

1LT Thomas Herron Wingate
1 April 1912 – 21 August 2005
(was an OFLAG 64 prisoner of war)

From Mr. Wingate's personal notes written in 1997 at age 85 about his POW experience:

“Time in Germany and Poland was as a Prisoner of War. Eleven months under German Control hard to endure but character-building. Lost 55 pounds in confinement – 165 to 110 (maybe lower, not weighed until back under US control and eating GI rations for three days or so.)

Plenty of time to think – about life, about home and family, about God. No Bible available, but passages committed to memory in childhood Sunday School became useful. Especially helpful were Saint Paul's words, sent to the church at Philippi (4:11):

‘I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content.’

Paul wrote from a prison in Rome. I remembered at a prison camp in Schubin, Poland. (OFLAG 64)

It was there, too, as well as in other areas of military service that I was convinced of the absolute necessity of all human beings to depend on one another and to help one another. As prisoners we walked for a week in near- zero cold and snow that was knee-deep in places. I would not have survived without help from my companions. Some of them were helped along by me, I hope. That is the way it has to be if we are to survive in this world, no matter what our age, or our circumstance.”

Introduction

Mr. Thomas H. Wingate never forgot his POW experiences. It was the seminal event between youth and wisdom. His fundamental character traits were sharpened as a result of war experiences, and particularly the eleven months as a POW.

Mr. Wingate never met a stranger and developed friendships with a variety of people. His quick wit and sense of humor certainly helped. At heart, he was an optimist and believed in the basic goodness of people. “Everyone deserves respect” and “Always keep your word” were phrases he often said. He loved his family deeply.

He believed in and followed thru, in doing the right thing even if there was pressure to do otherwise.

These traits will be demonstrated throughout his life and are particularly apparent during his wartime service years.

Pre-War Summary

Mr. Wingate was born and raised in Charlotte, North Carolina. His father owned and operated a grocery store.

He graduated cum laude from Presbyterian College in Clinton, S.C. in 1934 with majors in Economics, English and French while working various jobs to support himself. He was active in the ROTC, where he served as Captain of the Rifle Team and was honored as the Distinguished Graduate of his unit. Upon graduation, LT Wingate served in the North Carolina National Guard. He began his career at *The Daily Independent* newspaper in 1934 in Kannapolis, North Carolina. Mr. Wingate never thought of his job as work. He loved the newspaper business and especially writing.

In 1935, he married his childhood sweetheart, the former Frances Alexander of Charlotte. Together they reared three daughters Mary Alice, Daphne Herron, and Frances Anne. Mr. Wingate was a devoted and loving family man.



Picture taken in early 1942. Left to Right children are Anne, Daphne, and Mary Alice. LT and Mrs. Wingate were both 29 years old.

Call to Service for World War II

LT Wingate was called to active duty on 14 February 1942. Assigned to the 752nd Tank Battalion, training followed at Ft. Knox and then at Ft. Lewis, Washington. His family drove to Ft. Lewis to be with him until 13 April 1942 when LT Wingate went with his battalion to the Desert Training Center at Camp Young near Indio, California serving as a Platoon Leader (M3 Grant tanks) in B company. (CPT Meshkoff was his company commander.)

LT Wingate submitted the paperwork for Soldier's Medal for one of his Sergeants. Here is an excerpt of the citation:

"After helping to extinguish the flames on their clothing, he turned his attention to the vehicle, fully combat loaded with 120 rounds of 105mm ammunition, which was then enveloped in flames. The heat by this time had become so intense that the casings around the shells had melted and the ammunition threatened to explode... Fully aware of the danger involved and with utter disregard for his personal safety, [he] with another Sergeant, climbed into the vehicle and smothered the flames..."

LT Wingate drove his family back to Charlotte from 10 July to 18 July 1942 and recalled being so tired that the last 10 miles of the drive were completed while asleep at the wheel. Mrs. Wingate had made the drive to Ft. Lewis, then to Indio, with the family and a sister along poor roads and fog. LT Wingate proceeded to Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania to meet his battalion. The 752nd Tank Battalion moved out on 3 August 1942 to New York City. About 21:00 hours on 5 August, his unit boarded the ship that left for England on 6 August 1942.

Lt. Wingate's Wife Took Family With Him

By MACK McKA

It isn't easy for a mother with a number of children to follow her husband all over the country while he is engaged in maneuvers in preparations for killing Nazis, but it can be done.

One of those who did this and took the children with her, too, was Mrs. Frances Wingate of 2123 Plaza. Her husband is Lt. T. H. Wingate, former editor of the Kannapolis Independent, who fought through Africa and is now fighting in the Anzio Beachhead in Italy.

Mrs. Wingate and her three charming little daughters, Mary, 7 1/2, Daphne, 4, and Frances Ann, 2 1/2, are now making their home with Mrs. Wingate's parents, Mr. and Mrs. A. E. Alexander. Lt. T. H. Wingate is with a tank outfit.

Lt. Wingate, who had ROTC training at Presbyterian College, entered the service as a second lieutenant Feb. 14, 1942, went overseas in August, 1942, was stationed in England, Africa, Sicily in turn, and is now on the Anzio Beachhead in Italy. At last reports he was an acting adjutant, in line for promotion to the rank of captain.

Mrs. Wingate worked here in the Western Union office on Tryon St. before her marriage in 1935, and she resumed her old position at the Western Union office ten months ago.

Shortly after their marriage almost two years ago the Wingates moved to Kannapolis, where "T. H.", as he was known among newspaper men, became editor of the Kannapolis (weekly) Independent. James L. Moore of Kannapolis had launched the newspaper a few years previously, his office being a room at home for a considerable period.

Editor Wingate, Mr. Moore and Lawrence G. Giam, advertising manager, made a drive which carried the struggling newspaper into the tri-weekly field and later into the daily field. Lt. Wingate had a leading part in making it a successful daily, but just as the future was taking on a rosy hue, war clouds came over the United States and he was called to active duty.

Lt. Wingate had his preliminary training at Ft. Knox, Kentucky, early in 1942, then was transferred to Ft. Lewis, Washington. Mrs. Wingate closed her home at Kannapolis, and the family of five rolled across the country to the West Coast, making the trip by automobile, with a few treasured possessions, and many items of children's clothing in the rear seat.

In just a few weeks the father was transferred to desert maneuvers at Camp Young, Calif., but undaunted, Mrs. Wingate, with the three tiny children beside her, one a baby of six months, drove the car 1,000 miles over difficult roads to Camp Young.

A new home was hastily set up near the desert, and again the family circle was complete.

Lt. Wingate, more of the studious than the athletic type, weathered the desert maneuvers like a thoroughbred. He kept the family and friends back home in Kannapolis, cheerful, with stories of sand in the beans and cactus thorns here and there. In dozens of letters since that time, he has

tried to keep everybody at home "cheered up".

Lt. Wingate wrote of his grizzled commanding officer at the desert maneuvers as follows: "He rode over the desert and rubbed his hands together and kept remarking that it was 'a wonderful place for his men to get in shape.' I could not just get the idea at that time, but I did, after a few weeks on the desert."

From Italy recently he wrote as follows:

"We arrived in a quaint little Italian town this week and they gave us fine quarters, upstairs over the railroad station. I am sleeping between clean sheets again, for the first time in months and we are now able to take a bath as often as we desire. Boy, what a thrill!"

Never a complaint about sleeping in a sleeping bag on African sand. Once he lost his sleeping bag and just about all his other equipment. He wrote his friend, James L. (Jazzy) Moore, the Kannapolis publisher, about it. Moore wired Capt. Solon Smart, a Kannapolis man, stationed in Washington, D. C., and within the hour a new sleeping bag was on its way to Lt. Wingate.

But back to the story, and the California desert.

Wingate was ordered back to Ft. Knox, Ky., and the "family car" started eastward with the family of five. After a short furlough, he reported at Ft. Knox, and in August Mrs. Wingate received a telephone call.

"He told me good-by in a few short moments, and I cannot describe how I felt, for it seemed like the end," she said, "and her three charming little daughters, playing in the front yard."

Charlotte News

Camp Young, California was near the town of Indio, California. The family tried to stay together as long as possible before LT Wingate left for England.



Family picture at Indio, California 1942



LT Wingate, 23 April 1942. Note weight of 165 pounds. He will return to Allied control in 1945 weighing 110 pounds following 11 months of captivity.

England

On 6 August, about 14:00 hours, the RMS Orcades sailed past the Statue of Liberty and arrived on 17 August around 19:00 hours in Liverpool, England. There were two submarine attacks on the convoy, but his ship had not been targeted. Departing the shipyards, the battalion stayed at Camp Pennings near Tidworth on the Salisbury Plains for 6 weeks. The battalion moved to Tidworth Barracks and then Perham Down for another three months of training. The battalion returned to Liverpool on 5 January 1943 and boarded the RMS Reina Del Pacifico for North Africa. On 6 January, the ship headed to sea and arrived on 17 January in Oran shortly after nightfall.

A testament to his writing talents and love of family, the following is a letter to his youngest daughter for her first birthday written at Perham Down, England. Anne Wingate's birthday was 20 October 1941. Note the letter was published by his newspaper 22 November 1942.

The Daily Independent, Kannapolis, N.C. -- Nov. 22, 1942
In the "Town Crier" column by Jazzy Moore

(Remembering his little daughter on her first birthday anniversary, a Kannapolis father now with the second front forces in a foreign land fighting for his country, and yours, wrote the following letter which we believe is one of the best ever published in The Daily Independent.

(The letter will touch ~~xxxx~~ the hearts of every patriotic man and woman in Kannapolis and it is being published with the permission of the little girl's mother. You will readily recognize the author as T. H. Wingate, former editor of the local paper.)

Dear Frances Ann:

In just a few more days you will be one year old. I won't be there to help you and your mother and Mary and Daphne celebrate the occasion, so I'm sending you this letter instead.

It won't be much of a letter. It's sort of awkward writing like this to someone who won't be able to read for several years yet. I just felt I ought to send you something; and suitable presents are hard to find here, to say nothing of the difficulties of getting them 2,000 miles over the ocean to you.

You don't know it yet, but this short year since you arrived on this earth has been the most eventful period in the lives of your parents and sisters. To begin with, you came along last fall to ~~xxxxxxx~~ round out what your mother and I consider a perfect family. You are the third in a sisterhood of beauties. To be perfectly truthful, you surprised us. After having two lovely daughters, we hardly expected to have such good luck on the third try, but, thank Heaven, you turned out as beautiful as the others.

Apparently your disposition matches your looks, too, another fact for which we can all be thankful. Or, you were of a cheerful disposition the last time I saw you. That was several months ago, but I doubt that you have changed so very much since then.

Anyway, we soon got back to Grandmother's. I left shortly after that
~~and, within a few weeks, was in England~~
 and within a few weeks was in England, part of a fighting force the
 United States and England are readying for the "Second Front".
 The "Second Front" probably won't get much space in your history books.
 It will be just a part of this gigantic world struggle, but it is
 getting a lot of space in the papers now.

You are lucky in that this war will probably be over by the time you
 are old enough to realize that there is such a thing. By that time,
 today's conflict will live only on the pages of that history book and in
 the memories of ~~xxx~~ those unfortunate persons old enough now to see
 what goes on.

By that time, too, the world will be getting ready for the next
 war--if it follows its age-old habit.

The world need not follow that bloody, senseless cycle of peace, ~~xxx~~
 then war; but it will, unless we who people the earth turn more to God
 and rely on His divine leadership and mercy.

All of us need to do that--little children like you and grownups
~~xx~~ like Mother and Dad and Granddaddy and Grandmother. When we all do
 that, God's ~~power~~ power can be transmitted to the whole world and the
 leaders of nations--too frail within themselves to beat down the
 temptations that lead to conflict--will be fortified by the Lord and
 thus enabled to down the urges of greed and revenge and lust for
 power and selfishness.

