

## Thornton Vernon Sigler

1919 – 1981

### FAMILY NOTES:

“Mr. and Mrs. J.W. Sigler of Westport, Maryland, are the proud parents of CPT Thornton V. Sigler. He graduated from St. Peter’s Catholic High School in Westport in 1933 and was employed in Alexandria, Virginia, before entering the service. Sigler was inducted at Camp Meade Maryland on 7 May 1941 and stationed at camps throughout the country before being sent overseas. In a unique graduation ceremony on February 3, 1943, held in an English gymnasium, Sigler and four other Marylanders graduated from Officers’ Candidate School and were commissioned as Second Lieutenants. His wife, Dorothy (Fountain) Sigler, and young son live in Philadelphia.”



**COMMISSIONED IN ENGLAND**—Wearing brand new uniforms, five Marylanders who recently were graduated from Officers’ Candidate School somewhere in England are standing, diplomas in hand, outside the gymnasium where graduation ceremonies were held. Left to right, the five second lieutenants are: Nicholas J. DeLuca, Baltimore; Thornton V. Sigler, Westernport; Henry Strickland, Baltimore; Charles H. Maus, Westminster, and Gerald G. Trenton, Cumberland. The photograph was taken by Lee McCardell, Sunpapers correspondent with the United States forces in England.

“Informed initially that her husband was missing in action, she later learned that Lt. Sigler was captured in France and placed in a Prisoner of War camp in Poland. For his courage and leadership during the D-Day invasion, he received the Bronze Medal with V for Valor. This medal was received by his wife, Dorothy Sigler, in his absence.”

Sources for the write-up and the photo include The Cumberland News (Cumberland, Maryland) Monday, Sep 4, 1944 and The Baltimore Sun (Baltimore, Maryland) Friday, Mar. 5, 1943, with photographer Lee McCardell, Sunpapers correspondent with the United States Forces in England.

**A WARTIME LOG**

**A REMEMBRANCE FROM HOME**

**THROUGH THE CANADIAN Y.M.C.A.**

**Published by THE WAR PRISONERS' AID OF THE Y.M.C.A.**

37 Quai Wilson

Geneva Switzerland

DEDICATION:

To My Darling Wife,

I hope these various insights into my life in Oflag 64 will partially make up for months during which we couldn't write. I miss you very much my darling. 15 September 1944 T.V.S.

THIS BOOK BELONGS TO

Thornton V. Sigler, Capt. 175<sup>th</sup> 29 Infantry Division

POW 85549

Schubin Poland Oflag 64

Altburgund, Germany

## **SIGLER'S COMBAT SUMMARY**

3 June 1944 – Sailed from harbor at Helston [England] aboard LST 355.

6 June 1944 – Arrived off Normandy at 0430. Ships as far as you could see. Watched invasion from bridge. Aircraft overhead continuously.

7 June 1944 – With half of “M” Co. was loaded into LCVPs at 2200. Touched down on shore at 2315. Very shaky. Many bodies around.

8 June 1944 – Met remainder of Co. on beach at 0730. Rejoined Bn. about 2 miles inland. Attacked and captured Lacombe about 1600. Attacked toward Isigny. Captured it the next morning.

9 June 1944 – Rested (?) till 1000. Attacked toward Lison at noon. Captured the town and high ground beyond about 2000. Dug in. Lost Col. Goode here. Marvelous help from the 747<sup>th</sup> Tk. Bn.

10 – 15 June – Held positions while other Regiments came abreast.

16 – 19 June – Attack cross-country toward St. Lo. Hedgerows. Moved slowly.

19 June – Became C.O. “M” Co.

20 – 23 June – Attack. Going was very tough.

24 – 27 June – Three days in Regimental Reserve.

28 June – Assisted, by fire, the movement forward of 2<sup>nd</sup> Division on the left and the 30<sup>th</sup> Division on the right.

4 July – Every gun on the beachhead fired at least one round into Germany at noon.

5 – 10 July – Attack again. Very hard fighting.

10 – 13 July – Regtl. Reserve. Received replacements.

14 – 15 July – Cut St. Lo road. Became Bn. S-3.

15 – 19 July – Held, while 2<sup>nd</sup> Division moved up again.

19 – 25 July – Relieved by 35<sup>th</sup> Division. Marched to rest area near St. Clair-sur-Elle. Lt. Col. Blandford became new Bn. C.O.

26 July – Loaded on trucks. Transported thru St. Lo gap to Villebaudon.

28 July – Attack toward Tessy. Promotion to Captain came thru.

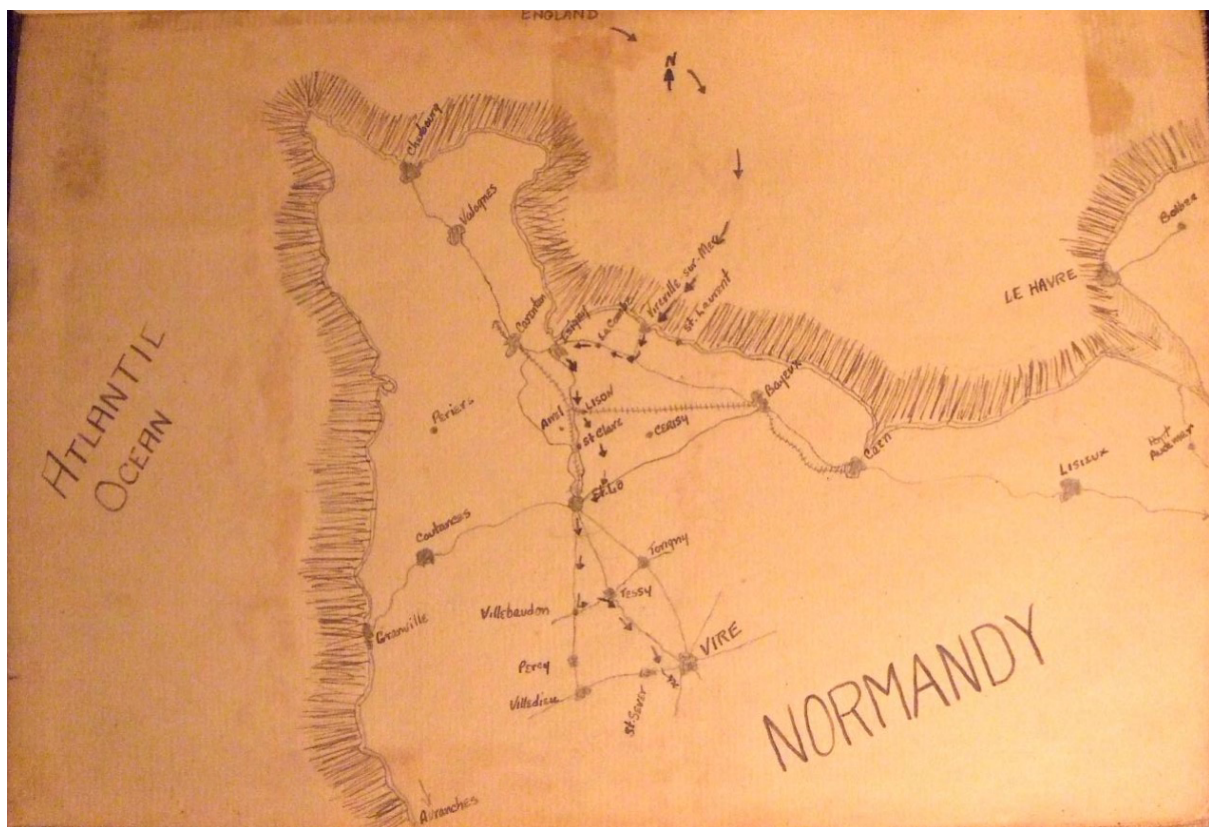
30 July – 35<sup>th</sup> Division beat us to Tessy.

31 July – Bn. in Regimental Reserve. More replacements.

1 – 3 August – Training of replacements.

4 – 5 August Attack on Vire.

6 August – Bypassed Vire. **Captured at 2330.**



### FROM VIRE TO SCHUBIN

7 Aug – Marched to the rear. Quartered in an aid station. Our Artillery was falling very close. Loaded on a truck about 0900 and sent to rear. No food.

Arrived at Division Command Post. Searched and interrogated. Slept in a shed.

8 Aug – Marched 4 miles to collecting point, then by truck to an Ordnance Depot. Again trucked to possible monastery. ??? Fed.

9 Aug – Joined more American POWs. Taken by truck to Alencon. Fed. Moved on to a deserted concentration camp at Vermeille.

10 – 13 Aug – Remained at Vermeille. Very short on rations.

14 – 15 Aug – By truck, thru Dreux, Versailles, Paris, Meaux, to Chalon. Quartered in old cavalry barracks.

16 Aug – Searched and interrogated. Registered with Red Cross.

22 Aug – Received first Red Cross parcel. British. Loaded into a boxcar for Limburg.

28 Aug – Arrived at Limburg, searched, deloused, showered, fed.

29 Aug – Given P.O.W. # 85549

11 Sept. – Another boxcar. Schubin our destination.

15 Sept. – Oflag 64

This account of my first 1½ months as a Kriegie is just barely a sketch. A detailed account I had written was lost somewhere on the march from Shubin. Many things have been forgotten, but I'll mention them below as I recall them.

1. The wonderful treatment by the French people, who risked the displeasure of the Germans to give us food and smokes. Some were caught and punished on the spot.
2. The hundreds of vehicles we saw which our AF had destroyed.
3. The Palace of Versailles, Eiffel Tower, Seine, Arch de Triomphe
4. The black market at Veremeille and Chalon
5. Our first boxcar ride. O'Connor.
6. The German Red Cross
7. The difficulty of becoming accustomed to German food. Latrine facilities.
8. Col. Thompson's story. Sick call at Chalon.

## **OFLAG 64**

Alzburgund, Germany (Schubin, Poland before Polish capitulation), the site of Oflag 64 is a town of about 2000 population. It is located on a great flat plain and has no visible means of support. At least that is our conclusion. Even though we've only seen it once as we marched thru on our way here. The streets that were paved, and there were very few, had cobblestone surfaces. The rest were just rutted, sandy tracks. The buildings were old and some badly in need of repair. The people we saw, were of the "peasant" type and all either old or very young. Oflag 64 is just on the west edge of the town.

The Camp consists of one large, concrete, four-story building known to us now as the "White House", seven long, temporary, brick barracks, a smaller "White House" is used as a hospital, a very attractive brick Chapel and an assortment of smaller buildings used for latrines, stock rooms, storage, etc. At one time, they tell us, the camp was a Polish reform School for juveniles. Surrounding the camp is a double barbed-wire fence about ten feet high with masses of tangled barbed wire between the sections. Strategically located are guard towers equipped with a searchlight which is played over a certain portion of the camp at regular intervals through the night, a swivel-mounted automatic rifle, and a telephone. Guards patrol outside the fence between the towers. Just inside the fence is a single strand of wire beyond which we mustn't go on danger of being shot without warning. Signs are erected here and there reminding us of it.

