

P.O.W. EXPERIENCES

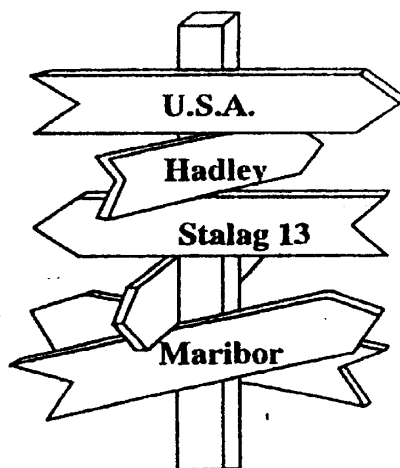
FEBRUARY 13, 1945 - MAY 10, 1945

On account of my experiences as a prisoner of war in Germany during World War II, I am writing this for my family because there are lessons to be learned from being a *P.O.W.* If what I have learned can benefit my family then I have accomplished a purpose in life. I am also writing it for Colonel Ralph Doty pilot of the B-24 Bomber, who ordered us out of the plane. He has never heard what happened to the eight airmen who were ordered to bail out. In my opinion he made the right decision. He was also an excellent leader of our crew.

Not all the experiences of being a *P.O.W.* were negative or detrimental. There are lessons that can be learned. We learned to appreciate the essence of loyalty, duty and fairness. We learned a deeper meaning of commitment and of solid relationships with one another. We learned the value of freedom; without which we would have little else of value. The price of freedom is high but worth fighting for.

The greatest of these lessons learned is my deep appreciation of freedom. Our forefathers had great insight when they established the Bill of Rights. It gave us the freedom of speech, the freedom of press, the freedom of worship and the freedom of assembly. Would life be worth living if we could not openly express our ideas and beliefs? Would life be worth living if we were not able to step up on our soap box to express our viewpoints, or to pick up the morning paper and know that there is only one side to every story or idea? We all know countries of the world where personal freedoms are withheld. The people of these countries are searching for ways to find their freedom and piece of mind.

I would be at fault if I did not mention that there are negatives in my personality because of my experience. If this has hindered the growth of our family I apologize. I only hope there are more positives than negatives and that we have all learned from my experiences.



Mission 15
Friday, February 13, 1945
15th Air Force 451 Bomb Group 724 Bomb Squadron

The uneventful day of Friday the 13th, February, 1945 was the start of an experience which in my life will be remembered until the day my life is complete. It is surprising how some events in one's life are etched like glass upon our brain. So often there are eventful memories one wants to remember yet it is not recorded. The little personal things of life are only day to day thoughts that make life worth living, but tomorrow's thoughts gather and yesterday's are forgotten. This is as it should be because the world is in progressive change and we must change with it. A war time experience is an event that happens only once in a lifetime. It is an experience that will be remembered for the good and the bad. Most every detail can be recalled with only a hint of the past. This account of Mission 15 is being written 43 years after it happened, but is still fresh in my memory.

Mission 15 started as usual with an early call for breakfast. The enlisted men on the crew were always reluctant to slip from their cots and the warmth created by their body heat. We were always covered with as many blankets as could be obtained. We quickly slipped into the necessary flight clothes and headed for the warmth of the mess hall. We stood in line anticipating that old farm breakfast of bacon and eggs, knowing it was only a dream. The usual breakfast was at hand, powdered eggs and spam.

There was not the usual chatter at the table this morning. Everyone was anticipating the most dreaded of all missions to Vienna, Austria. Each finished his meal and quietly deposited his utensils and tray in its proper place. A few gathered together as they headed for headquarters and mission briefing. As they walked through a grove of olive trees you could feel the tenseness in the air. There was no kidding or laughter, just serious talk about the mission destination. What was the mission for today, Friday the 13th, February 1945? Was it to Vienna? Was it to Munich? Was it an oil refinery in Regensburg or Blackinhammer? Was it the railroad yards at Lenz or Augsburg? Was it an air strip in Milan, Italy or some city in Yugoslavia? Or was it a new target for today?

We were now all at headquarters. Rumors continued to fly as to our destination. A few of the crew were brave enough to place a bet or two on where the flight would go. All were talking to wear off the nervousness that precedes the announcement of the mission. The door opened and the briefing officer of the day walked in. As he walked

to the briefing platform in the front of the room, an echo of every step filled the room because all had stopped talking. You could have heard a mouse run across the floor.

Without hesitation he announced that the mission today would be to Vienna, Austria. With our hearts pounding and with lumps in our throats we listened to the orders. "We will fly at 24,000 ft. Wind velocity will be sixty miles an hour. We will hit the target from the southwest to the northeast to take advantage of the wind. Temperature will be 60 degrees below zero. We will not drop bombs unless we can see the target. In case of an overcast we will proceed to the alternate target, Maribor Yugoslavia. Intelligence says the enemy has 600 anti-aircraft guns at Vienna and 19 guns at Maribor. A fighter escort will pick you up before the I.P. (initial point for the beginning of a bomb run) and again as soon as you leave the target area. Good luck men!" The enlisted men were then dismissed and the four officers of the crew remained to get additional details.

