

The highway ran southeast for twenty miles to the first town. Here was a railroad division yard with the main line running due west. The British would leave us here and board a train to the west. We would trudge on for four days to Spremberg, where we would finally board a train also.

After walking for an hour, we were allowed to stop for about ten minutes. This was long enough. Our clothes were damp from sweat and my shoes were soaking wet from walking through the snow that had turned to slush. After ten minutes of laying on the cold ground, we would start chilling, and our shoes would freeze stiff. Along about daylight the horses pulling the bread wagons played out, so as we passed them each kriegie was given a loaf of the brown German bread to add to his pack. This would be our only ration of bread. The artillery fire from the east could no longer be heard, so we guessed correctly that the Russians had stopped their advance, and we would not be liberated immediately.

The order of march had fallen apart and we just shuffled along at will. I discovered that by walking fast for awhile, I would be near the head of the column, then I'd slow down to a snails pace, allowing the column to pass by and I could get a little rest, until I was at the rear again. My back was aching so bad that on break periods, I'd just lay flat on the ground. Once I became frozen to the ground and had to have help to get up. Sometime during the day we lightened our packs by discarding any items that were not essential. Mainly anything that we couldn't eat or wear. I think that was when I disposed of my log book.

Sometime that first day we acquired some additional guards. About twenty young SS Troops and Hitler Yugen graduates mounted on motorcycles. They would roar up and down the column shouting and occasionally a shot would be heard. Once, while taking a break, we heard several volleys of shots and found out later that four kriegies had been shot while trying to escape. I did observe one cold blooded murder myself though. I was playing my game of just moping along until I was in the rear end of the column and was treated to an unusual sight. The little old guard had weakened to the point that two kriegies were holding him up and practically carrying him. Another kriegie carried his pack and another was dragging his rifle along in the snow. There is going to be some trouble here I thought as they passed by me. Sure enough, it wasn't long until two SS troopers roared up on their motorcycles and pulled this strange procession out of the line. Jerking the rifle out of the hands of the kriegie the SS beat him to the ground with the rifle butt. The other SS trooper knocked the old guard down and pulling his pistol, he emptied it in the old man's body. Back on their bikes, they roared on down the column without even looking back.

The wind and snow continued throughout the day, and late in the afternoon we were finally halted. We were in a small town about twenty miles from where we had started. A few of the luckier ones found barns to crowd into but most had to lay down in the snow to rest and sleep. My group was in a barn with a large pile of barley straw in one end. I and Clifford Spencer from my room had sort of

teamed up, so after staking our claim to part of the straw stack we prepared to build a fire and have some warm food and coffee. This is where our little Jewish room-mate, Irving Fredrick Baum, tried to attach himself to us as his protectors. He had thrown everything away except the blanket that he wore over his shoulders. The Red Cross parcel, the food from our room and even the loaf of goon bread, because he said, it was too heavy to carry. When we refused to give him any of our food, he became highly indignant and thoroughly expected us to share our food with him. I had to threaten to turn him over to the SS to shut him up. Before we finished eating, he had started to cry, so as much as we disliked him at this time, we did share our meal with him. I don't recall even a thank you out of him. We made it clear that this was only a one time deal and if he had anymore to eat, he'd have to get it from someone else.

After eating, we burrowed into the straw stack for a good warm nights sleep. This wasn't to be though. After about an hour, the barley beards had worked through my clothing and was itching like mad. I was so exhausted though that I just gritted my teeth and would sleep a little, then scratch a little, etc. throughout the night.

The sun came up the next morning bright and clear with no wind or snow, but still very cold. Spencer and I made some coffee, and had a snack from our food supply. Baum had wandered off in search of someone who would feed him, so we talked the situation over and decided to let him suffer for one day, then we would have to feed him to keep him from starving. He returned after awhile crying that no one would give him anything to eat. We relented again and fed him a little. That day while talking to Bill Roberts, I found that he had told Bill that someone had stolen his food, so Bill gave him a good feed that morning. Baum had deliberately lied to us. That does it, we decided, no more food or even conversation with him. No telling how many people he'd lied to, and probably had more to eat than any of his benefactors, without having to carry anything.

