

lousing parade. Then came the fake Swiss party, the lights out caper and finally the broken ribs escape from the ambulance.

According to the Army Conduct Manual, a captured soldier was expected to harass the enemy and cause as much trouble as possible without getting himself shot.. The best way to carry this out was by escaping, thereby causing the enemy to maintain a large detail of guards around the POW camps, and putting a lot of soldiers in the field searching for escapees.

The escape activity had number one priority and was not taken lightly even it was practically impossible to make a successful escape and get into a neutral country. These countries were Spain, Sweden and Switzerland. The penalty for escape attempts at this time was fourteen days of solitary confinement on bread and water.

The escape activity was organized with "Big X", at the top. This position was very efficiently held by one of our Colonels. Each block had a "Little X". If a kriegie came up with a good escape plan he would first go to his Little X, if approved it was then taken to Big X. If he thought it feasible, the Escape Committee would kick it around and possibly smooth out any rough edges. If it was a multiple participant caper, the instigator would be chosen, then came the proven escape artists. If there was room for more, all those who donated any effort would be chosen by lottery. These were craftsmen such as tailors and forgers. A tame goon would be delegated to purchase train tickets if needed. A "tame goon", was a ferret who had been bribed into accepting contraband from a kriegie, usually photographed, and easily persuaded to do little favors that would cause him to be shot if exposed. A "Ferret" was an inside security guard who strolled about the camp looking for evidence of any escape activity or of anything "verboten", forbidden. "Kriegie" was short for the German word for Prisoner of War, "Kriegsgefangenen". Most of the escape artists were kriegies who could speak German or another European language fluently and possessed the courage and will to test their skills.

Many new kriegies were really gung-ho and couldn't wait to escape. Those who talked loud enough would be furnished with a pair of wire-cutters, which most of them would return without even touching them. Those who took them would be furnished with a diversion and other essentials and given the GO. This procedure was mainly to test his courage and see if he was escape material.

Having my body cast, I couldn't make the wire job right away. After two months I had become so lousy I couldn't stand it. It felt as though the lice had built nests inside my cast and the constant itching was driving me nuts. Bill Roberts whittled on the back while I cut a groove down the front of the cast. After wearing it for nearly two months, I stepped out of it and was free to scratch to my hearts content. I don't think it helped any because my back still ached terribly and I couldn't stay on my feet very long at one time.

When we moved into the new South Compound in October, we immediately began work on a tunnel. At the same time we were pulling stumps and laying out streets and gutters, so it was very

easy to dispose of the tunnel sand. It was a light brown in contrast to the dark top soil. We kept the ground stirred up enough on the legitimate projects to easily mix the sand with the other. In the two years we were there we must have raised the elevation of the compound several inches. In the summer time we all planted gardens in a little plot beneath our windows. This was merely an excuse to dig up the sand beneath the top soil so we could scuff the tunnel sand in with it. The gardens never grew anything other than a few sickly weeds. There was one character in the camp who really did grow good gardens. The entire compound had at least a taste of his famous tomatoes. Rivers would follow the horse drawn wagons around whenever they were in the camp to pick-up garbage or to pump out the latrines. He carried his little scoop shovel and pail, and whenever a horse lifted his tail, Rivers was right there to catch the biscuits before they hit the ground. He worked this into the soil and had very productive gardens. It was considered a privilege to carry water for these gardens because those who helped would also help reap the harvest.