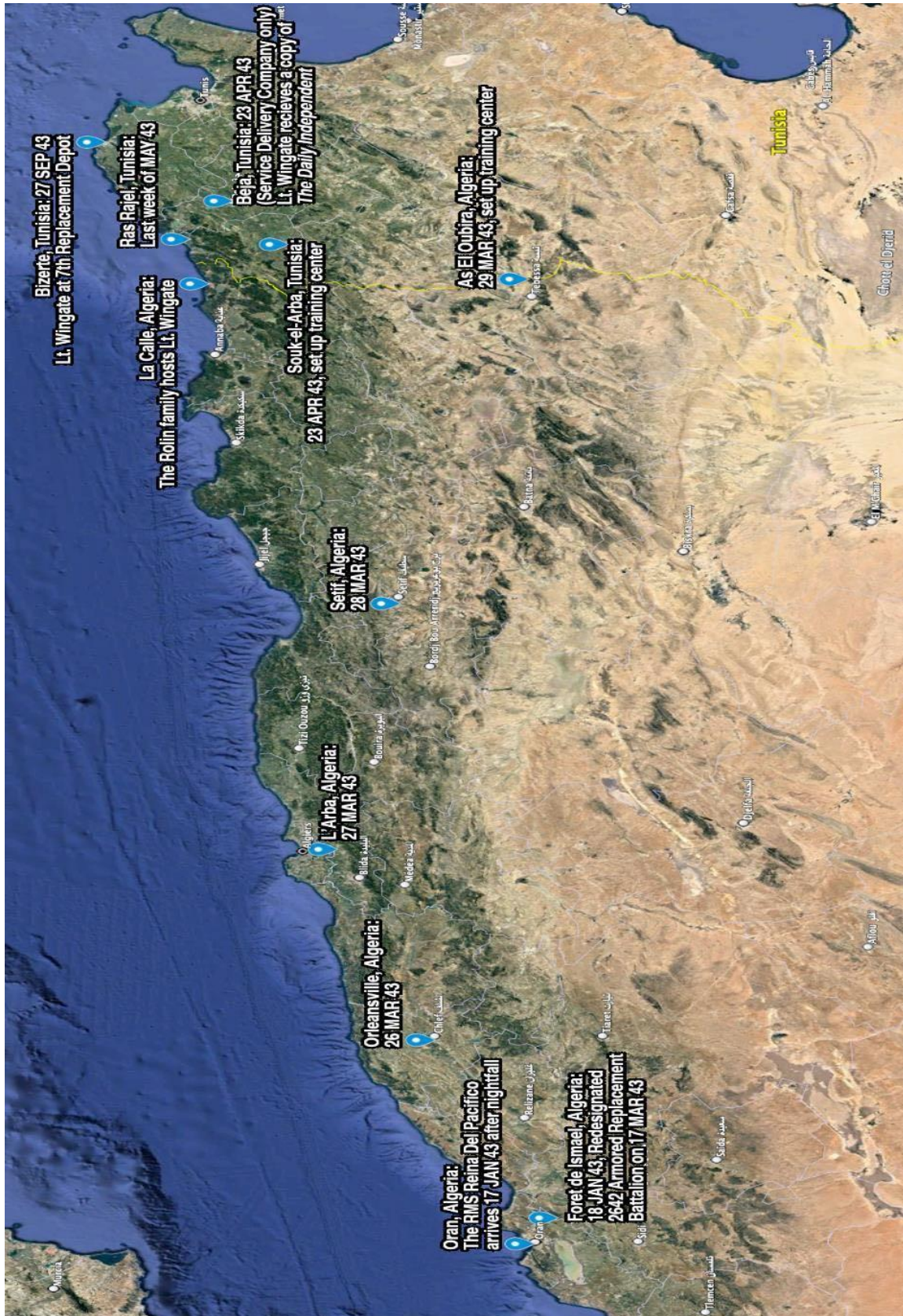
You will learn about God and Jesus Christ in just a little while
 now from Mother and at Sunday School. You can see God's glory and goodness
 today shining from the eyes of your sweet Mother.

That's precious little, I know, for a father to say to his little
 girl on her first birthday. But it is my heart talking.

My heart will be there on the second, too, although my body may
 still be here. So, happy birthday, and may you have many more of them,
 each one more joyous than the last. Set a place for me when ~~there~~
 there are three candles on the cake.

Lovingly yours,
 Daddy

North Africa



The battalion arrived in Oran, Algeria on 17 January 1943 and headed to Foret De Ismael about 10 miles west of Saint Dennis Du Sig. The battalion was re-designated as the 2642nd Armored Replacement Battalion responsible for training replacements and operating a truck company on 17 March 1943.

The battalion began a series of moves closer to the frontlines. On 26 March, the unit spent the night in Orleansville and on the 27th stopped overnight at L'Arba about 10 miles from Algiers. On the 28th, the next stop was Setif. Arriving on the 29th, the unit set up a training center at As El Oubira, about 10 miles east of Tebessa.

On April 23rd, the unit moved to Souk-el-Arba with the service delivery company moving to Beja. The last week of May, the unit moved to Ras Rajel, Tunisia. During these months, CPT Alexander of Elizabethtown, Tennessee, had acquired an "off the books" jeep for personal use. He was a bachelor who enjoyed life and a friend of LT Wingate. [It is possible that CPT Alexander was distantly related to Mrs. Wingate as her maiden name was Alexander. Both the CPT's and Mrs. Wingate's ancestral Alexanders were early settlers in North Carolina history.] He, First Sergeant Randy Sells, and LT Wingate would explore the seacoast areas in off-duty hours. They had made acquaintance with a French family in LaCalle, Algeria. The letter below is from Madame Renee Rolin written to Mrs. Wingate after learning that LT Wingate had been captured in November 1944.

La Calle 9 Novembre 1944.

Chère Madame,

Par l'intermédiaire de Mrs Moore, je me permets de vous écrire pour vous exprimer notre profonde tristesse au sujet du lieutenant Wingate, fait prisonnier. Vers la fin Juin en apprenant cette mauvaise nouvelle arrivée d'Italie, nous eûmes beaucoup de peine votre mari étant digne d'une réelle estime. La guerre nous avait rapprochés pour faire naître cette belle amitié et l'aider à supporter le départ, le déchirement de l'absence dans l'optimisme et la confiance. Bon époux, père excellente, sa joie consistait à nous montrer les photographies de sa chère

Je m'excuse de vous écrire en
français, mes connaissances en
américain étant peu étendues je
puis mieux vous faire connaître mes
impressions. Je pense qu'il vous sera
possible d'en faire faire la traduction
française.

Notre désir serait d'avoir des nou-
velles du lieutenant - ne suis-je pas
indiscret en vous demandant de bien
vouloir nous les transmettre de temps
en temps.

Veuillez agréer, Madame, l'assurance
de nos meilleurs sentiments scellés
par ma vive sympathie.

Sincerely Yours.

René Rolin

Madame René Rolin
Cottage Marcelle Route de Tunis
(Algérie) La Calle

This is Madame Rolin's letter, translated. Her husband was Andre Rolin. They had four children: Paulette, Marguerite, Marcelle, and Helene. They lived at Cottage Marcelle, Route de Tunis, La Calle, Algeria.

Through Mrs. Moore, I take the liberty of writing to you to express to you our deep sadness about Lt Wingate, being in prison.

we had great sorrow your husband being worthy of real esteem

The war brought us closer to nurture this beautiful friendship and help it endure the change of scenery, the desperation of absence in optimism and confidence.

A good wife, an excellent father, his joy consisted in showing us the photographs of his dear family whose three charming daughters made our admiration.

So, from the Italian front, he sent us your group prints on the Daily Independent. It is for our whole family a precious souvenir.

Dear Madam, do we take an immense part in your grief? less let me tell you that the worst could have happened to you and that it is a consolation to have the life saved to the loved one that we thought we would never see again.

As you fervently pray to God for his next return so that he may find the happiness that you knew how to create so well and to which he aspires to

I apologize for writing to you in French because my knowledge in America is not very extensive, I can tell you my impressions.

I assume that it was possible for you to have the French translation done.

Our desire to hear from the lieutenant did not escape. I am not indiscreet in asking you to kindly transmit them to us from time to time.

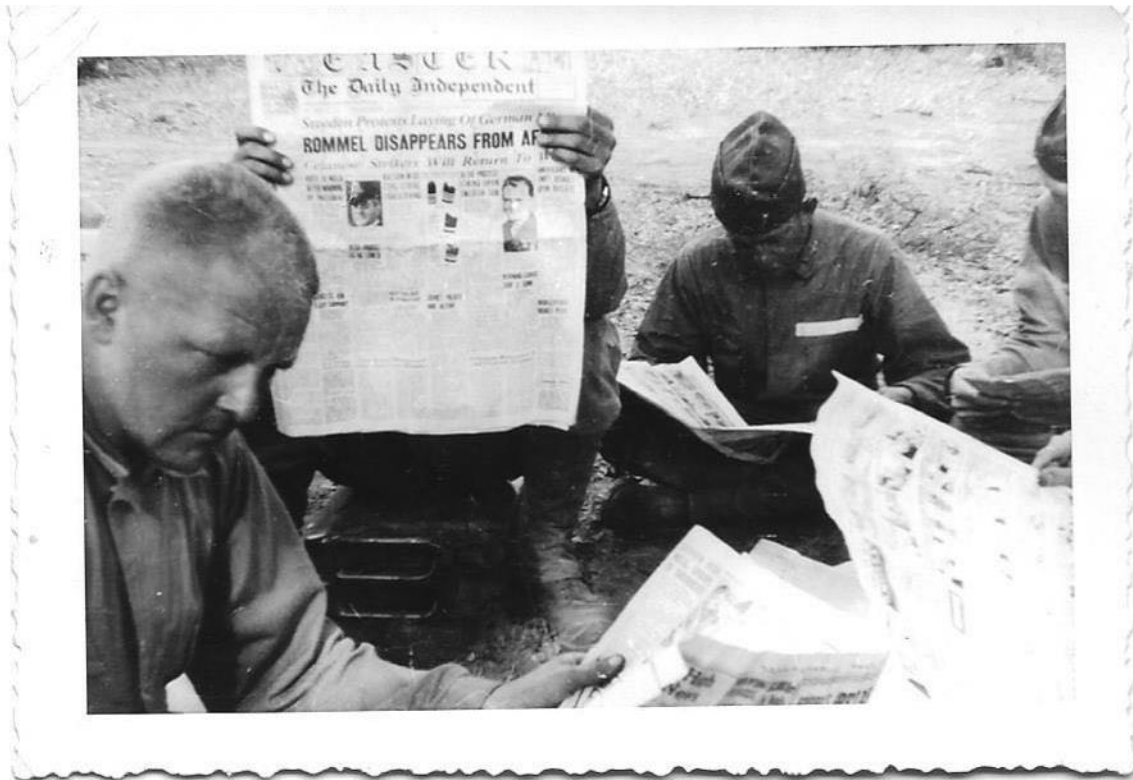
Please accept madam the assurance of our best feelings sealed by my deepest sympathy.

At some point between March and May 1943, LT Wingate (assigned to the infantry replacement training detachment for Personnel & Classification duty and later as the adjutant for the temporary truck battalion) refused to reclassify cooks as trained infantrymen because these men were simply not trained. The cooks in question had never qualified with a rifle and were to be sent as infantry replacements the following morning. Later, he was assigned as the defense counsel at a court-martial of a Native-American soldier. Evidently the new battalion commander, LTC Hyman Bruss, did not wish for a fair trial and was frustrated that LT Wingate was able to convince the court to reduce the charge to less than first degree murder. It is clear that LT Wingate performed his duties ethically in these two instances described.