The second day on the trail was rather uneventful. Just shuffle along, wondering where and when it would all end. We started over-taking caravans of German civilians, some camped along side the road. They were people from Eastern Germany that were fleeing from the Russian advance. It was really a touching sight. Only very old people and little children, with their belongings piled on old wagons pulled by skinny old horses or oxen. Many wagons were seen with a horse and an oxen hitched together. They all looked cold and hungry, so being big hearted Americans, we gave them food from our meager supply. Better to share it with them than a rat like Baum. I'll never forget the look of joy and gratitude that I got from a little big-eyed girl, when I gave her a piece of chocolate bar, and she popped it into her mouth.

All day long we trudged along. Darkness overtook us and still we mushed on. It required more effort to rise to our feet each time after a rest break. The guards started telling us, "Zwei mer kilometer", meaning two more kilometer to go. A shot was heard now

and then. It was the SS disposing of someone who had fallen and wouldn't or couldn't arise. About midnight we finally reached our destination. It was a small village much the same as the night before without enough buildings for everyone to find shelter, so many were forced to sleep on the cold ground. I was lucky enough to get into an old barn where we were so crowded we couldn't turn over. This crowded condition kept us warm though, and I slept without moving until daylight, when we were roused out. We hit the road almost immediately without enough time to make fires for coffee. I slipped over to an old civilian and asked for some water, which he gave me and also a big red apple. "God Bless You", I told him. It was his way of showing his feelings toward us I guess.

It started snowing again that day, and we traveled on an autobahn running east and west for awhile. There was one continuous stream of refugees traveling much the same as us. Most of them trudging along on foot. There was also a lot of military traffic all headed east. Whenever a convoy of troops appeared, we and the refugees had to leap off the highway and give them the right-of-way. It was a relief when we finally left this busy highway and moved onto an old road going south. Shortly after leaving this autobahn, I was in the front ranks of the column, when we rounded a bend in the road and entered a village. Some old women on the road looked up to see us and took off shouting, "Ruskies, Ruskies". Others popped out of houses and followed after them also shouting and waving their arms. I think that within two minutes the entire village had vacated and were in the next county, still running from what they thought was the Russian Army.

Baum again attached himself to Spencer and I, so we gave him a few crumbs to keep him from crying, as we still had a lot of food left, and it was getting heavier all the time. Another blizzard came up that day, and by noon we were completely exhausted. I think it was the cold that weakened us rather than the exertion of walking. Those that had exercised faithfully back in Stalag Luft III, were in good shape, relatively speaking. My back was sheer torture and one knee started flying out of joint for some unknown reason. Also two big blisters had developed on my heels, so needless to say, I was in a foul mood. About the middle of the afternoon, Irving decided to give up. Our break periods had been cut in half, so now we stopped to rest every two hours. After these breaks, Spencer and I would have to lift Baum to his feet, and literally carry him until he would start to walk. I think my cursing him did more than anything else to get him jump started. This wasn't easy, as my mouth was raw and my tongue was swollen from eating snow. Some prisoners were shot that day by the SS escort, as we had about reached the limit of our endurance. The familiar chant from the few guards that were still with us of, "Zwei mer kilometer", started up again about sundown, and still we kept moving. Sometime around midnight we approached a fairly large town. We stopped at a large compound with a stone wall around it that turned out to be a huge glass factory. I don't know how many large furnaces there were, but each was housed in a large building, with small compartments or rooms all around the furnace itself. We

were packed into these small spaces like sardines, but it was warm and we immediately fell to the floor in a heap and went to sleep. After a few hours of sleep I awoke almost smothering. My tongue was swollen out of my mouth, and I felt as though I would suffocate. I untangled myself from the mass of humanity about me and made my way to an outside door. Telling the guard that I had to go to the toilet, I stepped out into the cold, fresh air which immediately straightened out my head. Soon others started emerging from the furnaces into the yard so the guards withdrew to just guarding the wall around the factory. Spencer and Baum came out shortly, so we started a fire and had a good feast.