My wire job came up the 9th of October. An easy date to remember as this was my enlistment date. Russell, Pickett and myself planned a triple threat, by all three attacking the wire simultaneously in three different locations. We would be acting as diversions for each other and one might get through. We must wait for a cloudy night and this came up October ninth. Pickett and Russell were going to try for an airfield a few miles away, and possibly commandier an airplane and fly away into the sunset, preferably toward Switzerland. My plans weren't so elaborate. I was hoping to hide-out on a train that would take me away from the camp. There my plans ended. Actually I didn't think any of us would be successful. The goons changed guard at mid-night, four am and eight am. We thought eleven pm would be the best time as the guards should be more likely to be drowsy and also it would leave us more time to cleverly slip away. Eleven pm was zero hour but it depended on the guard dogs that were turned loose inside the compound to roam around and eat anything that moved. Big X would arrange for some people to bait them, and hopefully keep them in another part of the compound, while we snipped away. At zero hour I was go, so slipping out I started crawling to the fence. It was raining a little and the wind was blowing so the weather was on our side. Everything was pitch black except for the search lights on the towers. I was wearing an old khaki colored great coat that could have come from most any army. Before I got through the fence I was wishing that I'd left it behind. The guard would stand back about three feet from the rail as he swung the light from side to side. This left a blind spot out to about thirty feet from the tower. This was where I was trying to go through. If he stepped up to the rail and looked down he would probably see me from the light of other search lights. I snaked across no-mans land, this was a strip about ten meters wide all around the inside fence, with the light sand cover. If anyone was caught here the guards would usually shoot, and at night the light colored soil would outline an object quite effectively. This was the most dangerous leg of the

entire trip. I could hear the guard above me moving around but no light hit me. Dogs started barking and a guard blew his whistle up where Russell and Pickett were supposed to be. Well here was my diversion so I got to work clipping wire. There were two fences actually about eight feet apart with coiled concertina wire between them. I got into this about half-way and had to slip out of my great coat as it kept getting caught in the wire. I was working on the outside fence when the light hit me. Lying there I was wondering why I had did this. Guards were blowing whistles and flashlights seemed to be all over. Nothing I could do but make myself as small as possible and wait for the inevitable. A guard running by me spotted the coat in the fence first, then put his light on me. He called for help and two more came up and pulled me on thru the fence. One crawled in the fence and retrieved the old coat as they were laughingly marching me away. There had been some machine gun fire that worried me. I thought one or both of my fellow escapees might have been shot.

I was taken to the Kommandant's office and stood against the wall. All of this had only taken about thirty minutes. Soon Pickett was brought in and stood beside me. We were told to stand at attention. After what seemed like an hour Russell made his entrance. A dog had attacked him so he was skinned up a bit and had been taken to the first aid station for treatment. My back was hurting badly so I guess I was slumping a little. One of the guards shouted at me to straighten up which I couldn't do to his satisfaction so he pulled his pistol and I thought he was going to beat me with it. Instead he punched me in the face with his other hand that started my nose to bleed badly. I was taken to an outside latrine and allowed to sit down and try to stop the bleeding. After about an hour I was returned to the office where the Kommandant [ a Luftwaffe Colonel ], proceeded to tell us what ungrateful dogs we were, and how compassionate and thoughtful the guards had been not to shoot us. We had to agree that it was nice of them, as according to the Geneva Convention on the handling of POW's it was legal to shoot anyone on an escape attempt. Up to this point no one had been shot so we had reason to believe that we would get away with it. We would be confined in the cooler fourteen days solitary, on bread and water. We were then taken to our own private cells and the party was over.

Now in the cooler, I was handed about an eighth of a loaf of bread and a pail of water. This was my ration for the day. The cell was about 6x6x6 feet. The bed had a palias and one blanket and the toilet was a bucket with a lid. On the north side was a window about 4x12 inches, with a view of the fence and the highway. I spent a lot of time at this window. Every morning at 8:o'clock a troop of "Hitler Yugen" would march by. They were boys from six to about sixteen who were trained by fanatic Nazi's and knew only the Nazi "Mien Kompf". They were good soldiers as they would not surrender. Later in the war they would be put on the front lines when only eight years old if they were large enough to handle a rifle. Now they carried shiny, square pointed shovels instead of rifles. At about 4:o'clock they would return still marching at

attention and no horse-play.

