVE RECEIVED SOME MAIL BUT ITS THE SAME AS EVERYTHING ELSE ILL EXPECT IT WHEN I GET IT. THATS OUR SENTIMENTS ON EVERYTHING. I'VE QUIT WISHING, WONDERING, AND WORRYING AS IT DOES ABSOLUTELY NO GOOD SO THERE IS NO REASON FOR YOU TO AT ALL - AT LEAST ABOUT ME. MY THOUGHTS ARE WITH YOU ALL AND GIVE MY BEST REGARDS TO ALL.

LOVE, BENE

Several amusing things happened while at Oflag 64. Every Saturday morning the German guards came in for an "inspection". Usually they were only looking for one item, and with the German discipline, they did exactly what they were told - nothing more and nothing less. One Saturday the guard pulled back the "mattress" on the bed of a fellow in our barracks. There lay a German rifle. Why the POW had it and how he got it, I will never know, but I suppose he had gotten it from a guard in trade for something. Anyway the guard laid the mattress back down with the remark; "We are not looking for guns today". I never did find out what the fellow did with the rifle after the guard left.

# To all Prisoners of War!

The escape from prison camps is no longer a sport!

Germany has always kept to the Hague Convention and only punished recaptured prisoners of war with minor disciplinary punishment.

Germany will still maintain these principles of international law.

But England has besides fighting at the front in an honest manner instituted an illegal warfare in non combat zones in the form of gangster commandos, terror bandits and sabotage troops even up to the frontiers of Germany.

They say in captured secret and confidential English military pamphlet,

## THE HANDBOOK OF MODERN IRREGULAR WARFARE:

"... the days when we could practise the rules of sportsmanship are over. For the time being, every soldier must be a potential gangster and must be prepared to adopt their methods whenever necessary."

"The sphere of operations should always include the enemy's own country, any occupied territory, and in certain circumstances, such neutral countries as he is using as source of supply."

*England has with these instructions opened up a non military form of gangster war!*

Germany is determined to safeguard her homeland, and especially her war industry and provisional centres for the fighting fronts. Therefore it has become necessary to create strictly forbidden zones, called death zones, in which all unauthorized trespassers will be immediately shot on sight.

Escaping prisoners of war, entering such death zones, will certainly lose their lives. They are therefore in constant danger of being mistaken for enemy agents or sabotage groups.

Urgent warning is given against making future escapes!

In plain English: Stay in the camp where you will be safe! Breaking out of it is now a damned dangerous act.

The chances of preserving your life are almost nil!

All police and military guards have been given the most strict orders to shoot on sight all suspected persons.

*Escaping from prison camps has ceased to be a sport!*

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REMOVED FROM OFLAS 64. GERMAN PRISONER OF WAR CAMP, LOCATED IN POLAND.  
REMOVED FROM OFLAS 64. GERMAN PRISONER OF WAR CAMP, LOCATED IN POLAND. JANUARY 21, 1945.

### German Notice on Bulletin Board

With the arrival of more new shipments of POWs during the winter, the camp population was nearing 1600. With the arrival of a new group of POWs just after



Christmas, one Lt got by with keeping the family pictures he had in his wallet. He was showing some of the older POWs the picture of his wife. Suddenly after looking at it again, one fellow said, “What do you mean, your wife? That is my wife”. Evidently the girl didn’t think the first one was coming back and married the other one. I have always wondered what happened after the war, if both of them made it back home.

Another time the Gestapo agents came in the barracks and woke us up in the middle of the night. They made us take down our pants and bend over while they looked up in our ass holes. I don’t know what they were looking for, but one of the fellows down the line from me had a good case of dysentery, and as the Gestapo was looking, he almost got an eye full. Needless to say the German moved on very quickly. We never did find out what they were looking for that we would hide in this part of our anatomy.

In Northern Poland the winters are quite cold, and this winter of 1944-45 was certainly no exception - in fact, it was to be the coldest winter in more than 50 years. We only got one bucket of coal each morning and another one each evening to heat the one stove in our big, non-insulated barracks. All of us slept in our clothes, cuddled up under the two thin German blankets we had been issued. The blankets didn’t keep us warm, they just kept us from actually freezing to death. Temperatures would drop below zero most nights and water would often freeze in our cubicles. We were cold all the time.



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### **Knit cap from Red Cross**

In January 1945 the Russians started their big drive across Poland and were headed our way. On the morning of January 21, the Germans marched us out of the camp, and we headed on foot back toward Germany and away from the Russians. The only clothing I had was what I was wearing when I was captured in September, and a wool knit cap from the American Red Cross. The Germans must have felt sorry of some of us as they gave a few of us old Polish overcoats. Mine had a number of bullet holes

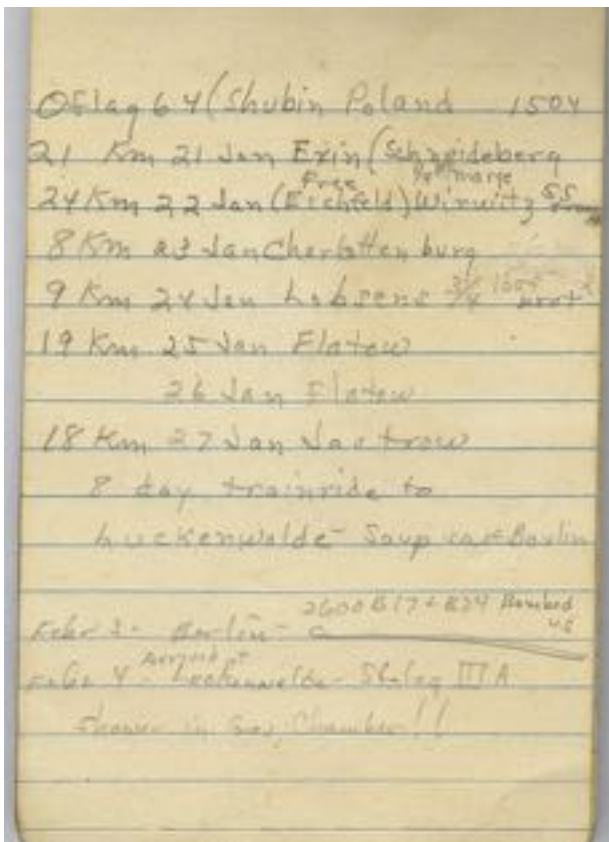
through it with a lot of dried blood still on it. It certainly helped to keep me from freezing to death. I had no gloves or heavy socks though.

About 100 of the POWs were too sick to march, so they were left behind. About 1,500 of us started out, marching to the northwest, which was against the wind. With a foot or two of snow on the ground, it was mighty cold. Some days it was snowing too. We shared the road with a continuous stream of German refugees, with them on one side of the road and us on the other. - all of us trying to escape before the Russians got to us. These German refugees had moved into Poland to occupy some of the best farms after Germany had invaded Poland in 1938. Now they were trying to get out of Poland and back to Germany because they knew what would happen to them under the Russians. Bill Pryor and I were at about the tail end of our column of POWs as our feet were frozen and hurt, making it difficult to keep up with the others. The Russian army was not far behind us and the guards kept prodding us on to get across the bridges we came to, so they could blow them up to slow the Russian advance.

At night we stopped at the big collective farms that were characteristic of this area, where we slept in the barns. I slept cuddled up as close as I could to sheep or hogs, or on manure piles to try to keep from freezing to death, as it was 30 to 40 degrees below zero at night. The Russians were moving so rapidly that we would leave a place in the morning and the Russians would take it that night. Every night the Russians sent out a patrol but the German rear-guard always managed to kill them or drive them off. One day Colonel Schneider, the German commander, who rode around in his little car, left the column to visit a friend. He put a German captain by the name of Menner, in charge, with instructions that if it appeared the Russians would overtake the column; he was to abandon the POWs and load up the guards in the trucks and all head back to Germany. That night the Russians did send out a pretty big patrol but the German rear-guard managed to kill all of them. However, Captain Menner, an old Austrian schoolteacher that had been more sympathetic toward us, stayed with us, but loaded the guards up in the trucks and sent them on their way back to Germany. Some of the POWs dressed him up so he could be an "American" when the Russians came.

The next morning the Polish people butchered a hog or two, and had started cooking it for us when Colonel Schneider unexpectedly came back through the town. He never even stopped, as it was obvious what had happened. He took off again, and a couple hours later came back with a company of SS guards. They quickly rounded us up and out on the road again. I don't know what happened to captain Menner, but I can guess.

—From Oflag 64 to Stalag 3A



After about a week of marching, I caught a cold and it quickly developed into pneumonia again. At this point there were about 120 of us who were too sick to march any farther, so the Germans loaded us on two boxcars; there were sixty of us and five guards in our boxcar. The guards took the entire center area between the two doors. We had both ends of the car and were so crowded that we alternately stood up, sat down, or laid down at two-hour intervals. For the first few days I was pretty much “out of it” and I am sure that had they not made me move around and take my shift, I would have died. My will to live was pretty strong as I was determined to get home to Skeets and my folks instead of being thrown out in a snow bank along the railroad tracks. Without that will to live, I probably wouldn’t have made it. Fortunately, after several days I started getting better.

One day our train stopped in front of a depot or train station. The German Red Cross had set up a soup kettle there to serve transients. Three of us talked two of the guards into letting us get out and see if we could get some soup. Along with the guards, we got in line and waited. By the time we got up to the kettle, the Red Cross server wouldn’t give us any because we were not Germans. Then we went to the restroom, where I was surprised to see women and men both using the same facilities, side by side. When we came out of the restroom, our train was gone. We stood there waiting while one guard went to find other transportation. Being fairly close to Berlin and with all the bombing there by the Americans, the civilians had no use for the Americans. Before long the civilians recognized us as Americans and as the remaining guard didn’t care, they started spitting on us and hitting us. I will always remember one individual that spit right in my face. I swore that if that ever happened again, I would either kill the person, or die trying. We were so weak it didn’t take much to knock us down, and pretty soon all three of us were on the ground. Fortunately, about that time the first guard came back and chased the civilians away.

After a short wait, we got on a regular passenger coach with a small compartment all to ourselves where we could sit on the seats - pretty nice! But it didn’t last long. A couple of towns down the line we caught up with the train with our POW boxcars on it and we had to get back on our boxcar again.



**Russian Cigarette Holder** I traded a little piece of soap to a Russian POW for this cigarette holder

On February 3, 1945 we were sitting in the main rail yard in Berlin. That day the Americans made one of the biggest air raids of the war - 2,600 B-17’s and B-24’s

bombed us with the rail yards as their main target. In my mind's eye, I can still see those red streamers coming down to mark the targets and hear the bombs coming down and exploding all around us. This went on hour after hour as it took a long time for that many planes to all come over their target. Again Lady Luck smiled on us as we didn't get a direct hit. After the raid ended late that afternoon, there were thousands of old women and men as slave laborers out there getting the tracks back in shape so the trains could run again.

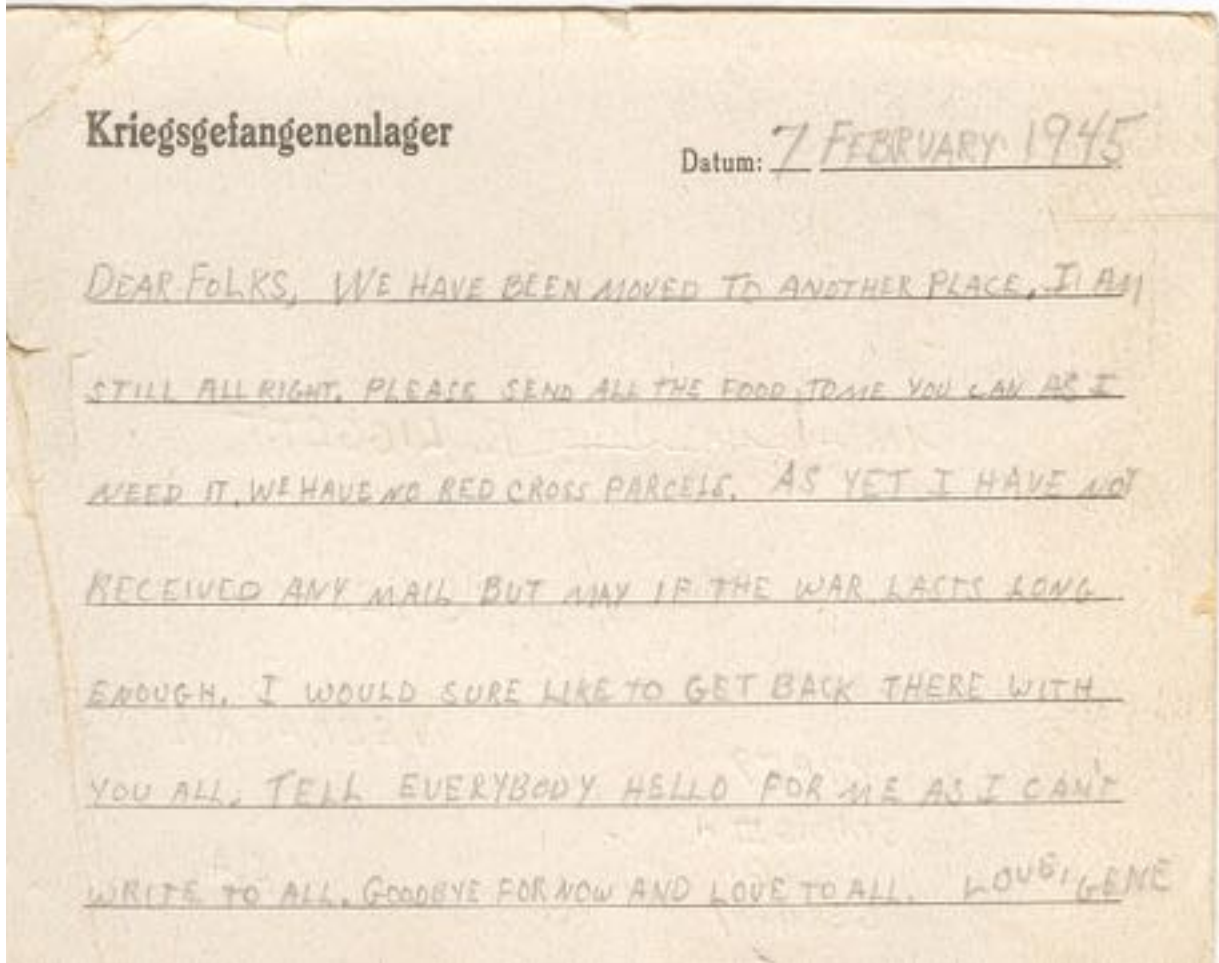
Late the next morning (February 4) the tracks were repaired sufficiently for our train to pull out. That afternoon we arrived at the Luckenwalde railroad station, just south of Berlin. Having been very sick when we got on the train and then having had no food for 8 or 9 days, we were so weak we could hardly walk and had to help each other to walk the ¼ mile or so from the station to our new POW camp, Stalag 3A.