LT Wingate, along with many other long serving battalion officers, were slated to report to the 7th Replacement Depot on 27 September as the battalion was being re-activated as a tank unit and excess officers were being removed from the rolls. LT Wingate thought his ethical actions as

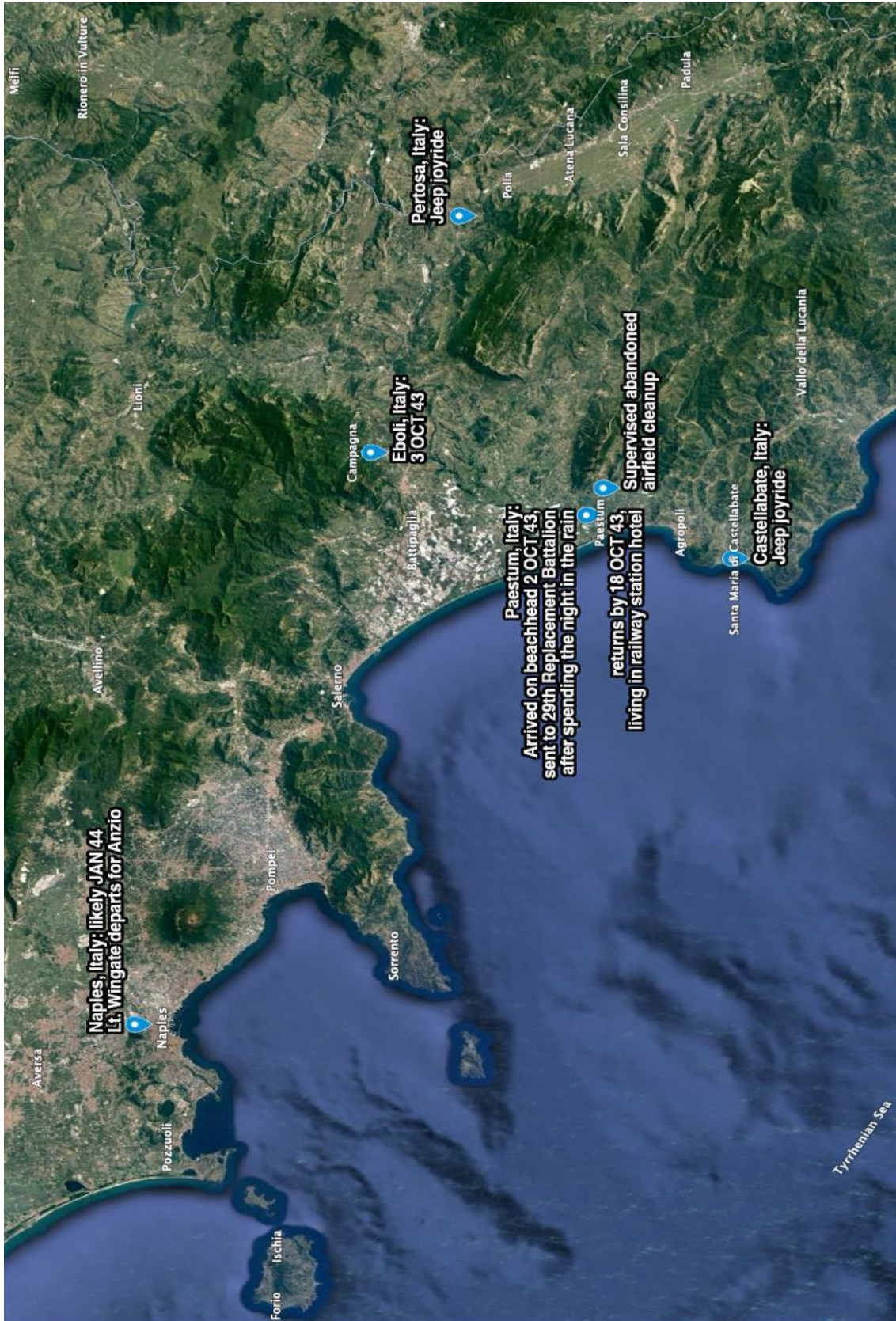
defense counsel had irked LTC Bruss and likely contributed to his replacement orders. (LTC Hyman Bruss, who had been relieved of his command of the 2nd Battalion, 13th Armored Regiment following "an appalling defeat" at Djebel bou Aoukaz on 6 December 1942. LTC Bruss had lost all 18 tanks of his command in less than 15 minutes.)

Arriving at the replacement depot at Bizerte, Tunisia, CPT Alexander and LT Wingate considered driving their jeep onto the LST for their Italian adventures together. Deciding against this, they bid farewell to their "old friend" (jeep). Once they realized the chaos at the port would have made loading their jeep possible, it was too late. They were headed to Salerno, Italy.



Mail arrived very late and newspapers were readily shared. Note the headline about Rommel leaving Africa in the Easter edition of *The Daily Independent*. This photograph was during the time the 752nd Tank Battalion was serving as the 2642nd Armored Replacement Battalion. This picture was reported to have been taken after transporting equipment.

Replacements



On 2 October 1943, LT Wingate arrived on the beachhead to be sent on to the 29th Replacement Battalion (2nd Replacement Depot) in the vicinity of Paestum, Italy. The chaos at the beachhead left LT Wingate and CPT Alexander with no idea where to report until LT McGuinn (former SGT from the 752nd Tank Battalion) arrived with a truck. The pair had spent all night in the rain on the beach waiting for instructions. Following a 25-mile ride thru war torn areas towards Eboli, LT Wingate and another friend from the 752nd Tank BN (LT Wood) lugged their gear up a large hill to camp. After pitching a tent, they were then sent to another location to encamp. The disorganization and chaos of replacement units is legendary.

Orders were distributed for officers not to leave the replacement camp. Naturally, LT Wingate, CPT Alexander, and LT's Wood & Covington (all these officers had been in the 752nd Tank Battalion together) left camp to explore the area on 6 October by visiting a nearby evacuation hospital at Paestum. After enjoying an evening dining with the nurses, the four officers returned on 7 October for another dinner.

On 10 October, LT Wingate began his New Testament reading with Matthew. His goal was to read the entire New Testament.

11 October was the first of many visits to an Italian family's farmhouse for dinner. The house was 1/2 mile from camp. LT Wingate, CPT Meshkoff, and LT's Delavan, Sandler, Foreman, and Harmon enjoyed dinner. LT Wingate was not a fan of the spaghetti but loved the chicken and potatoes.

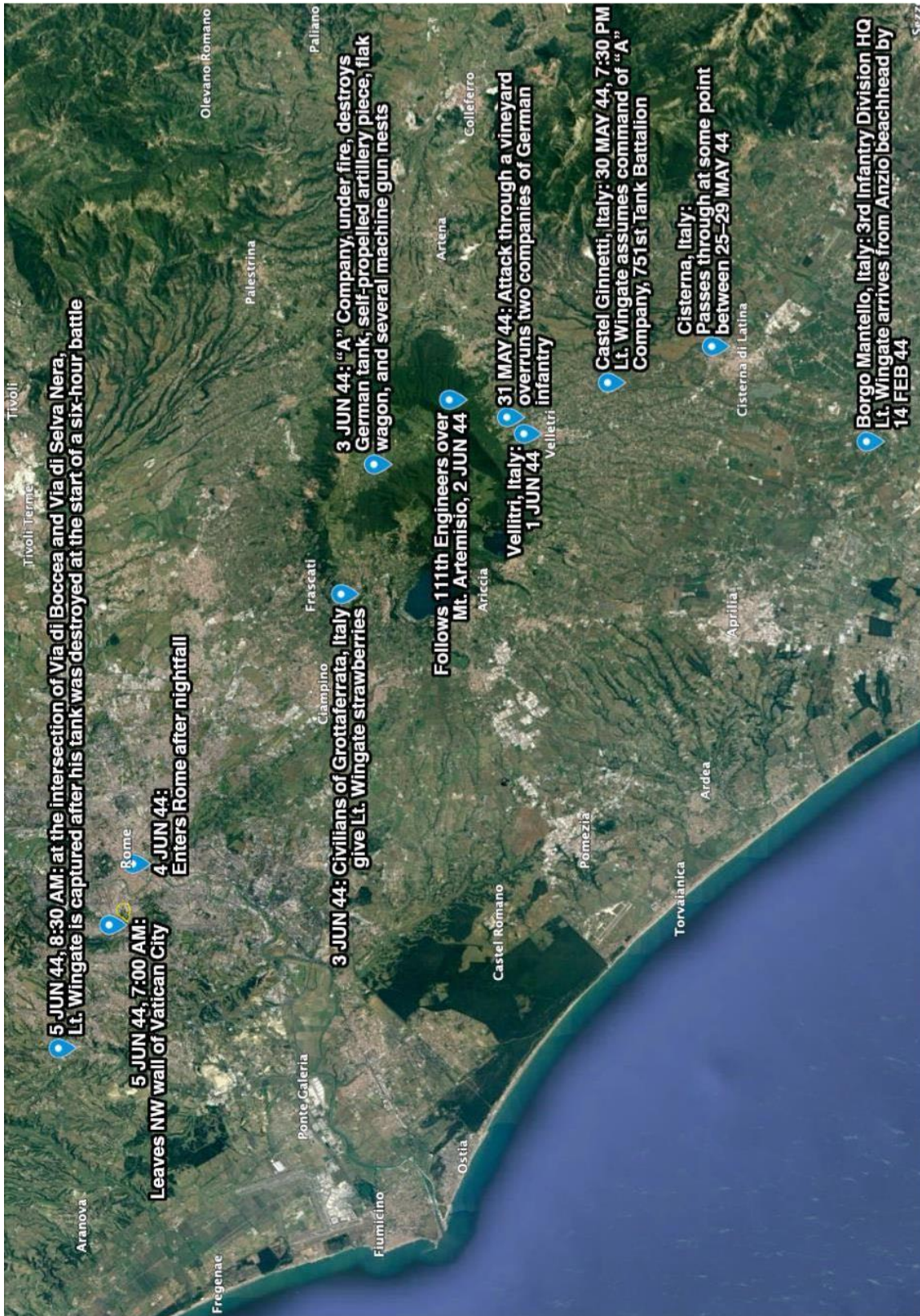
LT Wingate was finally billeted in the upper rooms of the railway hotel in Paestum near the famous Greek ruins by 18 October. This was the first building he had lived in since Perham Down, England. An Italian boy, Santoro Luigi, showed up in their doorway on 18 October. He was about 12 years old. LT Wingate and his friends looked after Santoro for several weeks.

While waiting to be assigned to another unit, LT Wingate was detached for duty to a provisional truck company with CPT Meshkoff (Rockford, Illinois). The Captain enjoyed life and drove up and down long stone staircases in an village (believed to be Castellabate or Pertosa, both locations were visited) with LT Wingate holding onto the jeep for dear life. During one joy ride on 21 October, they encountered a crashed jeep where an American Air Corps First Sergeant had been driving drunk and was dead at the scene. CPT Meshkoff tossed the wine bottle away so that the Sergeant's next of kin would receive the life insurance proceeds as driving under the influence would have denied those benefits. LT Wingate complained in a letter home that he seemed to be stuck with fun-loving Captains, especially Meshkoff.

At the Paestum USAAF field, abandoned for a short time after the 33rd Fighter Group's P-40 Warhawks had moved north, he was assigned to supervise Italian workers collecting used fuel cans for movement to newer airfields. The payroll cash in his jeep was stolen and he was embarrassed by this turn of events. The airfield was about 5 miles north/northeast of Agropoli.

Later he was sent to the replacement depot in Naples. (This may have been where he attended a beautiful Italian Catholic Christmas service.). One morning he was awakened. It was his turn to head to Anzio.

Anzio



He arrived at the beachhead and was briefly in the vicinity of the 38th Evacuation Hospital (a nurse, LT Edna Parker from Kannapolis, was with this unit, but LT Wingate did not know her until after the war).

LT Wingate was assigned to the staff as assistant adjutant of the 751st Tank Battalion at the Anzio beachhead on or earlier than 14 February 1944. This location was close to the 3rd Infantry Division headquarters.

Prior to his capture, he had marked and noted Romans 8:26-39 in his government issued Bible. LT Wingate had written on 10 October 1943 that he intended to read the Bible daily starting with Matthew. It appears he knew his day of trial would be coming soon.

He endured one extremely close encounter with a nighttime air raid. LT Wingate noted that everyone was supposed to sleep in a slit trench for added safety but that few did. He did not think it would add that much protection and thus did not bother to dig one. (Air raids and artillery shelling were frequent at Anzio.) The close call resulted in heaps of debris being tossed on him and the bombardment seemed to last forever while he waited for the end to come. In a letter to his wife, dated 1 March 1944, LT Wingate references a lot of shelling by the Germans up and down the line.

LT Wingate was the Headquarters Company Commander from 5 April to 14 April. The battalion headquarters was in the vicinity of the 3rd Infantry Division headquarters at Conca in a group of buildings known as "The Castle". (This is today's Borgo Mantello where Chiesa Parrocchiale della SS. Annunziata is now located.)

On the night of 30 May 1944, LT Wingate was riding with the battalion commander to inspect "A" company (M4 Sherman tanks). Discovering the company commander drunk, the battalion commander placed LT Wingate into command at Castel Ginnetti outside Velletri around 19:00 hours. He was the 4th company commander in 10 days with only 6 tanks out of 17 still in operation. The breakout from Anzio had proven costly.

