

My Career as Kreigefangenen No. 7181

(German Prisoner of War)

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0632459

7 Aug 1944 - At approximately 11:32 AM on this day it was "Bombs Away" over the North Oil Refinery of the Blechhamner Oil Refineries located near the city of Kosel and about 40 seconds later smoke started gushing into the sky. We knew by that that our bombs had "struck oil" and Hitler's Blechhammer Oil Refinery had taken a terrific beating. This refinery, located on the Oder River in Upper Silesia, is about 125 miles southeast of Breslau, Germany. But while this was going on the Germans weren't just standing by doing nothing. Numerous flak puffs of smoke began to fill the sky and the famous German "ACK - ACK" (Anti-Aircraft) guns were getting quite a work out. At approximately 30 seconds past 11:33 we received a direct hit from one of the 88 MM guns. The old Liberator ("Nobody's Baby") seemed to be throwing up in the air. And the sound from the explosions told us that we had really been hit. I turned around and could see flames about three feet away. The hydraulic accumulator behind the nose wheel was burning fiercely and about that time the Navigator (Lt. Charles J. Conlin) yelled "Get out of here". He assisted me in the removal of my flak suit and pulled the emergency release handle on the nose wheel door. I then went out on my back.

It was quite something going out into space. I remained on my back and had the feeling that I was just floating along. I was scared, particularly because there was "dogfights" going on (My parachute received a bullet hole in it) and the flak hadn't completely stopped. When I figured that I was clear of the plane and the flak area I pulled my ripcord and nothing happened. I was really concerned then - but I had presence of mind to call on JESUS CHRIST - the Spirit said "Try a little harder" and I pulled about an inch more and heard the flutter of the pilot chute and then felt the terrific jerk when the main chute opened up. It was a sense of relief to feel that "jerk" because you knew that the old parachute was functioning. The white canopy over my head was indeed beautiful. Well I had scarcely gotten settled down or I should say my nerves had scarcely gotten settled when my chute started popping and I began to be concerned that it might close up on me, so I prayed some more. Yes, I imagine that most people call upon The LORD when they are in a similar situation.

My chute more or less settled down after a while and I was drifting down into enemy territory. What an awful feeling. I felt as though The GOOD LORD and all the people had forsaken me but I realized later that HE was right there with me all the time. As mentioned earlier about the bullet hole or piece of flak in my parachute - I heard what sounded like a bullet hit and looked up to see the hole in my chute. But the chute was well made - it did not rip. I thought at that time that the Germans might be shooting from the ground but later I felt that it was probably during one of the "dogfights" going on in the target area.

While floating down I saw another liberator plane which had been shot down from the group ahead of us. It had made a pancake landing and was burning.

I had thoughts while floating down. I thought of how worried my wife and family would be when they received the "MIA" (Missing-In-Action) notice from the War Department. I also thought about a letter which I had written to our first son (Clyde) a couple of days before.

As I came down to earth the wind seemed to have died completely and my chute folded up nicely on the ground. I landed in a field which had some kind of grain (wheat, oats etc.) in it. It was rather a smooth landing although I hit pretty hard on my left foot. Very shortly after I landed a German soldier with civilians came up. The soldier took me into a small town for interrogation. Then I was put in a small room and kept until about 3:00 PM at which time I was taken by truck to another town. In this truck also was one of the gunners from my crew and the bombardier and navigator of the plane shot down in the group ahead of us. We arrived at the town of Neustadt and were searched again and then placed in jail cells. That night the Germans gave us some margarine, sausage and lousy German (black) bread. I really was hungry but I could only eat a bite or two of that German bread. After an overnight stay in the jail (also the next day) we departed in the evening to the railroad station and started a trip to Frankfurt on the train. Our route took us through Oppeln, Gorlitz, Breslau, Dresden, Leipzig, Weimar and Erfurt. We arrived in a couple of days.