When we entered the camp, we were put in a big building that had one corner partitioned off and secured with a big iron door. The Germans told us they were going to give us a shower. Some of the POW's had heard stories about Auschwitz, so as we looked at that door and the circular room we had questions about the "shower". There was, however, nothing we could do about our fears, as we were too weak to resist. Most took this opportunity to start "making peace with their maker" They had carts that had racks with pegs on them to hang our clothes on after being instructed to undress.

Then they ran about 20 men into that corner room and shut the door. Nobody ever came back out. After awhile they opened the door and another bunch was sent in. After a period of time they never came out either when the door was opened. Then my turn came to go in and the door closed behind us. In the room there were showerheads all around the outside walls, but until they turned the water on we didn't know whether we were going to get the showers or gas. After a cold shower, a door on the other side of this room was opened into a room where our clothes had been wheeled around for us to get dressed again in our old dirty clothes. After all had been showered, we were taken out to a narrow street between barbed wire fences into the main camp.

Stalag 3A was originally Germany's main interrogation center, being close to Berlin. However as the war progressed it was enlarged and made into a permanent camp with numerous sub-compounds that held POWs of all nationalities and ranks. As the Allies closed in on Germany from both the east and west, POW's from other camps being evacuated were sent here. Because of the crowded conditions, we were put in the same compound with the British Royal Air Force (RAF) officers and a few of the remaining old Polish Army officers who had managed to survive more than five years of captivity.

Those with me in the group that had arrived from Oflag 64 were in pretty bad shape, since we had had nothing to eat for eight or nine days. In addition to being starved, I also had had pneumonia for the second time when I got on the train. I weighed only about 100 pounds by then and was so weak I could hardly get out of bed and stand up. In fact when I stood up I had to hold onto the bed, as I would temporarily black out. After a minute or two, my vision would return and I could see where I was going and walk away. Our beds were the same wooden ones, only here they were three tiers high instead of only two as they had been in Poland. I had a lower bunk to start with, as I was too weak to get in or out of an upper one.



### **Febr. 7, 1945 Card from Stalag 3A**

We heard that there were 57,000 American Red Cross food parcels here in the camp, but the Germans wouldn't give us any. Instead, they were giving them to other nationalities. The Norwegian officers were in the compound across the fence from us. Up until recently their Norwegian, Danish, and Swedish Red Cross had been allowed to bring in food in their own trucks to the Norwegian POW's. Now they knew they would get no more, but they gave us one half of what they had. We got this on my 25<sup>th</sup> birthday—February 19<sup>th</sup>. Even though it wasn't much, it was certainly appreciated. This

was far more than any other nationality did or offered to do for us.



### **Toilet paper-a prized possession**

In late March the Germans started giving us barley soup, which was good. It even provided a bit of protein

from the abundance of little black bugs in it. With spring coming and lots of warm sunshine, I began to feel better and regain more strength and traded for a top bunk where I could sit up in bed. I made a calendar on the wall and each morning crossed another day off - that much closer to when the war would surely be over and we could go home again.

Here in this camp the fleas, lice and bedbugs were thick and there was no way to get away from them. On warm days we sat outside the buildings in the sun with our pants off, picking out the lice and fleas that were abundant on the inside seams. I was fortunate in that they didn't seem to bite me like they did most others. They sure did a lot of crawling though. Many of the men have a permanent scar about three inches wide around their waists from where they were bitten.



### Recipes—Memories of the Past and Dreams of the Future

Even though we Americans were in the same compound with the RAF officers, we had separate barracks, but we got well acquainted and enjoyed visiting with each other. We all started trading and copying down recipes for good food that we remembered and someday hoped to enjoy eating again. I filled six pages in a little notebook I had managed to keep when I was captured. Some of these are quite interesting as they were from all over the world where the various POW's had been stationed.

Another favorite pastime was watching the Americans bombing Berlin in the

daytime and the British bombing at night. We could see the German searchlights at night focused on some of the planes. All too often they were able to shoot some of our planes down.

A strange noise up in the sky attracted our attention one day. There was a small plane flying over that was a charcoal-burner. That is the only one I ever saw or heard of being flown..

One day the Germans brought in an officer who was part of the crew of a plane that had been shot down on February 3<sup>rd</sup>—the day we were sitting in the railroad yards in Berlin. He was the lead bombardier of a squadron or group of planes. After talking to him about where we were at the time, he said he was supposed to have bombed our area, but had goofed up when he dropped his target marker that the rest of the planes used as an aiming point for their bombs. So, yet again, by another simple quirk of fate, I had been spared. Lady Luck was still smiling on me, but I kept wondering if my luck would hold out until the end of the war.



### **Cap with various countries buttons**

In April the Germans came in and announced to us that President Roosevelt had died and that the U.S. would now join them in fighting the Russians. We of course questioned that probability, but still it seemed quite possible. We really wondered what would happen next.

Only a day or so following the announcement of FDR's death, we began to hear artillery firing to the west; we assumed the Americans were getting close and hoped they

would come soon. However, on or about April 16<sup>th</sup> the artillery fire ceased. When we woke up on the morning of April 18<sup>th</sup>, the German guards were all gone. Now it appeared that the Americans had either stopped or backed up, so it must be that the Russian Army was to be our liberator. As the word passed through the camp that the guards had fled, many of the POWs in other compounds broke through the fences and gates and began to run wild—especially the Russian POWs, who had been treated more brutally than most other nationalities for several reasons. Russia had not signed the Geneva Convention; therefore, neither the Germans nor the Russians felt compelled to treat POWs with much consideration, and cruel treatment of POWs was the norm for both sides. The Russian POW officers in Stalag 3A were constantly abused by the Germans, being forced to perform such filthy and degrading jobs as cleaning our latrines, for instance. They were poorly fed, and many of the Russian POWs were deliberately starved to death. But the thought of the pending liberation brought no great joy to them, for they knew that Stalin viewed soldiers who surrendered as traitors, and they feared what would happen to them when the Soviet troops arrived.

A few of the Russian POW's worked in the camp bakery, and the other Russian POW's were envious because these 20 or so Russian POW's were getting more to eat. After the German guards had left that morning, the Russian POW's took clubs and killed these so-called traitors who had been working in the bakery. Other Russian POW's got out of the camp and killed anything that was German—dogs, cats, men and women (usually they raped them first and then cut their throats). I saw this happening just outside the camp. On their rampage, they got some guns from some of the Germans and killed more Germans, getting more guns. Sort of a snowballing effect as their violence escalated. Some of the Russians explained to us that if they weren't actively fighting the Germans when their army got there, they too would probably be killed by their own troops. In our compound our senior officers decided that we would be better off staying in our own compound until the Russian army came and things settled down again.

On the morning of April 20<sup>th</sup> a Russian armored spearhead group, commanded by a woman Major entered the camp, knocking down the barbed wire fences as they came. We thought that at last we were freed. Since the Russian Army did not carry any food with them, they lived off the land, taking whatever they could find. They told us to do the same, and moved on toward Berlin.





### **German Back Pack**

For several days we got out of the camp to see what we could find. . Several of us stayed together and saw a number of interesting things without going but a short distance from camp. We saw various machine shops etc. with tools and machinery for making various products. These were marked and protected by Russian guards posted to protect this equipment until it could be dismantled and taken back to Russia. Some warehouses containing items such as one that contained a lot of new typewriters were also marked and guarded. We got into one German warehouse though and “borrowed” some small backpacks. Mine was used to hold all of my meager possessions and enabled me later to carry my “stuff” back home. I still have it.

Also in the same area we saw a sort of a hotel with a big courtyard around it. We were told this was used as a German rest and recuperation center as a reward for heroic German officers and men, mostly from the Russian front. Each man was there for 30 days and was given 10 girls to get pregnant during that time. The girls were selected for their

“superman” German qualities—blonde, blue-eyed and physically strong and fit. Afterward these girls went back home to later have their babies, but were paid well without having to work like everybody else. They were to raise these super-race kids for Hitler’s future Germany.

In the fighting that took place as the Russians came to Stalag 3-A and Luckenwalde, the electricity and the water distribution systems were knocked out. The Russians sent in a group that would be comparable to our Military Government people to occupy and administer the area. These people were a lot different than the front line combat soldiers and were much less friendly toward us POWs, and really brutal to the German civilians. One of their first orders to the Burgermeister of Luckenwalde was to get the electricity and water back on within 24 hours. They didn’t offer him any help or assistance of any kind; just orders to get it done anyway he could, but to get it done! He didn’t quite make it, so they shot him and appointed another Burgermeister. That guy got the job done. We were told that one of the military government men went into the schools and without any instructions or help to the teacher, the Russian sat in the back of the room. If he didn’t like the way the teacher was teaching, he shot that teacher and got another one.

The whole Russian Army seemed to move past us on their way to Berlin. Most of the Army was horse drawn, except for the initial spearhead units and those who followed with American made 6 x 6’ trucks. Their soldiers had taken out the seats and replaced them with over-stuffed cushions etc. from German houses. They usually had brightly colored curtains hung up in the windows. The horse-drawn artillery was mostly American-made 105-mm howitzers like we had used. The ammunition was hauled in wagons or on the caissons with the howitzers. Following them was another interesting sight—the hayracks hauling hay for their horses to eat. It was typical to see several crates of chickens up on top of the hay and two or three cows tied on behind the hayrack. This arrangement provided feed for the horses and cows, and milk, eggs, and then meat for the soldiers.

The Russian soldiers knew that the guns and trucks came from America, and consequently they were more friendly to us than to the POWs of other nationalities. Some of the Russian soldiers we were talking to wanted us to go with them to Berlin. One showed us how they treated the Germans. He had a beautiful SS knife, with a red swastika on the handle that he had taken from some German officer. He indicated how he cut across their stomachs and let their guts spill out. They were brutal and blood thirsty people. But with them, as it was with many of us, it was either kill or be killed. Human life didn’t mean much to them-theirs or anybody else’s.

I did not see any of their soldiers wearing a steel helmet, nor did I see any evidence of any medical personnel or equipment. They had an unlimited supply of men and women to replace any who were killed. The wounded apparently were left to either live or die as fate would have it. Some of their troops looked like Mongolians, or others who were a long way from home. We found that there were two distinct groups among the Russian soldiers—the educated and the uneducated. Most were at the extremes, with not too many in between.

The Russian Army seemed to have a lot of women soldiers, with the ratio of about

10 men to one woman, and with women serving in all ranks from privates to officers. One day as part of the Russian Army that came by, there was a whole division of women cavalry. They rode some of the nicest looking Arabian horses I had ever seen. All of the women had dark gray capes over and around them with a Tommy gun under it. They were a tough-looking bunch of women!

Some of the Russian officers could speak English, so we were able to talk with them. We asked if they had trouble with the men and women being integrated so closely in their Army. One of the officers replied, "No, we don't have any trouble with that. If any of these women get pregnant, we will start down the line and shoot 100 to 150 of the men until we are sure we get the right one—then kill the woman too." Apparently this eliminated the problem—but it sure put all the German women in danger of being raped and killed.

One day I went over to the Russian POW's compound and into one of their barracks. I had seen a lot of human suffering since I'd been in the Army, but what I saw there was probably one of the worst. Laying in their bunks were very sick and starving men who were nearly dead, along with many who were already dead. If they weren't able to fight, the Russian Army left them there to die. They had not only been badly treated by the Germans, but now they were being abandoned by their own countrymen.

May 1, "May Day," was a time of great celebration for the communists. Marshall Zukhov, who was the commander of all the Russian Army that came through here, came into the camp for a big celebration and a ceremonial funeral - for the 20 or more Russian POWs who had worked in the bakery and who had been clubbed to death by their comrades. The Germans had been blamed for killing them, and now they were to be buried with great fanfare.

A large mass grave had been dug on the camp's parade ground, and in honor of Marshall Zukhov all the different nationalities of POWs in the camp were requested to form up on the parade ground and participate in the funeral.

A newsreel cameraman took pictures, always insuring that the Russian soldiers, we Americans, and the British were in the foreground. POWs of other nationalities, such as the French, Serbs, Norwegians, and others were always kept in the background. Marshall Zukhov got up and made a big speech, then called on the Senior American officer, and then the Senior British officer to step forward and say a few words. Along in the middle of the ceremony, the cameraman ran out of film, so everything stopped for about 20 minutes until he got more film. Big propaganda deal! The ceremony concluded with the firing of Tommy guns over the grave and the Russians starting to shovel the dirt back in to cover the graves.