The word soon came around that we would stay there that day and rest as we were only one day's march from our destination which, would be Spremberg. There we would board a train to our final destination. Where that would be, no one knew or much cared at this point. We found out that this town we were at was named Muscow. Many French prisoners came into the plant that morning to go to work, but the guards ran them back out. I was sitting near one small gate in the wall just basking in the sun, when I saw four French workers approaching. They were wearing long great coats that nearly drug the ground and could easily be recognized as French Army overcoats. As they drew nearer, I recognized them as kriegies, one of them named "Nethiemer", from Casper. He winked at me as they passed and walked by the guard at the gate with no challenge. This was the last time they were seen. After the war and I was home in 1945, Netheimer's father from Casper, came to Greybull to see me. He had seen my name in the paper and knew that I was in the same camp as his son, and maybe could tell him something about why he had not been liberated. I told him exactly how it was, and added my own speculation about the outcome of this incident. I think that somewhere along their road, they had been recognized by some retreating and bitter German soldiers, and simply shot. They would not be the only ones shot, as about four hundred did not survive the trip. Some two hundred that elected to stay at Muscow because they were too sick or too weak to continue, were never seen again. The other two hundred were either shot along the way or escaped and shot later, as had probably happened to Netheimer. We were told that those that were sick or crippled and could not continue walking the next morning, would be allowed to stay here, and later would board a train to go on to Nurmberg.

Because of my blisters, back and crazy knee I seriously considered staying. To me, it sounded too easy and compassionate when the SS Officer gave us this news. I suspected a trick of some kind, so forced myself to hit the road. We heard later that the two hundred odd kriegies that stayed were executed by the SS a few days later.

Many kriegies spent the day building sleds to carry their belongings on, It didn't require a very large sled to carry maybe ten men's supplies on, so this was a very good idea. Spencer and I joined Roberts, Chadwick, Russell and others in building one that worked out real good.

We left bright and early the next day and arrived in Spremberg

before dark. Much to our surprise we were marched into a large army base and were locked into some empty barracks. The few goon soldiers here wore the green Wehrmacht [ground army], uniform. Many were just kids, and one in particular I remember well. He looked to be about sixteen, but had to be older as he wore the Afrika Corps badge which signified that he had fought in Africa under Field Marshall Rommel at least two years ago. He must have been a black marketeer, as he slipped into my barracks with an arm load of bread to trade for cigarettes. My group picked up a few loaves from him and we went to sleep with full bellies.

The following day we marched to the railroad tracks and were loaded into box-cars. These cars were known as 40 and 8's. Meaning 40 soldiers or 8 horses or 80 kriegies could be stuffed into one car. The only way we could all lay down was by laying on one side with our feet together in the center. The windows were boarded up so the only way we could see out was through the many cracks designed to let plenty of cold air in. After many hours we started moving. We traveled along good that night and about mid morning the train stopped and we were allowed to disembark and relieve ourselves. We were issued some bread and canned meat, probably horse meat, but it sure tasted good. We rolled up balls of snow to carry back into the boxcars for water. I talked to my good friend "Hairbreath Harry" Lang during this rest period, and he said he was working on a hole in the floor of his car that would allow a small man to slide through. I was to survey the kriegies in my car and those that wished to escape could change places with the same number of kriegies from his car the next day when we stopped for relief. By this time we were sure that our destination was to be Nurmberg.

That night we stopped in the marshalling yards of Regensberg, and we knew that it was a favorite target of the RAF's night bombers. Soon after stopping, the air-raid sirens started and we could hear bombs dropping not very far away. We were sitting ducks and spent most of the night either cursing the RAF or praying. We sweated out three different raids so didn't get much sleep.

We started moving at day-light and chugged along all day. I had decided to change over to Lang's car and go out with him even though nobody else was interested. However I didn't get the chance, because the train kept moving all day and into the night with no rest stop. Finally we stopped and from what we could hear from the guards, we were on a siding just outside of Nurmberg. I was lying in the end of the car next to Lang's car and everything was quite and peaceful. Suddenly I heard a noise like someone dropping to the gravel beneath the next car, then footsteps crunching away. Another and another, I counted six in all before some shots rang out and whistles and shouting began. It was Lang and company departing. The next day we found out that two kriegies were shot while crossing a bridge a little way down the tracks. The other four had got away, at least for now.

At day-light we were unloaded and allowed to relieve ourselves. Then marched to a small compound outside a huge camp. We were at Stalag VIIA about one hundred and fifty miles south of Nurmberg.

A small town across the river from the camp was Mooseburg and I think it's only claim to fame was a big cheese factory. There were no barracks in this compound, only long narrow sheds with no floors, only a thin layer of straw to sleep on. We had an open slit trench for a toilet and only one water tap in the compound. The main camp was full of Americans, but we had no opportunity to talk to them. The outer fence here was a very flimsy affair compared to that at Stalag Luft III. It wasn't easy, but I talked myself out of pulling a wire job. If I would have known or even thought that there would be another three months of misery I would surely have attempted to escape.