The first four days were not so bad as I slept a lot. I guess I was unwinding from the anxiety of the escape. After that everything kind of ran together. I was trying to keep track of the days but I would forget whether I had already made a mark for that particular day. According to my account I still had one day to go when I was released. Needless to say, I didn't argue about it.

When we returned to the compound we got together with our stories. Russell was spotted as he was crossing the no-man's area and the guard let his dog attack him. Pickett who was at the south-west corner had gotten through the fence, but the corner tower sentry seen him as he was running to the trees. He opened up with his machine-gun but was shooting high just to stop him. The brush had been cleared back about a hundred feet from the fence, so left a large open area to cross after getting through the fence.

While in the cooler, I made up menu after menu of what I would eat whenever I got home. This was my initiation to hunger. I thought that I had been hungry before, but it was nothing like this. One day I was given a can of the dehydrated soup containing the worms and bugs that we had always thrown away. As hungry as I was, it was difficult to swallow, so I closed my eyes and drank it down to the last drop and worm.

Never did I entertain any thoughts of making a successful escape. Those who could speak a European language fluently and were in good health had the best chance of all. Previously two Free Polish Squadron types had pulled a successful mole job to get out of the compound. They had then hid out in a box car of freight that eventually had landed in Sweden, a neutral country. From there they were flown back to England. A "mole job", was a rather unique type of tunnel that would work if there was no sensor instrument in use. On this particular one the tunnel was started beneath an exercise horse. A hole large enough to accomodate two human bodies was dug out just under the top soil, from twelve to eighteen inches. This sand must be disposed of in the usual manner by spreading and scuffing it into the exercise yard. The tunneliers would dig forward pushing and packing the sand behind them as they progressed. Fresh air was obtained by punching holes through the roof of the excavation. When this one was discovered after the fact, by the goons, sensors were used that would detect digging down to twenty-five or thirty feet. The ferrets were on the constant look-out for evidence of tunnel work. If one was suspected, squads of ferrets with long sharpened probe rods would saturate the suspected area with holes down to six feet deep. When this proved unsuccessful a heavy wagon pulled by four head of horses was driven around and around expecting the tunnel to cave in. To my knowledge this only caved in one tunnel that was dug too shallow anyway. The tunnel shafts were about thirty inches wide and high so the bed slats could be used for shoring up the sides and ceiling without sawing. They were merely notched on the ends and fitted perfectly. As time passed and more tunnels were dug and discovered, the beds began to sag throughout the compound. Some kriegies gave their all and swung their palias's like a hammock.

In the summer the tunnel sand could be mixed in with the camp dirt, but winter time presented a problem to some extent. The buildings were pre-fabricated and made up of panels. We found that the wall sections had a three inch space between the inner and outer boards. The floor had a four inch space. This solved our disposal problem completely. Our ever present ferrets were always on the look out for the yellow tunnel sand, and punching holes in the ground with their probe rods. They carried no weapons as they knew that the kriegies would steal them one way or another. They were distinguished by their baggy cover-alls and casual gait. They were known to hide in the attics, under the beds, under the floor always watching and listening for escape activity or the location of our radio. They could all understand English very well and were a definite nuisance. During the day there was always at least six of them inside the compound and when we went to "Apell", formation to be counted, there was always danger of them hiding somewhere. After Apell all verboten activities would be suspended until all ferrets were accounted for. Except for when we were in formation, each of them inside the compound had a tail and we knew where they were at all times.

The goons knew that we possessed a radio and were constantly on the alert for anything that might tip them off as to where it was located. One place that was used was in a loaf of the goon bread that was hollowed out. This radio was very important for the moral of the kriegies. We picked up the English BBC news report daily and by using this and the German version of the current events we had a pretty good idea of the true story. We found that the BBC was as good at exaggeration as the German News. The radio had been constructed from parts smuggled in by a tamed goon. We also had a camera from the same source.