Shortly after Marshall Zukhov's May Day visit to Stalag 3A, there were rumors going around that we would be taken back to Russia to use for bargaining power with the Americans and British at the end of the war. After the Russians started fixing up the barbed wire fences, we gave the rumors more credibility. Then when they had the fences about fixed up, several of us decided we had better try to get out and back to the American lines. (Earlier when we had heard the American artillery firing to the west of us, and it had suddenly quit, we figured that some deal had been made to let the Russians take this area. Then we had heard reports that they had pulled back to the Elbe River,

which was about 60 or 70 miles from us, and were letting the Russians go on to take Berlin.) That was when the four of us Americans and one Norwegian officer, Leif Bucholz, decided to try to escape and get back to the American lines. We definitely didn't want to go east to Russia. The Norwegian could speak German and also English, so he would be a big help to us. He was a naval officer so we found some army clothing to make him look like an American. We managed to get out of the camp through a hole in the fence, even though they were still working on them.

That morning they had put armed guards back in the guard towers, but were not too well organized yet, which enabled us to get out. We headed west, but should have been more careful. After going several miles, some of the Russian military government people caught us. They took us back with strict orders to stay in the camp. Now we were more determined than ever to get away, and less than an hour later we managed to get out again. However, this time we were much more careful to keep from being seen by the Russians. Eventually, after we'd gotten away from the military government controlled area around the camp, and closer to what appeared to be the Russian front line troops, we decided to take to the roads again. Not only because we could travel faster and navigate better using the roads, but because we needed food and all the houses were near the roads.

Soon after getting back on the road, we stopped at a house and asked an old German lady to give us something to eat. She was quite cordial; she fed us and even gave us a map that helped a lot, although it did not cover the area far enough west to show the Elbe River. On the map she showed us the road that would lead us to the bridge at Magdeburg and across the Elbe River. She told us that when Hitler first came into power, they were very poor and could hardly buy enough food to stay live. He started building the Autobahn highway and began many other projects to put people to work. She said he built up the country and helped the people, but he went too far—he shouldn't have started invading other countries.

Not long after we started down the road again, a Russian soldier came by and stopped us. He wanted to know who we were and where we were going. After finding out that we were Americans, he asked us why we were walking. After visiting for a little while, a Frenchman, who had also been a POW, came by driving a horse and wagon. The Russian stopped him and told him to get off and give the wagon to us. The Frenchman argued a little, so the Russian shot him and gave the horse and wagon to us.

Late that day we stopped in a small town and asked to see the Russian commandant to get permission to stay in the town overnight. We were directed to the best house in town—a nice two story brick home. We found the commandant upstairs at a window, with a machine gun set up on the windowsill, trying to shoot the chickens in the back yard. However, he was so drunk he couldn't even see the chickens! His deputy took us to the second-best house, next door, where two old German women lived. The house and all the furnishings were beautiful and immaculately kept. There was plenty of room for the five of us, but we told the officer we wanted the beds rearranged in the bedrooms—we didn't trust anybody and wanted to be closer to each other. The Russian told the women to move the furniture the way we wanted it. They were having trouble moving a beautiful, antique dressing table that had a glass top and very expensive-looking cut glass lamps on each side. Apparently, they were moving too slowly to suit the

Russian, so he went over to the dressing table and kicked it, breaking the glass top. Then he pulled out his pistol shot at the dresser several times. Quite naturally, this terrified the old women, but they did move a little faster after that.

After getting it arranged the way we wanted it, the Russian officer asked us if we were hungry. We were. He went outside and fired his gun up in the air several times and began shouting. Townspeople came running to him from all directions. He told them what he wanted for us, and they all took off on the run. Before long several of them were back, with more food than we had seen in months. One old man had several rings of bologna over one arm. The Russian said something and then kicked him in the rear end. The old man took off running again. We wondered what this was all about, but pretty soon he came back with the bologna all neatly wrapped up for us.

Once the matter of food was taken care of, the Russian officer invited us to join them that night for a party. He told us to just point out any girl we wanted and he would see to it that she would be ours. We finally succeeded, without making him mad, in telling him that we were very tired and weak and wanted to go to bed instead. We thanked him very much though, and he left us alone to eat and to go bed.

Along in the middle of the night we were awakened by the sound of a lot of shooting. We wondered if the Germans had counter attacked or what was happening. Finally it quieted down and we went back to sleep. The next morning when we got up, there were German women out scrubbing the steps in front of our house and the Russian's house next door. In talking to the Russians, we found out what all the shooting had been about during the night. It seemed that one of the Russians next door who had a German girl up there with him, had got up to go to the bathroom or to get something to drink. When he returned, he found another Russian soldier was with "his" girl. They started shooting at each other. One ran outside and the other followed, resulting in a running gunfight all over town. We never did learn the outcome of the fight, but once again this showed how wild and unpredictable the Russians were.

As we were preparing to leave the town and head west again, a Russian tank crew asked us if we wanted to ride with them on their tank. Of course we gladly accepted his invitation and left the horse and wagon behind. We made pretty good time riding on the tank and we covered quite a distance before the Russians had to turn away from the route we wanted to follow. They let us off and we were on foot again for the rest of the day. Considerable fighting had recently taken place in the area we walked through, and there were a lot of dead horses, as well as dead Germans along the road. One dead German soldier at the edge of the road had a pair of spurs on his boots, so I took them off of him as a souvenir. (I still have them.)



**German Spurs**

It was dark when we got to the bridge that crossed the Elbe River and luckily, no Russian guards were there to stop us from crossing. On the other end of the bridge were the Americans! Lady Luck now gave us a great big smile! Never had we been so glad to be back where we could trust people and feel safe again. We were then taken to an army unit close by. Of course their mess hall was closed by the time we arrived, but they did offer us some white bread. After having eaten that German bread, composed of about 1/3 sawdust, for eight months, that plain, simple American white bread tasted better than any angel food cake that I had ever had.

Back in Luckenwalde in Stalag 3A, when we were visiting with the Russian combat soldiers, we had asked about our getting back to the American forces. They told us that this would be up to the Military Government people after the Germans surrendered. Until then they could do whatever they wanted to do with the displaced people and the POWs they liberated or overran. That, along with the rumors about being taken back to Russia, increased the uncertainty about our future that led us to escape from the Russians and risk the dangers of an active battle area to get back to our own people.

That night, after a good hot shower, I slept for the first time without the uneasy feeling of wondering what would happen next. I almost had to pinch myself to believe that at last I was really free again and out of barbed wire enclosures and away from the Germans and the Russians. Just being safe, back among people we could trust gave me a feeling of well being that is beyond description! We had crossed the Elbe River and regained our freedom on the night of May 6, 1945. The Germans surrendered at 2:00 am the very next morning of May 7<sup>th</sup>, while I slept, and the POWs who remained behind the Soviet lines, became political bargaining chips in the rapidly developing Cold War.

Of course, we had no knowledge of it at the time, but according to the German and the American records, over 3,000 American POWs who remained in Stalag 3A never did come home. Apparently they ended up in Siberia as slave laborers. According to some reliable sources, a total of 23,500 known American POWs liberated or recaptured from the German POW camps in the Soviet drive across Poland and Germany just disappeared, probably to the Siberian slave labor camps.

I now know full well that nobody can fully appreciate the freedom that we have and enjoy here in the United States until they lose it. Neither do they realize what the American Flag really stands for --- **FREEDOM**--- unless they could only see the German flag with the big Swastika, or the Soviet flag with the Hammer and Sickle displayed at the top of the pole, instead of our beautiful and wondrous Stars and Stripes. How very lucky I was - and am!)

With my prayers and with lots of luck - and with the good fortune to have encountered only friendly Russian soldiers during our escape—I had made it back just in the nick of time. Once again, the feeling overcame me that some one had been “looking over my shoulder” and had kept me from being killed so many times during the past two years. I could sense that Lady Luck was still smiling, and Old Father Time was still saying, “ Not Yet”.

After a good breakfast with our US Army hosts the next morning, we said good-bye to Leif Bucholz, the Norwegian navy officer, who had been an essential help to us in getting back from Stalag 3A. He would take a different route to his home in Norway. We

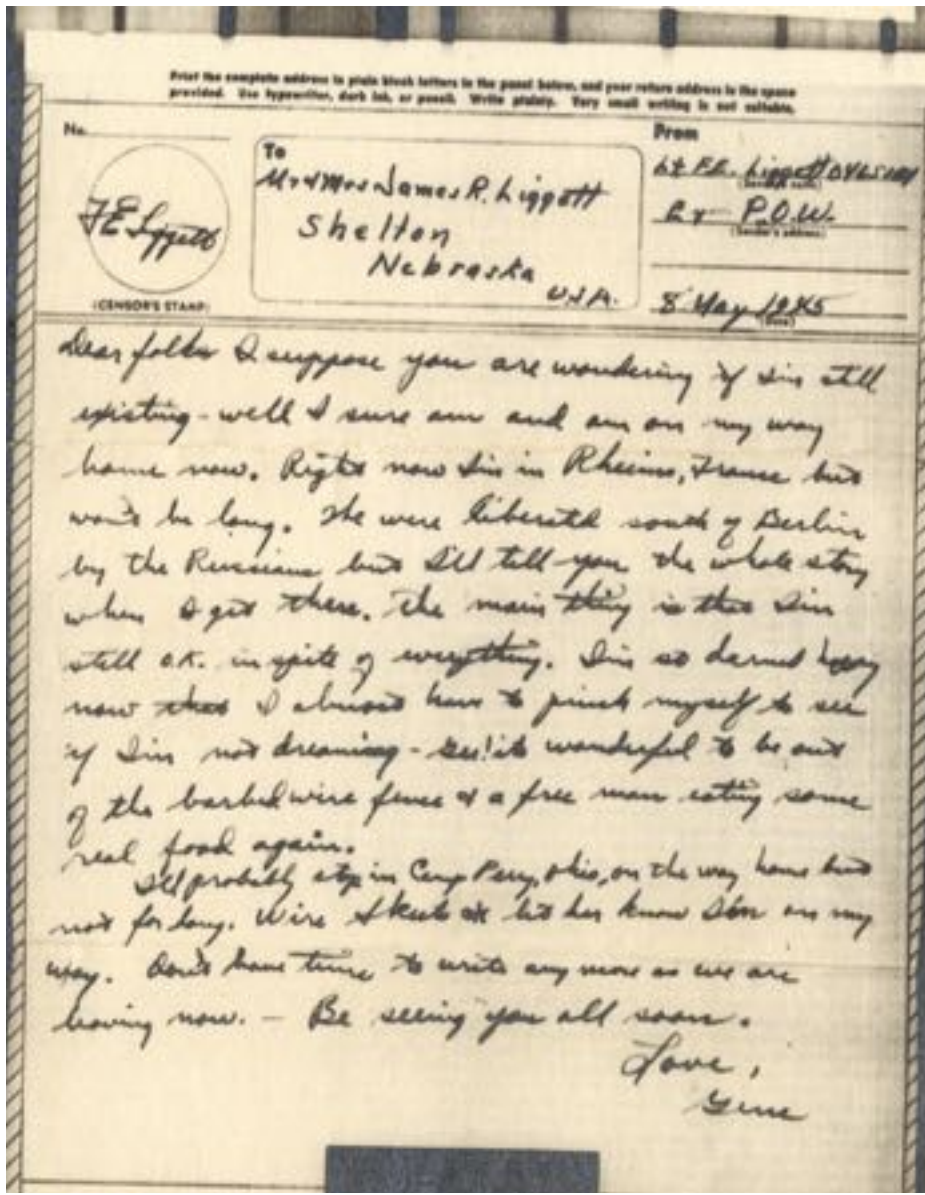
boarded trucks and rode about 40 miles to the airport at Hildesheim, where we also spent the night. The next morning, May 8, 1945, we caught a C-47 plane that took us to Rheims, France, where representatives of the German military forces had signed the official instrument of unconditional surrender to the Allies only the day before. After arriving in Rheims, we were taken to a sort of collecting center for POWs that had been liberated in that area of Germany. After being assigned to a tent and getting settled in, an American one star General stopped by to visit. Despite the fact that we were still in our old dirty clothes and badly needed haircuts and shaved, he took five of us for a ride around Rheims in his big, official Cadillac or Packard car. We saw the building where the surrender had taken place, along with a lot of other important government buildings. We were disappointed that all the taverns in town were boarded up that day, so he couldn't get any drinks for us.

Shortly after the General delivered us back to our tent, I was very much surprised and pleased to receive a visit from Herman Rodrigues, who had been a member of my FO party and was captured with me. Herman told me about some of his harrowing experiences. The Germans required all American privates to work and he had been sent to Dachau Concentration camp to live and to work in the railroad shops near there as a slave laborer. He said that each morning when they formed up on the parade ground for Appel before being marched to work. If any one of the men in his group had caused a problem, all the men in their group were made to undress and an SS guard made them run over to the gas chambers. Usually this was just to scare them, for unless the offense was a serious one, the men were just reprimanded and sent back to get dressed and then go to work. For "serious" offenses, however, the punishment could be horrendous. Some prisoners were "hung up spread-eagled" and naked. The SS guard pointed his whip to the man's testicles and a big German police dog then jumped up and tore them out! Herman said these sorts of things were very common occurrences.

In a nearly unbelievable coincidence, Herman Rodriguez was liberated by I Company of our "own" 157<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, 45<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division! He had temporarily visited the 158<sup>th</sup> FA Battalion headquarters and C Battery and had found out that my promotion to first lieutenant had come through right after we were captured. That was welcome news to me. He also filled me in on a lot of other happenings. Lt. Olsen had been badly wounded and was in England in a hospital for about five months. It was really good to see Herman again, and to know that he had survived. I have no idea how he found me, since this was a rather large tent area to temporarily house former POWs before they were sent on to Camp Lucky Strike.