After a few days the American enlisted men from the main camp were moved out thereby leaving the camp to be occupied by us. Later we found that they were moved to a camp further south in the mountains. I didn't know it then, but a cousin, Harry Crane, was in this group. He was a paratrooper in the 82nd Airborne and captured on the Anzio beachhead in Italy. Being a private, he was forced to work and most of this work was cleaning up after an Allied bombing raid.

We were moved into the large main camp after their departure. Here were triple deck bunks with all the modern conveniences, like latrines and running water. The compound we had vacated was filled with Russian POW's to the point to where it looked as though they didn't have room to turn around. We were crowded but nothing like they were. About two days later, I was walking near this Russian compound when I thought I heard my name called. Just imagination I thought and kept on walking. I heard it again, so stopped and started looking the crowd over. They were all very thin from starvation with beards and long hair and their eyes were very large in their skinny faces. Their clothes were dirty and in rags, so I guessed that they had been prisoners for quite awhile. While looking them over, I suddenly spotted a long nosed type standing on a stump, waving his arms frantically. It was my old buddy, Lang. He was the last of the six escapees to be captured. After getting my attention, he moved closer to the fence and told me that he would be over tonight. I thought he meant that the goons would move him into the American compound, but not so. He had to pull a wire job to get into the proper compound. Talking to him the next day, he said that he had been with the Russians for three days and never got close to any food. The Germans brought their soup in once a day in 25 gallon barrels. Only the biggest and toughest had a chance at it, and he was neither. He thought it less painful to just starve to death than to be beaten to death fighting for soup. He told us what was happening in our compound every night. Some of the Russians would slip through the fence as he had done, and steal everything that wasn't nailed down. Mostly shoes and food, as we slept in our clothes. After getting this bit of news, we would pass everything to the man in the top bunk and he would hang the stuff to the ceiling. We had been missing things, but thought it was other American kriegies that were guilty. One kriegie was caught stealing food in my barracks though. A lot of us would take our goon ration of bread and break it into small

pieces and boil it in a can. After cooling we had a sort of jello, almost double in bulk. This bread was ersatz [imitation], following is the official recipe taken from the Food Providing Ministry published [top secret] Berlin 24.XI 1941 and the Director in Ministry Herr Mansfeld and Herr Moritz.

- 50% bruised rye grain
- 20% sliced sugar beet
- 20% tree flour [saw dust]
- 10% minced leaves and straw

From my own experiences a nail, pieces of glass and sand would occasionally turn up.

We would usually cook this up in the evening, then set it on shelves in a small room. The thief would slip in and take a spoonful or two from each can, then fill it back to the original level with water. He got away with this for a long time before getting careless and was caught in the act. As punishment, he was given a good beating and his rations were taken away for a week. Red Cross parcels were non-existent now, so we had to survive on the generous goon ration. Besides the bread, we were given a can-full of dehydrated vegetable soup, always with worms and bugs floating on top. and sometimes rancid blood sausage and moldy cheese. We were told that the bugs and worms were a good source of protein, and the mold on the cheese was also good for us. All of this, excepting the bread, had to be eaten in the dark or most of us couldn't keep it down.

Lang had gotten away clean the night he escaped from the box-car and walked to Munich, about twenty-five miles south. Trying to make the Swiss border wasn't easy though. The Germans had road-blocks on all bridges checking identification papers. He had acquired an old German Army overcoat and could move about the city at will. The streets were teeming with refugees and wandering soldiers, so he drew no attention. Upon sighting the road block he turned back into the city. Passing a Catholic church, he said he stopped and was tempted to go in, but was seen by a priest working in the yard. The priest started talking to him in English, so he replied in English. Taking him inside, the good Father told him to wait and he would return with someone who would help him enter Switzerland. Sometime later he was surprised by the Father returning with four German soldiers. They took him into custody and sent him to Moosburg with some Russian POW's who had been working in the city. He said that if I had have been with him, he wouldn't of gotten so lonesome and hooked up with the Catholic priest, and maybe the two of us could of made a successful escape.

