1LT Nelson Curtis Tacy

1918 – 1979

BACKGROUND

Nelson Curtis Tacy was born on 21 August 1918 in Springfield, Massachusetts to parents William P. Tacy and Ruth Ada Fox Tacy.

After completing state school requirements, Nelson Tacy entered Norwich University in Northfield, Vermont, and graduated in the class of 1940. Considered by many as "America's senior military college", Tracy would be well-versed for a successful career in the U.S. Military. The US National Archives lists 1LT Tacy as being assigned to the 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron during World War II concerning Operation Husky.

The following summary was taken (by permission) from a Master of Military Art and Science Thesis by Jeb S. Graydon, Major, U. S. Army at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 2020.

> *Operation Husky, the six-week Allied campaign to liberate Sicily from German and Italian defenders, offers a unique and interesting case-study to analyze the operations of the 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (CRS) in support of corps and division level maneuvers in high-scale combat operations. Incorporating nearly 2,600 ships and 180,000 troops, Operation Husky was the largest amphibious operation ever attempted at that time.* (p. 39)

Tacy's first-person written accounts are not included in this biography —as none have been located. According to the Oflag 64 POW database, his date of capture is 29 July 1943 in Sicily.

Fortunately, he was an officer to be remembered and has been chronicled throughout this writing through those of his friends and military colleagues—most through the descriptions of Lt. J. Frank Diggs in his book, *Americans Behind the Barbed Wire WORLD WAR II: INSIDE A GERMAN PRISON CAMP.*

POWs from the North Africa campaign were transported to Naples, Italy, then to other camps before arriving at Oflag 64 in Poland. Specifically used for American Ground Force Officers, by war's end some 1500 Americans had experienced this version of "behind the wire". Lts Frank Diggs and Nelson Tacy arrived at Oflag 64 on the same day and year—10 September 1943.

CAMP LIFE AT OFLAG 64

> *Arriving at the little Polish town of Schubin, we as new POWs climbed down from our German boxcar and marched along cobblestone streets to the town's main thoroughfare, Adolph Hitler Strasse, and along it to our new camp, Oflag 64. It did not look much like a prison camp. It had been, in fact, the campus of a boys' school and still looked like one, with some large, old buildings and even a few trees. However, there was no mistaking the two double 15-foot-high barbed wire fences that went around the 10-acre compound, nor the ominous-looking guard towers spotted at intervals around the enclosure, sporting large searchlights and machine guns. Between the double fences, perhaps 10 feet apart, were rolls of rusty barbed-wire, which made escape over the fences very unlikely.* (p. 15)

After being greeted by other American camp POWs and vetted as to his true identity, each Kriegy (German name for POW) was assigned to a cubicle with other men of his rank and station. Walks about the camp grounds often followed as each man became familiar with his new home-away-from-home. Sources of nutritious foods became an immediate concern. Red Cross food parcels were available but not always predictable, so each person ate what and when he could. For meals, all POWs ate in a central dining hall in what was referred to as the White House. A very unique device, known as the "smokeless heater" was also used in their cubicle by many in the camp to heat water for foods and drinks.

Each day the new arrivals learned additional details—including information on escapes. These had to be approved by the camp security committee and were often not executed or "caught in process".

Early in the book, Diggs wrote about a match-up between himself and Tacy.

> *A fellow Kriegy named Lt. Nelson Tacy and I started to work on a stand-by plan for escaping in case the right opportunity arose. Nelson was a scholarly New Englander who was married to a German-American girl back home* [Tacy married Anna S. on 25 June 1940] *and he knew how the Teutonic mind worked. He had located an old Polish sled in the basement of the White House and figured if we could disguise ourselves as one arrogant German soldier and one beaten-down worker dragging the sled, we might get away without anybody stopping us. We began to work on our plan by finding some props that would work as a disguise. I located some material that I shaped into something that might look like a German helmet, if the light was very dim, and shaped a stick to vaguely resemble a German rifle. Nelson practiced pulling the sled and looking subservient while wearing a Polish-looking hat. That stage was as far as we got at the time, but this unlikely plan*

would come in exceedingly handy later when conditions changed. (pp. 35, 36)

Norwich, Tacy's college of record, emphasized academic excellence and physical fitness. Incorporating these well-known and practiced regimentations while incarcerated were surely integrated into his daily routines.