Frankfurt (on the Main River) is an interrogation center for the Prisoners of War. Then we were taken to Wetzlar which is a distribution point for Air Force Prisoners of War. I was happy to see that all members of the two crews who were shot down four days ago (from our squadron) had gotten out safely. I later found out that seven of our crew bailed out safely - the Pilot (who stayed with the ship so we could bail out and did not get out because he was trying to save the other two who could not get out) the Co-Pilot and the Engineer - Top Gunner - did not make it. (Note: Lt Bates, the Pilot, was awarded the Silver Star, posthumously, for his acts of heroism).

I found "chief" Elliott there at Wetzlar. He had been shot down before we were. I had flown several missions with him and he was a good friend. The bombardier and navigator from another of our crews as well as some of the enlisted gunners were there also. We arrived at Wetzlar on 13 Aug 44 and received our first issue of Red cross supplies. We were also able to take a bath, shave and put on clean clothes. Seemed like "Xmas" as each prisoner was given a cardboard suitcase, 1 suit underwear, 1 sweater, 1 bottle cascara pills, American cigarettes, pipe, pipe tobacco, pipe cleaners, face and laundry soap, razor blades, shaving soap razor, toothbrush and tooth powder, trousers, shirt, army blouse and overcoat. (Most of the clothing was furnished by the U S Army to the Red cross). We also received vitamin pills, socks, toilet tissue.

I missed my old leather jacket that I had carried on every mission whether I was wearing it or not. It was sort of a good luck piece I guess. I had received a new testament from my sister Hazel for Xmas 1942 and I carried that testament in the pocket of the jacket. Inside the testament was a picture of my wife Cathy, and son Clyde. But I didn't think of picking it up when I had to bail out.

14 Aug 44 - Departed for Stalag Luft III located at Sagan, Germany. Chief Elliott, Joe Coote, Bill Teller, Lloyd Clark from my group and others from different groups boarded the train for our new "home". I would guess that there was about 120 in the group that headed for Stalag Luft III.

16 Aug 44 - Arrived at Stalag Luft III - this is located at Sagan northwest of Breslau and southeast of Berlin. We were assigned to the North compound and Chief and I were assigned to the same room (Room 9 Barracks 103). Found Jim Connell (Chief's navigator) and Larry Crane from our group.

The North Compound consisted mostly of RAF personnel- and personnel flying with the RAF such as RAAF, NZAF, RCAF and others). There were about 400 Americans in this compound, which is similar to the other compounds (East, South, West & Center) with fifteen barracks (or as the British say "Blocks") in rows of three. The barracks were divided into different rooms with 2 or 3 assigned to the smaller rooms and up to 8 or 10 in the larger rooms. There were six others besides Chief and I in our room. We originally had 4 double decker bunks and this was changed to two triple decker and one double decker. It was rather crowded in these rooms since they weren't larger than an ordinary living room. We had F/Lt. Dan Shuman of the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) - he lived in Statesboro, GA before going up to Canada to join the RCAF before the US had entered the war; F/Lt. Kenneth Anthony, RCAF; F/Lt. Percy Toft, RCAF; F/Lt. Jungowski who was a member of the Polish Air Force but had fled to England and started flying with the RAF; F/Lt. Ian Kingwell of the RAF and F/Lt. Lou Grant of the RCAF. In the compound was also a building which -was used for communal kitchen and store room. The kitchen issued out supplies and gave out hot water 3 times a day for making coffee, tea or cocoa. But each room did its own cooking.

Also in the compound was a theatre building which the prisoners had built with the Germans zephyring the materials. There was a road or track around the inside of the compound where prisoners walked or ran for exercise. Also in the compound was basketball courts, softball courts, baseball, cricket (English game) and places to play other games such as handball, badminton, etc. The YMCA had furnished most of the athletic equipment with some other being received by prisoners in packages from home.