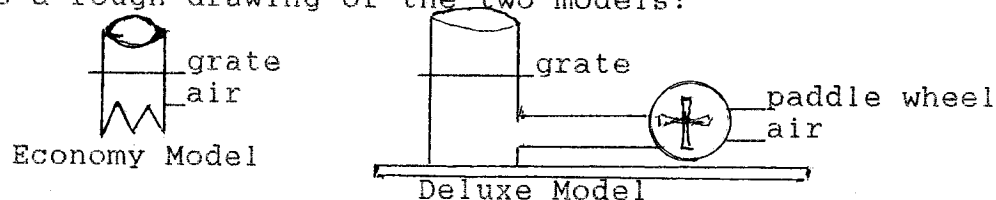
Fuel for heating our rations was very scarce, just what wood we could borrow from the buildings. Naturally the bed boards went first, then other boards that wasn't necessary to keep the building standing. The guards agreed to taking a group of about twenty kriegies out every day to gather wood in the forest. We had to promise not to escape or the wood walks would be stopped. We also gathered any food that might be lying around, such as stray chickens, potatoes and kolarabi. These vegetables would be windrowed then covered with manure to keep them from freezing. It

was quite easy to pick up a few whenever the guards attention was elsewhere. I only got out once on this excursion and as we walked through the forest I could see snails as big as my fist hanging on the bushes. I thought they should taste like oysters, so commenced to gathering them until I had my pack full of the slimy creatures. I must of had about twenty pounds, shell and all when I returned to my buddies with all these goodies. Hungry as they were, no one would volunteer to eat them with me. This was in April and the camp was overflowing with all nationalities. Chadwick suggested that I locate some Frenchmen and maybe make a trade. Following his advice, I traded them for a loaf of bread, so my efforts were not all in vain.

Two types of ingenious burners were developed here. They allowed one to get the most heat from the least wood. The economy type was to use two cans on top of each other, with a grate up about half way. The sides of the bottom were cut open in slits to allow air to be fanned into the burner. Wood shavings were fed in from the top and we had a pretty effective burner that we could heat our water, etc. quickly, and didn't require very much wood.

The deluxe model worked on the same principle, except that an air chamber from six to twelve inches long connected the burner to a large paddle wheel, that, when cranked would supply a large amount of air to the burner, creating a very hot fire.

Below is a rough drawing of the two models:



One day about two thousand new American Prisoners arrived. They had walked from Nurmberg, which had taken over a week. Along the way, they were spotted from the air by a flight of P-51's, who mistaking them for retreating German soldiers, made two strafing passes at them before realizing their mistake. Nobody seemed to know how many were killed. Before leaving the Nurmberg camp, they were subjected to a heavy American bombing raid one day, then the RAF hit them that night. By morning the camp was demolished, one air raid shelter damaged with several killed in it. The target for these attacks was a huge munitions plant built very near the camp. Near misses hit the camp. C'est le guerre.

I was standing near the gate as these new kriegies came in. They were a mixture of army and airforce, some old kriegies and some just freshly captured. One Infantry Major asked if there was anyone from Wyoming here. I told him that I was, and we started getting acquainted. His name was Bill Garlow from Cody and a grandson of Buffalo Bill Cody. He later changed his name to Cody for publicity. After talking a while and finding out that he was a graduate of Harvard University, it was plain that we had very little in common.

I was walking around one day for exercise, when I noticed a



character peering through something that turned out to be a magnifying glass, and picking at a small piece of wood. Oh! Oh!, I thought, another one around the bend. I walked over and casually asked what he was doing. "Just whittling," he replied. I asked to see it and he handed me the disk of hardwood. It was a record of our march carved out on one side, and Moosburg with a burner carved on the other side. Beautiful work, I told him. He said he was planning on casting it in silver and would sell them after the war. I told him to put my name down, that I sure wanted one. He kept his word and my address. In 1946 I received a letter from him, that the silver watch fobs were in production and so I bought one for five dollars.

As March moved in, so did the air raids. About every day the sirens would start wailing and after awhile we didn't pay any attention, except when we could see the formation going over. Many times we would sweat out "Tail-end Charlie", as the last plane was usually trailing smoke. These great formations of hundreds of silver B-17's were always a beautiful sight to us. Especially with no German fighters in sight. At this time of the war, the once mighty Luftwaffe was practically non-existent.