Inside, the camp is run just as any American camp is run at home, a concession made to us by the German Commandant. Col. George Millet, S.A.O. (Senior American Officer) is in command with Lt. Col. Schaeffer as his assistant. Major Meacham is Adjutant and Major Robertson supply officer. We are all responsible to these men and they in turn to the Germans. Other Officers have been put in charge of various activities (sports, postal, etc.) Each barracks is commanded by a Lt. Col. and he has his assistants just as the Camp CO. Orders [emanating] from either the German Commandant or Col. Millet are read at Appel, then posted on a bulletin board in the White House. Everything is carried on in a military manner. We have two compulsory formations (Appels) each day and usually a surprise one sometime during the week. At these times (0800 and 1645 daily, plus the surprise one) we assemble, by platoons in the square behind the White House, and are counted by a German Officer. It usually takes a few minutes. There must be no tardiness for Appels, else the offender is punished by the SAO. Punishment for this offence is usually an hour in the assembly area to think it over.

The living quarters are good. The barracks are about 200 feet long and 40 feet wide. They have concrete floors and plaster walls. The walls are painted cream color, giving the place a bright and clean look. The concrete floor gets very cold, but it is easy to keep clean. The barracks is divided into two equal-sized sections by the wash room and cooking room; the washroom has 48 faucets, accommodating quite a few men at a time, when we have water. The cooking room is equipped with a big stove with two fire boxes and four sets of double lids. The living quarters on each end of the building are divided into cubicles, 6 on each side of the room. Each cubicle has a window, 4 double lockers, a table, 8 stools and four double-decker beds, accommodations for eight men. Bed sacks, filled with wood shavings especially prepared for that purpose, are our mattresses. Two blankets, a mattress cover and a pillow case complete the bed. Heat in cold weather is furnished by three double, tiled stoves. Fuel is coal, wood and peat, or whatever else will burn.

Due to the large number of officers here (roughly 800) and the lack of space, we eat in three shifts. For breakfast, a representative from each barracks draws hot water from the kitchen to be used for coffee and we prepare our meal in our own cubicle. Lunch is served in the dining hall at the White House. First sitting is 1130, second at 1220 and the third at 1310. Usually, we have soup from the German ration. We are issued 1/6 loaf of bread to last till lunch of the next day. Supper sittings are at 1700, 1750 and 1840. For this meal we get boiled potatoes and Spam or Corned Beef which has been taken from our Red Cross Parcel. Once in a while some very good cottage cheese comes our way. Once a week we get an issue of German sugar, margarine and sugar beet jam. Everything works out pretty well. Each sitting is broken down into groups of 8 men per table and all issuance of rations comes thru the leader of that group. Every week, we are issued a Red Cross Food parcel sent to us by the American Red Cross. The contents of these boxes are well selected and supplement our ration nicely.

Amusements are of various natures. We get an occasional American movie and a group of former actors, now under the title of the "Little Theatre Group", put on very good plays about once a month. Some of their performances have included, "You Can't Take It With You", "The Man Who Came To Dinner", etc., all first class shows. The Swing band, 20-pieces strong under Bob Rankin, puts on a swing concert periodically. The playing of some sport is encouraged by the formation of soccer, football, basketball, softball, etc. leagues. Golf lessons can be had for the asking from Jerry Long, a former pro. A gymnasium with a handball court, weight-lifting equipment, ping-pong tables and the paraphernalia associated with boxing is available for our use at any time of the day. We boast a library of well over 6,000 books ranging from "Games For Kiddies" to Shakespeare with a liberal supply to technical books. Classes in German, French, Mathematics, Dramatics, Law and many other subjects are held daily. An artist will teach you how to paint if you so

desire. For those who like to putter around in the garden, most any piece of unused ground in camp, can be, and has been planted. The "Volkischer Beobachter", a German daily, is issued and those who speak German translate it for us. The camp itself publishes a monthly paper "The Oflag 64 Item". A German propaganda paper "O.K." printed in English finds its way to us about once a week.

The religious welfare of the officers is well taken care of by four Chaplains, two Protestant, two Catholic. For the Catholics there are two masses daily at 0730 and 0915. Evening Prayers each night at 1930. Protestant services are held every Sunday at 1030 in the theatre. The Chaplains are available to listen to our woes at most any time and their rooms have become hangouts for those of us who care to spend a quiet evening in small talk. Father Brach is the oldest Kriegie among the Chaplains. He was captured in Africa nearly two years ago. Chaplain Hennon, next oldest was with one of the "Airborne Divisions" that landed D-1 in Normandy. Chaplain Teilmann, Col. Hardaway's Chaplain, was captured with the Colonel at Mortain on 9 August and Father Glennon is J.C.P., taken around the 1<sup>st</sup> of Sept.

Representatives from the International Red Cross and the Y.M.C.A. pay periodic visits to camp. Any complaints we have are registered with them and they in turn pass them over to the Swiss Government, the Protecting Power, for action. These men also take into consideration any plausible suggestions we may have relative to making our life here in camp a little easier, and see that those suggestions are placed in the hand of the proper authorities. On arriving, these men, accompanied by the German Commandant and the S.A.O., inspect our quarters, sanitary facilities, mess, etc. Any discrepancies are noted and the German High Command informed. The S.A.O. can complain, thru them, that any Articles of the Geneva Convention pertaining to the P.O.W. are being violated.

Mail goes out every Monday and Thursday. We are allowed to send one letter and one postcard per week. These are censored by the Germans, then sent to Switzerland, where the International Red Cross, acting as intermediary, places it in American hands for delivery. Mail coming in goes thru the same routine. The average time for a letter to get there is 80 days. We can receive an unlimited supply of mail.

## **REALISM EXPOSED**

[Note: The information below was added 6 years later on 8/19/1951.]



## TO THE READER:

After reading this description of life as a P.O.W. in Oflag 64, you might get the impression that it was a vacation for us. Don't you believe it! This book was illegal. Had I been caught with it, I could have been shot. It was smuggled into camp by some ingenious method of which I was unaware. At least 20 of us got one. When I began to record my "memoirs" I made the decision to put down my words in such a way that the Goons could not say I was defaming the Third Reich (Germany). Take into consideration then, that the opposite of what I wrote was usually the truth. The guards stole the Red Cross parcels, we rarely had running water, fuel for stoves was practically non-existent, we were infected with lice, the Goons paid no attention to the Geneva Convention, we were constantly being searched and threatened with death, we got no mail, we were under constant surveillance by guards and were called "weasels"—I suppose the way we were treated was a form of brain washing. Worst of all though was the lack of food. I entered captivity at 165 pounds—I came out at 127.

Please keep this in mind as you read this book. TVS

On the following pages, I've tried to give a brief account, day by day, of a Kriegy's actions and thoughts as he sweats out his captivity hour by hour. Unless you have been in this situation, there is no way you can understand the boredom, frustration and fear for your life that he lives with 24 hours a day. When you read, try to put what you read into perspective. If I say a morsel of food was tasty or good, it was—compared to the absence of food, but to you, had you known its contents, in comparison to what you eat, it would be repulsive. When I say I enjoyed something, I did, because it was better than having nothing happen. Prisoners of war are desperate people and will seize upon any activity in order to keep their sanity. The mental anguish is far worse than the physical.

Keep in mind also that food was our number one priority. The German ration was slow starvation (but the German civilian was little better off than we were) and had not a few Red Cross parcels reached us, many of us would have died—if not from malnutrition, then because his body was too weak to fight off illness. The Americans and the British were treated far better than the Poles, Russians, French, etc., thousands of whom died in prison from criminal neglect. In retrospect, I thank God I was one of the lucky ones—I pray for those who didn't make it.

ONE FINAL THING – Eisenhower got word to us to sit tight, don't risk your lives by trying to escape. A few Americans who tried it wound up dead and were used by the Germans to show us that trying to escape was futile.

Excerpts below are from a speech delivered by Colonel Drake, former S.A.O., Oflag 64 on 6 June 1944.

“Let no man believe that there is a stigma attached to having been honorably taken captive in battle. Only the fighting man ever gets close enough to the enemy for that to happen. That he is not listed among the slain is due to the infinite care of Providence. Be proud that you have carried yourselves as men, in battle and in adversity. You will be enriched thereby.”

## **DIARY ENTRIES AT OFLAG 64**

[Note: Many are present in Captain Thornton Sigler’s diary. Some are expansive and poignant, others brief, and all memorable, but because of their numbers, fewer have been included and some abbreviated in this biography, especially those describing daily activities and routines. Furthermore, plain font is being used throughout this writing, in place of *italics*.

This diary also offers a plethora of items not always found in examples which still exist: These extensive lists can be found toward the end of this writing under the title: Diary Declaration.]

Readers who wish to “view the whole experience” might pursue a complete copy of the diary. It is certainly worth the read!]

### **15 Sept. 1944 Friday**

Tonight we arrived at our permanent camp. Oflag 64 at Altburgund, Germany. Left the train at 1730 and marched thru town and into camp. Searched and turned over to the American Administration. Food, bath and an issue of clean clothing. Quartered in Barracks 9b under the command of Lt. Col. Martz. Got ½ Red Cross box. Went to bed at 11:00 P.M. and slept like a log. You should see how the old men flocked to the gate when we arrived. The same old story—looking for someone they knew. All were as considerate as could be. Everyone wanted to help. One officer took us in tow and guided us all evening till we got to our barracks. It’s a relief to be among your own again. This little spot of Germany belongs to America.

### **16 Sept. 1944 Saturday**

Today was a busy one for me. After breakfast from my Red Cross box, with some hot coffee, was appointed Adjutant of the barracks and as such,

had a whole raft of rules, regulations and orders to print up for Col. Martz. Was surprised by a visit from my old friend Jimmy Heard who was captured on 11 June. Saw Slingluff, DiBerto, Scott and Myron. There was a track-meet today. Some of the competition was pretty hot. Saw part of it. Had a good supper: fried Spam, Cole slaw, mashed potatoes, bread, butter, jam and coffee. During the evening, I got myself settled in my new home and went to bed about 2300. My first twenty-four hours in my new home has been pleasant. Hope it remains so.

### **17 Sept. 1944 Sunday**

Sunday and a beautiful day as far as the weather was concerned. Made a tour of the camp to see what was here. Visited the library, the bulletin boards, the Chapel, the athletic fields (basketball, football, soccer, track, etc.) the hospital. Drew a blouse, sweater, 2 shirts, 2 pairs socks, tie, 6 handkerchiefs, wool knit cap, pair shoes, pair athletic shoes, 2 sets insignia, toilet set, heavy underwear. Spent the evening with Scotty and Heard. It's the first time we've had a chance to talk. They wanted to know all about the Division. In turn they gave me the lowdown on the ground rules, the tin store, entertainment, the library, cleaning facilities and lots of other questions I asked. Came back to barracks at 2145 because no one is allowed outside after 2200.

### **18 Sept. 1944 Monday**

We were registered by the Germans. Filled out a form that all P.O.W. fill. Worked all morning on some business arithmetic. In the afternoon I started making a map. What a job. It shows the European situation. Pretty hard on the eyes. Scotty invited me down for some grilled cheese sandwiches this evening. Went to bed about 2230. The men in camp have been very considerate. All of them have done their best to get us settled. The first questions they ask is Do you need this or do you need that? Marvelous bunch. That sounds like repetition but it's worth repeating. Maybe the fact that we are all "Kriegies" makes a difference. (Kriegies comes from "Kriegsgefangenen"—P.O.W.) I've never seen a bunch that gets along as well as this camp. More co-operation than enough.