We were left more or less alone in this camp. The Germans held roll call and count twice daily and now and then the "Ferrets" (German security police) would run all of the prisoners out of the barracks and give the building a search. We were permitted to write 3 letters and 4 postcards (V Mail) each month and to receive as much mail as the Germans felt like bringing into camp (when it was able to get through to us). German food rations were mostly 7/6 loaf bread per man per week (1/6 per day), some potatoes, a small amount of margarine, sugar and occasionally green vegetables, honey and a few other items. We got meat now and then. The meat issue was run on a roster by rooms. Our room got meat (usually beef) about 3 times in the 5 months at Stalag Luft III. When supplies were available we got a Red Cross parcel per week which consisted mainly of 1 can powdered milk, (about 1 lb.) 4 ounces chocolate, 1 lb. cheese, 1 box K-2 crackers, 2 ounces powdered coffee, 1 can jam or peanut butter 1/2 lb. sugar, 2 bars face soap, 1 can spam, pream or similar canned lunch meat, 1 can corn beef, 1 can salmon or 2 cans sardines, 5 pkgs. American cigarettes, 1 lb. margarine, 1 lb. raisins.

28 Aug 44 - Went to sick quarters to have a boil lanced (was bitten by a horse fly) and stayed there. I managed to read quite a bit there. Was surprised one day when I was asked to go to a room to see a patient and who should it be but S/Sgt. Al Yatauskas who was the tail gunner on the crew that I was shot down with. He had been shot in the leg and had to have it amputated. He later on was repatriated home. I also got to see Joe Collins (from my Cadet Class at Big

Spring). He was shot down in 1943. The German doctor checked on the patients now and then but mostly left it up to the allied doctors who are prisoners. (The British name for the Germans was "Goons").

14 Sep 44 - Returned to the compound from sick quarters. Lt Charley Conlin, our Navigator had arrived in the Center Compound. Got to see the British stage productions at the theater. It was a musical entitled "Messalina" and depicted the life of the Emperor Claudius. I had seen one before entitled "Palina Panie" on the 18th of Aug. The British did a wonderful job with the limited facilities they had.

October 44 - Nothing much doing now - doing lots of reading. Saw a band show put on by an orchestra organized in the camp. YMCA had furnished the instruments. Also got to see some nice softball games with the Canadian All Stars beating the American All Stars. Got to see my first game of cricket - the popular game in England. Also another theater production entitled "Thark".

Nov 44 - Armistice Day - We observed a 2-minute silence at 11:00 AM. Saw a good dramatic play "Flashing Stream" which depicted life at a British Naval Base.

12 Nov 44 - First snow.

20 Nov 44 - Received my first letter today – from my sister, Vicy.

21 Nov 44 - We had kept a certain amount of food in reserve for emergency but orders came out today to use it all up so we really had some nice feeds or as the British would say "a Bash". To be on the safe side, though, we hid about 16 pounds of raisins in cans in the ground.

1 Dec 44 – YMCA brought an American file to the camp – it was "The Spoilers" with John Wayne, Marlene Dietrich and Randolph Scott. Chocolate candy is beginning to sell for high prices. A British guy was offering \$20.00 per pound. Of course, there is no money transaction – the buyer would just give a check for the amount to be cashed upon liberation.

7 Dec 44 - Another play – "The Importance of being Earnest".

21 Dec 44 - Finally got that letter that I had been waiting for a long time – from my darling wife, Cathy and our son, Butch.

XMAS WEEK - Getting full- issue of parcels this week. part regular and part Christmas parcel. We exchanged our regular parcels for Christmas parcels and ended up with each one in the room having a Christmas parcel. Also, one of the guys in the room, F/Lt. Kingwell, had 5 personal parcels which he had received from his home in storage so he got them out for Christmas. The American Christmas parcel had boned turkey, Vienna sausage, wash cloth, pipe, tobacco, plum pudding, deviled ham; preserve butter, dates, mixed nuts, mixed candy, chewing gum, a game (cribbage, chess or similar game), honey, cheese, jam, cherries. - A very wonderful parcel.

25 Dec 44 - Christmas - Christmas in Germany as guest of the German Luftwaffe – our menu for the day: Breakfast - Cereal, Bread, Coffee, Baked beans with pork, vienna sausage. Noon (Dinner) - Boned turkey, dressing, plum jan, onion sauce, beets, carrots, tea, fruit cake, plum

pudding, noodle soup, bread. Supper - Fruit cake, mincemeat pie, coffee. We had turkey for 3 good meals. The puddings also lasted for 3 meals. Had singing at the theater. "The Messiah" was presented during the Christmas week.