LT Wingate participated in the 31 May attack on the northern side of Velletri with the 141st Infantry Regiment driving into two companies of German infantry thru a vineyard. Along the way, he saw his first American killed in action crossing a bridge. LT Wingate recalled firing his machine gun at a German in a ditch next to his tank that he did not hit. On 1 June at 0:500 hours his tank drove thru the city as the Germans were pulling out.

On 2 June, LT Wingate's tank followed the 111th Engineers over Mt. Artemisio (believed to be the road labeled as Via Arcioni, merging with Via Monte Artemisio, today). The 111th Engineers graded a trail to allow trucks and tanks to drive over the mountain close to Rocca Priora. He went into an engagement on 3 June at 15:00 hours supporting the 143rd Infantry Regiment about 1.5 miles southwest of Rocca Priora towards Rome. LT Wingate came under some German artillery fire, and his tanks destroyed a Mark III tank, a self-propelled artillery piece, a FlakWagen, and many machine gun nests. He recalled firing on enemy occupied buildings and German vehicles

along this route. Near Grottaferrata his crew obtained fresh strawberries. (After his capture, LT Wingate recalled being “angry the Krauts would be getting those strawberries!”.)

LT Wingate’s company was then attached to the 142nd Infantry Regiment for entry to Rome. The ride thru Rome during the night of 4 June began about 02:30 hours and not many civilians were to be seen. This regiment had difficulties passing through Rome without a guide resulting in several traffic snarls and had a brief pause to regroup along the northwest side of the outer Vatican City wall. During this brief time, his company was attached to all three infantry regiments of the 36th Infantry Division.

On 5 June, the regiment moved out around 07:00 hours along the Via di Boccea road as it branched off from the Via Aurelia. LT Wingate was in the lead for the 142nd Infantry Regiment. Approximately five miles along this road near the intersection with the Via di Selva Nera at the crest of a slight rise at approximately 08:30 hours, a German anti-tank cannon (picture attached of the exact cannon following the battle) in the right side of the road fired. His tank was hit, LT Wingate radioed his tank was disabled while his crew escaped, and then he bailed out of the tank wounded below the waist. The tank drove erratically off the road. LT Wingate was in a ditch attempting to burn important papers in his possession before capture. The tank driver (CPL Glenmar Nelson, Akron, Ohio) was killed and the rest of the crew escaped capture. LT Wingate had shrapnel appear for almost three decades after the war.

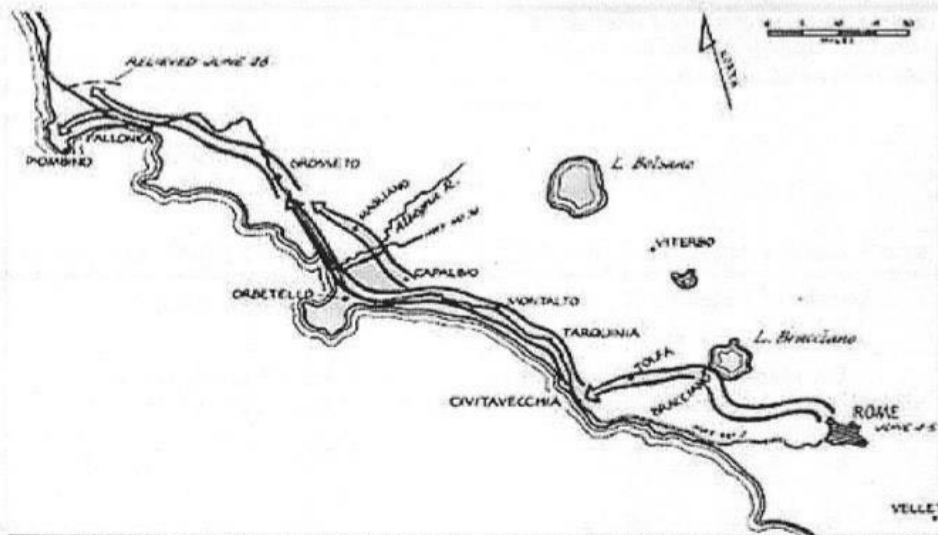
On the following page is a picture of the actual anti-tank cannon that disabled LT Wingate’s Sherman Tank. He described the position of this cannon in multiple interviews, without knowledge of this picture. Research after his passing revealed this picture and website courtesy of the Texas Military Forces Museum.

The rearguard battle lasted for over 6 hours. His tank was the first lost in battle during the advance from Rome. There is a note about the capture of a truckload of cheeses, anchovies, tuna fish, and chocolate that was “liberated” by the 142nd Infantry Regiment as a feast following the battle. This event occurred at this ambush location.

Texas Military Forces Museum
36th Division in World War II



NORTH FROM ROME



Rome was free! The 36th drove through the city and headed northward as enemy rear guards fell back to hastily prepared positions. Early on the morning of June 5, the 142nd Infantry was fired upon at a turn in the road five miles outside the Italian capital. The enemy delaying force, with several anti-tank weapons and supported by strong mortar and artillery fires, presented a formidable obstacle. The Germans quickly forced a struggle. The 3rd Battalion was brought up hurriedly from the rear and deployed for the attack. Companies K and L, with I and M laying down a base of fire, fought until late afternoon before the block was wiped out. Immediately following, the 141st and 143rd, along with elements of the 1st Armored Division, passed through the 142nd to follow up the rout.

Through the Lake Bracciano-Manziana sector, the Division plodded on, coping with sporadic resistance as Germans vainly attempted to delay our troops. Swinging west toward the coast, the "Texas" Division mopped up German remnants in its path to Civitaveechia, important Italian port which had fallen the same day to the 34th Division. Continuing north to Tarquinia, the 361st Infantry, attached to the 36th, met and overcame bitter German opposition. By June 12 the



At a turn in the road just outside Rome the Germans hastily set up this block with many A-T guns. A day-long battle wiped it out.

Capture



Following capture at the ambush site, the Germans tended to LT Wingate's lower body wounds with paper tissues used as band-aids.

Arriving in Florence after several days of marching and truck transport, the Germans kept LT Wingate and 4 other POWs in the city jail cell at Le Carceri for 10 days. Before arriving to the city jail, he and fellow POWs were forced to load gasoline cans on German vehicles at gunpoint. The POWs had already refused this order. The cell had no facilities and only a small window for ventilation too high for the prisoners to look outside. (Today, the prison has been converted to

apartments and a restaurant called “Le Carceri” as of 2021.) From Florence he likely traveled through Bologna to Mantova.

On the way to Mantova (Mantua), Italy, he was locked up with fellow POWs in the back of a truck. When Allied aircraft attacked the convoy, the Germans abandoned the truck with the POWs trapped inside. At some point LT Wingate spoke in a transport truck with an African- American POW pilot (from the 99th Pursuit Squadron of the famed 332nd Fighter Group “Red Tails”) who appeared to have been beaten by the Germans. The pilot was not seen again on LT Wingate’s journey. Along the way going thru an Italian village at night, LT Wingate cut a small slit in the canvas covering the truck he was riding in to try to escape. The Germans failed to take away his pocketknife after capture. The attempt was aborted as the slit was too small. He arrived at Dulag 339 (renamed Stalag 339) located near the shores of Lake Inferiore opposite Mantua. Later, Allied aircraft attacked the train where he and fellow POWs were on near Mantua. (The train route went through the Brenner Pass.) The Germans abandoned the train but left the POWs, 40-45 men, inside the locked boxcar during the Allied air attack.

From his capture on 5 June, he had marched and was occasionally trucked for at least a week, spent 10 days in the Florence jail, likely several days waiting at Dulag 339 (Stalag 339), and another 4-7 days on the train from Mantua to Stalag VII-A. LT Wingate often remarked how fuzzy his memory was of his first month or two in captivity, attributing it to shock.

He arrived in Moosburg, Germany at Stalag VII-A, on 1 July 1944 and was there until 20 August 1944. His barracks was a collection of Allied prisoners of war from many nations. He made friends with a Tunisian officer (LT Khelil Hamadi). LT Wingate had visited the officer’s town (Babouch, Tunisia) a few times while stationed nearby in 1943 at either Souk El Arba and/or Ras Rajel, Tunisia. While at this Stalag, the Germans took the POWs on a few hikes into the countryside. At one rest stop during a hike close to a farm, LT Wingate recalled eating his first raw potato right out of the ground and raw green peas. He said “...not good, but it was better than what we’d been getting, and more of it”.

At this Stalag, POW’s were allowed one postcard. The postcard LT Wingate sent was logical and clear about how to make sure his wife and three daughters received their just payment from the government to support them while he was a POW.

Kriegsgefangenenlager Datum: 14 August 1944

Heading: If necessary, you can increase my allotment by applying to War Dept. Essential info:

1) My name & serial no (2) Service: Own 10 years, 3rd year parole, 10 years completed 27 May 1944

(3) Your name & address (4) No. of dependents (5) Reasons for requesting increase in allotment i.e. to pay expenses, support child, etc (6) Amt of present allotment: Class E (govt) \$220, Class N (govt. ins) \$23.50, war bond \$97.50 (7) amt of increase desired. Be sure to clearly specify amt. you want to receive, including increase. i.e. if you want \$80 increase, tell them (in addition) that new monthly payment should be \$300. Be sure to tell that I am P.O.W. X.



Lt. Thos. H. Wingate Is Missing In Action

First Lt. Thomas Herron Wingate, Charlottean who served as editor of the Kannapolis Independent until he entered the Army, has been missing in action in Italy since June 5, according to an official telegram sent to his wife today.

The Secretary of War told Mrs. Wingate that further details would be sent to her as soon as they were available. Lt. Wingate was with headquarters company of a tank division in the Mediterranean theater of operations. He has been overseas for two years.

Lt. Wingate is the son of Mr. and Mrs. T. E. Wingate of Mecklenburg Ave. Mrs. Wingate, the former Miss Frances Alexander, and her children have been living with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. A. E. Alexander of 2123 The Plaza while Lt. Wingate is in the service. The Wingates have three children—Mary Alice, Daphne Herron and Frances Ann.

The missing officer was well-known in Charlotte. He attended Central High School here and Presbyterian College in Clinton, S.



LT. WINGATE

C. Before entering the Army, he and his family had lived in Kannapolis for eight years.



FIGHTING DADDY AND FAMILY—Top is Lt. Wingate, his wife and three children taken about the time he completed his training and sailed for the African campaigns. Below is Mrs. Wingate and the children at their home, 2123 Plaza, where Mrs. Wingate lives with her mother while her husband fights on the beachheads of Italy. Lt. Wingate was formerly editor of the Kannapolis Independent of Kannapolis.

1944

← Charlotte News

As was often the case, POWs were listed as Missing in Action pending verification. Mrs. Wingate learned that he had been captured from a radio report by a short-wave operator listening for reports of POWs in Texas. The report is noted in the newspaper report below. Later, the War Department officially notified her of LT Wingate's change from MIA to POW status.

LT Wingate Has Sent Word He Is In German Camp

A message over short wave radio from Lt. C. H. Wingate, who is a prisoner of the German Government, was received recently by Mrs. Willie Grammell Hutto of Houston, Texas.

Mrs. Hutto in a letter to The News, dated Aug. 15, related that Lt. Wingate said, "I hope you will receive this message from me. I am a prisoner of war in Germany. Am treated fine; have plenty to eat. Please don't worry. I am well and safe. Tell all my friends where I am. Love to one and all and tell them to write. We can receive all mail and parcels."

Mrs. Hutto lived in Charlotte at one time, but she did not know the address of the Wingates. She hopes that they will receive this news of their son through The News.

PRISONER



LT. T. H. WINGATE.

Wingate Held By Germans

Editor Previously Reported Missing.

First Lieut. T. H. Wingate, editor of The Daily Independent until he went into the army in February, 1942, is a prisoner of the Germans, his wife, Frances, who is making her home for the duration at Charlotte, was notified yesterday by the war department. The officer had been reported on June 27 as missing in action in Italy as of June 5.

In the message received by Mrs. Wingate yesterday, the war department promised further information in a letter that can be expected in a few days.

Lieut. Wingate had been in Italy since February, and saw action on the Anzio beachhead and with troops advancing to the capture of Rome and beyond the Italian capital. Prior to going to Italy he was in the North African and Sicilian campaigns.

Connected with The Daily Independent since 1934, Wingate was called into the army as a reserve officer in February, 1942. He went overseas after training at Fort Knox, Ky., in the state of Washington and on the California deserts under Lieut. Gen. George S. Patton, Jr.