Much later, I learned that Dick Borthwick and Charles Smith also survived their POW ordeals. They had been sent to Stalag III-C, at Frankfurt on the Oder in Eastern Germany, which was a camp for non-coms. Their camp had also been overrun by the Russians in January or February. Somehow they had made their way down to Odessa through the Russians, where they managed to get on an American ship that took them back to the US.

## First letter after Escape



After a couple of days at Rheims, we got on a train and went through Paris to Camp Lucky Strike. Here we got hot showers again and dusted from head to foot with DDT to kill all the lice and fleas and any other vermin we might have accumulated. With new clothes and a shave and haircut, I felt wonderful. The first day I tried to eat three meals, I passed out like a light and fell flat on the ground. Like most of the recently liberated POWs, I had tried to eat too much food for a stomach that was not used to it and just could not cope with the volume or the richness of “real food”.

Between the scheduled processing appointments, I was able to write a short letter home.



Because it had been so long since I had received any mail, I did not know where Skeets was, but I remembered that she was to take part of her schooling at other locations than in Lincoln. Therefore, I just sent a letter to my parents and asked them to call Skeets to tell her I was on my way home.

It was here that we had to sign statements not to reveal anything that had happened to us as POW's that might be considered "classified" information or that could be detrimental to the well being of POW's still being held, or that might damage relations between other countries and the U.S. Only after we had signed the statements were we "eligible" for transport home.

Though the war in Europe had ended, operations in the Far East were still going full-blast and the Allied forces were concentrating every effort and asset to bringing the Pacific War to a rapid conclusion. This understandable emphasis on defeating Japan resulted in a shortage of ships going to Europe and, consequently, returning to the States from Europe. Despite the shortage of shipping and the huge number of soldiers awaiting transport, only about 250 of us former POWs walked up the gangplank of the *USS John Erickson* and settled in our staterooms for the trip home. Unaccountably - given the huge number of men waiting to leave - the ship still had room for a lot more people when we pulled out of the harbor.

We went to South Hampton, England where we stopped again overnight. We didn't get off the ship though, and the next day we sailed for New York. On this trip across the Atlantic the lights were on at night, and we were allowed out on deck at all hours of the day or night. We were only permitted a small amount of food on each visit to the galley - in consideration of our weakened systems - but we could go back anytime, day or night to get more. This was certainly the most enjoyable ship ride I had. As we came in to New York Harbor, all of us were out on deck, to get a look at the Statue of Liberty. It was a very beautiful and emotional sight, and it served as a welcome confirmation that we were really free and home at last!

We got off the ship and immediately were taken to Camp Kilmer, NJ, where they kept us for three days to get our records up to date and to pay us and to take care of various other administrative matters. We were so rushed in the processing that the only contact I was able to make with someone from "home" was a quick call to talk to Dwight Cherry, who was still going to medical school at Columbia University. As soon as our records were "straight" we were put on one of many troop trains, each taking all those men going in the same direction and dropping them off at stations closer to their homes. I got on one heading west, and we stopped in Indianapolis at about midnight on about May 31<sup>st</sup>. While standing out on the station platform to get some fresh air, I saw a man standing close to me who looked familiar. I asked him if he was Bing Crosby. He smilingly acknowledged that he was, and we visited a while. He had been in "Indy" for the auto races and was now waiting for a train home. I got his autograph on the back of my German identification card.

In St. Louis, Mo. we stopped again, and some of us went into a restaurant where we got the first hamburgers we had seen since leaving the U.S. in 1943. From there we went to Leavenworth, KS, where I got off this troop train and waited to get another train to go to Nebraska. While there I was able to make several telephone calls to locate

Skeets. We had been on the move all the time up till then without even access or time to call anybody.

When she answered, I sensed immediately that something was wrong. Apparently she didn't think I would ever make it back, and now had "other" arrangements with some Air Force captain who never got out of the U.S. This was about the biggest blow to me that could be. After being engaged and with all that I had endured during combat and as a POW, she was the main reason for my will to live and survive. This was hard to take! During the war I had seen other men who got the "Dear John" letters, and many of them were either recklessly killed or lacked the will to live and did not survive. Now I was glad I did not know this while I was a POW. Since I never did get any mail while a POW, I didn't know whether she had written to me or not.

The train I was on arrived in Shelton, NE, about 6:00 am on June 2, 1945. Bill Evans, the depot agent, was there when I got off the train; he was the first person from my home town to welcome me back from the war. Bill sent someone across the street to the tavern to get a pint of whiskey, and we had a "welcome home" drink together. I called my brother, Harold, and he came down to get me. We went to his place and then to my parent's place. My other brother, Bob, had just got home from the South Pacific, after fighting the Japanese, so the whole family was home together again. Much had taken place over the past two years that I had been away, and we spent a lot of time just "catching up." After several attempts to reconcile my relationship with Skeets were unsuccessful, I gave up.

The Army gave all of us former POWs a 60-day "rest and recuperation" which was in addition to any other leave we had accumulated. This was a much needed opportunity to help restore our health and regain some of the weight we had lost; also to relearn our civilian social manners.

In August I went to Hot Springs, Arkansas to an Army Redistribution Center. Here I stayed in a nice hotel with some of the other POWs I had known in POW camps. We were all processed here to get our records up to date and to give us another physical exam. This was also like most of the others since I had got back from being a POW --- we could walk and were warm and breathing. However, we were just so glad to be back to the U.S. again that we didn't complain about anything. While at Hot Springs the Japanese surrendered, and now WWII was over, both in the European side as well as the Pacific. There was a big celebration in Hot Springs, but I quietly celebrated with a friend and fraternity brother from Nebraska, Mark Keller, who was stationed at Hot Springs.

I was informed that it would be a few months before I could be released from Active duty with the Army, and was asked where I would like to be assigned while I waited to be separated. I chose to go to Ft. Bragg, NC because it was the closest place to Atlanta, Georgia. I wanted to see a girl I had met there while on my way in 1943 from Camp Shelby, Miss. to Ft. Meade, Maryland and had stopped in Atlanta to visit my cousin, Elsie Moye.

This time I stopped in Atlanta on my way to Ft. Bragg and was glad to see Elsie again and also to see her husband, Lt. Leon Moye, who was an OSS officer and was home on a leave with orders to go to the CBI (China, Burma, India) area to work. However, with the war ending, his orders were soon canceled. Anyway nothing

developed there with this girl I had previously met.

At Ft. Bragg I was assigned to a new outfit that was just being formed. It was composed of all black enlisted men with white officers. This was a new and interesting experience for me, but after a few weeks I wanted to move on. I put in a request to go back to Ft. Sill, Oklahoma and left Ft. Bragg a short time later. At Ft. Sill, with nothing else to do, I joined a few other officers in a class at the Field Artillery School. We spent a lot of time out on the firing ranges. It was sort of fun adjusting artillery fire on targets again as we had done in combat in Europe—only this time it was amusing and entertaining, as our lives didn't depend on it.

In October they decided to release me from the Army and after another physical exam, they sent me to Borden General Hospital in Chickasha, Oklahoma, which specialized in treating those with hearing problems. I had had too many close calls with exploding artillery shells and concussions that had broken my left ear drum and damaged my hearing abilities in general. I had hopes that they could help me. During the six weeks that I was there the doctors tried all kinds of hearing aids, but the technology available at the time was fairly primitive and none of them helped very much. I did get some lip-reading classes at the hospital and that has been a big help ever since. (Forty years later the Veterans Administration did give me some modern hearing aids that do help.)

On December 5, 1945 I was discharged from the hospital and left for Shelton, Nebraska, where my parents lived. With accumulated annual leave, I was separated from the Army as of February 11, 1946.

\* \* \* \* \*

I was wounded twice and captured, but I managed, with the help of a lot of luck and prayers, to survive the war. Now, having reached my 83rd birthday, I find that my good friend, Lady Luck, is still smiling at me and Old Father Time is looking closer, but still saying, “**NO,--NOT YET**”.

Like a school teacher awarding gold stars to children for certain achievements, all nations present colored ribbons and medals to their soldiers, as recognition of service and personal achievement. At the time I was separated from the Army for the last time, I was only interested in becoming a full time civilian again. The ribbons and medals didn't mean much to me - compared to returning home. Only much later did I begin to reflect on how my comrades and I, and the soldiers who served so nobly before and after us, had earned and protected all the rights and freedoms that we as citizens of the United States now enjoy. Those bits of ribbon that I had cared not a whit about in 1945 or in 1952, but became more important to me in my later years.

About 50 years after WW II, our US Senator Slade Gorton, got all the medals and ribbons I had earned during both WW II and the Korean Conflict and presented them to me in Vancouver. These included the following:

- Bronze Star Medal
- Purple Heart Medal, with one Oak Leaf Cluster
- Prisoner of War Medal
- European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal, with 4 “Battle stars”

and one Bronze Arrowhead device for an amphibious landing  
WW II Victory Medal  
American Campaign Medal  
National Defense Service Medal  
United Nations Medal - Korea  
Korean Service Medal



**NO, ---- NOT YET**

### **AFTER THOUGHTS AND REMINISCES**

For me and most of my fellow combat soldiers, the war was a matter of killing or being killed. There was always a very fine line, a delicate balance, between these cold alternatives, because those opposing us faced the same realities and their wishes were directly opposed to ours. The ultimate fate of a combat soldier on either side of the front lines was decided by many factors. Training and experience played a big part in staying alive, but maybe the greatest influence was pure luck and happenstance. Almost all of the fighters in an infantry division were fated to be wounded, captured, or killed as most of them were in for the duration plus six months.

In World War II Generals Marshall (Chief of Staff of the Army) and McNair

(Commander of the Army Ground Forces) “shared a common mental picture of how the enemy would be defeated. They imagined a comparative handful of men picking themselves up from the dirt and mud after spending hours lying on the ground; these were men who were wet, probably men shivering with cold;; thirsty, hungry, tired and afraid, mentally scarred by the deaths of friends and by witnessing sights that would haunt them for the rest of their lives, they would move forward under machine gun and artillery fire. Some would fall, but the survivors would close with the enemy and kill him in a foxhole or a bunker, a building or a ditch, or die in the attempt. All the machinery the Army possessed came down in the end to that one-act drama. And it was that moment, repeated a million times over, that Army Ground Forces was created to produce.”

(Source: There’s a War To Be Won, by Goeffrey Perret, Random House, NY, 1991, page 73.)



**Gene and Rosalie Liggett in 2003**

**THE END**

**You may go to “The Rest Of The Story” that covers my life after WWII**

## THE REST OF THE STORY

By Eugene Liggett

On Dec. 5, 1945 I was released from Borden General Hospital in Chickasha, Oklahoma. I was released from Active Duty in the U.S. Army and at the end of my accumulated annual leave on Febr. 11, 1946, I would again become a full time civilian. After clearing the Post, I got in my red Chevrolet and headed north to Denman, Nebr. where my parents lived. My brother, Bob, had already been discharged from the Marine Corps after serving in the South Pacific, fighting the Japanese. Freda, my sister, was also home from Lincoln, NE where she had been training to become a Nurse. My older brother, Harold and his wife, Leona, and their small daughter, Janice, lived in Shelton, NE where he had spent most of the war years working at the Air Base near Kearney. We were all very thankful that our family was all safely together again after the war.

Bob was married on Dec. 9<sup>th</sup> to Lois Wendling. I got home in time to be his best man at their wedding.

After I had been home for a couple days, I went over to the Denman Store to get the mail for my parents. I was surprised to see a good looking young lady there who was also waiting for the rural mail carrier to deliver the mail to those who normally got their mail at the Post Office, which was also in the General Store. Rosalie Wiese had arrived in Denman at about the same time that I had and was staying with her Aunt Ann and Uncle Mike Andersen in Denman. She and her parents had moved to Vancouver, WA in 1943 where her dad, Bill Wiese, worked at the Alcoa Aluminum Plant. Previously they had lived in Denman where he was a partner in the Denman Store with his brother, Frank Wiese. Their sister was Rosalie's Aunt Ann and her husband Mike Andersen was the village Blacksmith in Denman. Rosalie had taken a month off at her job in Vancouver as a teacher in a nursery school. She and I knew who each other was, but I had been away from home to go to college and then in the army. She had been teaching at a country school near Denman prior to moving to Vancouver.

After meeting at the store that morning and getting acquainted we had a date arranged for that night. We went to Kearney to a movie and then to a dance at the Armory. It was almost a case of "love at first sight" for both of us. From then on we were together nearly every day or night, going to movies or dances in Grand Island or Kearney. We also went ice skating and hunting along the south channel of the Platte River that ran for about a mile through my parent's pasture. Rosalie was scheduled to leave on New Years day to go back to her job in Vancouver. We had gone to a dance in Grand Island on New Years Eve and I decided I didn't want her to ever leave me, so I proposed to her that night. I was glad that she felt the same about getting married and spending the rest of our lives together. Some may think this was a short time to know each other to make a decision like this, but I had been disappointed once and I wasn't going to let her go back to Washington. She was a keeper! We continued seeing each other almost every day. February 3<sup>rd</sup> was set as our wedding date and all the arrangements were made. I ordered the rings from Charles Smith, who had been a part of my Forward Observer party in the army and was captured at the same time I was. He owned and operated a jewelry store in Philadelphia and was happy to be of assistance to us.

In January I wanted to make plans for our future and decide whether to go back to college for additional training or to get a job somewhere doing something I would like. We went to Lincoln where I went to visit Mr. Brokaw. I had known him when I was going to college and had helped his son paint their house over an Easter holiday weekend. He was the head of the Agricultural Extension Service at the University of Nebraska, College of Agriculture. Mr. Brokaw convinced me that I would learn a lot more by going to work for the Extension Service as a County Agricultural Extension Agent than I would by going back to school, and offered me a job as the Assistant County Agricultural Extension Agent in Buffalo County with the office in Kearney. Dale Cress was the County Agent there that I would work with. Also in the office was Tracy Van Camp, the Home Extension Agent and her assistant, Angela Hellberg. They worked with the women and the girl's 4-H program. This looked like a good way to start my career in the field of Agriculture and we were pleased with the location. I would start working on February 15<sup>th</sup> – just 4 days after my annual leave was gone and I would be officially out of the army. (Those 4 days were the only time I was ever unemployed from the time I went in the Army in February 1943, until I retired in 1975.)