Easter Sunday 1945, Spencer came in with two chicken eggs that he had traded my leather jacket for. I was mad at first, but soon forgot about it when faced with the problem of how to cook the precious eggs. We finally decided, because it was Easter Sunday, that we should hard-boil them. This we did very carefully and with everyone in the barracks looking on and offering advice. I ate mine very quickly, but Spencer just nibbled on his, making it last for an hour or so. It had to have been the best egg ever eaten by either of us.

Along about this time we were weakening a little, and terribly hungry all of the time. We were divided into twelve man combines on the rations, so each day one of the twelve would go to the gate to pick up the rations. This particular day it was my turn. Besides the soup we had a slice of the blood sausage that we used to throw in the latrine, but now was very tasty. When I reached our area, I doled out the soup and just told them that the blood sausage was in the bucket and to help themselves. After eating, I was returning to the gate with the empty buckets, when I noticed there was a slice of sausage left in one of the buckets. My first thought was that the goons had mistakenly given us one too many slices, so promptly popped into my mouth and swallowed, we never chewed this stuff as it might not go down. Then I started thinking about it. Probably some one had forgotten it and I had eaten his ration. It worried me so, that I regurgitated it up, so it didn't benefit anyone. When I returned, I asked if everyone had eaten a slice of sausage and they had. The goons had made a mistake.

Once I saw a colored Infantry prisoner picking up pieces of paper along the fence. A guard was following him to keep him honest. They moved around one barracks and the kriegie stepped up one or two strands of wire to reach a piece of paper that was caught at the top of the fence. I guess that his guard was out of sight from another guard further down the fence. Anyway a shot

rang out and the kriegie fell to the ground with half his head blown off. The camp guards were using hardwood bullets that would literally explode on impact. The guard who shot said he thought the prisoner was trying to crawl the wire to escape, so the incident was forgotten.

CHAPTER VI  
ESCAPE AND HOME  
[April 27 to May 15 1945]

I was lying on my bunk the morning of the 27th of April, dreaming of the first meal I would have when I got home, when these pleasant thoughts were interrupted by a kriegie on the bunk across from me. His name was Mindy something or other, I didn't know him very well. He said that he and a friend Mike, had a good escape plan and were going out that afternoon and I was welcome to go with them. There was a strong rumor that we were to be evacuated again and moved further south, so I became interested very quickly. Mindy's friend Mike, joined us in the conversation and between a fast talking Irishman and a clever Jew they easily persuaded me to go out with them. The plan was to slip into the third garbage truck and hope that the gate guard wasn't too thorough with his sharpened crow-bar as he probed through the garbage. They had checked the procedure of the gate guards as the trucks exited the gate for several days and it was always the same. The first truck would get a pretty good probing with the sharpened rods, the second a few disinterested jabs and the third was usually just waved through. After the trucks left the gate, the road ran up a hill and into some heavy brush and trees. This is where we would drop off and hide out until General Pattons Third Army rolled down the road. They were fighting at Nurmberg at this time, so should reach us in a day or two. My combine buddies gave me their daily ration of bread, so I had about a half a loaf to munch on until liberation.

Climbing into the truck was easy, but there wasn't enough trash to cover us, so we just crunched down and prayed a little. Today they departed from their regular procedure and didn't stop any of the trucks, so we sailed through the gate with no problem. As we started up the hill, an Army truck caught up with us, so we had to stay in the truck. We went on down the hill on the other side and crossed a large river. After crossing the bridge, the garbage trucks took a small winding road parallel with the river. We easily dropped out of the truck and into the heavy brush. We found an abanded machine-gun nest, dug-in and well sand-bagged to hide out in. The bridge was in full view about a quarter of a mile away and we could see army trucks and other vehicles crossing and all going south. We knew that it had to be a major retreat. That night we could hear a steady roar of artillery fire to the north and by morning, it sounded as if they were almost here. All day the traffic increased, all going south. Then we saw a sapper team

wiring the bridge with explosives, so we knew the end was near. We couldn't see the camp from our position, but were quite sure they hadn't been evacuated, as they would of had to cross the bridge. The firing and traffic slackened gradually during the night. At day-light it had ceased entirely except for occasional small arms fire.

At about 8:am, a flight of P-51 fighters appeared at about two thousand feet and after one circle, they suddenly dived on a target across the river. As if this was a signal, firing started all over again. It was small arms and machine-gun fire so we knew it was close. After about an hour of this, a string of tanks appeared on the highway leading to the bridge. We almost jumped out of hiding when we recognized the American Star painted on them. We thought that within just a few minutes we would be free at last. We had forgotten about the explosives on the bridge. One tank approached slowly and inched forward until the bridge blew. The tank rolled backward unharmed, but this stopped their advance. So much for our freedom that day.