He first went to England, and from there was in the force that invaded North Africa. He served in Sicily before crossing the narrow strait to Italy.

Mrs. Wingate and three daughters are living with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. C. E. Alexander at Charlotte, where she is employed at the Western Union office.

The Daily Independent story on LT Wingate's status update from MIA to POW.

OFLAG 64

LT Wingate left Stalag VII-A on 20 August and arrived at OFLAG 64 (Schubin, Poland) on 25 August 1944. LT Wingate was initially assigned to a cubicle with LT's Bill Frodsham (arrived 17 August), Roger White (arrived 22 July), Sid Fredrickson (arrived 17 August), Don Chappel (arrived 17 August), Don Graul (arrived 17 August), and Steve Kochy (arrived 17 August).

Later he was assigned to Barracks 7B. Fellow POWs listed in his diary for Cubicle 12 were Thompson, Glendinning, LT Albert Miller (later his long march buddy), Wisniewsky, Salmons, Gillespie, Anderson.

LT Wingate noted there were several men from Charlotte, North Carolina at OFLAG 64 to include LT's George Tate, John Samonds, White, and CPT Edward Anthony.



OFLAG 64 ID card issued 4 September 1944.

To break the boredom, he and LT Edward Berlinski (former North Carolina State University athlete), decided to play a prank one morning. LT Wingate recalled:

"It gets boring in the wintertime...and about the only recreation, about the only thing to break up the monotony of the day, somebody would bring in a tub of hot water. And you could take your cup or can or whatever you had and put tea leaves

in it and make you a palatable drink. That was the highlight of the day. And a friend of mine and I was, we were as bored as everybody else one day, so we went out and got the empty tub and brought it in, and no water. Brought in the tub and rattled the cup around the edge and yelled, "Hot water, hot water." And everybody in the barracks came down to that end, including the LTC who was in charge of our barracks, and he was leading the parade. And they didn't find any water, so they called me and my buddy up and they were going to court-martial us. The LTC said 'As punishment now, you'll have to heat up a bucket, a tub of water every day for two weeks. And heat up a bucket of water was a challenge there, because you had to tear down a building to get enough wood to build a fire, to heat it. So, I said, 'No, I won't do that. I've been punished already'. So, he was going to get me...and my buddy backed me up and said he wasn't going to do it either. So, the LTC was going to charge us with insubordination. Of course that worried us, but we knew another LTC who seemed to be more level-headed and we told him about it and asked him advice and he said 'well, sit tight'. And we did. And I don't know what he did, if anything. But, we never did hear anything more about that court-martial. That was a childish prank, but it was a lot of fun when it happened. And there wasn't much amusement there. The LTC was the only one that complained, and he was embarrassed because he was the first one in line with his cup, you know."

He participated on a few occasions in producing *The Daily Bulletin*. According to his diary notes, LT Wingate took classes in bookkeeping, banking, security analysis, Spanish, German, Japanese, salesmanship, farming, and history.

LT Wingate was captured wearing "tanker boots" that had two buckles on the top. He recalled "I was in one of the bunks furthest from the rest room. And when I had to go to the rest room at night, I'd just put my feet in the boots and walk down there. And the buckles rattled. And I got a lot of complaints then."

In another letter sent to his newspaper publisher (Mr. Jazzy Moore), LT Wingate wrote:

"One of the officers in this cubicle (there are eight in each cubicle, 12 cubicles to a barracks), is telling another about his escape in France, three are reading in bed, one is playing sol. Down the hall an accordion is playing "I'll Be Home for Christmas" – a popular overseas song of the 1943 holiday season. The major just bellowed an announcement that overcoats will be worn at roll call. Joe Tyrell came in to gravely announce that the war will end in April and Donaho's hunting a light for a cigarette. In short, life in Oflag 64 is moving along as usual this afternoon. It is pretty dull but we manage. This many people in one group always manages to get along."

LT Wingate reported in a letter of 27 November 1944 that he attends classes, stands inspection and gets washing completed on Saturday's and attends Protestant services on Sunday attempting to wear his Sunday "best".

He was aware that messages were somehow getting into and out of camp and that the “bird” (radio) was in the attic somewhere in the library area.

He stood lookout duty on occasion. He recalled “As close as I got to it [radio] was, some, we rotated watch-duty to see if the Germans were coming and close as I got was the balcony outside the third story room to watch. So, I presume it was hid in the rafters, or something. Maybe disassembled it, I don’t know.” LT Wingate did not know anything about MIS-X.

He also thought COL Paul Goode was an excellent leader.

Here is a poem written by LT Wingate.

(written at Schubin, Poland (Oflag 64)

My mind, in books, goes far away.
I talk with Greeks in ancient Athens,
Stroll on Cathay's exotic shore.
I climb atop tall Ghengi Devi,
Black Afric's mysteries I explore.

25 DECEMBER 1944

DEAREST FRANCES: YOU MAY BE SURPRISED TO
KNOW THAT I SPENT A PLEASANT CHRISTMAS. EVEN
THE WEATHER CONSPIRED TO MAKE IT SO; IT WAS A
LITTLE WARMER THAN USUAL AND IN MID-MORNING
SNOW BEGAN TO FALL. THE WHOLE CAMP BECAME
IMBUED WITH THE HOLIDAY SPIRIT AND IT HAS
LASTED UNTIL THE MOMENT. CHEERY GREETINGS
WERE AS NUMEROUS AND AS SPONTANEOUS - AND
MORE HEARTFELT, I BELIEVE - AS THOSE AT HOME.
CHURCH SERVICES, FOR ME AT LEAST, WERE MORE
IMPRESSIONING THAN THEY'VE EVER BEEN BEFORE.

THE REAL MEANING OF THE DAY CAME HOME
TO ME, AN EVENT THAT POSSIBLY WOULD NOT
HAVE OCCURRED UNDER ANY OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES.

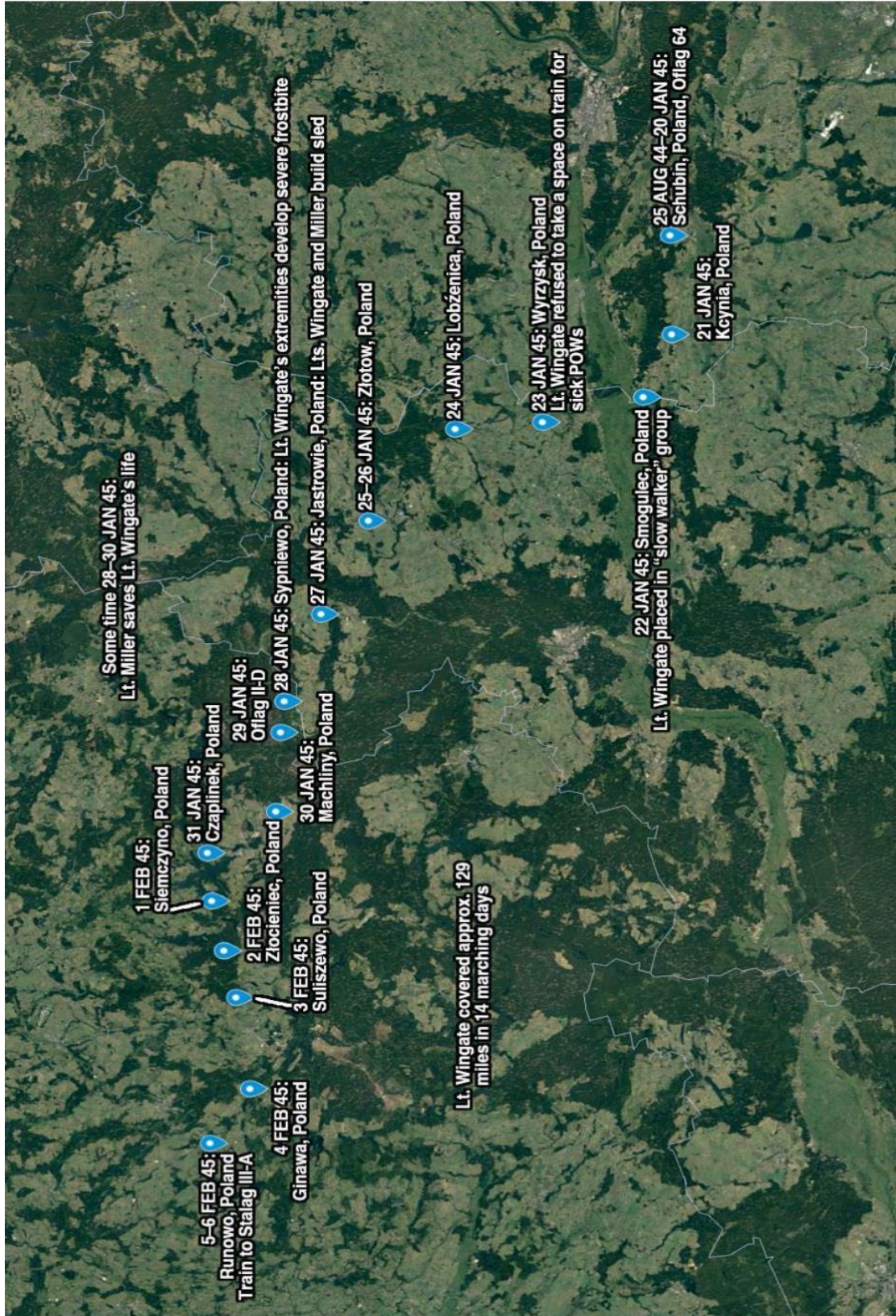
YOU WERE IN MY THOUGHTS CONSTANTLY, OF
COURSE, AND I PICTURED YOUR JOY WITH THE
CHILDREN AND THEIR SANTA CLAUS. YOU WERE
HAPPY, THE CHILDREN WERE HAPPY, I AM
SURE. I REJOICED IN THAT ASSURANCE.

RECEIVED A LETTER FROM BETTY YESTERDAY.
DISAPPOINTED THAT IT WAS NOT FROM YOU,
BUT AM GLAD TO KNOW SOME OF THEM
GET THROUGH. DON'T FORGET TO USE THE
TYPEWRITER. I LOVE YOU.

GOODNIGHT, SWEETHEART, X

Letter 25 December 1944 to Mrs. Wingate describing Christmas cheer at OFLAG 64.

Long March



The infamous long march that began on 21 January from OFLAG 64 to Germany resulted in severe frostbite. LT Wingate left the camp with a pack made from an extra shirt and a blanket roll. He also appreciated the Polish people for their kindness and help during the march.

On 22 January, he was placed in the “slow walkers” group led by LTC Oakes. His diary indicates LT Edward Wisniewski and LT John M. Samonds, Jr. of Charlotte, North Carolina (men from his cubicle) hid out from the Germans on 22 January as the column departed Exin (Kcynia) and the pair returned thru Odessa. On 23 January, LT Wingate refused to take space on the truck for sick POWs. He did not want to take space from a fellow POW in worse shape than himself. On 24 January his diary mentions the Germans blew a bridge as a German motorcycle messenger was approaching it.