Rosalie and I went to Kearney and met the people that I would be working with in the Extension office which was located in the Buffalo County Court House. Then we rented an apartment in a house on West 27<sup>th</sup> Street.



On February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1946 we were married by Fr Hayden, the Catholic priest at the church in Shelton, NE. Eileen Hallas was the Maid of Honor and my brother, Bob, was the Best Man. Rosalie's Aunt Ann was like a second mother and she, along with Myrtle Wiese and my Mother, served a big dinner for all those attending. Later in the afternoon, with our car well decorated and a

bunch of tin cans tied on behind it, we left to go to Omaha for our honey-moon. About a week later we returned to Denman where the whole community had planned a shower and chivaree for us at the Denman School House. We received a lot of nice and useful gifts to help us, as a newly married couple, get off to a good start. I was then a part of the Wiese family and Rosalie was a part of the Liggett family.

Two major decisions had now been made that would affect our lives from then on --- finding and marrying a wonderful wife, and starting a career with a job that I would like and enjoy doing. I would be working with farmers to help them improve their farms and to apply methods that would increase their production and raise their standards of living. I was then on the faculty of the University of Nebraska and also a Federal employee working in the County to bring the latest information from the University and USDA research studies to the rural families in the County. We worked primarily through the use of local organizations and clubs with the adults and the 4-H clubs for the younger generation.

Right after WWII a lot of changes were being made that affected the rural residents of Nebraska. Rural Electrification was just becoming available to the farmers, bringing about the demand for new services and products to improve the farms and homes with labor saving equipment for the housewife and family. Many veterans were returning to the farms and were eager to take over the farms or to start their own

operations. New home appliances, new tractors and machinery, use and availability of commercial fertilizer, new varieties of wheat, hybrid corn, soybeans, and milo were now becoming available. Indoor plumbing and pressure water systems, along with sewage disposal and septic tanks were needed. Irrigation development was just beginning on a large scale with the war over and land leveling machinery again available to contractors to do the necessary leveling. Our job with the Extension Service was to advise and help guide the people in making the best educated choices. Mr. Brokaw was certainly right when he told me that I would learn a lot more as an Extension Agent than I would by going back to school. I really enjoyed the work and the people I worked with, but in order to work with the farm families, a lot of it had to be done at night meetings because they couldn't leave their farm work during the daytime. Rosalie didn't like to be left at home so much while I was away attending these night meetings. On most weekends we were able to go back to Denman or Shelton to spend time with Aunt Ann and Uncle Mike or my parents and family.

Rosalie and I both liked the outdoors so we bought a couple Army cots and camped out under the stars at Johnson Lake south of Lexington. At that time no houses or cabins had been built out by the lake and we enjoyed the solitude. I enjoyed fishing, but I never did succeed in making a fisherman out of Rosalie. She did enjoy going along though and being with me.

It didn't take long after we were married for Rosalie to become pregnant and we looked forward to starting our family. During the summer we looked for another apartment and finally found a nice one that Rosalie wouldn't have to go up or down stairs like we had at the upstairs apartment that we had been living in. In October Rosalie's doctor thought something wasn't quite right with the pregnancy and decided to take the baby early because it would be a breech birth. On October 30 it was a very difficult birth for Rosalie, and our son, Joe Wayne, was born with a spinal bifida. The spinal cord made a loop outside the vertebrae of his lower back instead of staying inside the vertebrae as it should have. We took him to Lincoln where a well known surgeon operated on him to put it back in place. However, this resulted in another serious problem with the spinal fluid being produced with no place for it to go. This resulted in building up pressure on the brain and enlarging his head.



In March of 1947 I was transferred from Kearney to Clay Center, NE as the County Extension Agent for Clay County. We went over there and bought a nice, nearly new 2 bedroom house with a full basement for \$3500. We then bought our furniture the next day.





The following morning we took off for a two or three week vacation in Vancouver WA to visit Rosalie's parents and two brothers, Bill and Bob, and her sister, Margaret. I built a bed in the back seat for Joe. That was my first trip to the Northwest. The interstate highway

system hadn't been built yet so we went on Highway 30, competing with the trucks etc. for space on the 2 lane road over the mountains and all. It was at least a long 3 day trip. It was interesting to see Celila Falls and the Indians fishing on the Columbia River from their stands built out over the raging waters of the falls. This was several years before the big dam was built at The Dalles that backed up the water in the Columbia River and covered up the falls at Celila.

We arrived in Vancouver after dark and Rosalie directed us to her parent's home at 2805 Unander Ave. in Fruit Valley. I had my directions mixed up when we got there and I still do when I go to that part of Vancouver. Margaret was still in high school and Bob and Bill were going to college and living at home. Bob had been in the Army and had been one of General McArthur's guards in Japan after the war. Bill had been in the Navy after serving on a ship in the South Pacific during WWII. Rosalie's dad worked at the Alcoa Aluminum plant in Vancouver. I was welcomed into the family and they all made me feel like I was a part of it now. They all got to see Joe Wayne. We enjoyed seeing and visiting with some of the other Fehrenbacher relatives. Rosalie's mother, Anita, was from a large family of Fehrenbachers who lived in Washington and Oregon. Over the following years I got to meet and know most of them.

We hated to leave to go back home, but with the anticipation of starting a new job as a County Agent and moving into our new home, we were anxious to get back. On the way home we were going through Wyoming and it was dark when we stopped for gas at some gas station. While I was busy gassing up the car, Rosalie went in to warm up a bottle of milk for Joe. I saw her come back to the car and get in the back seat to feed Joe while I went in to pay for the gas. When I came out I got in the car and took off. After going several miles, I said something to Rosalie, but she didn't answer. I turned around to look and she wasn't there. Immediately I turned the car around and went back to the station. She had decided to go back in to the rest room when I had assumed she was still in the back seat feeding Joe. We still laugh about me leaving her out in the middle of Wyoming at night. The ironic part of it all was the fact that she didn't even miss me as she didn't come back out until after I had returned.

We were glad to get back to Denman again, but our work was just starting. We had to move all the furniture and household items that we had acquired to Clay Center to our first home. The previous Co. Agent had resigned and the secretary had also quit, so I

had the added job of hiring a new secretary. The County Clerk resented our office being in the Court House and even more resentful because as State-Federal Employees, we received a higher salary than most of the County officers did.

I didn't have a Home Extension agent so I took care of that phase of the job in addition to building a good relationship and working with the rural farmers and their families.

Kenneth Palmer and his family lived close to us. He was a college class mate and fraternity brother and also a good friend of mine. He was the District Conservationist with the USDA Soil Conservation Service with his office also in Clay Center. He worked with many of the farmers in the county that I worked with. They were anxious to take advantage of the services and latest help and information. They were eager to get the results of tests of new varieties of crops, the use of commercial fertilizer, and other information coming out of the various departments at the College of Agriculture and the State and USDA experiment stations. I had access to all the University Department Specialists to come out to meetings and demonstrations to help me when I needed them. I also assisted in the organization of new 4-H clubs for both the boys and the girls. For the women I sometimes had the Home Extension Specialists come out to help with meetings on sewing, food preparation, meal planning, etc. My experience of "batching" while going to college helped me in giving lessons on cooking etc. and made some of the meetings more interesting for the women. I learned a few things too. With more of the farmers getting electricity for the first time, there was a lot of interest in indoor plumbing with pressure water systems and sewage disposal. I had the forms built to make concrete septic tanks and they were rented to the farmers to use.

Prior to this time, commercial fertilizers were not on the market yet and of course not used by the Nebraska farmers. Now they were starting to become available and with the demonstration plots we were able to show the farmers the value of using the right kind and amount of fertilizers to increase their production of alfalfa and corn etc., especially under irrigation. This was more evident on the newly developed irrigation systems that had required considerable land leveling and a result of the help provided by Ken Palmer and the Soil Conservation Service. On a few occasions I went out with Ken to help with some of the surveying. In the army I had learned to use the surveying instruments and rather enjoyed doing it.

I helped organize a Noxious Weed District in the County to help get rid of, or at least control the noxious weeds such as Field Bindweed and others.

At the County Fair I was busy with the 4-H clubs in preparing their animals and other projects to show at the Fair. I also helped arrange for the judges of the livestock and other projects of the 4-H Clubs and the Home Extension Clubs. It was gratifying to see the effects of the influence we made through the Extension Service as well as that of the Soil Conservation Service on the rural residents of the County.

While I enjoyed all the work and the progress made by the farm families by using the information I helped to provide, I was not able to spend as much time at home on evenings and weekends because of meetings with various groups. Rosalie was pregnant again and Joe was becoming more difficult to care for, so we had to make some changes. We decided to have Joe put in a State Home in Beatrice for those who needed more help such as Joe.

Rosalie's doctor was in Hastings, about 25 miles from Clay Center, and on New Years Day she decided she had to get to the hospital. All the roads were closed due to a big snow storm, so I called the State Highway Dept. They got a snow plow out and opened the road ahead of us so we could go to Hastings to the hospital. After getting there it turned out to be a false alarm so she stayed in Hastings with my sister, Freda and Dick Stull who lived there. Finally on January 11, 1948 Jim was born. We were so thankful that he was strong and healthy. From then on time passed quickly. Rosalie was kept busy taking care of Jim at home and I was busier than ever with an increasing demand from farmers and the various related organizations.

That summer was perhaps hotter than usual and the Court house was not air conditioned so all the windows were kept open. Since our office was on the ground floor it was not as hot as those on the upper floors. One day an old farmer came in from a part of the county that had been instrumental in getting the Extension Agent voted out of the County in the 1930s. They still wouldn't have anything to do with the Extension Service. This old farmer brought in a dead chicken and he insisted that I dissect it, right then and there and tell him what made it die. Fortunately I had taken a course in Poultry at the University and I remembered some of what I had learned. When I cut the chicken open, it stunk up the whole place with a terrible odor that was characteristic of Botulism poisoning. I had no doubts that it had died from some spoiled or rotten food it had eaten. The farmer left happy that he had accomplished his mission. With all the windows open, the cool air that came in our windows then went up through the whole court house taking the terribly offensive odor with it to all the other offices. Needless to say there were a lot of people less happy with me than ever before.

That summer the participation of all the 4-H clubs and other rural exhibitors made the County Fair bigger and better than ever before. Our influence in the county was definitely increasing.

The more I talked to Ken Palmer and thought about the time I spent working and the time he spent working, I had more thoughts about trying to get a job with the Soil Conservation Service. I also liked the way they worked with individual farmers to plan and physically improve each farm, while the Extension Agent disseminated information and advice to individuals, as well as groups of people. I would be able to spend more time with my family with almost no night meetings. After a lot of serious thought, I put in an application to the State Soil Conservation Service office in Lincoln for a job such as Ken had as a District Conservationist.

On Nov.4, 1948 we got a call from the State Institution in Beatrice that Joe Wayne had passed away. The increased pressure from the spinal fluid had enlarged his head and the pressure on his brain had caused his death. We contacted the undertaker who was a friend of ours in Clay Center and made the funeral and cemetery arrangements. The Catholic priest from Harvard came over and held a graveside service at the Clay Center cemetery where he was buried.



My application with the Soil Conservation Service was approved and I was to start work in York County with the office in the city of York on January 3, 1949 as an assistant District Conservationist. The next

thing involved resigning from my job as County Agricultural Extension Agent in Clay County at both the State Extension Office in Lincoln and with the Clay Co. Extension Board of Directors. We went over to York and bought a house in December and sold our house to Deon Axthelm who had been hired to take my place in Clay County as County Agent. Rosalie's uncle, Frank Wiese who owned and operated the Denman Store and Post Office, had a truck and he moved us from Clay Center to York just before Christmas of 1948.



I was already well acquainted with Alvah Hecht, who was the County Agent at York. Glenn Feather was the District Conservationist that would be my immediate boss and train me in all phases of the planning and application of all the soil and water conservation practices applicable to this area. Ed Saylor was the Area Conservationist and Glenn's supervisor who lived and had his office in Hebron, NE. In this job we worked with individual farmers instead of with groups like we did in the Extension Service job as a County Agent. My primary job was to assist the individual farmer in developing an overall plan for all of his farm to conserve the soil and to use it according to its capability as shown on the soils map that had been made by a SCS soil scientist. John Steever and Logan Ohlmstead were the two technicians who helped Glen and me to design and lay out the various conservation practices in the county. This included the surveying that was needed to lay out terraces, diversions, irrigation development with land leveling, dams, drains, etc., as well as tree planting for farmstead windbreaks and wildlife areas. We also worked with the local contractors hired by the farmers to build or construct the conservation practices that we designed and layed out. We also checked them after they were completed to be sure they would do what they were designed to do. I liked this type of work and it had the

additional benefit of permitting me to be home almost every night and weekend with my family.

On August 10, 1949 Dorothy was born at the hospital in York. Now Rosalie was kept twice as busy with two small ones to take care of. However, she still managed to join and participate in a woman's home extension club. With more time available in the evenings and on weekends, I began to accumulate wood working and other tools so I could make and fix things around the house. I also was able to raise a garden and to start a worthwhile and needed hobby of canning and preserving a supply of fruits and vegetables for our family use.