### **19 September 1944 Tuesday**

Took eight laps around the track at 0630--We all need the exercise tho. Worked the whole day on the map. Bigger job than I expected--Took the evening off and read Ogden Nash. He's terrific. Bed about 2300.

## **21 September 1944 Thursday**

Got sick last night. Don't know what's doing it but it's happening too many times lately. Slept until 1030 and felt much better.--During the evening Major Cole, Div. C.W.O. came over and we spent time talking about our experiences and the people we both know. Bed at 2300.

## **22 September 1944 Friday**

This morning we signed receipts for our AGO cards and other papers that had been taken from us. Afterward I washed all the clothing I had worn to camp. Had hot water for it--After supper we saw the play "You Can't Take It With You"--There are about 700 officers here and among them is all kinds of talent. The feminine parts were taken by men naturally. It was well done and in no time we in the audience had forgotten the actors in our concentration on the story. Hope there will be more of them.

## **23 September 1944 Saturday**

There is a Catholic Chaplain here who says Mass every morning so I've started to go to church every day. After breakfast we cleaned up for an Inspection, a regular Saturday affair, conducted by Col. Millet, our S.A.O. After lunch practiced some soccer and attended a meeting to get a soccer league organized. Listened to the band again for a while then washed up for supper. In the evening Powell and I started to make bread pudding but it wound up with about everything but our blankets in it. We put it up to soak overnight.

## **24 September 1944 Sunday**

Roll call at 0900 this a.m. We cooked our "concoction". Doesn't taste too badly.--Went visiting Ray Marnien from Philadelphia and spent the evening talking of home.

## **25 September 1944 Monday**

Rainy today and cold. Worked all morning putting notes and autographs in this book.--Got a #9 Red Cross box, water soaked. Not as large as the #10. Had a very good supper tonight, baked corned beef with onions, cottage cheese, boiled cabbage and stewed pumpkin. Spent the evening getting autographs.

## **26 September 1944 Tuesday**

Feels like winter is here. Worked all morning catching up this diary from my notes. We hear that 60 new officers are coming in today. They're getting places ready.

## **27 September 1944 Wednesday**

Had my picture taken by the Germans for an identification card.--Lunch was uneventful. Held a blackboard talk with some of my players who have just begun learning the fine points of the game.--Two years ago today I sailed from New York Harbor. It has been a hard, long time. I wonder if the next two years will produce the variety of events the past two have?

## **29 September 1944 Friday**

Sixty-one new officers came in the am. No one I knew, but a couple new patches. They were glad to get here. They tell us Limburg was bombed.

## **30 September 1944 Saturday**

Pay day back in the Army. Certainly would like to be there to collect it.—The SAO inspected us about 1000 and pronounced our barracks EXCELLENT.

## **1 October 1944 Sunday**

New month, new day, new page but same old routine.—Read for a while, then listened to the dress rehearsal of Rankin's Band.--Good American jive makes the day worthwhile. After Appel I got the whole soccer team out for a final practice before tomorrow's league game. Wasn't feeling so well so I didn't eat any supper, but worked a while on my insignias then read till bedtime.

## **2 October 1944 Monday**

Germany set her clocks back at midnight last night. It rained all day so my game was postponed.--Read "Life In A Putty Knife Factory" by H. Allen Smith.

## **October 1944 Tuesday**

Another rainy day. We are temporarily out of water. The pump is broken. Sang at High Mass at 0900.—This evening at 7:30 I went to hear Bob Rankin and his Band in a full hour of swing. Some of the numbers he played brought back a lot of memories.--Read a compilation of humorous stories.

## **4 October 1944 Wednesday**

For a change the sun came out early this a.m. At 1000 my soccer team played its first league game and while they outplayed the opposition, we lost the game 2-1. Better luck Saturday--About 1930 we got 3 new officers in, so I spent the remainder of the evening getting them settled. Bed at 2300.

## **6 October 1944 Friday**

Sewed some paper into my blanket yesterday and it worked like a charm. Didn't get cold once last night.--Studied my French lesson during the evening.

## **7 October 1944 Saturday**

Didn't sleep well last night because of my stomach. Bread is catching up with me again. Stood inspection at 1000.--A bad headache developed during the evening so I went to bed early.

## **8 October 1944 Sunday**

Today has been a perfect day as far as the weather is concerned.--This afternoon the big All-Star Touch Football game was played, regulation length and the Redskins beat the highly-favored Bears 51-25. The Germans were on hand to watch. During the evening, I wrote an account, in this book, of the game and read "Topper Takes a Trip" until bed time at 2300.

## **9 October 1944 Monday**

Wrote letter to Dot and acted as timekeeper for two soccer games during morning.--After Appel talked with Chaplain Glennon for a while they came up to the barracks and fried some bread and green tomatoes for my supper. Read a part of a mystery novel in bed.

**12 October 1944 Thursday**

452 years ago Columbus got to America.

**13 October 1944 Friday**

We were issued hot water again at 1500 so I had a cup of coffee.--  
Repaired an undershirt then went to supper.

**15 October 1944 Saturday**

Tight soccer game--Worked on my book.--Been here one month today.

**16 October 1944 Monday**

I've transferred to the 3rd sitting so my lunch came at 1310.--About  
2100 nearly 100 new officers arrived. 38 were sent to our barracks. It was  
well after 2300 when we finally got them set, answered a thousand questions  
and got into bed.

**17 October 1944 Tuesday**

Mass at 0730, Appel, then breakfast.--After lunch went back to work  
and stopped at 1500 when coffee water came. Talked until 2030 and worked  
on some insignias, then read.

**18 October 1944 Wednesday**

Mass, Appel, Breakfast in that order.--Stood later Appel during which  
Colonel Goode assumed command of the 1000 Americans here. Supper, then  
to a swing concert.

**19 October 1944 Thursday**

As usual, I watched some soccer and at 1100 took my weekly hot  
shower.--Went to the library and drew a couple of books.

**21 October 1944 Saturday**

Read till 1500 when I ate my first piece of pie here in camp. We made it  
from a D-bar, milk, margarine, sugar and crackers. Very good.

## **22 October 1944 Sunday**

One of the nastiest days we've had. It was foggy, rainy and cold. Inside the barracks we had to keep on all our clothes to stay warm.--About 50 of us were late for Appel this afternoon so we had to march around the perimeter of the camp for 30 minutes, all the while being good-naturedly hooted by the rest of the camp. We've learned our lesson.

## **23 October 1944 Monday**

There are no more Red Cross boxes. That's going to hurt.

## **27 October 1944 Friday**

First frost of the fall. Everything was white. Cold as heck this am.--We got a new officer, Lt. Mason, in our cubicle so we talked to him till supper. Benediction at 1900, cleaned up my locker for tomorrow's inspection then went to bed with a book.

## **29 October 1944 Sunday**

Made out the duty roster for November and cut up some more rutabagas and green tomatoes for our soup. A friend of Capt. Eldridge's came up with some leeks and 5 bouillon cubes to add to the brew. We invited him up to share it.--It was delicious.--Appel has been set back from 1945 to 1615 due to the shortness of daylight.--Supper of Span, potatoes and greens; the last good meal till we get Red Cross parcels in. So far, no news. German ration, here we come. Had my first piece of gum in over 3 months and had a cigar given me during the evening. Both came in private parcels from home. Benediction at 1900. Listened to a batch of new Swing records which have just arrived from England. Fats Waller, Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Artie Shaw, etc. They sounded swell. I know what music starvation is. Worked a little on this book and when the lights failed at 2130, I went to bed.

## **30 October 1944 Monday**

Very cold and damp today.--Started another book but had to go out and move around to keep warm.--Supper at 1700. Benediction at 1900. Climbed in bed with couple magazines at 2030. Warmest I'd been all day.



## **October 1944 Tuesday**

Hallowe'en, Pay day, and according to Lloyd's of London the day the war was to end.--Swaim started teaching me a little E.E. [Electrical Engineering]. Might come in handy. Built our fires for the first time, re-arranged our cubicle, then went to lunch. Felt pretty rotten so I went to bed till 1500. Had some bouillon, very little, then Appel--I'm getting a cold so I took some aspirin and went to bed at 2030.

## **1 November 1944 Wednesday**

Rained all day so it wasn't too cold. Felt pretty bad in the morning but it cleared up a bit during the day.--Worked on my book for a while.--Spent the evening studying E.E.

## **2 November 1944 Thursday**

Slept fairly well altho that cold of mine is uncomfortable.--Took my weekly shower. Worked on a jig-saw puzzle--then spent the rest of the afternoon working on E.E. with Ben Swaim.

## **3 November 1944 Friday**

My cold is much better today.--Worked until lunch on E.E. Getting some of the fundamentals thru my head. Class at 1315 till 1500. Ersatz coffee. Read till Appel.

## **4 November 1944 Saturday**

[Barracks inspection was "Excellent"]. Worked a while on this book and my E.E. then went to lunch. Attended a prep school meeting at 1400 and signed up for physics and geometry.--Wrote a letter to Dot and a card to the Tedaldis and read until 2300.

## **6 November 1944 Monday**

At 830 I went to the first class in trigonometry.--Drew clean bed sacks for the cubicle, repaired some of my clothes, soaked some laundry then read till lunch.--Worked on the book for a while. Talked about home for a while with Frank Healy, then got into bed and read the story of the Civil war.

### **7 November 1944 Tuesday**

Spent a couple hours on E.E. then went to lunch. At 1400 attended a class on Salesmanship (Major Sage – Procter and Gamble).--Today is election day so we spent most of the evening agreeing that Roosevelt should stay in.

### **8 November 1944 Wednesday**

Darned some socks and worked on E.E. till 1130.--At 1530 went to Trigonometry Class.--Spent the time till supper arguing effect of change of Administration on prosecution of the War.

### **10 November 1944 Friday**

We got 55 new officers in the am, so my shower was postponed till 1330. Did my daily stint of E.E. then went to Library.--Choir practice till 1500, Trig class till 1600.--Talked about home and food with Smitty till supper.--Worked on this book.

### **11 November 1944 Saturday**

Armistice Day, everywhere but here. Had our first snow of the year, about 2 inches.--At 1030 I was issued a beat-up Belgian overcoat. Better than nothing.

### **12 November 1944 Sunday**

Now on first sitting at meals. Visited Trotter who was with my Bn and who just came in the other day. Spent about an hour with him.

### **14 November 1944 Tuesday**

It has been the coldest day I've experienced since I left the States. At 1000 the thermometer stood at 28 degrees. We had occasional snow flurries during the day. The Gestapo arrived to search the camp.--At 0930 attended Apologetics class in Fr. Brach's room. Gives me something to think about.--Went to Salesmanship class at 1945. Very interesting. Had a slice of bread and [went to bed to read].

### **15 November 1944 Wednesday**

Two months ago today we arrived here. Not quite so cold today but still pretty bitter.—The Gestapo started on our barracks early. While waiting for them, I darned a couple pairs of socks and did some E.E. At 1030 they got to our side and I escorted one party during their search. They finished at 11:35.