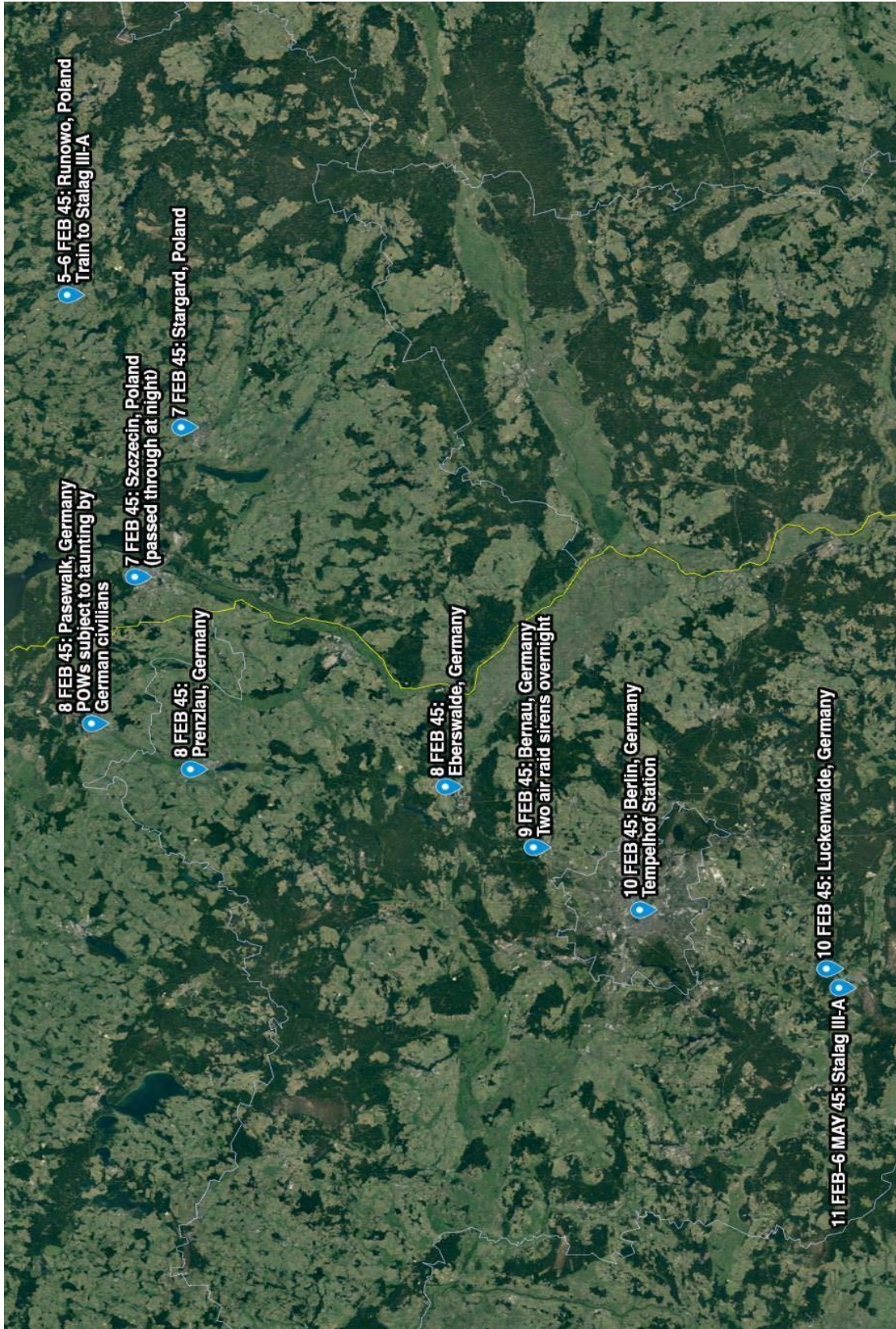
At Flatow (Zlotow), 26 January, LT Wingate discovered a frozen Russian soldier dead in the latrine. LT Wingate already had frozen fingers. On 27 January, LT Miller and LT Wingate built a sled to pull their gear. By 28 January, LT Wingate’s fingers and feet developed severe frostbite. No medical help from the Germans was provided. He had to cut the toes out of his tanker boots to accommodate his frozen and swollen feet. His diary mentions a POW named Tate having a frozen toe and being left at OFLAG II-D. On the march to Machlin (Machliny) on 30 January after going down the street in a small village, he left the road to retrieve a blanket covered in snow. Underneath the blanket was a frozen dead POW of unknown nationality with his hand sticking out. He left the blanket with the corpse. During this march in knee deep snow and sub-zero temperatures, LT Miller traded cigarettes for 10 loaves of bread with civilians to feed himself, LT Wingate, and a POW named Alexander.

His diary makes note of the sub-zero temperatures and deep snow from 28 January to 1 February. The sled LT Miller and LT Wingate were pulling was abandoned.

He recalled “And we had to walk through knee-deep snow. That’s where I almost gave up. I think if I hadn’t had a Yankee buddy, I might have quit. We were walking, it had been...We walked through a pine forest and it was snowing. Snow was on the ground about a foot deep and as we got out, when we got out of the forest, it was blowing. The snow was blowing and still coming down, and over a foot deep. And I was tired and I was going to quit. And we operated a kind of buddy system on this march. And my buddy was a fellow named Miller, a Yankee. And I told him I was going to, I said, ‘I just can’t make it anymore. I’m just going to lie down here and quit’. So, he gave me a lecture and called me a ‘weak rebel’ and stuff like that. So, he made me mad enough to walk on. And we got through that night and that was the closest I came to death. I think, really.”

LT Wingate always credited LT Miller with saving his life. LT Albert Miller had two addresses listed, one in California and another in New York City. LT Miller’s father was the general manager at the Warwick Hotel in New York City. LT Miller survived the war but his whereabouts thereafter remain a mystery.

Luckenwalde



On the night of 5 February 1945, LT Wingate was placed on a train at Ruhnow (today's Runowo), Poland to Stalag III-A (Luckenwalde, Germany). His portion of the long march totaled approximately 129 miles in 16 days (14 days of marching). He was in a 40 & 8 boxcar with 48 POW officers and 3 guards. This POW group had 180 men leave the march column who could march no further (according to his diary) but only 100 on his train.

Along this route at a stop, LT Wingate was asked by the German train engineer about the POW camp in Monroe, North Carolina, where his son was a prisoner of war. Monroe is in the next county from LT Wingate's home.

The train was still in the yard at Ruhnow until 21:00 hours on 6 February and arrived at Stargard on 7 February. One car had trouble so LT Wingate's boxcar now had 71 POWs with little room to stand. The train passed Stettin (Szczecin) later on 7 February and arrived at Pasewalk about 08:30 hours on 8 February. At this stop, his toes were bandaged by the German Red Cross. He and fellow POWs were subjected to taunting by the German civilians. A fanatical German soldier was shouting at civilians in the train station. At 04:30 hours on 8 February the train had 178 POWs and 12 guards after adding two cars at Prenzlau (and allowing 40 POWs per boxcar). LT Wingate was given one of 5 hammocks in the boxcar. His feet were full of pus from frostbite. The train went thru Eberswalde and finally arriving at Bernau station north of Berlin on 9 February. There were two air raid sirens during the night while at this station. The train then went to Tempelhof station arriving 07:30 hours on 10 February. Arriving at Luckenwalde station around 18:20 hours on 10 February, the guards marched the POWs three miles the wrong direction in the rain to Stalag III-A and then had to double back. LT Wingate arrived at Stalag III-A at 21:00 hours to a barracks. Delousing began at 02:00 hours on 11 February followed by food at 09:00 hours. There was little in the way of food or water during the period of 5 – 10 February.

LT Wingate noted LTC Oakes was doing a fine job as acting SAO. On 16 February, CPT Gunnar Teilmann gave a Protestant service as chaplain. CPT Charles Glennon gave the Catholic services. Fellow POWs from OFLAG 64 who arrived on 13 February included LT Richard Miles and LT William Reeves. LT Wingate was surprised that a POW named Munson was not with LT Miles as they had marched together. LT Reeves said that on his train, 31 children had frozen to death in an open flat car one night with mothers laying the children next to the train track the following morning. Arriving on 20 February was LT Sid Fredrickson, his friend LT Albert F. Miller, and LT James Anastos (these POWs were part of a group of about 100 men from OFLAG 64 arriving). His diary on 25 February indicates the OFLAG 64 men felt the leadership of COL Paul Goode, LTC John Waters, and Major Kermit Hansen was excellent.

LT Wingate had a prized possession that the family still maintains. His comrades at Luckenwalde Stalag III-A gave him a tin box as a gift for his birthday on Easter Sunday, 1 April 1945. Mr. Wingate cherished this small tin box and sentiments.

In the photos on the following pages, one can see that the box has 1944 on the cover; the box was made of materials from downed Allied planes. The menu is signed by his OFLAG 64 friends: CPT Tom Piddington, LT Bill Frodsham, and LT Albert F. Miller.

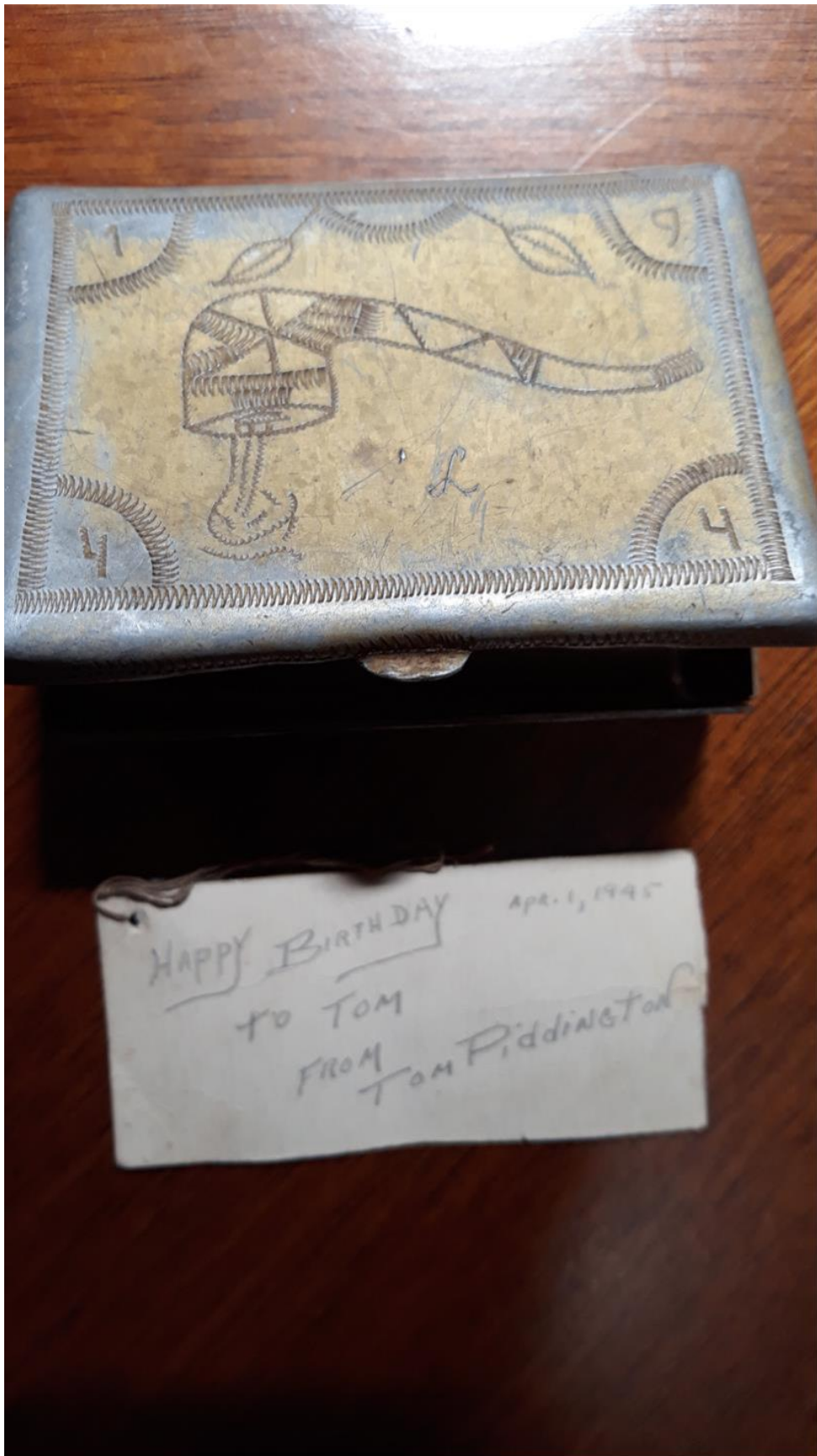
Happy Birthday
to
from the
Boys
April 1, 1945

Bill
Grueller Jr

and "Jackpot"
Edwin
Grueller

Menu

Consommé de coq à la crème
—
Filet Lambert
Pommes de terre crûtes à la crème
—
Epinards à la crème
—
Gâteau d'Opéra
—
Nids et crème Pain et cœur



Here is a poem written by LT Wingate at Luckenwalde to his wife, Mrs. Frances Wingate.

Excerpts from P. O. W. diary -- T. H. Wingate

"Poem written at Luckenwalde (Stalag IIIA) 1945

Dear Frances . . .
Two thousand miles of ocean,
A thousand more of war-torn land,
Strong strands of barbed wire,
A guard's wary rifle
Now keep us apart.