After spending two years at York I was now well trained and capable of being a District Conservationist in some other county. Grand Island would be our next home as I was transferred there in January of 1951. We sold our house in York and

bought a new home that was just being built in Grand Island. We moved into it about the first of January 1951. Here I was in charge of the SCS activities in Hall County and responsible for all the reports and public relations. I was also responsible for the Government vehicles we used and all the survey instruments and other equipment provided by the Government for our use. My job included the scheduling of the work for all the technicians and trainees that I had at various times, as well as being responsible for the technical work done by all the employees. Henry Beck and John Lessig were my two main technicians along with several seasonal and part-time employees. In Hall County the majority of our work involved the development or improvement of the irrigation systems on the individual farms. Here all the water was provided by deep well irrigation pumps on each farm. We did all the surveying with the farmer providing some of the rodmen to help with the surveys.

Clyde Claussen, the County Extension Agent and I were good friends and we worked together for the benefit of the farmers in the county, helping them with fertility problems as well as crops to grow for maximum production.

I was just getting a good start in Hall Co. when in June of 1951, after being there for only 5 months, I was recalled to Active duty in the Army during the Korean War. I had signed up to stay in the Reserves at the end of WWII.

We rented out our house, stored our furniture etc. and bought a trailer to live in. Rosalie and the two kids, Jim and Dorothy, stayed in the trailer at Aunt Ann and Uncle Mike Andersen's place in Denman while I went up to Camp McCoy in Wisconsin as ordered. After about a week up there, I came back to get my family and the trailer. Rosalie met me in Shelton and on the way to Denman another car hit us at an intersection. Rosalie got a couple broken ribs and other minor injuries but I wasn't hurt. I got a 10 day leave to stay there with Rosalie before going back to Camp McCoy. While

in Denman I got orders to go to Camp Carson in Colorado instead of going back to Wisconsin. I left the family in Denman and reported in at Camp Carson. The unit that I was assigned to was getting ready to go to Alaska. The men were buying fishing gear etc. in anticipation of being stationed in Alaska. I was glad to be going there instead of to Korea. However, I got a letter a few days later stating that due to my hearing loss, I wasn't even supposed to be in the Army. But when I presented this letter to the Commander at Camp Carson, I was told that the Doctors that had examined me didn't care as they got paid to qualify so many men for recall and now that I was back in the Army, it would be up to the Army to release me. Instead of just releasing me, they decided to send me back to Washington, DC to Walter Reed Army Hospital to be re-evaluated. As a result I missed out on going to Alaska with the unit and went to Walter Reed Hospital for 6 weeks. After a lot of tests etc. they finally came to the conclusion that I was good enough to go to Korea. I went over to the Pentagon and got my orders to go to Ft. Sill, Oklahoma to the Artillery School before going to Korea.

I then went back to Denman and with my family with the trailer, we drove the car to Oklahoma. We found a nice trailer park in the town of Lawton, which was just outside of Ft. Sill. A lot of other soldiers were there with their families and trailers, so it was easy to get acquainted with our new neighbors and their kids. At Christmas time I got a short vacation so we went back to Denman to spend Christmas with the Wieses, Andersens, and Liggetts. I had to be back to Ft. Sill the day after New Years. At that time we had just had a big ice storm with about an inch of ice from the freezing rain on the highways. We drove back down to Oklahoma on the ice covered roads and were lucky to have made it without an accident. In January my schooling was over and I had orders to report in at Ft. Lawton in Seattle for shipment to Japan and Korea. We took the trailer back to Nebraska and sold it. Rosalie and the kids planned to go to Vancouver and stay with her parents while I would be gone. We drove the car to Vancouver and from there I rode the train or bus to Ft. Lawton in Seattle.

Even before I went to Walter Reed Hospital, Jim had asked me several times why I didn't go to church with his mother and him and Dorothy. I had been thinking about the same thing, so while I was back in Washington D.C. I talked to a Catholic Priest and started taking the instructions. When we got back to Ft. Sill, I again talked to a Catholic Priest and learned more about the religion. In Ft. Lawton at Seattle I contacted the Catholic Priest and after a few more sessions with him, I joined the Catholic Church.

At Ft. Lawton I had picked up a barracks bag full of clothes etc. and swung it up over my shoulder. In doing this I had twisted my back and re-injured it like I had done several years before over in Poland while I was in the German POW camp. I went to the Doctors and the hospital there, but after a lot of X-rays etc, they went ahead with sending me to Japan anyway and to the Tokyo General Army Hospital for treatment. After some time there, the doctors agreed that I was not physically able to go back into combat in Korea.

Instead of that, I was assigned to an anti-aircraft artillery unit guarding an air base about 40 miles from Tokyo. They in turn sent me to the Chemical, Biological, and Radiological Warfare School in Gifu, Japan. This was a very interesting and educational learning experience as that sort of pointed to the direction that future wars would be fought. After finishing that school, the Army finally decided that I wasn't physically able to do what was required and gave me orders to return to the US. After boarding a plane in

Tokyo, we flew to Guam and from there to Honolulu in Hawaii before going on to Travis Air Force Base in California. There I was released from active duty for the last time.

I called Rosalie and she flew down and met me in San Francisco. Needless to say, we were very happy to be back together again. This time I resigned my commission in the Army and was again a full time civilian. We went back to Vancouver to Rosalie's parents where she and Jim and Dorothy had stayed while I was gone.

We were glad to all be together again, but were also anxious to get back to Grand Island, NE to our home and to my job with the Soil Conservation Service. All of our friends and neighbors were glad to see us return. After the renters moved out we got our home back again and took our furniture etc. out of storage. After being gone for about 14 months, we hoped we could get on with our life without any more major disruptions.

My back has been a limiting factor in my activities every since then. For many years I had to wear a back brace and with the help of a few good Chiropractors, I have been able to keep going if I am careful and respect my limitations.

The widest part of the Platte River Valley is in Hall Co. NE where it is from 15 to 20 miles wide. It has good soil over one of the largest underground rivers in the world, running from west to east through a gravel aquifer with a static water table varying from 10 to 80 feet below the surface. This made it ideal for pump irrigation.

During the 11 years at Grand Island, we of the Soil Conservation Service worked directly with the farmers on one of the largest irrigation developments on individual farms of any county in Nebraska. Of course we also worked with and assisted the farmers with the planning and application of all the other necessary soil and water conservation practices on the upland areas of the county with terraces, diversions, waterways, grass seeding, tree planting for farmstead windbreaks and wildlife areas, range management, and farm ponds or dams etc.

As the District Conservationist, I usually had another Conservationist to train and two or 3 technicians to help us. The SCS provided our office space along with 2 or 3 pickups and all our surveying equipment and office supplies. The local District Supervisors provided the secretary to work in the office. Our assistance to the farmers was on a voluntary basis and without any charge to them.

To develop a new irrigation system on a typical farm, the first step after the overall conservation plan had been made, was to go out and make a topographical map of all the potentially irrigable land. With the map, we designed the irrigation system and with the farmer we selected the best location for the well and planned the row direction and the length of run, along with all the ditches and drains. The next step after the well was drilled and the pump installed, was to help the farmer to stake out the fields on grid 75ft. by 100 ft. and with the surveying instrument get a reading at every stake so we could figure the cuts and fills needed at each of the stakes so that the water would run down the row to properly irrigate the crop after the leveling was done. With this map the contractor, hired by the farmer, did the work and we checked it to see that it was done as planned. At one time there were at least 60 land leveling machines working in Hall Co. and with the SCS personnel we had, we did almost all the surveying and figuring of the cuts and fill for them. We also checked their work after they were finished with the job.. As a help to the contractors, I encouraged them to buy a good level of their own and I made the stadia boards for them so they could check their own work during the process of leveling. However, we always checked it when they were done. I even held night classes

for the contractors to teach them how to use their levels as well as how to adjust and care for them so they could accurately check their own work during construction if we couldn't get there to do it when they needed it.

From January 1951 to January 1962 while I was the District Conservationist for Hall Co., our SCS personnel helped the farmers with the planning and assistance to install over 1000 new irrigation wells that brought over 60,000 acres of farm land under irrigation for the first time. With all the added production on each of those farms, the increased income tax paid the Government probably more than paid for our salaries—and that has been going on each and every year since. With the irrigation system installed, the value of the land was also significantly increased. The Soil Conservation Service was one agency of the Federal Government that made money, where almost all others cost the taxpayers money. In addition, all of the soil and water conservation practices we assisted the farmers to apply on their farms have resulted in the preservation of our most valuable natural resources—soil and water.

As for our personal lives after coming back to Grand Island after the Korean War, we tried to combine our work with pleasure. We always raised a lot of flowers as well as a big garden and did a lot of canning and preserving of the tomatoes, green beans, peas, sweet corn, pickles, etc. We did all the landscaping of our yard with the establishment of the lawn, trees, and shrubs. I built a big swing set for the kids to play on. Ron was born on January 30, 1954 and Marianne was born on April 7, 1959. Jim, Dorothy, and Ron all attended St. Mary's Catholic school. On Jim's first day of school I got ready to take him to school and we couldn't find him anywhere. Finally after hunting everywhere, we found him hiding in the garbage can by the back door. He didn't want to go to school. In our part of the city all the houses were new so there were quite a few kids about the same age as our kids, for them to play with as they were growing up.

Our house was rather small so on weekends and at night, we built on an additional 8 feet to the south end of the house. This enlarged the dining area of the kitchen and added to the size of the living room. It was about 1955 that we got our first black and white television set. We had a full basement that we divided up into rooms for another bedroom, my shop, a fruit room, laundry and furnace room, and a play room for the kids. Rosalie was a Cub Scout den mother and that was their meeting place.

Bob Riesland and I became lifetime friends and enjoyed a lot of fishing and hunting trips together over all the years, even after we moved to other locations. Bob worked on the railroad until he retired. He had been in the Navy during WWII and was badly burned when his ship, the Big E, was hit by a Japanese kamikaze plane.

With Shelton and Denman only 20 to 25 miles from Grand Island, we were able to frequently visit Aunt Ann and Uncle Mike, as well as my parents who still lived on the farm close to Denman before they retired and moved to Shelton. I had helped Uncle Mike fix up the rooms upstairs over the store so they could move up there after he had sold their house. We installed a bath room and kitchen with all the necessary plumbing and electrical work. In 1955 Uncle Mike was in the hospital in Kearney and died there in June 1955 at the age of 72. He was buried in the cemetery in Kenesaw where some of his relatives were buried. His dad had been a sea captain and they came to the United States from Denmark when he was small. Aunt Ann continued living upstairs over the store until 1967, taking care of different people in her home for their welfare payments. She had always done a lot of sewing for other people, but was losing her eyesight. By 1967 she was almost blind and she moved into one of the new Shelton Apartments. We continued



going to visit her and help her in any way we could until on September 27<sup>th</sup>, 1972 she passed away at the age of 87. She was buried in the cemetery in Kenesaw beside her husband, Mike Andersen. She was a wonderful lady that never had any children of her own, but was 'Aunt Ann' to all the kids in the neighborhood as they grew up. She was loved and respected by all who knew her.

In January 1962 the SCS decided to move us to Hebron, NE to temporarily take the place of Dwight Pumphrey, the District Conservationist, who was called back into the Army during the Berlin Crisis. We sold our house in Grand Island and moved to a rented house in Hebron because we would only be there a short time. We hated to leave all of our friends in Hall County and Grand Island, but we added more new ones in Hebron.



After moving there, we bought a boat and motor and a new Chevy station wagon. We enjoyed going fishing and water skiing on a lake over in Kansas. We had bought a small vacation trailer while we lived in Grand Island and had enjoyed fishing and camping at

Johnson Lake south of Lexington, NE. Now we put the boat on top of the new station wagon and pulled the vacation trailer to Itasca State Park in Minnesota where we enjoyed a vacation of camping and fishing and boating.



Uncle Mike and Aunt Ann Andersen



Jim and Estella Liggett

In the summer of 1962 we took the trailer to Vancouver, Washington to

visit Rosalie's relatives. While there we went to Seattle to the World's Fair with Rosalie's parents and Bill and Joyce and Margaret and their families.

When we returned to Hebron we found out that we were being transferred to McCook as the District Conservationist for Red Willow County. We immediately went to McCook and rented a house to live in. Then we moved out there on Dorothy's 13<sup>th</sup> birthday, August 10, 1962. A short time later we bought a vacant lot and made plans to build a house at 906 West J St. At some prior year a house on that lot had been completely destroyed by a tornado. We ordered a Capp Home after selecting the floor plan and the design of a house that we liked. They sent us the blueprints and we hired a contractor to dig the basement and lay all the concrete blocks for the basement and for the foundation to fit the house when it came. When it came, they unloaded it and had a crew of carpenters that assembled the house and garage, putting up all the walls, and roof and installing all the windows and doors. We had to put the siding on and the asphalt shingles on.. We had a local plumber install all the plumbing and he also installed the natural gas heating system and furnace. I did all the wiring and electrical work. We followed about the same floor plan for the basement as that upstairs with the 3 bedrooms and a bathroom with a shower and a kitchen and dining area also in the basement. In addition we built a strong reinforced concrete "fall out shelter" under the front porch with the entrance in the basement. About Christmas time we moved from the rented house to the basement of our new house where we lived for several months while I put all the insulation etc. in the walls and ceiling of the upstairs. I did all the electrical work before the local contractor installed the sheet rock and finished the walls and ceilings. We painted them after he got his work done. We also painted the outside of the house. It was a lot of work, but we enjoyed the new house when it was all completed and we moved upstairs. Ron and Jim maintained their bedrooms in the basement while Dorothy and Marianne each had their own bedrooms upstairs. Again we did all the landscaping and established the lawn and trees.



Jim went to the public schools while Dorothy and Ron went to the St. Patrick's Catholic school. Marianne

hadn't started to school yet as she was only 3 years old at that time so she 'helped' her mother and me.