After the wire job I started working with X every day. My first assignment was a stooge at the main gate. We had a communication system of flashing signals by adjusting window shutters in the latrines. A team of two stooges worked the main gate. One logged the entries and departures of the goons. The other adjusted the shutters to signal the stooges located in latrines through out the compound. The signals would tell how many, who and what section of the compound they were in. The ferrets all had a name, such as Keen-type, Oscar, Dimwits, Laughing Boy and Casanova, these are a few I can remember. If a ferret should enter an area where there were clandestine activities, all action would cease and be covered up before his arrival.

Besides the digging of the tunnel, disposing of the sand was most important. This was accomplished by people known as "penguins". Two long, thin sacks were tied together with a cord hung around the penguins neck. The sacks hung down each leg inside the trousers. When the disposal area was reached, a string in the bottom of the sacks was pulled, and the sand trickled out, to be scuffed and mixed into the existing soil. He was now ready for another load. On Parcel Issue Day, Red Cross parcel boxes filled with sand could be carried to other blocks for disposal in the floor or walls. We had to wait for this particular day so the

goons wouldn't become suspicious of people carrying the boxes about the camp.

The tunneliers were the elite of the organization. They always were competing with other teams on the footage gained on their shift. This wasn't an easy task and very dangerous because of the constant cave-ins. They would strip naked and dig at the face with crude shovels, setting shoring from the bed boards as they progressed. They always worked in teams, so that when the lead digger was buried by a cave-in, the second man could pull him free. Others were stationed at intervals to pass the sand back. After getting a good start in the shaft a trolley system on tracks would be installed to remove the sand. The trolley would eliminate many under ground workers that used up the limited amount of fresh air supplied by the bellows team. Still a digger couldn't stay down very long. In the summer the shaft would be stifling hot, in the winter, damp and cold.

When the new compound was first opened, the Colonels started urging the Germans to allow the kriegies to build a theater. The kriegies would do the work and the goons would furnish the material and tools. Finally the project was approved and construction began. A high spot in the southwest corner of the compound was an ideal location. The tools were brought in and issued each morning, then taken out again at night. We had given the Scouts Oath that none would be stolen. A guard was always present, to over-see the work and prevent any hanky-panky. Despite his diligence, a large, secret room was excavated beneath the building which proved to be very useful. Many hundreds of feet of stolen lumber was safely stored here, to be used in tunnels. A few tons of sand was also disposed of during the construction. The building was used for church services, stage plays, band concerts, etc. The entertainment committee tried to have something each weekend. The stage plays were so good that the German Kommandant attended every performance. Musical instruments and stage props were furnished by the International YMCA in Switzerland. One of the plays I remember was written about the Doolittle raid on Tokyo. The story started with a crew that went down in Japanese occupied China and events that happened afterward. It was based on the true experiences of a bombardier that had participated in the mission, and was now a German POW. A little bizarre humor was added to make it more interesting. The B-25's, twin-engine bombers took off from an aircraft carrier but would not have enough fuel to make the return trip. After the bombs were delivered to Tokyo, the planes were to fly on to China and land or crash, which ever came first. The Japanese occupied the coastal area so they would hopefully have enough fuel to make it into the un-occupied areas. A few did make it as planned, but the majority went down and were killed or were captured by the Japs, who tortured them until they died. Two men in the camp had been successful survivors and returned to the States. One of them was a Captain Williams and the other Major "Tokyo" Jones. They were on different planes so had two stories to tell of their escapes. The stage play was based on these stories.

Of course the Shakespeare plays were popular, and many Broadway

hits were enacted. The female parts in the plays were played by a few female impersonators, who probably became more professional in this status. One of them was a real knock-out and even had a nice female voice. The star actor and producer had performed on Broadway and made a movie or two in Hollywood. I think his name was Walsh.