"Altburgund Academy", also known as "Kriegy College", offered a plethora of classes by qualified teacher Kriegies from universities like Yale, University of Washington, West Point, etc. Some course completions were even given credit by colleges in the US, which proved beneficial as the men started considering the direction of their lives after war's end. With Tacy's bend toward academics, he might have added classes and lectures to keep his very able mind occupied.

Personal health and mail from home filled the daily thoughts of these Americans in the hands of the enemy. Fortunately, secreted radios called "the bird" kept the men current on news broadcasted by the BBC. Even the date of the Normandy invasion was known to the Americans, well camouflaged by a planned first year camp celebration.

THE LONG MARCH

As the Russian advance became more noticeable via artillery fire, the decision was made to move 1400 Kriegies into Germany. The reasons were two-fold: 1) safety for camp members including the German staff and 2) safely tucked away in Germany, the Americans could be used as pawns in the game of politics when the war ended.

> *This was decided in January 1945, the dead of winter in northern Poland.*
>
> *The long column headed under heavy German guard, each man carrying all of his possessions, including an entire Red Cross food parcel. I was somewhere in the middle, sharing an old sled with Lt. Nelson Tacy. The snow was nearly two feet deep and the stuff had been blowing horizontally.*
>
> *Guards are looking grim and a bit nervous. Forced marches are promised ahead. Tacy and I are hauling our collective gear on an ancient six-foot Polish sled, which we found hidden in the White House basement long ago. At least we're now outside the barbed wire after being behind and trying to get out for 18 months.*
>
> *With slow but steady marching, we covered around 24 kilometers by night-fall. It was tiring and very cold but no casualties are reported as yet. We found no chance to get away either. We're bivouacked now in a large Polish barn.* (pp. 89, 90)

January 22 – POLANOVA, Poland

> *Starting up just after dawn, the column trudged along all day, covering some 23 kilometers. The snow has stopped falling, thank God, but it's still cold, about 12 degrees, we figure. We've been testing our guards, hoping to get away. A couple of kriegies nearly made it by slipping into a culvert, but the Germans found them and proved to be very trigger-happy, so that tactic didn't work.*
>
> *At night, our weary group was split up and assigned to several farm buildings to bed down. Tacy and I wound up in a loft above an enclosed pig sty. The hogs were very noisy all night, but it turned out to be the warmest place around.* (p. 90)

January 23 – CHARLOTTENBERG, Poland

The marching pace grew faster as heavy artillery sounds grew closer. Kriegies were herded to large dairy barn circled by barbed-wire fencing and fed rations. Posting of guards only at entrance and corners offered Diggs and Tacy their much-anticipated chance for escape.

> *We each put on our escape costume, which made Nelson look like a disreputable Polish worker and resemble a German guard, with a homemade cloth "helmet" and a stick of wood carved to slightly resemble a rifle. Thus attired, at dusk, Tacy slowly pulled our loaded sled across the compound to an unlighted far end, while I followed and swore at him from time to time in low German. It was supposed to look like a typical work detail—and it worked.* (p. 90)

Undetected, they pulled the sled to the back fence, pushed the heavy sled over the top with each jumping over in turn, and continued pulling it down the road. Meeting a Pole on his way home, Diggs used his "*fractured German that we were Americans who needed a place to hide. Our new friend knew of just such a place: a farmhouse only a few kilometers away where a member of the local Polish underground lived."* (p. 91)

Knocking on the door and explaining their situation, they were quickly pulled inside with the sled. This large, generous family fed them, enveloped them in conversation and offered them a featherbed for the night—a much appreciated gesture.