I had been working full time since moving to McCook and building the house at night and on weekends. When I first came into the office I didn't like my secretary so I

fired her and hired Joyce Stupka. She was very dependable and efficient, as well as able to go ahead with all the work with very little supervision. When she started working she said that she only wanted to work for a year or two. However she was my secretary for all of the 13 years before I retired and continued working there for the next 15 or more years until she retired.

At McCook I had anywhere from 5 to 15 employees to supervise as the dams in the Dry Creek South Watershed were under construction, in addition to all the other terracing and irrigation development work going on. Most of the Watershed dam construction was supervised by Glen Buchta, the Area Engineer. The Area Conservationist and my supervisor was Don Broberg. He also had a secretary. Ron Hoppes, the Soil Scientist on the Area staff, was also in the Area office. The Area office and the Work Unit office were separated only by a low partition in the big room on the second floor of the McCook Post Office in down town McCook.

After the Bureau of Reclamation built several large dams in Southwest Nebraska and Western Kansas, the water in the dams was routed by canals and ditches to irrigate the suitable land below each of the dams. When it became available to the farmers, we of the SCS helped the farmers plan and develop their land to make efficient use of the available water. Through the use of gates and weirs, the water was measured and sold to each of the farmers at so much per acre foot of water received. Deep irrigation wells in most of this area were not feasible because of insufficient under ground water.

Red Willow County had been building terraces for many years and was proud of the fact that in some parts of the County almost all the cropland was being, or had been terraced. The average annual rainfall in Southwest Nebraska was only about 10 to 15 inches and often times this came in hard rains where much of it ran off. The terraces being built were level so that they would catch and hold the water, but were only designed to hold a 10 year rain storm. That is one that would hold the biggest rain that we could expect once in every 10 years. On my first tour around the county when I came to McCook, I noticed that the crops that had been planted in the channels of the terraces had drowned out. Some of the terraces had breaks in them where most of the water ran out and down to the next terrace below, causing erosion.

It seemed to me that there should be a better way of controlling and using this runoff water. The water that ran off each farmer's fields eventually reached the streams and rivers and now was being caught and held in the dams that had been built by the Bureau of Reclamation. This is the water that the farmers below them were buying to irrigate their land. The rain that falls on an individual farmer's land is his, and he can do what ever he wants to with it. In this semi-arid land with limited rainfall, the amount of water that a farmer keeps to produce his crops usually makes the difference between success and failure. It is definitely to his advantage to catch, hold, and utilize all the rain that falls on his land.

I wondered why we couldn't build a bigger terrace with a level wide and flat channel so the runoff water would spread out over a bigger area and benefit the crop growing in the channel, instead of drowning it out as was being done in the V channel. I presented this idea to my local Soil Conservation District Board of Supervisors and to Glen Buchta, the area Engineer. It sounded good to them, so we presented it to Don Broberg, and he agreed with us. Glen then started drawing up a design for the width of the channel in relation to the slope of the land and the spacing between the terraces to get

the most runoff without causing erosion. Don Broberg came up with the name for this type of terrace that would differentiate it from the old conventional V channel type of terrace. The name seemed obvious when he suggested calling it a “Flat Channel terrace”. Glen drew up the specifications for laying out and building the flat channel terrace and presented it to the State SCS Engineer. He approved it and we also got the approval of the State Conservationist to start building some of these in Red Willow County. The long gentle sloping land in SW Nebraska and western Kansas and Eastern Colorado were ideal for Flat Channel Terraces and were soon being built and cost-shared by the Great Plains Conservation Program of the Soil Conservation Service and by the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Program.

The farmers in this area of the Great Plains were quick to accept the new terrace that caught and held a 50 year storm and utilized the water on their farms to increase their crop production.



It wasn't long until the Bureau of Reclamation started complaining to us about the lack of water in their dams to sell to the farmers below for irrigating their land.

At about the same time that we developed the Flat Channel terraces, Bob Klein, the County Agent in Red Willow County who was a good friend of mine, started working with a few of the dry land farmers to introduce Stubble Mulch farming or No-Till farming, whereby the crop residue was left on the surface to break the force of the rain as it fell, enabling the water to soak in, instead of hitting the surface of the bare soil, sealing it, and causing the water to run off. Bob received an award and recognition from the USDA in Washington D.C. for his work with the farmers and the machinery companies to develop machines that leave the residue on the surface while planting and growing the crops.

In 1965 Glen Buchta was invited to present a paper on the Flat Channel Terraces at the Annual meeting of the American Society of Agricultural Engineers in Atlanta Georgia. In 1966 I was invited to attend and presented a paper on the Flat Channel Terraces at their meeting in Saskatoon in Saskatchewan, Canada.

Rosalie and I, along with Dorothy, Ron, and Marianne took our little vacation trailer and drove up to Saskatoon for the meeting. Afterward we then went west over to Calgary and Banff where we met Rosalie's parents, who had Margaret and her boys, Dave, Steve and Tom, with them in their little trailer. Bill and Joyce and their kids with a rented trailer also joined us on the trip up north of Banff to see the glaciers and beautiful mountains and lakes of Alberta and British Columbia. Then we came down through Penticton and to the Grand Coulee Dam. From there we went over to the Washington coastal beaches before returning to Vancouver. Shortly afterward we left them to go back to Nebraska with a lot of pleasant memories and pictures of our trip.

In 1971 I began having severe muscle spasms in my back without any reason that we or my local doctor could identify. It got worse so I called my old college room mate, Dr. Dwight Cherry in Lincoln. He said he would have a room ready for me at the Lincoln General Hospital. Rosalie drove the car and fortunately there wasn't much traffic as she drove the 240 miles in exactly 3 hours. We met Dwight at the hospital and over the next several days he had the best specialist doctors in Lincoln check me for every possible cause with no results. My temperature had been going up and when it got to 105.8, Dwight took me to the operating room and cut me open to go through everything looking for cancer or whatever. The only thing he found was evidence of a slight infection, so after putting me together again, he started giving me a strong antibiotic. It worked! Later the blood cultures verified that it was a Staphylococcus blood infection. Nobody thought I would ever walk out of the hospital, but I can give credit for saving my life to Dr. Dwight Cherry. He was correctly noted for being the best "belly" surgeon in Lincoln.



In 1972 we bought our first Airstream trailer and enjoyed many years of traveling and camping with it and others that we got later. In McCook, Rosalie and I had become good friends with Norbert and Frances Dingwerth. We enjoyed getting together with them to go camping and fishing and made several trips together after we both retired.

In 1975 I was 55 years old and had a combined total of 33 years of Federal Service that included time spent in the US Army. Not only was I eligible to retire, but the Doctor suggested that I do it because of several health problems.

A big retirement party was planned for Rosalie and me and held at the McCook Elks Lodge. It was gratifying to have so many fellow SCS employees from other areas of NE, as well as the local Area and District employees, community leaders, farmers, business men, and other friends get together as a token of their appreciation for the devoted service that Rosalie and I had contributed toward the economic development and preservation of our natural resources in Nebraska over my career with the Nebr.

Extension Service and the USDA Soil Conservation Service. I had worked with the farmers and agricultural leaders in Buffalo, Clay, York, Hall, Thayer, and Red Willow Counties between the end of WWII and 1975.

Jim, Dorothy, and Ron had all graduated from the McCook high school. Dorothy had married Gary Vrbas from Stratton and they were living in Lincoln where they were going to the Uni. of Nebr. Jim was in Omaha going to College, and Ron had joined the Army and was in Germany. Marianne was still in high school.

It was a year or two after we moved to McCook that Marianne started to school. Then Rosalie decided she wanted to get a job. For a few years she worked at the local Montgomery Ward store as manager of the Women's clothing department. Later she worked at the local TRW plant where she was the assistant Personnel Director. They made transistors for electronic equipment. In 1973 she and her boss were in Trenton recruiting employees for TRW when she noticed a house for sale that she liked the style and looks of. We were looking forward to retirement but were undecided as to where we wanted to live or what we wanted to do after we retired. Anyway we went to Trenton and looked at the house. It was a Cape Cod style house and had been built in the 1920s by the banker. It showed a lot of quality, even though it had been vacant for a year or two and would require considerable work and some expense to restore and make it the show place it originally was. Also it was only about a mile from the Trenton Dam and Swanson Lake. It was one of the big dams that had been built by the Bureau of Reclamation to control flooding on the Republican River valley and to provide water for irrigating the land in the Republican River valley to the east of it. However, the thing that interested me the most was having a lake that close so we could go fishing and boating, as well as camping. It would also provide some good waterfowl hunting.

With all these possibilities and advantages, we decided to buy the house as a place to retire. It only cost \$10,000 and we were able to buy the adjacent lot with an old building on it for an additional \$1,000. With this we had all the space we wanted for a garden and orchard as well as something constructive to do after we retired. By taking some vacation leave, and working on weekends, we fixed up the house so we could live in it. Having been vacant for so long, the hot water heating system with copper pipes had frozen and broken and had to be fixed. Some of the walls and ceilings were cracked or broken and needed repaired or replaced. We installed new Armstrong ceiling tile that was suspended and at a lower level than the old high ceilings in the living room and the dining rooms. The oak floors required sanding and refinishing with new rugs. In the kitchen and bath rooms new linoleum was installed on the floors. We installed new kitchen cupboards and sink along with the plumbing etc. before we could move. The roof was in good shape and the outside of the house was pretty good. There were some big old cottonwood trees in the yard that were a hazard and had to be cut down. We graded the yard and planted a buffalo grass lawn so we wouldn't have to water it or mow. I also planted a lot of trees including cedar, blue spruce, walnut, Buffalo berry and Sumac bushes, and a lot of Concord grapes along the back yard fence.



Without any advertising, we sold our home in McCook in the summer of 1974 and moved to Trenton. Even though we put in a lot of work to build the house in McCook, we made at least \$20,000 on it. It was only 22 miles to McCook so I drove back and forth to work until I retired on March

1, 1975.

Marianne was very reluctant to leave all her friends in McCook to spend her last year of high school in the little town of Trenton. However, by living that close to McCook, she spent nearly every weekend in McCook with her friends and never did accept the change of schools. Even though she graduated in Trenton as the valedictorian of her senior class in the spring of 1975, she never participated in the school or social activities with any enthusiasm.

After we had traded our small vacation trailer in on an Airstream trailer we had joined the Wally Byam Club. This was an organization of owners of Airstream trailers that got together one weekend each month for a Rally at some place of interest in the central or western part of Nebr. After we retired we were able to use the trailer more. In the summer of 1975 we took the trailer and the boat and went with Norbert and Frances Dingwerth to Lake Itasca in Minnesota where we enjoyed fishing and camping for 2 or 3 weeks.

Now that we were retired, we spent most of our time doing the things we enjoyed such as fishing, boating, hunting, camping, gardening, fixing up the house, and working in my shop in the basement. We also had a stove and sink etc. in the basement so we could do the canning of fruit and vegetables as well as wine making down there.

In the summer of 1976, Norbert and Frances Dingwerth and Rosalie and I took our trailers and went through southwestern Colorado to the Mesa Verde National Park and then to the Grand Canyon and Los Vegas on to southern California. After spending several days in Los Angeles, we went north up through California to Vancouver, WA to be with Rosalie's family. Dingwerths stayed there with us for a few days and then went on by themselves to the coast and other places before going back home. Rosalie's mother had cancer of the stomach and we stayed there to help take care of her for about a month until she passed away on August 14<sup>th</sup>. A few weeks later we went back to Trenton where we cleaned up the yard and did a few more maintenance jobs around the house and yard.

After winterizing the house, we hooked on to the trailer again and went with Harold and Leona, who also had an Airstream trailer, and went south to join the 'Snow Birds' in spending the winter down around McAllen, Texas. Harold and Leona had spent the previous winter down there. Together, they showed us most of the places of interest in that area, which included the sugar cane farms and how they harvest it, several museums, and the real Texas Longhorn cattle that were being sold at the sale barns or auctions.

In January, Rosalie and I left Harold and Leona, and with our trailer, we headed over to New Orleans to attend the annual Mardi Gras with a group of Airstreamers. Reservations had been made for us to park our trailers in the stadium at the University. Arrangements had also been made for buses to take us to all the events going on during Mardi Gras, so we didn't have to drive our vehicles and try to find parking places. We enjoyed catching the beaded necklaces and the unique French Quarter and watching some of the parades with all the pretty costumes. We also took a cruise on the 'Delta River Queen', the big paddle-wheel cruise ship that went up and down the Mississippi River. We had a sight seeing bus that took us all over the city of New Orleans where we saw more interesting things such as the above-ground cemeteries where 'graves' are rented. When nobody continues to pay the rent, the 'graves' are emptied out and re-rented to another occupant. In the rear of the cemetery was a pile of human bones from those who failed to pay their rent. Everything was above ground because of the high water table.

On the way back to McAllen we stopped at Freeport, TX to visit my old army friend, George Olson and his wife. He and I had both been Forward Observers in C Battery of the 158th Field Artillery Bn in the 45<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division at Anzio and Southern France. I hadn't seen him since I was captured by the Germans. Shortly after I had been captured he had been hit by shrapnel and had spent 4 or 5 months in England in the hospitals recuperating before being sent back to the 45<sup>th</sup> Division when the war was nearly over.

After getting back to McAllen, Harold and Leona and Rosalie and I took a bus trip down into Mexico to Monterey and on to Saltillo. This was an interesting trip and was much different than the part of Mexico we saw in the border towns.

Back in Trenton in the spring of 1978 we were busy taking care of our yard and garden. In July we took the trailer and went to Vancouver, WA again. Rosalie's dad, Bill Wiese, had been living in their home and had developed Leukemia and wasn't feeling too good. Frances Wiese (Bill and Joyce's daughter) was going to college and living with her grandpa to take care of him.. While we were there, he got worse and passed away on July 29, 1978. Both Anita and Bill are buried in the St. James cemetery in Vancouver.