The theater building was the scene of an unusual escape attempt. A good friend of mine, Leonard S. Lang of Denver, managed to get this one approved by Big X. As the theater was built on a knoll a few feet higher than the surrounding ground, the electric cables ran on a noticeable grade from the building to the power line outside the fence. Lang thought that by attaching a pulley to the cable he could sail right over the fence to Freedom. One night when there was a lot of applause in the theater to draw the tower sentries attention, Lang launched himself into space. The plan worked great for a few seconds, but there being more slack in the line than anticipated, Lang was stalled out hanging right over the fence. The guards put a spot-light on him and let him hang for about thirty minutes, threatening to shoot him if he dropped.

The Germans took a very dim view of this building being used as a launching site for an attempted escape. The Colonel had to assure them that it would never happen again or our theater would be closed permanently.

Lang gained the nick-name "Hairbreath Harry" after the daredevil cartoon character because of his many dangerous escape plans. Big X turned down most of his schemes, but okayed another which I politely refused his offer to accompany him on. Another kriegie, Tony Aliamo took up his offer. On the east side of the camp was an old gate that wasn't used anymore. It was located practically under a guard tower and on a side hill. The horse drawn wagons had eaten out two deep ruts about eighteen inches wide, running under the gate and down the hill. This gate opened into the German vorlager so they weren't concerned about it being used as an escape route. However the trees had not been cleared and it would be easy to sneak out of the vorlager unseen. Lang's plans involved having the British in the North compound stage a gang fight to draw the tower sentries attention while he and another kriegie slid under the gate in the snow and hopefully gain the shelter of the woods. It would be timed to take place as we were falling out for evening Apell during or shortly after a snow storm.

His day finally came with a good snow storm in the afternoon, and by Apell time there was about eight inches of snow covering the ground. As we were proceeding to the parade ground to be counted, a fight broke out in the North Compound with much running and shouting. This did attract the guards attention long enough for the two of them to clear the fence. Lang slid all the way to the brush but Tony jumped to his feet and started to run to the trees. The sentry seen him when he stood up and was swinging his machine-gun around to fire, when Lang jumped from the brush and shouted, "Nicht schlisen," {don't shoot}. This undoubtedly saved Tony's life. The guards quickly marched them off to the cooler.

I did take part in one of Lang's escapes the spring of 1944. We decided that by short circuiting the main power lines we would cause a black-out that would put the search lights out of business for a short period of time. Then using a hinged ladder that would lay up the side of the fence and across the top we thought that several kriegies could get over the fence before the lights came on again. Big X gave us a GO on the plan, then took it over. Sixteen lucky kriegies should be able to make it over the fence and into the woods, with eight more on stand-by. Some of the prospective escapees were appointed by Big X and the remainder were chosen by lottery. Lang's name wasn't drawn but mine was. I was to go as a French worker traveling with a German Unter-Officier who was escorting me back to France. My guard was a kriegie who spoke fluent German, and had all the necessary papers and train passes. I was really enthusiastic about this attempt, because with Sammy I felt there was a good chance of success. He had been out before and made it almost to the Swiss border before being apprehended. We were to go out at three second intervals so we wouldn't be stumbling over each other and create a lot of confusion. We must cover about twenty yards before reaching the warning rail, then ten more yards to the fence. We were hoping for the typical German confusion and flapping when the lights went out, and could be over the fence before they knew what was happening. Sammy was number six and I followed him. We planned it for just before lock-up so it wouldn't be too unusual to be outside. We assembled in the designated block and made quite a sight. A few business men in suits, German soldiers and mostly foreign peasants like myself. At the scheduled time the lights went out and the escape was go. The first four carried the ladder and placed it without a hitch. We proceeded as planned, with the goons shouting and whistles blowing. The six inside ferrets had been lured to another section of the compound and the dogs hadn't been brought in yet. Everything was fine until I dropped to the ground on the outside of the fence. I twisted an ankle that I'd sprained during the winter trying to play hockey. It was inconsequential anyway as the lights came back on at the same time. We found that the goons had a back-up generator to cover such capers as this. Guards were all around us, so Sammy stopped short of the tree line and I followed suit. The nine kriegies behind me were all nabbed immediately but the five ahead of Sammy were out of sight and not persued as the goons didn't know they were gone until after the picture parade to see if any were missing. Silent Death Sage was one of the first five and the others were his students and they had a few hours head start before the picture parade was over and the search was started. Three were captured in the next two days but Sage and another eluded capture for over a week. They were caught on the French border by a border guard who had worked at Stalag Luft III and recognized Major Sage. Life can be cruel sometimes.