January 24-28 – WIRSITZ, Poland

The Dudziak family of six were generous hosts. They lived on a small farm, the father a member of the local anti-German underground. Refusing to let Diggs and Tacy stay in the barn, they were fearless when two soldiers came to the door searching for the escaped Americans. Neighbors visited with stories and gifts of hoarded food.

They were more apprehensive of the approaching Russians than of the retreating Germans. The Dudziak family had survived six years here of rather barbaric treatment under the Germans and were determined to stay and keep operating their small farm. Deeply religious, practicing Catholics but vehemently anti-Semitic. They blamed many of Poland's problems not on Hitler but on the Polish Jews. Time after time we heard the wistful notion that the U.S. Army would come to the aid of Poland after Germany was defeated and before Russia could take over the country. We asked our hosts to please not count on it. But this appeared to be the only hope they had for Poland's future. (p. 92)

January 27 – WIRSITZ, Poland

This day the Russians were close. Diggs and Tacy expressed their deep appreciation to the Dudziaks, gave them Red Cross cigarettes and pulled their sled into town. The Russians appeared in horse-drawn sleighs, as mounted cavalry scouts, on tanks, in familiar army trucks (probably US made) and as squads of infantry reconnoitering the town. Tacy and Diggs were apprehensive because they were wearing an assortment of old U.S. Army uniforms, G.I. overcoats and homemade hats. A Russian colonel thought them suspicious until he saw their ID cards and waved them on. Shouting *Amerikanski*, they moved past groups and vehicles safely.

Several small groups of Russia GIs passed by on foot, looking disheveled and far from military. We exchanged greetings with some. A few stopped to share their ration of raw Army vodka and toast, 'Stalin, Churchill, Roosevelt!' This usually led to an invitation for us to come along with them to Berlin, an offer not always easy to refuse, but we managed to part friends every time.

By late afternoon we got word that some other Amerikanskis were in the area and we soon tracked them down. They were six old kriegies who had managed to stay hidden in the hayloft despite all the firing by German guards. They had found the town's old Nazi headquarters, strangely undamaged, where they had located and happily liberated some German food rations and even a bit of schnapps. So we quickly joined them temporarily. The SAO was Major Crandall and the group included our old chums Durgin and Holder. They had been staying in a deserted German house and we spent the night undisturbed. (pp. 93, 94)

January 28 – WIRSITZ, Poland

This day was spent observing Russian soldiers who were clearing the buildings of Germans, shooting some and making prisoners of others. Diggs wrote that the Russians were curious about Americans and though a tough and rugged breed, they were usually friendly. Pointing to the lend-lease army

trucks driven by, they were identified as "*Schudabeggers"* after the American label of Studebaker vehicles. Some Russians gave Tacy and Diggs their Red Star insignia as sort of a memento but declined their offer of U. S. Army insignia in return. One called them "*Capitaleest's*" but appeared to be kidding. (p. 94)

January 29 – NACKEL, Poland

> *Getting out of Poland on our own posed quite a problem. As no transportation seemed to be headed east, our small group decided to split up and try to hitchhike back to Oflag 64, which presumably was now overrun by the Russians. The Soviets, we figured, would have to provide some sort of evacuation for the hospitalized kriegies, so we would maybe ride along as supercargo. So Tracy and I headed back toward Schubin.* (p. 94)

Diggs' accounts of their return trip to Oflag offered true-to-life portraits of the Russians. Often inebriated and singing in passing trucks, they even laughed when one of their comrades fell out of a truck and the next one ran him over, which was celebrated by all—probably according to Diggs—because of the driver's *"precision driving."* The town of Nackel was in ruins—buildings still burning. Fortunately, two Poles they met after walking around the square cold and hungry invited the Americans to their apartment for dinner (black bread and lard) and places on the floor for the night. These people, like the Dudziak, feared the Russians and looked to America as saviors.