### **16 November 1944 Thursday**

Worked on a drawing of home in this book--Prepared my little bit of food for tea; turnips, a potato and some bread crumbs fried together.--[At supper] we were told there would be no more coal till 1 Dec. Today was a 33-degree low and it's going to be pretty tough. Red Cross parcels (2144 of them) are on the way.

### **17 November 1944 Friday**

Temperature today was 31 degrees low.--The choir worked on Christmas carols.--Surprise Appel at 1100 this morning.

### **18 November 1944 Saturday**

Temperature today 27 degrees.--Inspection by Col. Millet, Col. Goode, Col. Waters. Excellent as usual--Got my bi-monthly haircut. Made up some new rosters.--Rubbed some circulation into my feet then went to supper.

### **19 November 1944 Sunday**

At 0800 [the temperature] stood at 45 degrees.--Choir practice at 1400. Russ Ford directs. We're on Xmas carols and singing them makes me homesick.-- Benediction at 1900 then to a German movie. Walked out on it.

### **23 November 1944 Thursday**

We had three new officers in the barracks. One from the 29<sup>th</sup> and one from Phila., Pete Mirakian, who left there in Sept. Talked with him about home till lunch. Then my first bath in two weeks. First time I've been warm in two weeks.

### **24 November 1944 Friday**

Spent the whole morning scrubbing my locker inside and out. Didn't realize it could get so dirty. Worked on Salesmanship till 1400 when we had choir practice.--Figured out how much money is accrued to me (\$956.00) at 30<sup>th</sup> November.

### **25 November 1944 Saturday**

Got 3 new officers in, a Jap and a War Correspondent for the Atlanta Journal and the NBC. At 1400 a surprise Appel.

### **26 November 1944 Sunday**

Letter to Dot and card to Tedaldis. W.C. Bryan talked to us about some of his experiences since D-Day. He was taken 12 Sept. near Metz.

### **27 November 1944 Monday**

31 degrees at 0800, one of those half and half days. Mass, Appel, breakfast, cleanup up, then to the Library.--Soaked my dirty laundry.—[Caught] up on Salesmanship. E.E. class at 1945.

### **28 November 1944 Tuesday**

31.7 degrees at 0800 and it kept getting colder all day. Surely wish we had some heat.--Sang Requiem Mass for Ray Marnien's mother.

### **29 November 1944 Wednesday**

Right after lunch we were issued a G.I. blanket, new, just sent in by the R.C. What a blessing.

### **30 November 1944 Thursday**

Thanksgiving Day. Warmer and rainy. Appel, breakfast, cleanup then 0900 Mass, when the choir sang. Memories came flying back at me, so I felt pretty homesick.—[Lunch time] had good soup. After lunch helped Powell issue some winter underwear, shoe polish and clothes brushes.--Walked around the path for about ½ hour getting my exercise then read till supper--My thoughts today have been almost continually of home, but I suppose that's natural. Maybe next year will be different.--Will it end soon??

### **1 December 1944 Friday**

31 degrees at 0800. Damp and miserable all day.--For the first time since I left England, I was able to shine my shoes. Spent over an hour working on my two pairs. Drew a map in the front of this book.--Made up copies for some signs for the cubicles then read.

### **3 December 1944 Sunday**

[Wrote card and letter to Dot]. Worked on my book.--2160 R.C. parcels came in. They are across the street in the Jerry tin store. Are we happy! That will give us one a piece. Camp strength is 1040 officers, 106 enlisted men. Probably issue them tomorrow.

### **4 December 1944 Monday**

Word finally came that the issue [of Red Cross parcels] would begin at 1400. At 1530 I got mine. Christmas came early. No.10 with all we've been wishing for.--Worked on my book, bashed, and went to bed.

### **5 December 1944 Tuesday**

Had a nice snack of potato patties mixed with pate on toast.

### **6 December 1944 Wednesday**

33 degrees at 0800. Weather still pretty good.--Worked on my book then took my weekly hot shower.--Lunch of good stew. Started to print up some prayers to be pasted into my prayer book.--Good supper of corned beef, boiled potatoes and good gravy.

### **7 December 1944 Thursday**

Three years ago today we got into this mess. I was on my way back from the '41 Carolina maneuvers and we were bivouacked at Danville, Va. when the news came thru. I've had enough for my lifetime. 34 degrees. Sunny all day.--Worked on my book then to the library until lunch. Helped George Powell and Ben Swaim plan a restaurant they want to start after the war.--Bash at 2100 then to bed.

### **8 December 1944 Friday**

Catholic Feast Day of the U.S., Immaculate Conception.--Studied Salesmanship, got my bi-monthly haircut then visited Jack Crawford--had a piece of toast and a little of my Red Cross jam.

### **11 December 1944 Monday**

Pete Mason's wedding anniversary and Dot's birthday fall on the 13<sup>th</sup> so we began preparations for a pudding in celebration.

### **12 December 1944 Tuesday**

For a cigar on Xmas Day, I altered Healy's trousers. Chopped up some wood that had been issued to us, then went to lunch. Pete and I cooked our pudding and then I did my laundry. Bashed at 2100. Pete and I weakened and sampled our pudding. Delicious.

### **13 December 1944 Wednesday**

Dot's birthday and Pete's first wedding anniversary. --Visited Joe Barrett where I picked up the news that 1400 Xmas parcels arrived, complete with turkey and plum pudding.--At 1500 Pete and I had our "party", toasting each other with real coffee. Prepared breakfast and the ingredients for a pie. Bashed. Bed.

### **14 December 1944 Thursday**

Up at 0330 to arrange delousing operations. Lice in camp. Rainy and cold. Ran groups of men down to the chamber at 2-hr. intervals. Went through myself with the last group at 0930. Got out at 1100. Diphtheria broke out in 8a so the whole barracks is quarantined. Lunch, then made our pie. Drew my 2<sup>nd</sup> Red Cross Parcel (#10) then lay own till 1500. Ate part of the pie (chocolate).--Temperature has dropped a lot. Nearly froze.--Prepared breakfast then made a straw mat. Ate rest of pie and went to bed early. Pretty sleepy.

### **15 December 1944 Friday**

17 degrees. Need I say more. Three months ago today I arrived here.--Had some good "Barrington Hall" coffee.--Pete and I pooled our food and we spent two hours planning our Christmas Day menu. Made a cap for my ears. Bashed. Bed.

### **16 December 1944 Saturday**

Inspection by Col. Millet at 1030. Pete and I made another pie. Lunch. Baked our pie.--Bashed at 2100. Bed.

### **17 December 1944 Sunday**

21 degrees.--Letter to Dot and a card to Harry and Mary. Pete and I experimented with jam tarts. Weren't completely successful.--Played Lexicon till supper. Squirreled all of the ingredients for our Xmas puddings and pies. Bashed at 2100 then to bed.

### **18 December 1944 Monday**

22 degrees. Mass, Appel, breakfast, clean-up for inspection of the camp by a German General, which did not materialize. Cut up our prunes for Xmas pudding. Lunch. Arranged a detail to help decorate the barracks then cut up some firewood. Read till tea time. Shaved. Appel. Supper. Fixed breakfast then went to see "Swingology". Major Hansen was terrific. Ate a little snack then went to bed.

### **19 December 1944 Monday**

My birthday this time.--Cracked open all our prune seed and took out the meat. Diced them and fried them in margarine. Taste like almonds. Traded 12 crackers for 2-day bread rations.--Pete and I grated up bread for our puddings. Ate a little at 2100 and then went to bed.

### **20 December 1944 Wednesday**

Our Wedding Anniversary. Hope I don't spend any more away from home.--Made a cardboard pie pan. Fixed my stove and chopped up some fuel. May get my Xmas parcel today. Worked on this book till 1430. Capt. Eldridge has had it for three weeks.--Made a pie crust then to supper. Mixed up pie and pudding batter then went back to see "Swingology". Bashed then bed.

### **21 December 1944 Thursday**

21 degrees. Shortest day of the year and one of the nicest.--Germans have started a big drive against the 1<sup>st</sup> Army.--Worked all morning cooking two puddings (prune and chocolate) and a pie (combination prune and chocolate) for Xmas day. They certainly do look delicious. At 1100 our Xmas Red Cross parcels arrived complete with turkey, deviled ham, Vienna sausage,

jam, honey, plum pudding, preserved butter, cheese, nuts, candy, cherries, dates, fruit bars, chewing gum, a pipe, Prince Albert, checker set, 3 packages cigarettes, and two pictures, tea, bouillon cubes and a face cloth; something just about as valuable to me as food. In gloating over our early Xmas present, I was almost late for chow. Put a nut-and-PW delight icing on my pie, then sampled both the nuts and the candy from my box. The Lord is certainly taking care of us. Traded a D-Bar for 1 pound can of margarine. Pete and I both love it so we eat it "promiscuously". Worked on this book for a while pasting in it some of the labels from the food in my box.--Helped with the cooking of some more Xmas stuff. Pete and I ate one of our puddings at 2100, along with nearly all of our nuts and candy. Temptation was just too much. It's been too long since we had anything like that. The lights went out early so we all got into bed and sang Xmas carols till 2330. I was too full to go to sleep.

### **22 December 1944 Friday**

14 degrees.--Spent most of the morning decorating the cubicle with red, green, blue, and white crepe paper. Finished off my nuts and candy in anticipation of a search. Was pretty full at lunchtime but ate my soup anyway. News says the Germans are still going strong in their counter drive. Worked on this book for a while then had choir practice. Pete and I decided to make a date pudding so we assembled the ingredients (3/4 pound of dates, 12 prunes, 1/3 D-bar, 6 lumps sugar, 1 tablespoon margarine, pinch of salt, 1/2 day bread ration and 2 medium-sized potatoes). Supper was potatoes (period) at 1730 in barracks. We cooked our pudding successfully and at the same time ate the second one we had cooked yesterday. We just can't seem to be able to stay away from the sweet things. Cooked up some of the Vienna sausage because already it has started to mildew. Got into bed early because my feet still insist on getting cold and staying that way.

### **23 December 1944 Saturday**

10 degrees, very cold but still dry and clear.—At 1000 we had a surprise Appel followed immediately by an inspection by Col. Gooler. Not so good this time. Too many preparations for Xmas, I guess. Our turkey, 12-oz. cans were issued, then lunch. Spooned out the center of our pudding and stuffed it with cherries. Mac and I did a little decorating in the Chapel. Worked on this book until 1500.--Removed our turkey from the cans to keep it from going bad.--Tried baking a potato-salmon concoction by just placing it against the fire the stove and it came out wonderfully.—It's very cold tonight.



## **24 December 1944 Sunday**

15 degrees, Sunday and Xmas Eve. Still sunny and cold.—[Helped the Father make some more crepe-paper flowers for the altar tonight.--Went to the mess hall and helped set up and decorate the altar and crib for Mass.--The choir and glee club sang carols before Mass.

## **CHRISTMAS DAY—December 25 1944**

2300 to 2330 Carols by the Choir and Glee Club. Mess Hall was packed by 2250. Altar and Crib were decorated beautifully.

2330 to 0050 Midnight Mass; Father Brach, celebrant. The Choir outdid itself. Very beautiful ceremony and it made a lot of people homesick.

0100 to 0830 Sleep, during which those “visions of sugar plums” danced thru our heads.