There was one relatively successful escape the fall of 1943. Twelve of the higher ranking officers including the Senior American Officer and Major Sage, were marched out of the gate by two German speaking kriegies dressed as German guards. They were not missed



until several hours later and were pretty well scattered before the alarm went out for them. They had requested a de-lousing parade a few days earlier. This was routine and nearly every day there was a group being de-loused. The two kriegies dressed as guards, carried wooden rifles made in the camp and presented the proper papers to exit the gate. The kriegies to be de-loused were allowed to carry their clothes rolled in a blanket, supposedly to be fumigated, but were really the civilian escape clothing they would use. When the two authentic guards entered the compound, they were delayed for an hour or so, then given a party of twelve men and everything went on as usual. The fourteen escapees had until evening Appell to get lost before they were missed. As quickly as possible they dispersed and hiding in the brush, changed into the civilian clothes and were on their own. Some boarded a train going west while others left in different directions. There were many trains passing through Sagan day and night, which helped the escapees put some distance between them and the camp. It was on this escape that Sammy had reached what he thought was the Swiss border. He and his traveling companion slipped past the border guards and thinking they were safe and in Switzerland, started walking down the highway. Suddenly a German patrol on bicycles came around a hill and caught them flat-footed. The Germans had built a false border about two kilometers from the real one. No doubt this fooled many people and it's primary purpose was to catch Jews trying to escape German occupied Europe.

This escape was successful in that it required many extra soldiers to search for the escapees. After about two weeks all were safely back in the cooler. No more de-lousing parades for us though, we would just have to live with them.

Another easy escape that completely infuriated the German higher officers caused the Camp Kommandant to be replaced and sent to the "Ost Front", [Russian Front]. This one was referred to as the "Swiss Show". Our spies told us that the Swiss Geneva Commission would be making a surprise visit to the camp. The delegation usually consisted of five people, so five of our most experienced escapers were outfitted as Swiss civilians. Shortly after the party entered the camp, another party of five departed from the other gate. The Swiss party were interviewing kriegies who had or pretended to have a reason to think they should be repatriated. This was planned to consume as much time as possible and did. The evening Appell finally interrupted the complaining kriegies giving the escapees all day to get away from the camp and far away. One of the repatriots had a broken back the same as myself but was still wearing his cast. His plea was considered, and in July 1944 he was allowed to return home. Maybe I was a little too hasty in removing mine.

Major Sage and Sammy were among the five on this escape and it took over a month to put the last one in the cooler. The Major would make one more attempt later.

The new Kommandant arrived and a thorough search was made of the camp. The only things uncovered were a few insignificant items that were left so they could be easily found. A new set of

regulations was posted, and we were soon wishing that our old Kommandant was still with us.

One night, a few kriegies who were not wise to the different ferrets, were running a batch of raisin wine through a still after lights out. The still was fashioned from parts of a trombone and tin cans and located in the kitchen of the block. With the black-out shutters closed and the cracks sealed they had turned the light on. "Oscar" a tamed ferret, discovered them. Oscar was a man of mystery. He claimed to be a Czech, forced into the German Army with the threat that his family would be killed if he didn't cooperate. He spoke excellent English, having been sent to England before the war to become an Englishman. He did little favors for us but could not be completely trusted. We suspected him to be playing both ends toward the middle. To be on the safe side, he was put in a compromising position by the kriegies, and evidence taken that would hang him if exposed to the Kommandant. Consequently he was a very valuable ferret. This group of kriegies were not aware of Oscar's status, thinking he was just another goon. He burst through the hall door catching them completely by surprise. He eagerly sampled their evil brew, then another and another etc. until he passed out. After stripping him, they cautiously drug him into an outside "abort" [latrine], and propped him up in a corner stall. When he didn't report to the gate at light, the goons went into their customary flap. The entire troop of guards rushed into the compound and moved all of the kriegies onto the exercise area. They then searched the camp until they finally found Oscar. Dragging him to the gate by his heels they deposited him at the feet of the Kommandant who calmly drew his little pistol and emptied into Oscar as he lay on the ground. His baggy cover-alls were found when they plugged the nozzle of the honey wagon hose when the latrine was pumped out about a month later.