January 31-February 4 – SCHUBIN, Poland

On the road again, the heavy sled now abandoned in deep snows, the duo shouldered their backpacks and made their way down the mushy highway.

> *The biggest tank I had ever seen clanked up beside us and stopped. We said the magic word 'Amerikanski' and the tank commander welcomed us aboard. It turned out that he had seen us smoking and was out of cigarettes. So I offered him a Camel; he took the pack.* (p. 96)

The tank driver drove like an Indy 500 racecar driver down the middle of the highway, scattering everyone and everything in the tank's path: 18 km from Shubin, Tacy and Diggs waved and jumped off.

> *Back in Schubin, we walked through the familiar wide-open gates and there found a terse note posted on the bulletin board by the camp SAO. A Russian truck convoy, it appears, had finally arrived the day before, packed up all the sick and wounded, and had taken off in the direction of Warsaw. We had missed it by one day.* (p. 96)

Finding the camp looted and empty, they decided to rest before starting out again. Another returnee, Lt. Marcellus Hughes, who had also escaped, been

hidden by a Polish family and returned as they did, joined them. They all slept in the attic library—the safest place around.

During their five-day stay, Tacy and Hughes found food and drink among the compassionate Schubin Poles; this was especially welcomed by Diggs who had become ill and still suffered from his game leg. By the time he recovered, 14 other Kriegie returnees had joined them and all were ready once more to go East.

February 5 – LABISZYN, Poland

Bribing a Russian truckdriver headed that way, the group of 17 rode in good spirits though cold and hunger. At Labiszyn, they departed with thanks as Tacy and Diggs once again headed for the town square. Another generous Polish family welcomed them with food and a place to sleep, their rumors about Russian treatment and hopes for American rescue again fell on the Americans' ears. (pp. 96, 97)

February 6 – HOLENSALZA, Poland

Four Americans, Holder, Durgin, Tacy and Diggs left town the next morning in rural Polish style—in the back of a horse-drawn cart. During lunch at the hotel (paid for with Red Cross cigarettes), they met an engaging Russian captain named Ivan who was headed their way. Catching a ride then became easy. Boris, his evil-looking batman, stood in the middle of the road and shot his burp-gun over the head of the next approaching truck driver.

This caused the startled man to stop while four new passengers hopped aboard. After several such rides, they were taken to the best hotel in Hohenzaltza, which was taken over for Soviet officers. There they were made welcome with lots of vodka toasting and assigned rooms.

Diggs' most memorable moment happened when he and Ivan exchanged uniform jackets which became a quick re-exchange when the unit's Commissar appeared. (p. 97)

February 7 – SOMEWHERE in Poland

Breakfast was shared with Polish officers, escapees from German prison camps after five years.

> *It was hard to visualize what they had been through—or what was ahead for them. Today we drove all day across the snow-covered countryside spotted with wreckage of war—shelled buildings, burned-out vehicles, unburied German corpses. At sundown we came to another Polish town with an unpronounceable name and headed for the town square. Tacy and I once again joined a hospitable Polish family, this time with nine people sharing two crowded rooms with no heat and little food.*

We talked until a late hour by lamplight. They claimed firsthand knowledge that several U.S. Army divisions were already on their way to Poland, a sad misconception. (pp. 97, 98)

February 8 – WARSAW

Boris again hailed trucks as the group traveled east past Kutno, reaching Warsaw at dusk after a very long day of 150 km. Completely destroyed with few walls standing, the Russians only cleared paths through the streets of the old Polish capital. Led to a basement, the four Americans listened to stories by the survivors of the battle of Warsaw. (pp. 98, 99)

February 9 – WARSAW

Walking through the city, they observed unimaginable destruction with civilians frantically searching, perhaps for their destroyed homes. Locating the refugee center at Rembertov, Diggs adds these reflections:

We were not prepared for what we found there, however. Probably 4000 to 5000 war refugees of at least a dozen nationalities were milling around the old brick compound. It looked like a Polish Dante's Inferno. Hundreds of homeless, ragged Polish civilians, some Serbian GIs, a contingent of British and French POWs who had escaped, lots of recently liberated Yugoslav and Polish troops, some Bulgarians, a few Norwegians, and at least one Hollander were among others in the hopelessly crowded compound. Most were living like animals, sleeping in hallways, filthy, scrounging scraps of anything that might be worn or eaten. They wore mismatched pieces of clothing, and were obviously hungry, cold, and unwell. More than one had a leg or arm missing. (pp. 99, 100)

They finally located the hospital contingent led by Col. Frederick Drury. "Guests" for nine days already, the Russians were being uncooperative about letting him connect with the American military mission in Moscow. Ideas about a trip to Moscow were tossed around.

February 10 – REMBERTOV, Poland

Checked into the refugee center, they enjoyed a hot shower and were relieved to deliver their clothes for delousing. Meals were served at noon at 8 pm and consisted of *kasha* (cereal) and weak tea. Members in the American sector were assigned several feet of floor space for sleeping and the warning to watch their possessions! A trip into town revealed a local open market where the barter system was in place; goods were plentiful and of varied quality. The local currency called *zloty* was worth about 20 cents American.

Their next stop was the Rembertov hospital where the facilities were primitive, the doctors, Russian women, and medications scarce. "Boomer" Holder and Wright Bryan were current patients and glad to see their Kriegie buddies. (pp. 100, 101)

February 11 – REMBERTOV, Poland

> *A few American enlisted men arrived here today. They are supposed to be the advance party for up to 1000 noncommissioned (NCOs) whose prison camp in southern Poland was overrun before the Germans could move them out. We hope the rest of them make it; this bunch looks pretty hungry.* (p. 101)

As more civilians arrived every day, Diggs equated it to a *'train terminal operating around the clock.'* Meals were now served later with barley soup and tea. Dysentery was rampant.

February 12-19 – REMBERTOV, Poland

The Russian commander made promises he could not keep, but the good news is that Col. Drake was able to contact the U.S. Embassy in Moscow. More American officers (240) and enlisted men (480) had now arrived.

> *The latest batch to arrive were kriegies from Oflag 64, who were on the long march but were in such bad physical shape that the Germans turned them loose about 40 km from Stettin. From there, they managed to hitch rides to Bromberg, then got aboard a freight train bound for Warsaw. They reported under-going some shelling when overrun by the Russian army, but luckily, they suffered no causalities.* (p. 101)

Pages 102-104 in Diggs' book described the extreme difficulty Washington experienced when attempting to provide assistance for American POWs. After agreeing to a well-organized plan, the Russians blatantly disregarded all efforts to comply.

> *The Russians refused to allow the American mission to send any of the accumulated supplies to the liberated camps or to Rembertov, which had been designated as the assembly point for all freed Americans. They also flatly banned any of the talented, Russian-speaking U.S. officers who had been assembled for that purpose from going into Poland to contact the Americans at Rembertov or anywhere else. Nor would they permit General Deane to send his big transport planes to Poland to pick up the growing number of ex-POWs there. Kremlin Policy.*
>
> *It was late in February before the Russians made any concessions at all, when they finally agreed to provide enough boxcars to transport the growing number of Americans out of Rembertov down to Odessa.*

February 19 – REMBERTOV, Poland

> *The good news finally arrived tonight. We are to leave for Russia in three days by train for the port. The destination is not clear yet, but with the Baltic now iced in, we are guessing at a port on the Black Sea.*
>
> *Along with the promise of some transport out of here, Marshal Zhukov has sent the American contingent here an unbelievable gift of captured German stores: some chocolate, a barrel of wine, some food rations, cigarettes, and even a few cigars. We are gorging ourselves.*
>
> *Before the good word arrived, Tacy got itchy and took off on his own to hitchhike south, aiming for Lublin, now the emergency capital of a communist government of Poland. I bowed out. A few other kriegies have tried this route, while at least three or four optimists have headed for Moscow. Now word from any of them yet.* (p. 104)