0830 to 0935 Breakfast. One morning we finished with enough. A lot of food had been saved for this day. Pete and I started off with some cereal made from stewed prunes, chocolate, milk, sugar and diced bread, toasted. Next, 4 grilled cheese and Spam sandwiches with liberal portions of preserved butter, a rarity and cherry jam, both from the Christmas parcel. ½ cup of chocolate and prune pudding, with a cherry and milk sauce. We topped off the meal with two cups of Barrington Hall coffee.

0935 to 1030 The job that always follows a meal, dishwashing. Made my bed, helped straighten up the cubicle, then swept.

1100 to 1130 Appel; late today because of Church Services. After we had been counted, Colonel Goode presented the Y.M.C.A. Medal for Fraternal Service to Comrades in P.O.W. Camps to the following officers in recognition of their outstanding performance of the duties listed after each name: Capt. Lumpkin, Parcel Hatch; Lt. Aschim, Mess; Lt. Creech, Garden and Greenhouse; Lt. Diggs, News Service; Lt. Ihrie, Library; Lt. Otterbein, Stage Construction; Lt. Rankin, Orchestra; Lt. Roberts, Cobbler Shop; W.O.(jg)Cottey, Camp Services; W.O.(jg) Knapp, Tailor Shop. Colonel Goode then wished us all a Merry Christmas.

1130 to 1210 Prepared my turkey pot pie for the evening meal. Grease a plum pudding tin. Line it with mashed potatoes. For a filling use other layer of mashed potatoes and margarine. Ready to bake.

1210 to 1245 Propped my feet on the stove again and enjoyed a cigar and some candy.

1245 to 1400 Dinner. The mess crew really worked for this one. A white cloth was on each table. A favor, which when ignited, blew up and showered us with noise-makers, was in the center of the table. Orderlies served us the first course; soup, green pea with cheese the second course was Spam diced in meat and beans, mashed potatoes with cream, cabbage salad with onions and Pate, gravy; liberal portions of all items. Coffee finished off the meal. For the first time since I've been a Kriegie, I can truthfully say I had enough and some to spare that I brought back with me. During the meal a four-piece ensemble "The Klim Tin Four" played all the suitable selections for the season. As I was leaving the mess hall, Fergie gave me a cigar for my after-dinner stroll. I ate so much that I had trouble making it back up the hill to the Barracks.

1400 to 1445 Recuperation.

1445 to 1500 Appel.

1500 to 1615 Toured the camp wishing all my friends in other barracks the season's greetings.

1615 to 1700 Propped the feet on the stove, drank a cup of coffee and smoked my cigar.

1700 to 1730 Capt. Eldridge paid us a visit so we entertained him.

1730 to 1800 Pete and I made a sauce of ripe, honey, milk, margarine and water to use on our plum pudding.

1800 to 1845 Father Brach stopped in. We fed him some chocolate pudding with my hot rice and honey sauce and some coffee. He liked my family.

1845 to 2000 Pete and I went to the theatre to see the Xmas show. It was excellent. Major Hansen sang, "White Christmas", "Night and Day" and "Silent Night", backed by the Glee Club. There were a lot of moist eyes. The Glee Club sang some Carols, then the "Hallelujah Chorus" from "The Messiah", all directed by Russ Ford. The Dance Band played "Jingle Bells", "Begin the Beguine" and a couple more numbers.

2000 to 2100 Baked my turkey pot pie in the stove; steamed the plum pudding and made some coffee; when I'd finished eating, I was full again.

2100 to 2205 The lights went out so the whole barracks sang Carols. Morales are way up. I got into bed and just lay there listening and remembering. Homesickness finally caught up with me for the first time today. Lights back on.

2205 to 2230 Started to say the Rosary, but dozed off; spending my first Xmas as a Kriegie and my third away from home. It's been a wonderful day. Under these circumstances a lot of us have learned that it doesn't take a lot of presents to make a nice Xmas. The things that really count in life were shown many times today; a word of greeting from the heart and a friendly attitude to your fellow prisoners. The Lord has been with us today. I hope we can all thank Him adequately.

## **MIDNIGHT—CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION COMPLETE**

### **26 December 1944 Tuesday**

28 degrees. Cloudy and damp all day. Served Mass at 0730 and found that after 11 years I still know how.--Started work on the Xmas page of this book and kept at it till lunch. Again till 1500 when I had a cup of bouillon and a cheese sandwich.--Completed work on this book, then wrote a card to the folks at home.

### **27 December 1944 Wednesday**

12 degrees—dropped 50%.--Spent the whole morning making out a batch of daily rosters for the barracks for January. Lunch then weekly bath. Warm all over for a change.

### **29 December 1944 Friday**

22 degrees. Sunny all day and pretty pleasant.--Stood in line for about an hour to get theatre tickets for "Room Service".--Assisted Col Skells on an inspection of lockers.--Made my locker up as a sample. Read (Schaeffer).--Made a salmon pot-pie for tomorrow a.m. Worked on this book. Cleaned up for Ins., then went to bed.

### **31 December 1944 Sunday**

29 degrees. Woke up to find about 4 inches of snow on the ground. If we had overshoes, it would be lovely.--Steamed my pudding and it came out swell. It's a hard job to stay away from it. Pete and I talked a while then prepared our 1500 bash of bread, jam, and coffee, plus ½ of the pudding.--Worked on this book then stood Appel. Talked Pete into writing Dot a letter and it's on page 85. [Pete wrote the letter on Sunday, 31 December 1944. He was an American, living in Canada and serving in the British Army. His wife had Canadian citizenship and they made plans to meet after the war.]--Climbed into bed at 2230 after wishing my cubicle mates a Happy New Year. Was asleep as 1944 passed away.

### **1 January 1945 Monday**

26 degrees. A deary day to start the New Year. Breakfast, Appel at 0900, then High Mass in the mess hall. Toasted my feet and read until lunch. Turned in some clothing then Pete and I made a list of the things we are going to trade from this Red Cross parcel in order to make puddings. Steamed the rest of my plum pudding mixture and drank a cup of tea for 1500 bash. Visited Pvts. Saul (Wash, D.C.) and Carter (Phil) till supper. Prepared breakfast then got into bed to work on this book. Found I can keep warm that way.

### **2 January 1945 Tuesday**

21 degrees. Snow still on the ground. Ice; and Windy as Hades. Holidays are over.--Worked on this book then read a while.

### **4 January 1945 Thursday**

30 degrees. Still sleety, windy and raw. Take your life in your hands every time you step outside.--Had a shakedown inspection for cans, etc.--Pete and I took our daily walk.

### **5 January 1945 Friday**

Red Cross parcels were issued at 1000.--Got rid of extra cans then lunch. Did some trading to get stuff for puddings--Supper. Concert.

### **6 January 1945 Saturday**

Extra-special clean-up for inspection by Lt. Col. Skells at 1030.

### **7 January 1945 Sunday**

Wrote to Dot and Billingsleys and worked on my book.--Made some snow ice cream after Appel. (3 tablespoons milk, 3 sugar, 1 Jerry jam and about ½ gallon snow. Beat till frothy).

### **11 January 1944 Thursday**

Red Cross parcels were issued at 1200.—Got in 7 new men all from the 106<sup>th</sup>. Spent a couple hours getting them squared away.

### **12 January 1945 Friday**

Spent the whole morning rearranging my cubicle to accommodate 3 men.

### **14 January 1945 Sunday**

Drew up plans for the banquet (invitations, menu, etc.)

### **15 January 1945 Monday**

Worked on my book a while then attended a Barracks Adjutants' meeting.

### **16 January 1945 Tuesday**

10 degrees. Clear and crunchy underfoot. Lots of air activity. Russkys [sic] on the move.--Saw Don Waful about some entertainment. Supper. Worked on this book. Ray and Joe came over at 1900 and we spent the evening planning our banquet.

### **18 January 1945 Thursday**

On the strength of a report that the Russians are going strong, Pete and I had a big bash.

## **“DAS GROSE RAUS”**

**20 Jan. 1945 Saturday – Schubin to Luckenwalde – 1 Feb. 1945 Thursday**

Saturday, 20<sup>th</sup> of January was a clear cold day. Went to Mass at 0730 stood Appel then had breakfast. Cleaned up for our regular Saturday morning inspection. About 1000 Col. Skells was called to a Barracks Commander's meeting at the White House. When he returned it was with news that, due to the Russian drive, Oflag 64 was to be evacuated by marching on Sunday morning, 21<sup>st</sup> January. We had heard rumors of such a move previously, but still the actuality of it filled us with certain misgivings. The weather under foot was bad and it would be no easy journey. Cold weather is no friend of wanderers. Reception of the news caused one of the greatest examples of mass bashing in the history of the camp. We were told to take only those articles we could carry, with food and clothing on the highest priority. All day we packed, threw things way, then repacked with numerous pauses for food. In the afternoon a complete Red Cross parcel was issued to each man. More food than I've seen in a long time. I stuffed my pockets, hat, trousers, and the linings of my clothes. In the evening we had a church service, then visited with the Chaplains for a while. We went to bed that night in all our clothes and with full stomachs.

At 0730 Sunday we went to our last Mass in Schubin. Father Glennon officiated and gave us General Absolution and Viaticum. Had a hasty breakfast. At 0845 the Appel bell rang for the last time and we moved out of the barracks with all our equipment. After being counted five times and getting thoroughly chilled from standing in the snow, the Commandant, Col. Schneider, spoke to us, thanking us for our cooperation at camp and advising us not to try to escape. We did a right face and marched out the gate. We left behind about 97 men who could not march, Smitty and Father Brach. Also abandoned 10,000 Red Cross parcels. That hurt worst of all.

Cox's Army had nothing on us. Never have I seen such a conglomeration of makeshift packs as we carried. Some men had foresight and had built sleds out of odds and ends; others carried everything, including two blankets. I had made a pack from a German pillow cover with two towels sewed on as straps. This I carried on my back. Across my shoulder was a long two-blanket roll with my extra clothing inside. Every one of my pockets was filled. In my pack were two R.C. parcels full of food, this book, toilet articles, etc. Altogether I carried about 35 to 40 pounds. I wore 2 suits of underwear, 2 complete OD uniforms, a denim jacket, combat jacket, overcoat, 2 hats and a scarf. How I moved is still a mystery.

Outside the gate the column (1408 officers and enlisted men) turned west on a road covered 4" of ice. Streaming along with us were wagon train after wagon train loaded with refugees, moving back to Germany. Col. Goode was in the lead with the German Commandant. The guard company was strung out on the other side of us on the shoulders of the road. The march soon became a nightmare.--Before two miles were covered, many men were dropping out to fix sleds, readjust equipment or just to get a rest. Our feet kept getting colder, adding to our discomfort (temp 15 degrees). We covered 21 kilos that day and arrived at a farm outside EXIN about 1730. We were quartered in three big barns which had plenty of hay. No one wasted any time digging a hole and climbing into it. In no time we were asleep. During the night Col. Millett and about 50 others escaped.