After shooting Oscar, the Kommandant strutted into the camp and announced a new regulation that there would be no more alcohol brewed in the entire camp. There would be a search of all compounds, and any alcohol discovered would be destroyed and the occupants of that room would be shot. After dismissal we proceeded to dispose of our brew in the only way we knew of without wasting it. Nearly all the blocks in the compound had a batch brewing in the fire-tubs with many smaller batches in the rooms. It was utterly impossible to drink it all, so most of it was poured out.

In my block there was only one tub brewing. We knew it wasn't ready because it was still bubbly but tried to drink it anyway. Most of us gave it up after a cup or two, but one character stayed with it until he got sick. The next day his stomach was so bloated we thought it would burst. The goon first-aid attendant diagnosed it as food poison so pumped his stomach and in a few days he recovered.

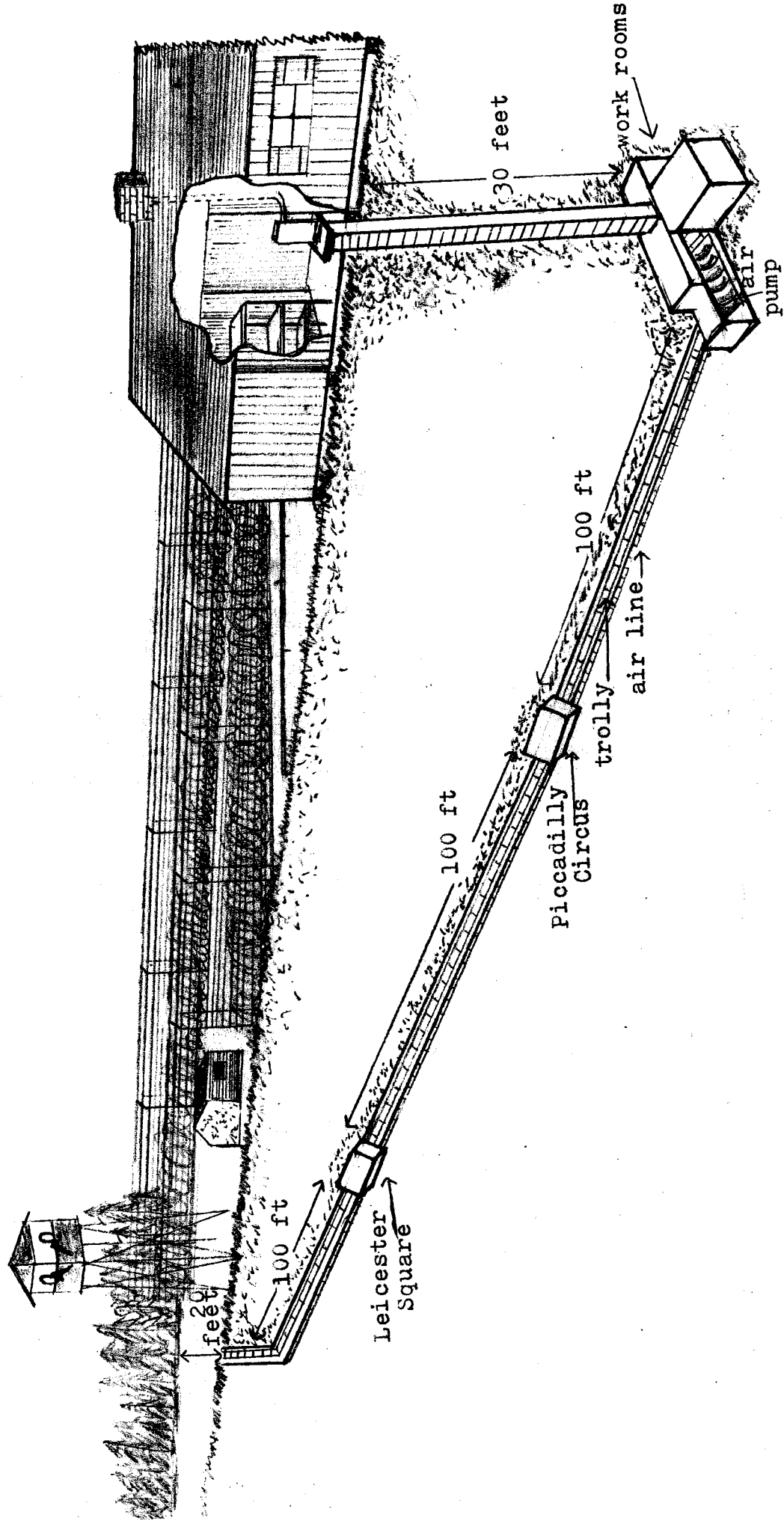
At 5:00 o'clock we all gathered at the parade ground while the search was on. Nothing was found and no one was shot in the South compound. The North compound yielded some buried bottles of potato whiskey but the owners couldn't be identified again no one was