February 20-23 – REMBERTOV, Poland

> *Our train to take us across Russia turns out to be a bunch of unheated boxcars headed for Odessa, but that beats walking. There are bunks with accommodations for about 220 U.S. officers and 600 GIs, plus about 400 British. The plan is to assign 30 men to each boxcar. This arrangement seems to be standard Russian army transport with double-planked platforms for bunks furnished with straw mattresses, an issue of Russian army blankets, a wood burning stove for each car, and a couple of water pails. Food and fuel may or may not be provided.* (pp. 104, 105)

Bartering everything they owned, including the treasured pen Diggs used "*for putting out The Daily Bulletin*" he also used his *zloties* to acquire as much Polish black bread as he could pack. Loaded onto their assigned boxcars, they waited patiently for the train to leave but spent the late-night hours, instead, in their "cozy boxcar."

February 24 – EN ROUTE, in Poland

Good News. The train left during the night, but the use of wood for fuel resulted in multiple stops. Bartering sessions were frequently seen in every way station, and many enjoyed just standing outside in the open air. Despite the cold, it was decided to leave the side door open to view the snow-covered plains of Poland. (p. 105)

February 25 – EN ROUTE, in Russia

The train crossed into Russia in the morning and stopped at Brest-Litovsk. Headed south for the 1500 km trek across the Russian steppes, former

Kriegies noted landscapes like the American Midwest as the train moved slowly onward.

By nightfall they were in Kowel and stayed the night. Pleasant scenery was replaced the next day by a trainload of German prisoners—possibly 90 per car—with long, sad faces looking outward. (pp. 105, 106)

February 26 – EN ROUTE

A Russian soldier had been stationed in our car to advise the Americans on procedures every Eagle Scout should know: where to sit to avoid the coldest wind blasts, how to keep the fire going, how to keep warm, etc. Barter sessions were still popular at fire wood stops and everyone looked forward to the daily soup calls handed out from the kitchen car.

February 27 – EN ROUTE

Two hundred miles were crossed this day with frequent stops. War damage was present across the lands with signs of winter everywhere. Troop trains continued to pass them, often manned by women and young boys. No passenger trains were seen. Two meals were served: *kasha* with black bread and tea. (p. 106)

February 28 – EN ROUTE

> *We are now traveling down through the Ukraine. Nearly all the villages and railroad depots were in ruins from the fierce battles last year in this area. It was getting warmer, so I started selling more pieces of clothing. We are dealing here in Russian rubles, at highly inflated prices. With a supposed exchange of 5 rubles for $1 apiece, buns for $2 each, a pair of socks for $40, and a pair of army blankets for $200.*
>
> *Most of our boxcar bunch were down now with some respiratory ailment, but the end is in sight. We halted tonight just 10 miles from Odessa.* (p. 107)

March 1 – ODESSA, Russia

> *We finally reached this big Black Sea port early this morning. The city is in bad shape under its cover of snow. The railroad station is about leveled by shelling, and most other buildings were damaged to some extent. There are no automobiles in sight, only army trucks and jeeps. But the sun is shining and civilian looked better than any we had seen for a long time. Some women even wore lipstick, a highly unusual sight for us. Our little group of Americans was met by a sort of military band, which attempted to play 'Roll Out the Barrel' over and over. We hiked and hobbled for several miles through the city of Odessa. It was a good feeling.*

Then our group of Americans was moved into an imposing building labeled in Russian, Polygon No. 2, reported to be the former Italian consulate. It was located in a little park surrounded by an iron fence. Unfortunately, there are no heat, lights or water. The Russians quickly stationed guards around the place to see that no Americans could climb over the fence and go into town. (p. 107)

March 2-6 – ODESSA

Frustration with the Russians was at the top of everyone's list. No barter system was possible and meals served to them were all inedible fish heads and tea. Cold and miserable, the Americans were stuck. Fortunately, a young American Major, Paul Hill, who was fluent in Russian, appeared "unofficially and semi legally" to relay the message that pressure was being applied concerning food and flights out, but the Russians remained noncommittal. Major players on both sides exchanged comments, but it was clear that the Americans were pawns in the world of political politics.