The guards woke us at 0530 on the 22<sup>nd</sup> saying we'd be ready to leave at 0630. It was bitterly cold and damp. A Polish family near our barn fed us some bread with lard and jam on it and some very hot ersatz coffee. For once I welcomed it. At 0830 we shouldered our loads and hit the road again. Many packs were lighter. We found we didn't need some things as badly as we first thought. I threw away a couple of books, all my extra clothing and numerous odds and ends. We were all pretty stiff and sore. No one knew our destination but after 28 grueling kilos we arrived in EICHEFELDE. They found a couple barns for us again. I was so tired and stiff that I just made it. Again the Polish people fed us. We got bread, immense cheeses and some delicious pea soup with fresh pork. I slept very well that night.

We awakened at 0730 on the 23<sup>rd</sup> to find ourselves free men in the heart of Poland. During the night the Russians got so close that our German guard Company took off for the rear. That caused a change in plans. We reorganized into a regular U.S. Army unit. Many more men took this opportunity to get away although the SAO advised all of us that it would be better to stick together. The Poles butchered 2 hogs for us and started preparing us a meal. We hung around the barn all morning drinking coffee and marveling at our newly-given freedom. It turned out to be short lived tho. At 1315 a truck load of SS troops drove into town and we were prisoners again. They reassumed command and started us on the road again to the rear. We didn't get a chance to eat the meal the Poles were preparing. My legs refused to function so I was left back to ride the distance of the march (7 kilos) to Charlottenburg. Here I had my first comfortable night. They quartered the "cripples" in a house, two rooms of which had big fires going. Space was cramped but warm. The temperature outside was nearly 0 degrees. We were fed some oatmeal about 2200 then went to sleep.

At 0730 on the 24<sup>th</sup> we received a small portion of pea soup then started marching at 0930. The sound of firing was very near but never quite near enough. We hiked thru a snowstorm to reach Lobsens, about 1600, a

distance of 16 kilos. Here we caught up to our old guard company and were quartered again in a big barn. We were allowed to build fires so we spent the evening huddled around fires and drinking hot coffee. Pretty miserable crawling into bed. My knees were killing me.

We crawled out of our holes about 0700 on the 25<sup>th</sup>. More snow. Had breakfast from my R.C. box then the Germans issued bread and cheese but there wasn't enough to go around and I was unlucky. About 1000 we moved out, this time cross country. At 1330, they tell us, we crossed the German border. We covered 22 kilos that day and arrived at Flatow at 1640. Here we passed a British column marching from Posen. They billeted us in a couple of big barns on the outskirts of the city. Again I just barely made it.

While fixing breakfast on the 26<sup>th</sup> the Germans told us we would stay there all day. I went on sick call at 1000 and Major Rock told me to join the sick group. In front of the barn where sick call was held lay a dead Russian who had frozen to death. At roll call 962 of us were left out of the 1408. The sick group was called together and told that we were to get rail transportation from Flatow. They fed us potato soup at 1300 and at 1420 we started the march to the station. We were a sad looking lot hobbling thru town. 47 of us were crowded into a gondola coal car. Before getting into it we had to clear the floor of 6" of snow then stretch a tarp over the top as a roof. It was very cold inside. We made the best of the straw we got. Huddling close together (we could do nothing else) we kept each other warm. About 1830 the train moved out and travelled intermittently thruout the night. Another famous box-car ride starting.

The morning of the 27<sup>th</sup> found us buried under a foot of snow in a yard at Zuppnaw. From then until the morning of 1 February when we detrained at Luckenwalde we moved, shifted and waited thru various sidings in Germany. We passed thru Jastrow, Deutsche Kromin, Armsvalde, Stettin, Berlin, then Luckenwalde. We were allowed out about once a day; otherwise we sat and stared at each other. The canvas over us was torn in several places, allowing water to run in on us whenever the snow and frost melted during the day. Drinking water was scarce so we ate snow. We were very cramped and after the first day, sore from sitting. The hunger was the worst thing to bear. Many of us got severe colds from the dampness. We stayed in the yards at Berlin nearly 24 hours and there it started to rain, making us wetter than ever. But eventually we arrived at Luckenwalde and walked to Stalag IIIA. Here we were deloused, showered, searched, registered and fed. They quartered us in a barracks (14) with some old Polish officers, a few Italians and some French. We were hospitably received by these men and after getting settled, we went right to bed. Another step nearer home.



Lots of things I have omitted here due to lack of space. Only someone who has been on one of these trips can appreciate the hardships of it. We're all far from being licked.

### **2 February 1945 Friday**

Up at 0700 to get my first shave in two weeks. Bread, honey, and tea for breakfast at 0830. Appel at 0930. Found an English-speaking Pole and spent the morning talking to him. He had been to England. Dinner at 1200 of grass soup and potatoes. Right after lunch I sat for my portrait.--1/5 loaf of bread and margarine were issued at 1500. Spent some time writing of the trip. At 2000 a very excellent Polish choir entertained us with Christmas carols and folk songs. Made some soup then went to bed about 2130.

### **3 February 1945 Saturday**

Up at 0745, washed and had my breakfast. Did a couple turns around the enclosure with Sub/Lt. Doug Cole from Bristol. We were chased in by an air raid warning (We're only 20 miles from Berlin). Sat again for my portrait, worked on this book, then had dinner. Took it easy all afternoon, talking to the Pole. Discovered that there were some famous Poles here: Symphony Conductor, Painter, Artists, etc. Read a while. Bashed all my bread and honey, then went to bed about 1800 with "The Robe" by Douglas. Stayed there.

### **4 February 1945 Sunday**

Got up at 0730, washed, had breakfast, stood Appel. Went to a Polish Mass at 0930. Cole and I talked until lunchtime. Some good pea soup and potatoes. Worked on my book till 1300. Did my trip around the enclosure. Talked to the Poles. Trading is running wild. They want cigarettes. Had tea at 1800. Talked Apologetics with Hank Prentice till well after 2100. Made my bed and got in it.

### **5 February 1945 Monday**

Weather cold and rainy, but better than Schubin. During the night 2000 RAF Officers came in from Luft III. Usual morning ritual. More Apologetics with Hank--Tea and bread at 1800. Paid a return visit to the RAF (Proudfoot) with Doug in the evening. Read a while then went to sleep.

### **6 February 1945 Tuesday**

Six months as a Kriegie. The longest ½ year of my life. Still cold and rainy. Up at 0800.--Visited some of the RAF.--Worked on this book. Some more of our group came in so I went to see them.

### **7 February 1945 Wednesday**

Daily dozen with O'Connor. Worked on my book. Gave Doug a whole flock of American recipes he wants to try.--Received a double ration of bread thanks to the British.

### **8 February 1945 Thursday**

Spent a couple of hours helping Doug make a pair of moccasins.--British sent us a ration of meat spread.

### **9 February 1945 Friday**

At 1800 gave Mr. Gielniewski some coffee, his first in five years.

### **11 February 1945 Sunday**

Some of our group got here finally, Pete and Father Glennon included. Spent the afternoon with Doug, both of us dreaming what our families were doing at different times. Homesick as the devil.--About 2000, 37 Italian officers came in.

### **12 February 1945 Monday**

Snow. Felt bad all day. Catching cold. Moved to Barracks 12. Spent morning setting up housekeeping. Took a walk then lunch. Met Flt/Lt. Jack Jones, RAF who had been in the US and Canada for 2½ years. Talked to him most of the afternoon.

### **14 February 1945 Wednesday**

Worked on this book for a while (This book is quite popular here. Lots of complements on it).--Another raid on Berlin which we could see and hear.

### **16 February 1945 Friday**

1400 Russians moved out. May be evacuating.

### **17 February 1945 Saturday**

Did a turn around the enclosure. Swiss representative inspected our quarters during the morning.

### **18 February 1945 Sunday**

Spent the morning working on this book and talking to Chris Ronkoni who has a book like this.--Spent rest of the afternoon dreaming of what you would be doing at home.

### **19 February 1945 Monday**

Rather deary all day.--Norwegian General Ruge (POW here) turned over to the British and Poles and Americans (2500 roughly) 500 Danish Red Cross Parcels, containing cheese, butter, crackers, molasses, sugar, malt, oatmeal, bologna. Issue 1 per 5 men. We had a bash!

### **20 February 1945 Tuesday**

I stayed in bed practically the whole day. My cold cleared up but it hit me again.--Doug fixed me up a bash of potato patties and meat from the Danish R.C. parcel, during the afternoon.

### **21 February 1945 Wednesday**

Nice day. One month ago we left 64. Some are still marching. 100 more came in last night.--Air raid put lights out at 2030. Dreamed of home till sleep.

### **22 February 1945 Thursday**

Another raid on Berlin which we can hear plainly, put the lights out at 2005.

### **23 February 1945 Friday**

Slept till 0730.--Worked on this book (it keeps me busy).--Talked to a couple Englishmen till chow of pea soup at 1245.

### **25 February 1945 Sunday**

Mixture of rain, clouds, and sun with cold wind blowing.--Another raid. Lights out till 2115. Bed about 2200.

### **26 February 1945 Monday**

Worked for a while on my diary.--About 2200 we watched a big raid on Berlin till the Germans chased us inside.

### **27 February 1945 Tuesday**

O'Conner came up to copy some of my recipes and helped me while away the afternoon.--Another raid put the lights out at 2030.

### **28 February 1945 Wednesday**

Today the Government owes me \$1612.73 in accrued pay, if my figures are correct.--Spent the morning putting a map of Europe in my book.--Raid again.

### **1 March 1945 Thursday**

While standing in ranks, a German jet-propelled plane went over. It's the first one I've seen. Some of the AF estimated he was doing 550 mph.--Spent the afternoon with Ross Williams discussing our chances of being flown out.

### **3 March 1945 Saturday**

Max Schmeling, whom we all believed to be dead, paid us a surprise visit, not as a German Officer, but as a sportsman. Most of us got his autograph.

### **5 March 1945 Monday**

Went outside in the sun for a couple hours.--Watched the raid. 4<sup>th</sup> of July.

## **6 March 1945 Tuesday**

The 7<sup>th</sup> month as a prisoner. How many more? Snow on the ground this a.m. (2 inches but it melted fast). Good news—1/2 American parcel will be issued tomorrow to us. Morale is sky high.--The a.m. was used to hash over the news. Worked on my book and visited Bob M till tea.--To bed during the raid.

## **7 March 1945 Wednesday**

More good news. 50,000 parcels are in!--Surprise breakfast of oatmeal.--Ross W. came down and we spent the rest of the morning talking about the parcels and some of our experiences in combat.--Parcel issue!! American #10's.--Bash again.

## **8 March 1945 Thursday**

Another beautiful morning. Sun is starting to get warm--Doug and I talked about the Navy.

## **9 March 1945 Friday**

A nice, brisk, sunny day. Mass at 0730, BREAKFAST, Appel at 0830. Doug heated some water and we had a cup of coffee. Worked on my book. Made a Smokey Joe. Soup was on time today. Thick barley with lots of horse meat. When it rains, it pours. Spent the time after lunch fixing a bash of Spam, potatoes and toasted cheese sandwiches. Father Glennon paid a visit. Got a haircut. Talked to O'Brien who was in 116. Appel. Cooked our food and some coffee. Just finished when lights went out.

## **10 March 1945 Saturday**

A Swedish R.C. parcel was issued. 1 per 7 men. They are very good. Divided it, then had a cup of coffee as lights went out.

## **11 March 1945 Saturday**

More English weather. Worked on my book.--Took a short nap then watched a short soccer game between RAF Officers and NCOs. Officers 4, NCOs 2.