31 Dec 44 - Saw the production of "The Drunkard" which would have really been good if the actors could have been slightly drunk. The show ended about midnight and we had a singing session afterward. The Germans gave no special food to the prisoners this year. They didn't seem concerned whether they had Christmas or not. But the Red cross parcels made our Christmas brighter.

11 Jan 45 - Saw an American film "The Male Animal" with Oliva de Haviland, Jaek Carson and Henry Fonda. The German official news summary (the O K W - or in German "Das Oberkammando der Wehrmacht gibt Bekannt") translated in American language means "The high command of the armed forces gives or makes known" have been mentioning the Russians on the Eastern Front. They seem to expect Joe Stalin to start a big drive.

15 Jan 45 - OKW announced "Soviet Begonnen Gross Angriff" or "The Soviets have begun a major offensive on the Eastern Front". This brought new hopes what we could be liberated by the Russians.

17 Jan 45 - Our second wedding anniversary and I am a long ways from Cathy.

20 Jan 45 - What a thrill -- 5 letters from my darling wife with pictures of her and our son "Butch". Gosh it makes me feel good. Also got a letter from Elzie Williams. The Russians are still driving and we are still hoping that we will be liberated. Little do we know that our hopes will be blasted very shortly.

24 Jan 45 - At 2100 (9:00 PM) it was announced officially that the Germans were moving us out of Stalag Luft III. What a cruel blow this was - we were hoping against hope that we would be liberated. The weather is below freezing and snow and ice covers the ground. Some people also went wild with preparations for the move. We made a sled to carry our clothes, etc.

28 Jan 45 - At about 0215 (2:15 AM) we were issued parcels and marched out for destination "unknown". Snow was nice for our sleds but not to walk on. We marched to Friedwaldav which is about 29 Kilometers (18 miles) from Stalag Luft III. We were to stay here overnight but the Germans decided to move to the next town which is about 6 kilometers. We moved to that town and stayed in the stable there.

29 Jan 45 - Left out at about 0900 and marched to Muskau. 300 of us stopped at a French camp.

31 Jan 45 - Remained at the French POW camp for couple of days - left at 1400 (2:00 PM) to go with the other Americans. Saw Owen Liversey, spent the night at Graustein.

1 Feb 45 - Arrived at Spremberg - stayed overnight and loaded on a train next morning.

2 Feb 45 - With 40 or 50 men to one small French boxcar and the weather being very cold this was the roughest part of the trip yet.

4 Feb 45 - Arrived at Stammlager XIII located at Nuremberg. On the train trip we went from Spremberg - Blestehland - Elsterwalde - Priestel - Groditz - Riesa - Chemnitz - Weimer - Erfurt - Hildesheim - Ausgang - Nuremberg.

5 Feb 45 - Nothing much of interest - Have seen quite a few of my friends including Bill Vorhies, Don Henry, Max Sketika, Frank Winands, John Spargo. George Davis is sleeping right above me in our barracks. There are 25 men to eat and sleep in a room about the size of an ordinary living room. Some are sleeping on tables - some on the floor. Food is pretty scarce.

15 Feb 45 - RAF made a night raid over Nuremberg - it was scary.

20, 21, 22 Feb 45 - 8th AF raided Nuremberg bombing the marshalling yards. The yards are about 3 miles from us and it got a bit scary.

26 Feb 45 - One of the RAF bombs hits close to the camp tonight.

27 Feb 45 - Potato ration cut - RAF scares the hell out of us again.

28 Feb 45 - RAF over Nuremberg again.

5 Mar 45 - Bread ration cut again to 1/7 loaf per man per day - potato ration is 2 per day.

8 Mar 45 - snowing for 7th straight day - we are now getting German field ration bread (hardtack) for 2 days per week.

9 Mar 45 - Snowing again.

Nothing of unusual interest has happened except bombing raids. Food is scarce - No Red Cross parcels in camp. Everyone seems to be getting nervous and jumpy from the bombings and lack of food. The RAF raids by the RAF are particularly nerve wracking. One night they came over and lit up the city. They also dropped a string of flares around our camp and we thought that they were going to bomb us, but we found out later that the flares around the camp were for our protection - the bombers had orders not to cross the line of flares. It looked like a 4th of July celebration with the sky lit up, bombs bursting, aircraft being hit, etc.