A few weeks after the funeral when we were thinking about going back home, we decided to move from Trenton to Vancouver. None of our children were still living in Nebr, and we had always enjoyed the northwest with the salmon fishing and the clams and crabs on the Oregon beaches. Another factor was the mild climate in the winter and the cool summers compared to those in Nebraska. Besides we would be close to all of Rosalie's relatives out here. Again this was a quick decision for a major change in our lives, but it, too, proved out to be a good one.

About 3 days later we bought the house that we still live in at 9020 Boulder Ave. and rented it to some college students. The next step was to go back to Trenton and sell our house there and move to Vancouver. After getting back to Trenton we bought a new



4 Horse livestock trailer to use in moving. It would be much easier to load and unload as it was much lower than a truck would be. We already had a good  $\frac{3}{4}$  T. Ford pickup to pull the Airstream trailer, so now we left the Airstream in Trenton and loaded up the horse trailer with household goods to take to Vancouver. With a canopy on the back of the pickup, we loaded heavy stuff like canned fruit and vegetables in the bed of the pickup and put some plywood across the top of it so we could have our sleeping bags with air mattresses for a bed whenever we wanted to stop and sleep at some rest area. Then we would get up and go until we were sleepy and stop again, day or night. With a big garage at our house in Vancouver, we had a place to store each load as we arrived in Vancouver. After making three trips with the horse trailer, we left the trailer in Vancouver and drove back to Trenton where we had an auction sale to dispose of all stuff that we didn't want to, or couldn't move. Then we sold the house for \$34,000 and I drove the pickup pulling the Airstream trailer. Rosalie drove our little Dodge Colt station wagon and pulled the trailer hauling the bigger boat. With the CB radios we could talk to each other while going down the highway. This time after we got to Vancouver we sold the horse trailer for about what it originally cost, so all the move cost us was for the gas.



We got possession of the house again and did a lot of work on and in it after moving in. It had to be painted and varnished throughout the house along with new carpeting for the whole house. In 1978 our house cost \$37,500. Other improvements were made in succeeding years that include the installation of a gas forced air furnace and a gas fireplace to replace the electric heating system. We also installed double pane windows throughout the house and new sliding patio doors when we remodeled the front entrance. We had steel security doors put on the front and back doors and added another bath room and shower along with a lot of storage cupboards. With all the canned fruit and vegetables stored in the garage, we put a gas furnace in the garage to prevent freezing in the winter. We connected to the city sewer to eliminate the old septic tank. We landscaped the yard and planted numerous fruit trees that included cherry, fig, and plum trees, as well as blueberries, raspberries and grapes. By having an additional lot, we have room for a garden and extra parking space for RVs.

An added advantage to living in Vancouver as we get older, is that we are close to the Portland and Vancouver Veterans Administration Hospital and Medical Facility where I can get all of my medical, dental and eye care. Also we live only a few blocks from the big Southwest Washington Medical Center and Hospital if we need it. We also have quicker access to the Portland International Airport than most of the people who live in Portland because we live close to the I-205 bridge over the Columbia River and the adjacent road to the airport.

My parents had previously retired from the farm in 1957 to a house they bought in Shelton, NE. To keep busy, he took care of the city park. About 1980 my mother developed cancer of the breast. Both she and my dad also had heart and blood pressure problems so they sold their home and moved into a retirement home in Holdrege, NE. My Dad died there on February 18, 1985 from a heart attack and three months later, on May 26<sup>th</sup> Mom died from the cancer as well as heart problems. We were not able to go back to attend either of their funerals. He lacked about a month of being 91 years old and she lacked a little less than a month of being 90 years old. They are buried in the Shelton Cemetery.

After retiring in 1975 I had more time to do the things I liked best. One of these was gardening and canning or preserving the fruit and vegetables. In Washington the soils and the climatic conditions were much different than what we had in Nebraska, so I contacted the County Extension agent in Vancouver for information. As a result I joined a select group of individuals who were Master Gardeners. The Extension Specialists from Washington State University gave classes locally to the Master Gardeners, who in turn volunteered to work in clinics for the public to help individuals with information on the soils and how to manage the fertility problems in their gardens. Also we helped them select the crops and the varieties of vegetables and fruit trees that were best adapted to our climatic and soil conditions. As a Master Gardener, I met and developed close friendships with several men. Sam Davis and I became real good friends in working with our own gardens and flowers. We learned to graft fruit trees and I practiced on a couple apple trees that I planted. As a result, I had about 20 different varieties of apples growing on them. Sam was an avid fisherman and he and I did a lot of sturgeon and salmon fishing in the Columbia River over the next several years until he died.

We still raise a lot of plums, cherries, figs, grapes, raspberries, blueberries and rhubarb along with flowers. Tomatoes are about the only vegetable we still plant in the garden and we buy all the other fruits and vegetables that we need at the grocery stores, already canned. We can the cherries and grape juice and dry the figs. The raspberries and blueberries and rhubarb are put in the freezer. I also buy whole salmon and cut them up before freezing. During WWII, when as a POW, I was nearly starved to death and now I never want to go hungry again. As a result we always have more food on hand than we could eat for a long time without ever going to the store.

In the summer of 1997 we attended a Liggett family reunion at a State Park in eastern Nebr. All the living members of Harold's family, our family, Bob's family, and Freda's family were able to be together to spend several days getting to know each and every one of their children and grandchildren a little better. We got to meet Agnes at the reunion. She and Harold had been married on August 3, 1996. Leona had passed away in 1995. My brother, Bob, died on October 26, 1997 from a cancer of the brain.

Another hobby that I have been able to spend more time with since retiring has

been photography. I built a dark room in the garage and for several years I spent a lot of time copying old photos and reprinting them as well as taking a lot of black and white pictures and developing, printing, and enlarging the pictures that I liked best. In about 2001 I got a computer and later I got a digital camera. Now with the scanner and the printer, I don't use the dark room anymore. Instead it is possible to do all the photographic work on the computer and I can store all the pictures either in the computer or on CDs. This makes them more readily accessible to look at or copy and exchange with others by e-mail.

I also enjoy corresponding by e-mail and keeping in touch with a lot of old friends who were in the army with me and/or in some of the POW camps. We have attended a number of the annual reunions with those of us who were in the 157<sup>th</sup> Infantry and the 158th Field Artillery Regimental Combat team of the 45<sup>th</sup> infantry division in Europe. In 1989 a group of over 50 of us and our wives went back to Southern France. In buses we followed the route we took in 1944 from the beaches we landed on and then generally followed up the Rhone River valley past where I was captured at Abbenans and then over to Munich. Included was a visit to the Dachau Concentration Camp.

After we moved to Vancouver in 1979 we met and got acquainted with several former POWs and a group of them over in Portland. They had organized a Chapter of the American EX Prisoners of War that met monthly. Even though we lived in Vancouver, we joined their Chapter and enjoyed their friendship. Over the next several years we met and got acquainted with a number of former POWs living in or around Vancouver, so in 1984 we got together and organized our own Chapter. I was elected Commander and held that position for several years building up the membership. At that time there were over 75 former POWs living in and around Vancouver, but only about 30 or 40, along with their wives were interested in joining our Ft. Vancouver Chapter. Over the years since, I have been either the commander or the treasurer most of the time. Our membership has dwindled rapidly during the last few years due to failing health and death as a result of old age and from combat wounds and brutal treatment as POWs. We still enjoy the fellowship with the Portland group of former POWs in the Columbia River Chapter too. In 2005 and 2006 I have been the Commander of that Chapter too.

In 1981 Congress voted to give former POWs special health and compensation benefits through the Veterans Administration Hospital and Health administration. Statistics showed that former Prisoners of War have health problems that are more serious as we get older than those of other veterans. The VA provides free medical, dental, and eye care, along with prescriptions and needed prosthetics to former POWs. Along with this is compensation for disabilities related to combat or medical and health problems resulting from wounds as well as from starvation and malnutrition along with the lack of medical, dental and eye care while being held as a POW.

We also have Kaiser Permanente Health Insurance that covers both Rosalie and me, although I usually go to the VA. However, it is a big help to Rosalie. She had a knee replacement in 1988, that wore out and had to be replaced in 2004. In 2005 she had the other knee replaced..



Our priorities have gradually changed because of old age and/or failing health as the years have gone by. During the earlier years, hunting, fishing, and

camping were given priority. Gradually we have disposed of the fishing boats. We went from camping with a tent to small trailers, to larger and more luxurious trailers, to motorhomes. Then back to a smaller trailer before disposing of it and just going to hotels and motels. Now we belong to the “been there and done that” group that gets together to eat and talk about it.

In looking back over my life, I am so very thankful to God for keeping me out of trouble or protecting and guiding me to make all the right major decisions throughout all my life. As a child, my parents raised me as a Christian, and by example they taught me to be honest and responsible. By growing up in western Kansas, eastern Colorado and central Nebraska during the depression years of the 1920s and 30s, I learned the true value of money and integrity from my parents. I learned to be conservative and to take care of and not to waste anything. With God’s guidance I made the decision to go to college after graduating from high school in 1938. I never asked anybody for any financial help and I worked my way through college, earning a Bachelor of Science Degree and a Commission as an officer in the U.S. Army before going on active duty during WW11. As a combat veteran in WWII, I did my best in helping to defeat the Germans. During the war, God looked after me, when at least 12 or 15 times I should have been killed, but wasn’t.

After the war, with His guidance, I met and married Rosalie and also had a job that I enjoyed. Through the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, I was able to help thousands of farm families in the central part of our United States to improve their economic well being and standards of living before retiring in 1975. At the same time our valuable soil and water resources are being preserved for the benefit of future generations.

We tried to raise our children according to our standards. We are proud of each of them and their success in their own field of endeavor. Jim worked in the advertising business in New York City for a number of years before moving to New Hampshire and starting his own business of making and selling his own brand of ‘Old Fashioned Bar Shampoo’ and related products. They are now being sold across the U.S. and many foreign countries. Dorothy is a registered Nurse and specialized as a Psychiatric Nurse in Vancouver, WA. Ron is CPA and is the Managed Care Controller for a group of hospitals in Denver. Marianne is a Landscape Architect and owns and manages her own Company in Los Angeles, CA. They have and are doing major landscaping jobs across the U.S. and in several foreign countries. We have eight grandchildren that are all headed in the right direction for productive careers.

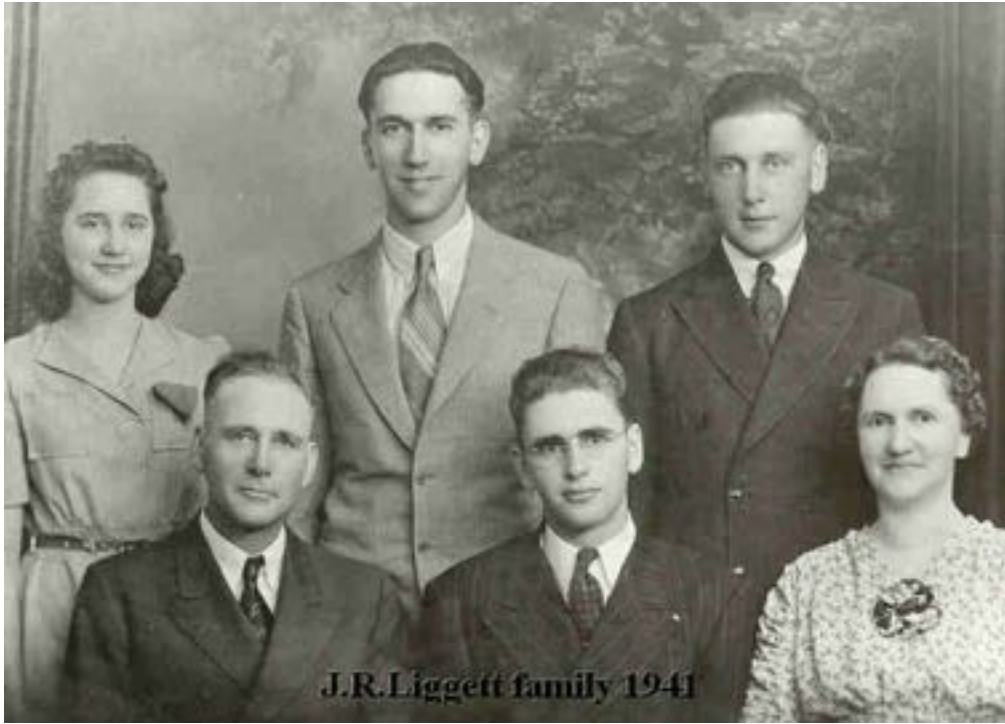
With my retirement benefits from the Civil Service Commission, along with my disability compensation and medical benefits from the Veterans Administration, we have not had any financial problems during retirement. We still remember the value of money that we learned while growing up and are considered quite conservative by today's standards. Our Catholic religion is very important to us as we continue to attend Mass regularly. We enjoy our relationships with our children, other relatives, and our many friends. After celebrating our 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary on February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2006, God is still looking after Rosalie at the age of 83, and me at the age of 86, and is still saying, "No, Not Yet" as we continue to enjoy living while growing older.

Just in case you would like to visit us at some time in the distant future, we plan to be in the Willamette National Cemetery in Portland, Oregon.

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Dorothy    Jim    Ron    Marianne  
Gene        Rosalie



**J.R. Liggett family 1941**

Freda Harold Bob  
James R. Liggett Eugene Mary Estella



Harold and Agnes



Gene and Rosalie



Freda and Orville Hanke



Wm.H. (Bill) Wiese    Bill    Bob  
Margaret    Rosalie    Anita



Lois and Bob    Gene and Rosalie    Orville and Freda  
Leona and Harold



Rosalie Gene Kevin Joe Anna Jason Dorothy Fern Mike Tilka