### **13 March 1945 Tuesday**

British and American set watches ahead one hour to give us a little more daylight.

### **15 March 1945 Thursday**

The day I predicted the war would end.--Watched a 2 hour air raid on a target East of us. The boys looked good.

### **16 March 1945 Friday**

More spring weather.--Spent the morning outside soaking up the sun, after doing my laundry and taking a cold bath. Nearly froze. Lunch with fish in milk gravy. The Norwegians gave it to us. Very tasty.--Raid chased us inside.

### **17 March 1945 Saturday**

St. Patrick's Day. All the Irish found a little green to wear.--Rainy all day.

### **18 March 1945 Sunday**

During the afternoon I sat in on a rehearsal for a swing show. It was a typical jam session. 3 trumpets, 2 guitars, bass, clarinet, drums, piano. 7 British flyers and two Americans.

### **19 March 1945 Monday**

Father Glennon came over and spent the morning in small talk. Am trying to reorganize the choir for Sunrise Service on Easter.--No parcels until the 26<sup>th</sup>.

### **20 March 1945 Tuesday**

At Appel the Germans marched us out on the drill field and assigned us shallow trenches to be used in case of air raid.--Supper then choir practice under Mr. Zawadski, who used to conduct the Warsaw sympathy.

### **21 March 1945 Wednesday**

First day of Spring. Thank God the winter is over. Still windy and sunny.--Frank has been sick. Air raid at 1000; lots of fighters and bombers.-  
-Had a German movie in our barracks, translated by Ellis. Running commentary by the audience was terrific.--Three raids during the night.

### **22 March 1945 Thursday.**

Real spring weather. Mass, Breakfast, Appel. Visited Doug and Frank in 85 till 1100. Sun bathed.--Another raid at 0045.

### **23 March 1945 Friday**

Another of those days. Temp. must be in the 60s.--Spent the morning working on this book out in the sun.

### **24 March 1945 Saturday**

Another issue of parcels came in at 1130.--Walked with Bracken and Frank till 2000.

### **25 March 1945 Sunday**

More good weather.—Sunbathed, stripped with Ross and Arne all afternoon and got burned.--Walked a while then brewed some coffee for Frank and myself. Lights out at 2045.

### **26 March 1945 Monday**

Spent the morning arranging for our outdoor Mass on Easter.—Si and I made some coffee then talked till 2300. Sleep.

### **29 March 1945 Thursday**

Rainy day and windy.--Returned to my work till 1430. Got a booster typhoid shot. Visited Doug and S/L (Squadron Leader) Hughes (DSO-DSM). Had coffee.

### **30 March 1945 Friday**

At 1200 I started a 3-hour silence in which I read The Passion. Stations of the Cross at 1500.

### **31 March 1945 Saturday**

Lent ended at noon today.—Then another parcel issue.--Lunch of grass soup.--Spent the evening with Proudfoot telling him about the invasion.--A few days ago Hershberger (AF) bet two Canadians that he could eat a parcel in 24 hours. If he wins, they give him a parcel. If he loses, he gives up his next one. He must keep it down. He started at 1100. At present (0900 1 April) he's still on his feet with about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the parcel gone. He's having trouble with cigarettes (100). His mouth is raw but, with 2 hours to go he's confident he'll make it).

### **1 April 1945 Easter Sunday**

It rained on and off but not enough to spoil the occasion. The choir was very good. We got a lot of favorable comments about it.--Spent most of the afternoon explaining this book to George Morges.--(Hersh lost his bet. When his 24 hours were up, he had about 2 ozs. Of Spam and the same of cheese left. His mouth was so sore from the cigarettes that he could not masticate. He gets no food now for 20 days. There's not much sympathy floating around for him.)

### **2 April 1945 Monday**

Had a repeat performance of the Easter Mass in the Polish Barracks at 1030. --Professor Zawadski visited me and we had coffee. Started to walk but was chased in by the guards.

### **3 April 1945 Tuesday**

Spent the morning doing some liaison work for the Professor.--Worked on some insignias in this book till 2130.

### **4 April 1945 Wednesday**

Finished the insignias in this book.--Choir practice at 1900. "Soldier's Chorus" from Faust by Gounod.



### **5 April 1945 Thursday**

Helped the Maestro copy some music for the choir until 1200.

### **6 April 1945 Friday**

Eight (8) months as a prisoner. Too long. Rainy and cold--We went over to the bath house to be deloused. It was the first hot shower I've had since 1 Feb.

### **7 April 1945 Saturday**

Sunny but still pretty cool.--Weekly issue of parcels. I squirreled biscuits, cheese, sugar, prunes, cigarettes, sardines and some milk. Only 2 more issues.--Bashed my spuds. Watched some softball.

### **9 April 1945 Monday**

Rumor running around that I don't like.--Our identifications were checked by a Luftwaffe Major. Our barracks got some unclaimed parcels.

### **10 April 1945 Tuesday**

Ditto on the weather. The rumor was confirmed. We're moving on Thursday to the vicinity of Munich. Here we go again.--We were fingerprinted again, then I worked on my equipment the rest of the a.m.--Visited all my English and Polish friends. About 1600 the TAF came over. Our lines can't be too far away. Supper. Appel.--The Maestro visited followed by Len Whiteley. No lights tonight.

### **11 April 1945 Wednesday**

Weather wonderful. Spent the morning making a pack to carry my stuff. Just before lunch, Ross and I walked the compound for a while.--The R.A.F. leave tomorrow so once more I made the rounds: Proudfoot, Arne, Ross, Doug, Frank, Pete, Len, etc.--No lights again.

### **12 April Thursday**

A little hazy but still warm.--British started to move at 0730. They caused the Germans a lot of work. By 1400 they had all gone.--During the afternoon, Smitty and I went thru this book.--No news of our move yet.

### **13 April 1945 Friday**

In Memory of Franklin D. Roosevelt who died yesterday. The world has lost one of its greatest men. May he rest in peace.

### **14 April 1945**

What a day this has been. The weather was beautiful, very clear and sunny. Mass, Breakfast, Appel. At 1000 the RAF boys started coming back from the station. The Germans haven't gotten the transportation to move them. Many of them took off. The stories they told were interesting. They stole coal from the engine and traded it to the people of Luckenwalde for bread. They had practically a free run of the town and the guards didn't seem to mind. One story says that some German civilians wanted to surrender to a group of them during the night. We are glad to see them back. Now they won't move us. Till lunch we welcomed back our friends. Pea soup at 1330. Goon communique puts our troops only 50 miles from us. About 1500, two groups of 47's came over and dive-bombed and strafed something south west of us. Rumors are running like wild fire. Appel. Supper. Then a parcel issue. Choir practice for us at 1900. Had a cup of coffee and visited Ross for a while. To bed at 2230. At 2345 the alarm went. We heard the planes going over and the first bomb dropped, nearly blew us out of bed. We all got up to watch. It was a very heavy raid on Potsdam, about 10 miles from us. Flak was terrific but we didn't see a plane go down. The raid lasted nearly ½ hour. Lord help the people under it. When it quieted down, we all went back to bed. **Come on George!** (Reference to Gen. Patton)

### **15 April 1945 Sunday**

The weather continues warm and sunny.--The Poles had a High Mass in Memory of President Roosevelt--Learned that Frank had escaped. Sat in the sun a while, then Si got 2 food parcels from home. Spent an hour helping him drool.—Some unclaimed parcels came in, and out of them I got a package of bouillon cubes, 2 boxes chocolate pudding, 3 pks. of cigarettes and a face cloth.

### **16 April 1945 Monday**

Learned that Frank has been captured and is in the cooler here--Helped Si and Sam Carlick fix a Kraft macaroni and cheese meal then had some. Visions of home.--Got into an argument with Doug about post-war matters. Put some clothes to soak. Bed at 2200.

### **17 April 1945 Tuesday**

Si, Jock and I worked on an Italian spaghetti bash. It was delicious. Sun bathed and watched a dive bombing till 1700.--Listened to a jam session till 2130. To bed at 2230. Thunderstorms.

### **18 April 1945 Wednesday**

Bashed my spuds and some coffee--Watched two groups of B-26's bomb Juterbog Drome. Visited Angus and S/L Hewitt who is from St. Ives--Back to barracks and to bed. 170 years since Paul Revere.

### **19 April 1945 Thursday**

Took a walk with Angus and then had a brew. Watched 272 (we counted them) B-17's bomb something about 20 miles South East of us.--About 1600 saw a smoke screen being laid far to the South West.--(Situation map shows the Russians and Americans near a link-up at Dresden. We're really sweating this one out.)

### **20 April 1945 Friday**

Sweat out another order to move. Goons say Russians are close.--About 1130 a whole raft of 17's and 24's bombed targets all around us.--Spectator at Smitty's baptism. Listened to another jam session till 2200. To bed, hopefully.

### **21 April 1945 Saturday**

Cold and drizzly. Woke up to hear artillery falling near Luckenwalde. Mass, Breakfast, Appel. Goons divebombed just southwest of us, fairly near. No order to move yet. All sorts of rumors. Hung around outside just waiting for something to happen. Lunch was pea soup. At 1300 the Goons took off leaving us in possession of the camp. Guards were immediately posted to prevent looting. The Russian prisoners of war went wild. I went over the wire to the EM (enlisted men's) compound and assisted in organizing them. Came back at 1600. Made a chocolate pudding. Firing all around us. They dug in 2 - 150's near the hospital. Made the round of all the Kriegies. Took what I hope is my last cold shower. Went back to the EM and met Betley. General Ruge ordered us inside. Goons expected a fight. Everybody got pretty jittery at bed time. The water went off, but miraculously the lights stayed on. We still half-way expected the Goons to come back as they did once before. No one undressed for bed. German planes came over just after dark and

remained continuously nearly all night, once strafing just over the camp, scaring us half to death. What I'd give to be out of here. We've been lucky so far. There has been shelling and dive-bombing all around but so far, no hits. I wonder if our luck will last.

## **LIBERTY**

### **22 April 1945 Sunday**

At 0555 a Russian reconnaissance car drove into camp with an officer in command. He told us that Russian forces had surrounded the camp and that we were free men again, although Germans were still in the vicinity. He took Colonel Herte and General Ruge to Luckenwalde to meet with the Russian commander. On the way, a German armored car fired at them causing the Russians to take to the ditch. Col. Herte got back safely. General Ruge went on to the rear. At 0700 a flock of Russian planes came over. Si and I had a brew to quiet our nerves. Went to Mass at 0815. Walked across to the tent compound to see the men. They were all in high spirits. At 0915 a Russian half-track, loaded with soldiers, drove thru camp looking for Goons. They were a rough-looking lot. Certainly am glad Russia's our ally. At 0950 five T-34 tanks loaded with infantry and eight truck-loads of soldiers came into camp and let the Russian prisoners loose. They looted everything in sight, especially the food stores. They streamed out of camp carrying all sorts of things. Had some more coffee. The camp was wild with excitement. From 1030 to 1200, made the rounds of all my friends congratulating and being congratulated on our good fortune. At 1300 took command of Company #25, 4<sup>th</sup> Bn, 1<sup>st</sup> Prov. Ex-POW Regiment, and spent the rest of the afternoon getting some sort of organization started. At 1700 we had chow. The Russians sent in 15 beeves, carloads of spaghetti and potatoes. Went back to the company for about an hour. At 1900 a Russian Lt. Col. visited us assuring us of an abundant supply of food, water and lights. He posted a company of Armored Infantry around the camp for our protection. Rather than move us to the East, he told us it had been decided to keep us here till a link-up is made with the Americans. The link-up was made tonight but not on a wide front. Ted, Frank, and Jock visited till about 2130. Had some more coffee then got into bed. What a day this has been. I want to get home now.