14 Mar 45 - Nice weather - Red Cross trucks arrive in camp with food - sunshine. What more could you ask for except to be liberated. You could almost shed tears of joy when the food truck showed up.

Nuremberg is under almost constant air alert - the 8th AF come over during the day - the RAF at night - this previously beautiful city is probably mostly rubble now. It is becoming evident more and more each day that Germany can't feed the prisoners they have but they continue to bring more to this camp. Our rations are very poor - the Red Cross with their truck (American government loaned them the trucks) are keeping us in food. We get very little from the Germans.

17 Mar 45 - Cath's birthday - her 20th and the 2nd one that I have been away from her.

20 Mar 45 - RAF over for 3rd straight night.

24 Mar 45 - Got an extra issue of parcels today - French Red Cross parcels were issued on basis of one parcel per 12 men. The French parcels contained some rich food – one contained 1 can condensed milk, 5 cans sardines, 6 cans fruit James - 2 lbs sugar, 2 lbs biscuits, 4 - 2 ounce pkgs. of French tobacco. Another one contained 1 lb honey cake - 2 lbs biscuits (cracker) - 1 large can fruit jam - 1 lb cocoa - ½ lb meat pate - ½ chocolate - 1 large candy bar – ½ lb sugar - 1 pkg. candy.

25 Mar 45 - Hitler called up the 14 year old boys and girls in a proclamation over the German radio. The boys were to go to combat - the girls to war jobs – Germany is in bad shape and is getting desperate - the Americans are on the move from the west.

28 Mar 45 - German news report that allies are still driving toward Nurenberg which means we will probably be on the move soon - in fact the excitement about moving has already begun.

29 Mar 45 - Situation has settled down somewhat.

3 Apr 45 - Well- we are moving tomorrow - seems as though we are always moving ahead of the allies. Wish they would hurry and catch up with us so we can be liberated. The Germans are more prepared for this move as they announced the route and stops which we will make and the destination to which we are headed.

4 Apr 45 - On our way - we were at Nurenberg for 2 months - we are now headed for Moosberg located northeast of Munich. First day's trip included Feucht - Ochenbruck - Pfeiferhutte - Oberferrieden_ - Postbauer and Polling where we stayed overnight. And we were in our usual place - in a barn. We covered about 25 kilometers.

5 Apr 45 - Left Polling about 0900 and went to Nueuarkt. We stopped there for a few hours and saw the planes pass over going to bomb Nurenberg. We could hear the bombs bursting. It was a beautiful day - sunny and nice temperature. We are issued 1/9 loaf of bread, a little honey and small cup of soup. We stopped in a forest till dark so we could travel at night and not have the danger of being strafed by our own planes. Went on to the city of Berching and stayed overnight in a church. Berching is one of the old cities of Germany. It was partially walled in - distance - about 24 kilometers.

6 Apr 45 - Departed Berching at approximately 1430 (2:30 PM). After being issued ½ parcel (British Red Cross), 1/7 loaf German bread and a little honey, we went through Pranksteten (we passed another group of Americans here including Owen Livesy, Bill Voorheis, and others who had left out ahead of us) - Beilingries – Paulushoffen (which is at the top of a small mountain which of course we had to walk up) Altmandorf and arrived at Ponsdorf about midnight. We have covered 24 kilometers on this leg but it was about the roughest day so far on this trip. It had rained quite a bit and our packs as well as our clothing were soaked which needlessly to say make things heavier. We settled in our barn for the night. But no one cared where we stopped - just as long as we stopped.