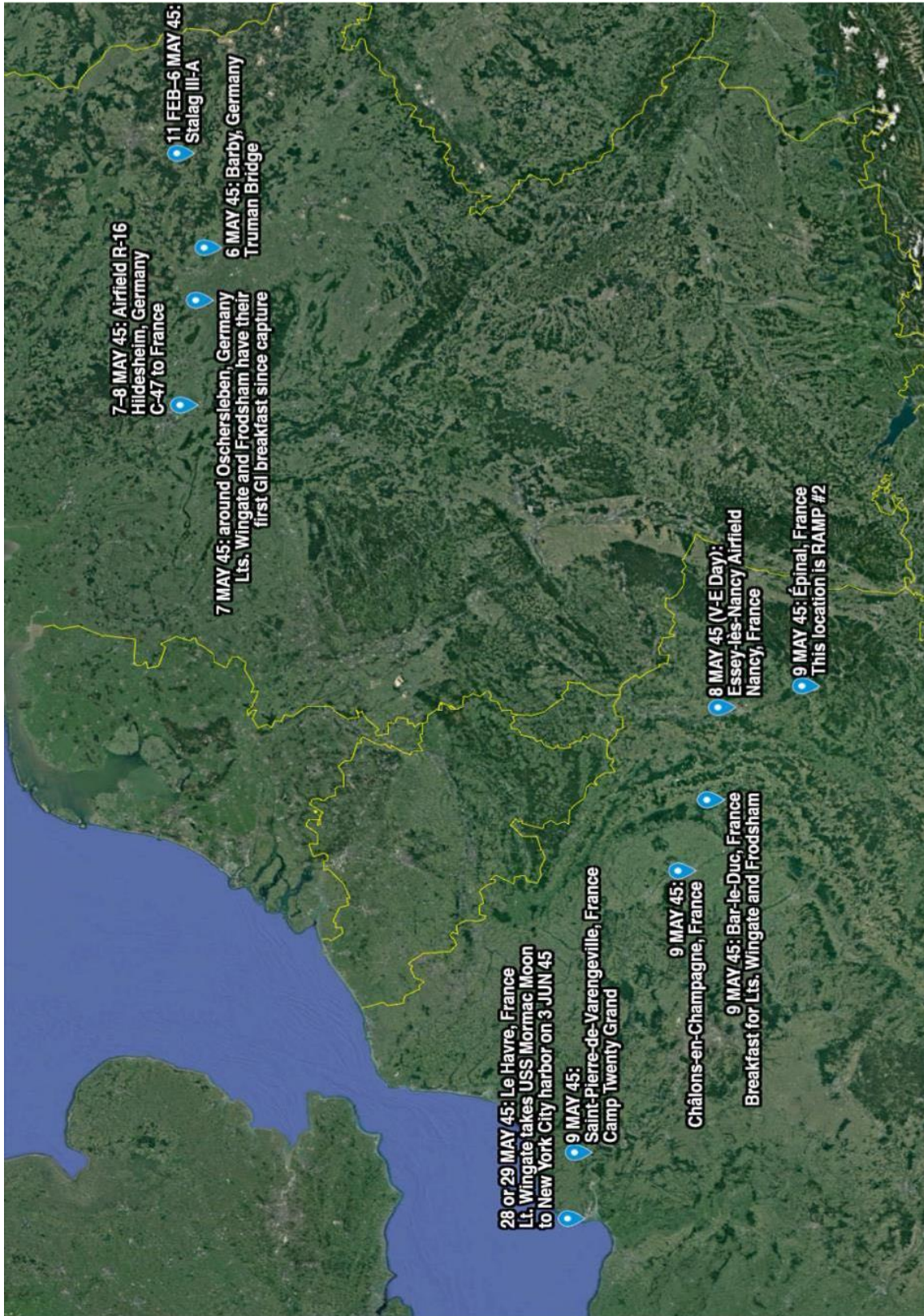
But it's only my body they've imprisoned here, not me.
High above the wire,
Across the frenzied land and sea
Soars my heart --
To be with thee.

Preparations for Chaos

To maintain military order, the Americans began to organize into four battalions in anticipation of a chaotic situation at the end of hostilities. LT Wingate served as the adjutant for the 2nd Battalion that was activated on 21 April after the German guards left camp sometime after 09:30 hours. He maintained the unit rosters (and kept all of regimental orders and unit rosters after returning home in case these would be useful later for the US Government). The battalion consisted of companies 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and Tents 5, 6, 7 (enlisted men) totaling 1150 men.

(It was estimated that the Stalag held over 4,800 Americans but only 2,200 were accounted for as having been returned to Allied control as of 20 May 1945. There is evidence to suggest many of these Americans may never have been returned by the Soviets. Given the Soviets actions after "liberating" the Stalag, it is probable that LT Wingate safeguarded the battalion roster in his possession to facilitate full POW accounting later.)

Liberation and Return Home



The Germans abandoned the camp on April 21 and the Russians took control of the camp on April 22, 1945. With only one postage stamp to use, CPT Tom Piddington, LT Bill Frodsham, and LT Wingate sent a shared letter out of camp with Mr. Edward Beattie (an interned United Press correspondent at the camp) who was leaving with two war correspondents, Robert Vermillion (*United Press*) and Lou Azrael (*Baltimore News Post*), that were following the 30th Infantry Division. The correspondents had entered camp to investigate on 3 May 1945. Interestingly, the war correspondents found the camp ahead of the US Army. The letter went to LT Frodsham's wife who forwarded it to Mrs. Piddington and Mrs. Wingate.

LT Wingate noted all the letters he had written for his wife and friends were all found in the commandant's office. None of his outbound mail was ever forwarded and he received no mail either during his time at Stalag III-A.

LT Wingate said "...my lone souvenir of Kriegyland --- a Goon typewriter (portable) with the Z where the Y should be. It's the gift of a Russian, who walked into a Goon house when he learned we needed a typewriter and came out carrying it. A great war." [LT Wingate was being tongue in cheek with his "A great war" comment.]. The typewriter was used for his adjutant duties and he did return home with it.

LT George Tate and CPT Edward Anthony arrived 17 April to Fort Bragg. These officers were from Charlotte and friends of LT Wingate's at OFLAG 64. LT John Dimling (former merchant from Kannapolis) from OFLAG 64 had also arrived back in the states. All these officers escaped from the long march and made the return via Russia. Tate and Anthony thought LT Wingate was still held prisoner but had hopes that he had been liberated by now.

LT Wingate snuck out of camp with other Americans to meet trucks 4-5 miles away on the afternoon of 6 May. A Russian sentry fired a rifle warning shot as he and comrades were boarding the trucks.

[Some background information is relevant here. On 3 May, the aforementioned reporters had entered the Stalag. The 113th Cavalry Group had also learned of Stalag III-A on 4 May. The 83rd Infantry Division had established the only permanent bridgehead at Barby on the Elbe River using a pontoon bridge. This bridge was named "Truman". The 83rd Division had sent trucks and ambulances to Luckenwalde to bring back American and British POWs on 4 May. Another convoy was turned back by the Russians on 5 May. About 4 May the orders had started to come from the Supreme Allied Headquarters to not remove more POWs until hostilities ended. The 83rd Division was ordered to retire to the west side of the Truman bridge by 08:00 hours on 6 May. The 30th Infantry Division was to replace the 83rd on the Elbe River at that time. Given the refugees, German units fighting the Russians or attempting to surrender to the Americans, POWs from various camps filtering toward the Elbe, and Russians seeking to control the POW camps to further their post-war political aims, plus the movement of several major US Army units (83rd, 30th, 113th Cavalry Group), it was a chaotic area. Orders from higher command were likely impossible to execute quickly and probably ignored based on the local situation. The war correspondents proceeded to explore amid

the chaos. It is likely that the 30th Infantry Division acquired the transportation from elements of the former "Red Ball Express" (the 6956th Quartermaster Group was supporting the 9th Army, and subsequently the 30th Infantry Division at that time). There are conflicting reports on how the transportation on 6 May likely occurred. It could have been multiple convoys from different headquarters were sent to retrieve the POWs. One report discusses a convoy being stopped on the morning of 6 May 3-4 miles or so west from the camp along the Juterbog-Wittenberg road by the Russians. POWs walking along this route were told by the convoy commander to go back to Stalag III-A and spread the word that the trucks were waiting for them and would leave by 16:00. This seems to correspond with other ex-POW reports. There is another report of a driver entering the camp to deliver similar news but to the extent of "we are not allowed to come into the camp to get you out, but we can put you on trucks if you are AWOL from the camp" in order to get around higher echelon orders. These trucks were moving around the Luckenwalde town area about 3 miles away.)

LT Wingate took roll call report on the morning of 6 May and had annotated previously the men from his battalion who had been returned to American lines by truck or ambulance. There had been some evacuation of men from the 1st and 2nd Battalion in the earlier convoy(s). LT Wingate (adjutant 2nd Battalion), LT Frodsham (platoon leader in 2nd Battalion), and CPT Piddington (Headquarters Company Commander in 2nd Battalion) left in the afternoon from the camp and found the trucks waiting along the Juterbog-Wittenberg road and returned to 30th Infantry Division area crossing the Elbe River over the Truman Bridge at Barby.

On 7 May, LT Wingate and LT Bill Frodsham ate their first G.I. breakfast within the 30th Infantry Division rear area. (The location may have been at the German aircraft factory at Oschersleben.) On 7 May, these two LTs arrived by truck to Hildesheim.

Taking a C-47 from Hildesheim (supply and evacuation airfield R-16 with the camp likely operated by the 692D Field Artillery Battalion), LT Wingate landed at Essey-les-Nancy, France between 11:30 to 13:30 hours on 8 May. He could hear celebrations in the distance as V-E day was announced. After dinner, LT Wingate and LT Frodsham took a slow 40 & 8 boxcar between 19:00 to 0:100 hours to RAMP #2 at Epinal, France arriving as 9 May began. Here he got his first bath and a fresh uniform. LT Wingate reported having "3 swell meals" at RAMP #2 (Recovered Allied Military Personnel) before being boarding the train for the RAMP called "Twenty Grand" at 22:00 on 9 May. [There is a note in quotes for "The Feeble Eagle" and "Ack Ack Hack" in his diary. The author presumes these may be truck names as he was a journalist and typically penned his notes in chronological order. These names appear before mention of a C-47 and so it is likely to be the truck nicknames or outfit nicknames. "Ack Ack Hack" could be a truck from an anti-aircraft unit. Many of these units were turned into transportation outfits towards the end of the war and may account for his recollection in later years that the 30th Infantry Division trucks delivered him to American lines.]

Taking a troop train (formerly a hospital train) from Epinal, the first stop was breakfast at Bar-le-Duc, France. Along the route, LT Bill Frodsham pointed out to LT Wingate the Chalon-en-Champagne where LT Frodsham was first held as a POW.

LT Frodsham reported the next stop as the RAMP camp at Twenty Grand near modern day St. Pierre de Varneville. On 17 May, LT Wingate penned two letters to his wife from this RAMP, or possibly Lucky Strike, expressing his excitement to finally be coming home.

In a newspaper clipping from 23 May 1945 from *The Daily Independent*, LT Wingate's youngest daughter Anne (3 1/2 years old) asked her mother (Mrs. Wingate) "...will my daddy be a man?" and upon hearing of vacation plans when the family was reunited remarked "...we have to take grandmother and my Sunday School teacher with us". Anne Wingate was 8 months old when LT Wingate left the states and had very little interaction with men or anyone outside her family and church. When LT Wingate saw Anne upon arriving back to their Charlotte home, she said "hello, Herron". LT Wingate's middle name was Herron and that was what most family & Charlotte friends called him before the war.

Staff Sergeant Floyd Severson, of South Fargo, North Dakota, mailed a postcard to *The Daily Independent* dated 28 May, that stated "This is S/Sgt. Floyd Severson, 805 Sixth Street, South Fargo, N. Dak. I saw Lt. T.H. Wingate in a prison camp [Stalag III-A] in Germany. He was in good health, and should be home in two months. I arrived home in 28 days. Please pass this on to his folks. Have him drop me a line when he gets home."

Boarding the return ship U.S.S. Mormac Moon at Le Havre with other RAMPs on 28 or 29 May 1945, LT Wingate arrived in New York City on 3 June and was taken to Camp Kilmer in New Brunswick, New Jersey to call home and board a train for Fort Bragg (Fayetteville, North Carolina). From Camp Kilmer, LT Wingate placed a phone call to his wife at 01:30 hours on 4 June. Once the operator got Mrs. Wingate on the phone, she was speechless. It was the first time they had talked in almost three years.