shot.

I did a very stupid thing once when wine was still legal. I think it was someone's birthday so my room threw a party that continued after lights-out. At lights-out it was customary to open the windows to air out the rooms and to sleep better. At this time there were twelve men to the room, so we had to make triple bunks instead of the doubles. I don't remember what instigated it, but I attempted to run around the outside of the block. My room was the second from the northeast corner. I waited for a search light to pass, then began my run down the east side. Just as I rounded the first corner, I came face to face with a German guard dog. Spinning around I started back but a search light hit me, so I leaped through the first window I came to. I lay against the wall as I fell inside with the search light trained on the window. The dog came in right behind me and landed in the middle of the room. Kriegies started hollering and the dog attacked one in a lower bunk. Thoroughly expecting a volley of machine-gun fire, I quickly scooted out the door during the confusion and ran down the hall to my own room. No shots were fired, probably because of the dog and the light was turned off when he jumped back through the window. Back in my own bunk I lay there thinking of what a useless and utterly stupid stunt this had been. Many of the guards would have sprayed the room with machine-gun fire after the dog was out. I'll bet to this day, the occupants of room 16 would love to get their hands on the damn fool that could have caused them to be shot up. Many times a vindictive guard would cut loose a burst of fire through the top of a block for no reason at all. A Colonel in my block was shot in the leg during one of these outbursts of rage.

A few days after the Oscar episode at about 8:00 o'clock in the morning we had an air-raid. It being in day-light we knew it to be the 8th Airforce and were very reluctant to go inside and close the shutters, as we were supposed to do. As the bomber formation passed overhead the temptation became too great, and heads started popping out of doors and windows all over the camp. A cheer even broke out which only infuriated the guards. They started shouting and some of them fired into the blocks. After the confusion died down a dead kriegie was found lying in a door-way with a bullet wound between his eyes. A strolling guard outside the fence claimed the credit for this, saying that the kriegie threw something at him. A very feeble excuse as they were over a hundred yards apart at the time. Anyway it justified the guards actions so the case was closed.

"The Big Escape", took place from the North Compound in March 1944. I'll insert my story of what I knew and heard about this bit of history. Although many Americans worked on these tunnels we were all moved into the South Compound when the break-out occurred.



The tunnel--"HARRY"