7 Apr 45 - Germans decided to give us a day's rest and permit the others behind to catch up. Quite a few of the guys stopped at towns behind us, mostly at Belingries - and came on the next

day. The farmer who owned the barn gave us all the potatoes we wanted and permitted us to heat water and boil as many potatoes as we desired. It was real nice of him to do that - he had a boiler in a little shed that he permitted us to use and also his wood. The German civilians we encountered on this trip were rather friendly to my surprise - The guards Permitted us to trade almost at will with the civilians so we used soap, cigarettes, chocolate, coffee and tea from our Red Cross parcels for eggs, flour, potatoes etc. This is known as "Scrounging" in Kriege language. A few American cigarettes, a bar of soap, a little tea, coffee or cocoa would get eggs, milk, potatoes or even a loaf of the better German bread (which is much better than our ration bread). When trading with men we use cigarettes and with women we used soap, coffee, tea or cocoa. The chocolate candy when trading goes real well with children. Swan soap was used almost exclusively in American Red Cross parcels and it was very good for trading with the Germans. American cigarettes were better than other cigarettes for trading also. The march was doing most of us some good although it was hard at first but with the guards permitting us to trade a few of us probably gained a pound or two. With the Germans furnishing practically no food for us, the parcels and trading kept us going.

8 Apr 45 - Left Ponsdorf about 0900 and the weather was just fine. Nice sunshine that is drying out our clothes and our packs. Our spirits are revived somewhat - we feel that it is just a matter of time before the Germans have to surrender - we still have hopes of the advancing American troops liberating us. Our trip this day took us through Schanhaupten - Sanderdorf - Mindelstetten - Forchheim - Marchlng - and then we crossed the Danube river and stopped at the town of Neustadt. I had been over the Danube a few times by air, crossing it going over into Rumania and sometimes to Vienna - but this was my first trip by land (on foot) crossing "The Blue Danube". But very few if any had the energy or ambition to "waltz" as we went over the river. The Germans had placed explosives on the bridge so it could be destroyed ahead of the American troops. We stopped out in a field and were going to stay there for some time until we could get on a train and go the rest of the way to Moosberg. We weren't too happy about this because we knew how it was to be cramped up in a boxcar - jammed as close as cattle. But our main worry was that the train would get attacked by allied fighter planes - we saw them almost every day on our march going about looking for targets such as trains, trucks, etc. Since the German guards were in commend we could do nothing about the decision to go by train. We had gotten settled down when overhead 4 P-47 Thunderbolts started looking us over. Boy what excitement - and what an eerie feeling prevailed over the entire group. The fighters evidently were trying to determine if it was a group of German soldiers and if so they would have strafed. There was no place to run and even if we did run it might make the pilots think we were soldiers and then it would be "Katy bar the door". The senior American officers ordered a large P O W be placed on the ground with our white sheets (When we left Nurenberg we took some white sheets to be used for signaling or some similar use in case of emergency. Also, we could use them for bandages if needed). The planes left after the P O W was placed on the ground. What a relief it was to see them fly away. (incidentally - P-51 aircraft kept track of us through the entire march - coming over each day to check our location). After the planes departed, the German Captain (Hauptman) in charge ordered us to get ready to move. He decided that we had better move out before other planes came over and ended up strafing us. It was a relief to know that we would not be jammed in boxcars and have the possibility of being strafed. It was late but we marched to Mulhlhausen - we covered 20 kilometers this day.

9 Apr 45 - Left out from Mulhlhausen about 1000. We were now getting into the farm

lands of Bavaria which were pretty. It was small hills and valleys and at this time of the year the wheat and other grains were real green. And it was so quiet and peaceful - it just didn't seem that a war was still going on. The people were very friendly and this part of Germany had never been bombed because there were no military targets here. Small towns and farms were all you saw. The civilians seemed to be ready for the war to be over also. Our trip took us through Sigenberg - Erlach and in the afternoon, we stopped at the town of Schweinbach, where we were issued ½ Red Cross parcel. We got settled down at a nice farm about 1600 (4:00 PM) and had nothing to do but prepare supper and go to sleep. The lady at the farm permitted us to cook on her stove in her kitchen and we managed to get some eggs from her for breakfast. She was very nice. We traveled only 10 kilometers today.

10 Apr 45 – Left schweinbach at about 1030 (10:30 AM) and got a small ration of bread. Trip took us through Ludmandorf – Pfefferhausen – Oberfussbach – Obermunchen and stopped overnight at Gammelsdorf. Covered 21 kilometers today. Going through one of the many small towns, a German lady threw some bread out the window to us. At the towns the civilians put water out by the roadside so we could have a drink.