The Germans had set up defensive positions behind and above us and they opened fire on the tanks. Our tanks backed out of sight and started shelling our side of the river. We considered trying to swim across the river, but in our weakened condition the strong current would be too much to handle and the Americans would probably have taken us to be enemy and shot us anyway. Now, we were in a fine predicament. Caught in the middle of a battle just because we had finally made a successful escape. We couldn't expose ourselves to either side, but we didn't seem to be in too much danger, as all the shelling was going over us. This was the 29th of April when the camp was liberated. The following day the fighting continued, and sometime that night the combat engineers started building a Bailey bridge across the river. The bridge was constructed by tying rubber rafts together with metal matting laying over the top. They would get about half way across, then have to back off. The American Artillery would pound the German positions back, then the engineers would go back to work. Finally on the third of May they succeeded in crossing. The tanks and Infantry crossed and the battle moved on behind us. We knew that we had to be very careful when coming out of the brush or we might be shot by our own GI's. We could smell food cooking, so followed our noses to a field kitchen set up by the combat engineers. We broke out of the brush with our arms raised and shouting American POW. We were immediately covered by many, many rifles. After explaining who and what we were, we were given all the food we could eat. All we had eaten was the black bread and river water for five days, so the C-ration stew and white bread was like a feast. No Angel Food Cake ever tasted as good as that white bread. After eating we were briefed by a Captain who told us the prison camp was empty. All the kriegies were back in France by now. We had seen C-47 transport planes flying in and out for the past few days and nights. They were bringing in supplies to the Army and taking kriegies out. Something about the GI's that I'll never forget was how fat and healthy they looked. Their round, fat and

red faces were such a contrast to the pale, thin faces of us kriegies. The Captain said that in a day or two they would be sending a truck out to Brussels Belgium, and we could ride out in it.

Two days later on the fifth of May, we took off in the truck with two GI's. We had several cases of C and D rations and drinking water, so we could hold out for at least a week eating constantly which we did. The highway was very crowded, and we spent more time just sitting to let convoys go by, than we did traveling. It seemed that the entire American Army was moving south. We passed tanks by the hundreds, that were blown up and burned.

The first night we stayed in the motor-pool of a transportation unit and took off early the next morning. All day we traveled through villages, towns and one city that was literally blown to pieces. There was nothing but rubble with a roadway bull-dozed through it. Block after block of nothing but parts of buildings standing. The few civilians we seen were all begging for water and food. This was very pitiful and made us think of what the war was doing to the poor German civilians. Darkness overtook us while still in this one time city, and finally we found a building with four walls and part of a roof. The next day we were back in open country and moved along pretty good, until we came to a bridge across a large river. Here, we had to wait for hours to cross. A German Stuka dive-bomber had blown a large section out and had to be repaired. Traffic was piled up for miles on the other side and with them having the right-of-way, all we could do was cool our heels and wait. We finally spent the night here sleeping in the truck. The GI's said that with any luck we should reach Brussels the next day, so with this in mind we slept pretty good.

After crossing the river the next morning, we made real good time and reached Brussels about noon. This was in the British occupied area of Europe, so there were no American troops here. The British had a DPD [displaced persons depot]. It was located on the outskirts of the city, where we bid farewell to our Yank friends in the truck. The day was the 8th of May. "VE DAY". The day the war officially ended in Europe.

The English at the depot showed us what the word "efficiency" meant. Within two hours we were showered and deloused, with a hair-cut and a brand new British uniform, no rank, and the equivalent of \$60.00 in our pockets. Mindy had to inquire how we were going to pay it back, and received this reply to his question. "Dommed if I know Yank, it's no skin off my bloody arse". We really didn't need the money as it turned out, and we could have given it all back the next morning. They then drove us down town where all the celebration was taking place and said to report back to the DPD tomorrow.

We were very self conscience about our new Limey outfits. They were the pale O.D. infantry uniform, with the baggy pants and a tam for a cap. No insignia or rank, just as if we were Limey recruits. We talked about what a big splash we were going to make with the Belgian girls wearing these outfits. Our concern was unfounded