There was one good development. Nelson Tacy, my escape buddy, finally showed up. He said that he got to Lublin and things were bad there. He and a few other kriegies hopped a train and headed here. Now we started to plan how we might bust out of the consulate and hop aboard a ship going somewhere. The question is how. (p. 108)

March 7 – ODESSA

The Russians relented and the men marched to the dock. A British freighter, the *Moreton Bay,* became "home" to the following passengers: *"Close to 2000 British and American ex-POWs were all of anxious to get the hell out of Russia as soon as possible."* Sleeping assignments were announced and the dining room became the most popular place with the first meal being served: "*real coffee, genuine white bread, edible soup, delicious canned roast beef, elegant mashed potatoes, and superb junket."*

Cast off was late day in the general direction of Turkey.

The boat was crowded but memorable. They sailed across the Black Sea, through the Bosporus to Istanbul, through the Dardanelles and across the Mediterranean coast to Egypt's Port Said at the entrance to the Suez Canal.

March 14-16 – PORT SAID, Egypt

We landed here at a well-stocked U.S. Army transient camp and spent three days getting our group of skinny, disreputable kriegies back into decent shape. We scrubbed up, got haircuts, exchanged our decrepit old uniforms for good new ones, got half a dozen shots and a lot of medication, sent cables to our wives, and cautiously tried a British beverage called whiskey. I found that I was down to 127 pounds, about 50 pounds under normal, and tried to make

it up by eating around the clock. We all started to thaw out and even did a bit of sightseeing. With a small salary advance, I managed to buy a new watch that worked. (p. 110)

March 17-19 – AT SEA

Smooth sailing accompanied the "cruisers" as they boarded and sailed on another British ship, the *TSS Samaria,* for the three-day trip to Naples.

March 20-29 – NAPLES, Italy

Boarded at the Terme Hotel, a health resort near the town, the Americans received an extensive physical exam, more shots, and forms to fill out. Diggs located friends and was presented with a Purple Heart, "*for a minor leg wound incurred, it seemed, at least 110 years ago."* (pp. 110, 111)

March 30-April 9 – AT SEA

From Naples, we boarded an American troop ship, the USS Mariposa, a *former Matson Line cruise ship and set out for home across the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. We spent the next 10 days luxuriating in the nine-man stateroom, eating two great meals a day and enjoying a smooth crossing.*

By the time we landed in Boston, we had pretty much agreed on one lesson learned from our recent travels: the Russians are great fighters but they think and act very differently than we do in wartime. We had better understand this difference well if we ever have to tangle with them. Hopefully we never will. (Diggs, p. 111, his last journal entry)

FINAL ADDITIONS

The following books were also used as resource materials: THE BIG BREAK by Stephen Dando-Collins; ROADS TO LIBERATION FROM OFLAG 64 by Clarence R. Meltesen; and *OFLAG 64 The Fiftieth Anniversary Book commissioned by The Anniversary Committee for the Kriegy Reunion.*

The Sons of Liberty Museum (Copyright, 2023) displayed the following information on their website:

Nelson Tacy of Massachusetts became a Prisoner of War during World War II. He was awarded the POW Medal. A Salute and Thank You for your service, Nelson.

Unfortunately, Tacy's arrival in the U.S., the symbolic recognition above and the inscription on his tombstone are the last written records known of his life.

Tacy was buried in Pine Hill Cemetery at Westfield, Hampden County, Massachusetts:

It is hoped that Tacy's military career and personal life have been renumerated in other relevant books and articles.

Biography written by Kriegy Research Group writer Ann C. Rogers