LT Wingate never received a letter from his wife as a POW. He only had gotten 10 letters from home (4 from Mrs. Betty Moore who was the wife of *The Daily Independent's* publisher and good family friend; 2 from Mr. Jazzy Moore, publisher of *The Daily Independent* and friend; 1 from Mrs. Beulah Reynolds, business manager of *The Daily Independent*; 1 from a First Presbyterian Church member, Mrs. Coggins; 1 from his sister, Miss Dorothy Wingate in Charlotte; and 1 from his mother, Mrs. T.E. Wingate of Charlotte).

His service time merited 115 points. LT Wingate saw his wife on 5 June 1945, a full year to the day of his capture in 1944.

When he returned to Kannapolis, North Carolina, Mr. Wingate weighed 150 pounds (15 pounds less than pre-war weight), after having lost 55 pounds in 11 months of captivity. The food intake between 7 May till 5 June 1945 helped to regain 40 pounds of lost weight. His feet and lower legs continued to hurt the rest of his life as a result of the winter march from OFLAG 64. Shrapnel continued to be removed over the next three decades.

Six weeks after returning home, Mr. Wingate wrote a moving editorial that appeared on 15 July 1945 in *The Daily Independent* that appears below.

By T. H. WINGATE
(Pinch-Hitting For Jazzy Moore)

This is the way at least one Kannapolis serviceman felt when he recently returned to Towel Town from ETO:

You drive up from Charlotte, passing familiar sights all along the route, but you don't realize you're nearing home until A. L. Brown's Clear Springs Dairy suddenly appears on the left of the road. The white fences and prettily painted houses and barns nestled in a cushion of soft billiard table green appear symbolic of the calm, roomy security that you've hunted for months without realizing just what you sought.

The scenery takes on new interest. There's a building on the right you didn't know about. It's radio station WEGO. Then Cabarrus hospital, and you wonder if Louise Harkey is still doing business there. You wonder how Jimmie Felts, ex-business manager now a captain in the Army MAC, is faring. And you remember the glassed-in nursery where your second and third-born spent their first few days and you remember how peeved your wife was when you showed up late for both events.

Pine Tavern looks deserted and you wonder if Harry Martin has closed up. The same old junk yard is sprawled all over a Ridge Avenue lot like a bombed European village; and you realize with a start that this is the first semblance of destruction you've seen in more than two weeks.

That is something hard to become accustomed to—undamaged towns, big buildings that haven't had their guts torn out and strewn over the street, dwelling houses with their roofs undamaged and unmarked by shells, trees unscarred and unburned, open fields cut only with the plow and bearing no barbed wire and warning signs, "Achtungminen" or "Danger, Mines," not a decaying body in sight and no odor except that of fresh-turned earth and growing things, the wholesome smell of life and never the stench of death.

You think back over the months you've been away and you can't remember a town in Africa or Europe that had not been damaged by the war. Most had the hard, unmistakable scars left by swift-cutting artillery or aerial bombs, others had the less distinguishable but unmistakable marks of war-forced decay. You remember some pleasant villages in England where conflict seemed far away, but they were few; the damaged spots were many.

You remember a few nice fields in Africa and Italy, too, areas of tall, waving wheat, pleasant vineyards and pretty farm houses. But they were always followed by shell-pocked fields, littered with artillery cases, scarred with the tracks of heavy fighting vehicles.

You find yourself unthinkingly expecting the same thing here. "This can't go on," says your subconscious mind, "the next town will be smashed to smithereens, the next field will be mined and shell-marked."

But the next town is Kannapolis. And it looks just as it did three years ago. You are glad and you feel a little foolish for having expected anything else.

"How does it look to you?" your wife asks as you jar across the tracks at Plant No. 6 and breeze northward up Main street.

You swallow hard and pretend to take a good long look at McIver school. Then you say, "O. K." just as unconcerned as if coming home were an everyday thing.

At Christmas Eve service every year until he passed, singing "Silent Night" would make Mr. Wingate sad as it reminded him of Christmas at OFLAG 64.

There are a few physical changes, mostly inconsequential, in the downtown section. Firms have moved from one spot to another. Some have disappeared entirely. The ration board is transacting the serious business

of apportioning scarce items where the Gem theatre formerly was in the light business of furnishing recreation and enjoyment.

The YMCA is still operating at the same old stand, but the place seems deserted. It's nice to find Carl Sharp still presiding at the towel counter and J. K. Rouse and Bess Breedlove and Paul Peterson on the staff.

Plenty of once-familiar faces are missed. Chief Ira Chapman and Claude Stewart are the only holdovers you remember on the police force. Gone to the wars are Mule Faggart, Footsie Davis, Bob Ketchie, C. C. White, P. A. Barger.

Bud Coggins isn't at Lady's Funeral home anymore. George Wiseman's friendly greeting is missed at Smith Drug. Missing also are Lon Whitmire, Doctor C. R. Bowman, Jim Butler, Fred Whitley, Payne Johnston, Buddy Glass, John and Ben McKnight, Raymond Connell, Rev. Roy Leinbach, H. A. Scott Jr., Leroy Scott—and many dozens of others, more than you'd ever be able to name, many whose faces and habits you recall vividly but whose names have slipped your mind.

Some, you remember sadly, aren't coming back. They died in battle or in accidents. Some just flew away toward the enemy and were never seen or heard from again. You talk to their fathers, their brothers, their sisters, their mothers. You read the sorrow in their eyes; you hear few complaints from their lips. And you have a feeling akin to guilt because you got back safely: some of their loved ones didn't.

You're touched by the sincere welcomes the home folk give you. People you scarcely knew three years ago shake hands warmly. It makes you feel good, because you know that the greetings are not for you alone but for all the boys who have left this town clad in khaki or in blue. People greet you sincerely, and with their lips they say: "Gosh, I'm glad to see you. I've thought about you lots while you were gone and I've prayed, too."

Meanwhile their hearts are saying, "If this were only my boy. Dear God, let him come home soon, too."

It makes you humble and yet strangely proud.

You are happy to learn that Kannapolitans have been exceptionally active in the purchase of war bonds, have gone over the top in every drive staged so far. But you are puzzled and disappointed to find them cashing those bonds in at the rate of over \$10,000 a week. Don't they realize the money they invest in a victory bond helps the government very little unless they hold the bond until maturity?

You hear strange talk about the scarcity of cigarettes, about gasoline rationing, about red points and blue points, about high prices and poor materials. You actually hear people grumbling because they can't get plenty of tobacco and they have to skimp on sugar. Some will "be glad when this damned war is over so I won't have to shop around for cigarettes." You think of the hundreds of people you know who have better reasons than that for being glad when the war is over.

And you wonder if the people at home will ever understand how utterly unimportant, after all, are cigarettes and ration points and gasoline.

Mr. Wingate was honorably discharged 2 January 1946 as a Captain with a Purple Heart with an oak leaf. His awards also include the additional following medals: Prisoner of War, World War II Victory, American Campaign, and Europe, Africa, Middle East Campaign with three oak leaves.

The rest of his life he never forgot many German phrases. Around the family he would say....

- - Rouse (to get up in the morning)
- - Was ist los? (what's happening?)

He often tore a tiny scrap of newspaper and ate it after meals. [Looking back, the author believes that this was a small remembrance of POW hunger. He never shared why he did this on occasion but he was always somber when he ate the paper.]

The one American POW phrase he often repeated to family members facing unfair adversity was "don't let the bastards get you down".

Post-War Years: A life of service to Kannapolis, North Carolina

Mr. Wingate was an exceptional writer and remarkable newspaperman. He felt honored to be the editor-in-chief, president and publisher of *The Daily Independent*. He began his career at the Independent in 1934. Following World War II, he returned to *The Daily Independent* and led the paper in winning several North Carolina Press Association journalism awards. Novelist Jerry Bledsoe, Nancy Anderson at Copley News Service, and numerous newspaper editors have credited Mr. Wingate with having mentored them. After retiring in 1980, he was recognized for his distinguished service by the Board of Directors for the School of Journalism Foundation of North Carolina. In 1992, he began writing a popular weekly column for *The Daily Independent* and later the *Independent Tribune*.

In 1965, he was awarded for "Distinguished Service to Men and Women of Armed Forces" by the USO National Council. In later years, he helped initiate the annual Kannapolis Memorial Day services. He was an active member in the local Beaver-Pittman American Legion Post, the "40 & 8", and the Veterans of Foreign Wars.



Mr. T.H. Wingate, also known at the paper as “Chief” at *The Daily Independent*, and in Kannapolis as “Tom”, or “T.H.” and in Charlotte as “Herron” his middle name; note the Purple Heart lapel pin. Picture could be from 1950s or 1960s as it is unlabeled.

He worked on many projects and with many organizations to serve the less fortunate. Mr. Wingate organized the Empty Stocking Fund between *The Daily Independent* and Kannapolis YMCA to provide gifts for needy children. He served as president of the local chapter of the American Cancer Society, and actively supported the Cabarrus ARC (Association for Retarded Citizens), Cabarrus Boys Club, the Coltrane LIFE Center, and the United Way.

He was also involved in developing character education for the Kannapolis City Schools.

Mr. Wingate helped establish and organize the Independent Student Aid Association, a fund for helping Kannapolis students with financial problems at college. He was actively involved in establishing the Cabarrus County campus of Rowan Tech (now Rowan-Cabarrus Community College).

He was a strong supporter of the Kannapolis Historical Associates and garnered several awards from the association for his work. He co-authored two history texts with J.K. Rouse. Mr. Wingate authored *Cabarrus Reborn* which was the first history text about Cabarrus County. He wrote the foreword for *Weavers of Dreams*, by Dr. Paul R. Kearns. Mr. Wingate also worked to save the Cabarrus County Courthouse which is now used as a community theatre.

He was a Paul Harris Fellow in the Kannapolis Rotary Club. Mr. Wingate also received the Toastmasters International Communication Achievement Award, presented by the Goldmine Toastmasters Club.

He was a member of First Presbyterian Church of Kannapolis, where he served over many years as a deacon, elder and Sunday School teacher. He readily forgave and would help people without expecting anything in return. He genuinely loved all people.

Final Thoughts

In recreating a POW camp stove from OFLAG 64, he enjoyed giving visitors a glimpse into the ingenuity of his comrades. Mr. Wingate found his fellow POWs inspirational as they set about to overcome challenges and attempt to create a functioning civilization behind barbed wire.



Recreation of camp stove courtesy of Mr. Caryle Johnson, 2011 Bergeson Drive, Granite Falls, MN 56241. Mr. Johnson was a POW after being captured during the Battle of the Bulge as part of the 707th Tank Battalion.



In 1998, at the age of 86, Mr. Wingate was being interviewed by Mr. Kevin Cherry for the Rowan Public Library in Salisbury, North Carolina. He was asked “How did your prison experience, war experience affect you, personally?” Mr. Wingate said “Well, I don’t know. Something made me a little nutty, maybe that was it (laughs). No, I think the experience, I think I’ve said before, I wouldn’t want to do it again, but I think I benefited from the experience. And that’s hard, that’s hard to analyze that, because it doesn’t make any sense to me, either. I don’t know, it made me, it made me realize that there’s good in all of us. And that we can get along if we try, under any circumstances. It’s not easy for me to define deep things like that.”

Mr. Wingate taught his family not to judge others, to be kind, to maintain one’s integrity, and to always do the harder right. All character traits that were honed as a POW.

Mr. Wingate in retirement years giving a Veterans Day speech. He also gave Memorial Day speeches.



Primary Sources for this Biography

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After-Action Monthly Report for May 1945 for the 83rd Infantry Division

Unit Morning Reports for the 751st Tank Battalion for May and June 1944

T. H. Wingate's POW diaries, letters, artifacts, and subsequent notes post-war in his handwriting

T.H. Wingate's obituary published in the *Independent Tribune* in 2005

Various newspaper reports and other documents/pictures noted in this document

OFLAG 64 Remembered (www.oflag64.us), 752nd Tank Battalion (www.752ndtank.com), Texas

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T.H. Wingate's interview for the Rowan Public Library in Salisbury, North Carolina in 1998

Biography written by Thomas Wingate's grandson, Kriegy Research Group
writer David Little