11 & 12 Apr 45 - stayed Gammelsdorf. Did quite a bit of trading with civilians these two days. Ran into some French POWs who were working on German farms. They thought we had escaped as we were some distance from Gammelsdorf while trading.

13 Apr 45 - Left out this morning on the last leg of the journey - We had really enjoyed the rest the two days had provided but good things come to an end. It was a dreary day and to make it more dreary we received word that our beloved President Franklin D. Roosevelt had died. Our journey took us Durnieboldorf – Pfettrach – Zieglberg - and arrived at Moosberg in the afternoon, covering 11_ kilometers today.

MOOSBERG - STAIAG LUFT VII-A - At last we came to the end of the second “forced” march. This march had been quite different from the other. This one had been organized. This was partly due to the fact that the German captain (Hauptman) in charge of us wasn't like the typical German officer. He planned it so that it wasn't so hard on us. He was an Austrian born officer who supposedly live in Vienna. We had covered about 144 kilometers which equals about 90 miles. But it was certainly nice that we used 10 days to get here. Ten days out from behind barbed wire - but now we were back behind the fence again. Barbed wire everywhere you look. We were quartered in large tents. After getting settled down most of us started looking for buddies whom we thought we had seen. I finally found Charlie Conlin, our Navigator; and the ball gunner, Sgt. Wilby. Also Joe Collins and Jones who were with me in cadet training. Ran into Bill Mitchel, Jack Hartman and some others from our group. Quite a reunion of the 465th Bomb Group especially my Squadron (783rd Bomb Sqdn.).

23 Apr 45 - This was a red letter day - it was officially announced that the Germans had agreed not to move any more POWs in face of the allied advances. This meant that we would just wait until the Americans took Moosberg and liberated us. We were getting excited.

28 Apr 45 - News that a “Free Movement” had taken over the radio station in Munich had ordered all fighting in Bavaria (of which Munich is the capitol) to cease. But later that day the Gestapo had eliminated the “free Movement” and the war was still on. But rumors were flying

high now. Rumors late at night claimed that American tanks were only 5 kilometers away. That meant about 3 miles. We saw the Luftwaffe (German Air Force) guards moving with packs so we knew something was in the air.

29 APRIL 1945 - LIBERATION DAY -- Yes, this was the day we had been waiting for since we became POWs. When we awoke and saw that the Regular Army guards had taken over the camp we were disappointed. We had seen the Luftwaffe guards leave and thought that all Germans had gone but the next morning the Wehrmacht (German Army) troops were patrolling. At about 0930 we heard a machine gun cut loose. Part of the guys ran for trenches and part ran into buildings - part just fell on the ground. A few bullets came down through our camp. Then we heard tanks shooting and some of the guys could see them on the hills. The battle took place about 300 or 400 yards away. At about 12:30 (12:30 PM) - we saw the American flag raised down in Moosberg which was about 2 miles away. The town had been captured - it was a wonderful feeling - just made you want to sit down and cry like babies. I don't know if anyone did but I certainly felt like it. We were FREE – FREE. The sight of the beautiful “Stars and Stripes” made you feel so wonderful - feel all choked up inside. Made you think of your wife - your son - your home _ good things to eat. Later a tank came in with the American troops and the crowd went wild. General Patton came in to visit.

7 May 45 - Flown out of Germany from airport at Landshut - Landed at Riems, France. Later went by train to Le Harve and boarded ship for the US. We had been paid - we had new clothes and good food - and we were on the SS John Erickson going from Le Harve, France to New York on the 16th of May 1945. Stopped at Southampton, England and left there on 19 May 1945. Arrived in New York 29 May 1945. What a glorious day to arrive on American soil. Called my wonderful wife, Cathy, from Camp Shanks, NY - also the family. Left for Ft. Sam Houston, Texas on 30 May 1945. Arrived there 2 Jun 45 and left that afternoon to meet Cathy and Butch in Dallas. Arrived there in the morning, Sunday, 3 June 1945 - Cathy and Butch were there waiting.

So ends the story of German prisoner of War (Kriegesfangenen) No. 7181.