### **23 April 1945 Monday**

Today the reaction set in. Everybody's browned off at the delay in moving us. Has rained for the last three days. Had a quiet night. Stood reveille at 0730 with the company and talked to the men. Mass at 0815.

Breakfast. Worked all morning in the orderly room. Co. Comm. Meeting at 1330. Came back to the Officers Barracks at 1700. Supper.--Strafing during the night, on some buildings nearby.

### **24 April 1945 Tuesday**

Still rainy and cold. Was up most of the night. Never can tell when the Goons might take a notion to strafe us.--Spent nearly the whole day putting my company on paper, then on the ground.

### **25 April 1945 Wednesday**

Spent the morning at the company. All of us are getting impatient to move out of here. This isn't the safest place in the world. Listened to some American programs on the A.E.F. Network of the BBC from London. Commandeered Goon radio. Soup. Due to lack of sleep last night because of raids, I slept all afternoon.--Clocks up one hour.

### **26 April 1945 Thursday**

No air raids so I slept right through the night.--Made out roster of the company by platoons. (Kendrick, Miller, Vaden, Fredrickson, Reeves, O'Leary, Purks).--Listened to the radio all evening; Bing Crosby, Command Performances, etc. Bed at 2230.

### **27 April 1945 Friday**

No air raids again last night--Read a while then went to the Company.-Co. Commanders meeting at 2100. Returned and went to bed after taking a bath.

### **28 April 1945 Saturday**

Read for a while then had an impromptu bull-session with the men. We're all pretty discontented.

### **29 April 1945 Sunday**

Russians say there is no immediate prospect of our leaving. This can't go on much longer or we're all going to walk.

### **30 April 1945 Monday**

Had a row with the Regimental Ex.O. about some reductions. At 1610 got the word to prepare to move from camp. Had barley porridge then marched out of camp. Moved cross-country to the Adolph Hitler Lager near Juterbog. Got the men billeted then went to bed myself.

### **1 May 1945 Tuesday**

Pretty chilly today. Got up at 0830 and had breakfast. Spent the whole day riding herd on the men and getting the quarters in shape. This must have been a pretty important place from the switch-boards, radios, cameras the Goons smashed up. Had trouble with the Frogs.--We found a lot of dishes so it was pretty nice to eat like a human being again.--To bed at 2300.

### **2 May 1945 Wednesday**

Has been a nasty day. Cold and rainy. Woke up very early to hear artillery and small arms fire close by. Scattered groups of Goons are still in the woods around this place.--Went to the Company for a while, then to Bn.-  
-Rumor says we are going back to Luckenwalde tomorrow.

### **3 May 1945 Thursday**

That rumor about us moving was true, but why, we still don't know. At 0700 we were rudely awakened and told to be ready to move back to IIIA at 0900. The boys were pretty mad about the whole thing but they got ready in time. The march back wasn't bad. We arrived here at 1130. First off, we found the Italians in possession of our barracks and after mediation failed, the company went in and threw them out, bag and baggage. We got chow from the kitchen and fed everyone. I came to my barracks, made up my bunk and slept a couple hours. Visited Doug, Ted and Frank for a while. At 1800 a jeep drove into camp with Lou Azreal of the Baltimore New-Post. It was hard to get near him but when I did, he recognized me and it was just like old home week. He invited me down to where he was staying and I talked to him until 0200. He told me about this Division which is only about 35 miles from here and all the people we knew. He took a letter for Dot and one for home and promised to mail them when he gets home in about 10 days. He offered to take Slingluff and me back with him to the 29<sup>th</sup> but Col. Herte ordered us to stay.--We returned to our quarters pretty happy to have seen a real, live, free American and one we knew as well. Sleep was pretty hard coming.

#### **4 May 1945 Friday**

Overslept Mass and Reveille. Had breakfast and worked on my book for a while. Went over to the Company to find I had a mutiny on my hands. The boys, and I don't blame them, were leaving by the tens. They've put up with as much of this persecution as they can take. The powers that be ordered old NCO's to be reduced in grade, threatened them with court martial and forbid anyone leaving camp. You just can't treat Kriegies that way. I got what remained of the company together and told them about Lou Azreal and Ed Beattie. That quieted them for a while. Came back for lunch. At 1400, 4 jeeps from the 125<sup>th</sup> Rec. Sqdn. drove into camp with information that trucks will be here tomorrow to start evacuating us. This was a happy day for us. The Russians don't want us to take the Norwegians with us but the powers decided to sneak them out. We're afraid it's going to lead to trouble. But that's our Administration. After the jeeps left, I came back and visited Doug, Commander Bracken, Frank, Ted, and the rest. Ross came in to say good-bye.--Listened to some swing music on the radio then came back to go to bed. I hope this is it.

Actual date at the top of the page below was 8/19/1951

This entry, 5 May 1945, was the last I was able to put into this book; however, for the next few weeks we stayed under Russian control. Rumor had it that we were now political prisoners being held to get more concessions from the Americans and the British concerning the splitting up of Germany among the Allied powers. I believe that rumor was true.

The Russians fed us well and, to my knowledge, did no bodily harm to any of us. Occasionally, an American General would appear at camp, a complete roster of all Americans was prepared and delivered to an American Colonel on one occasion, but we got no word about moving. The British assembled and tried to march out of camp but were turned back with a spray of machine gun bullets over their heads. So we sat and waited.

On or about June 1, 1945, a convoy of Studebaker 6X6's came into camp, into the American area. They were lend-lease trucks sent to Russia by the U.S. We got 30 minutes to prepare for the move, but that was 25 minutes more than we needed. We on-loaded and after the wildest ride I've ever had (Russian drivers have only one speed—FAST) we arrived at a checkpoint. After much bickering, we off-loaded and walked about ½ mile into the American 106 Infantry Division Headquarters—the greatest sights and sounds I think I'll ever experience. We were fed and given bunks into which we all collapsed at once.

The next morning we took off all our clothes (ALL of them), threw them into a bonfire, and walked into a ½ hour HOT shower with de-licing soap. We came out the other end de-loused and clean. We were issued new clothing, fed well and were driven to an air field near Rheims, France. We deplaned and were again driven to a bivouac area near Le Havre. On June 20, 1945, we sailed for home on the USS Admiral Mayo, arriving in Boston on Jun 24. We went by train to Ft. Dix where we drew our pay and a 60 day leave. I got home on June 26, 1945.

## DIARY DECLARATION

This was his lifecraft in a sea of war. Through combat, incarcerations, and repatriation, Thornton Sigler recorded the world as he encountered it on a day-by-day, camp-by-camp, event-by-event basis. Below is a list of treasured memories “stored” in his craft:

Page from THE OFLAG ITEM—Overview of Oflag 64 by Staff Artist Jim Bickers. Cut out and mounted page containing numbered camp building locations. German mail stamps on the side

Letter from War Prisoners’ Aid of the Y.M.C.A., dated November 23, 1943, which explained suggested uses of the “War-time Log

Multipage color-coated document “INSIGNIAS SEEN IN CAMP” and shoulder board insignias for military units.







List of “Some of the people I’ve met in my travels as a POW and whom I’d like to see again sometime.”

List of books he hopes to read when he returns home

Books he is reading in captivity

Private letters from Thornton to Dot

18 “good and bad” foods of Europe

Detailed description of Stalag XII and the life of the Kriegies

Humorous writing by Sigler called “And the stoves that were used to do it”

“I wonder what happened to” list

Signature of Max Schmeling (former world heavyweight boxer) who visited Stalag IIIA on 3 March 1945

List of songs’ lyrics and titles—used for entertainment at Stalag XXI A

ALL STAR FOOTBALL GAME notes between the Redskins & the Bears

All Star Soccer Game teams and notes

Sample Menus (when Red Cross Parcels were available)

List of German vocabulary words

18½ pages of Kriegies' signatures (many with addresses) plus two civilians from Tunisia, two from Casablanca [Do you suppose they saw Bogart and Bergman?] and several from France

THE BOXCAR KIDS (with signatures of those who road in a boxcar from Limburg 9/11/1944 to Altburgund 9/15/1944). Hand-drawn boxcar is centered with signatures surrounding it.

Hand-drawn calendar for 1944

Copy of a Prayer of a Prisoner of War (Romans XII, 12)

Copy of letter from Colonel Millett about camp water conservation as auxiliary pump is in use (main pump is broken)

Layout drawing of Sigler's home "as I remember it after two+ years"

23 clothing "day dreams"

Comments about England and France

Questions concerning the topics of music, radio, movies, politics fashion, and general questions for Dot

Menus for the first week at home "If I can stand it"

List of Duties of the Officer of the Day

Swedish Red Cross Parcel contents, British Red Cross Parcel contents, Canada Red Cross Parcel contents

Red Cross Parcel food and usable items labels

Original Musical Composition by Maestro Marian Zawadski with a letter of appreciation

The heart in the rucksack—a song by L/Lt. Jack Normandae

Theatre Programs

Page from German publication

Christmas [Card] Greetings from the War Prisoners Aid Y.M.C.A.

Christmas Card 1944 with sad looking Santa in balls and chains

Copy of American Red Cross receipt for Prisoner of War Package, dated 21 December 1944

Copy of German Camp Order No. 25 concerning latrine privileges

List of proposed places to visit with his family when he returns

SECURITY—(written after POWs had been liberated) This list of 3 (BBC News, Escape Material, Friendly Goons) discussed Siegler's "take" on each item

## **FINAL THOUGHTS ON BEING A PRISONER OF WAR**

It is a melancholy state. You are in the power of your enemy. You owe your life to his humanity, your daily bread to his compassion. You must obey his orders, await his pleasure. The days are long—hours crawl by like a centipede paralyzed. Moreover, the whole atmosphere of prison, even in the best and most regulated of prisons, is odious. Companions quarrel at nothing at all, and get the least possible pleasure from each other's company. You feel a constant humiliation at being fenced by railings and wire; watched by armed guards and webbed by a tangle of regulations and restrictions. Winston Churchill, 1899

No, the life of a prisoner isn't easy. The uncertainty that assails your thoughts daily prevents any peace of mind. You wonder about your family and loved ones and if they have changed; what your friends and acquaintances think of you being a prisoner; and the million and one thoughts that only the mind of a prisoner of war ever touches. You dream of home and the awakening to the realization that, to come true, that dream depends on so many things over which you have no control; the periods of high hopes and the inevitable, and usually sudden drop to the lowest depths of despair; all these things can only be appreciated by one who has experienced them in the hands and at the mercy of his Country's enemy. War is Hell. We, who have served both as soldiers and prisoners, will ever bear witness to the truth of that statement. Thornton V. Sigler

*Biography written by Kriegy Research Group writer Ann C. Rogers*