The six enlisted men loaded onto a truck and were on their way to the air strip to check the airplane for the flight. Guns were checked before every mission to see if they were operable. A visual check of the outside of the airplane was made. The "putt-putt", a generator for starting the engines, was started. Fuel gauges were checked to be sure we had enough fuel for a nine hour flight.

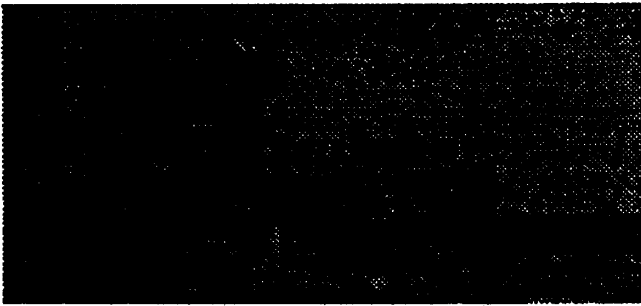
At a distance we could see the crew officers coming. All over the field you could see the crew members of 28 airplanes. Upon arrival the officers checked the readiness of the plane. Finding everything in order, we all headed for our positions. Krepps, the tail gunner, to the waist and later to his position in the tail of the plane. Gaddy also to the waist and later he would curl his small frame into the ball turret which would be extended below the plane during flight. Hawkins and Rosenblatt to the nose. Pat to prepare his nose gun for flight and Sam to ready his bomb sight for dropping. Cochoron to his radio, the navigator to his desk and I to the upper turret. The other waist gun was manned by an airman, who replaced Grossman who had burned his hand the night before lighting the make shift stove in the tent.

The co-pilot on this flight was a rookie pilot who had just arrived from training in the U.S. All rookie pilots had to fly co-pilot for one or two missions before they could fly their own plane. Ralph, the pilot, had gone over the check list with the co-pilot. Ralph was waiting to hear the order to start the engines. The call came, "Start number one"! After a few slow turns of the propeller it roared to a start. In turn numbers two, three and four were started. Each was revved up to takeoff speed to make sure all were in working order. Now it was time to wait for the flare which would indicate takeoff. All eyes were on the tower. In a very short time the flare arched its way through the sky. One by one the planes inched their way to the runway, turned to the wind, revved their

engines and slowly started the run for takeoff. A load of eight 500 pound bombs would require the full length of the runway. We watched and wondered if the planes could possibly get airborne. To us it seemed the runway was too short but at the last minute the landing gear would leave the ground. All engines, pulling at their maximum power, would inch the plane upward until enough height was obtained that the pilot could point the nose down to give the plane enough momentum to again soar skyward. It was now our turn for takeoff. The engines are at full throttle, brakes are released and the plane starts slowly forward, gradually it gains speed. Now the speed is great enough that the landing gear is bouncing along the runway. The end of the runway is approaching. The nose of the plane pulls skyward and we are airborne, leaving the engineer's tents below waving in the breeze.

Up and up we go. Now banking to the left to clear ourselves from a following plane. The plane is steadily climbing, straining to catch up so we can rendezvous with our flight. Suddenly trouble; the hydraulic pressure is falling. It continues to fall and the pilot makes decision to return to the base. As we found out later there was a break in a hydraulic line. As the decision to return to the base is announced over the intercom, jubilation could be seen on the faces of all crew members. In our minds this meant no mission today. We circled the base until all remaining planes had taken off to continue the mission. As we approached the runway for landing we worried if there was enough hydraulic pressure remaining to stop the plane as brake pressure was applied. The landing was accomplished without problems. At the end of the runway we turned and

began taxiing to spot bulldozed where we parked base). As we could see the air proaching by ready to fix the again rendez-flight. It was plane could not



the revetment (a out of a hillside our planes on the moved slowly we ground crew ap-truck. They were plane so we could vous with our impossible, the be fixed in time.

Again joy went through the crew, knowing we would not have to go on the mission to Vienna. The joy was short lived. Orders came to get all of our equipment aboard a new airplane that had arrived the day before from the States.

With our gear we were loaded on a truck and sped to the awaiting plane. Our gear was loaded again, engines checked, and with the crew in place, we were soon heading for the runway and takeoff. The new plane seemed to soar into the air with ease although it too was loaded with eight 500 pound bombs. We circled, gaining altitude and

headed for the squadron we previously had left. At a distance we could see that the group had already formed flights of seven planes except for ours where there were only six.

With engines at full throttle we finally closed in on our flight. Below we could see the boot of Italy and the shoreline of the Adriatic Sea. An aborted plane that resumed position with the flight would have to pull into the number seven position, called tail-end Charlie. For some reason the crew that had moved into our number two position, throttled back and allowed us to move up to our original position. Today one wonders if the move was one of charity or if they had premonitions of what was going to happen.

All squadrons and flights were now in place. As we continued to gain altitude we could see the curved shoreline of Italy gradually disappear. We were now at our designated height of 24,000 feet above the Adriatic Sea. It was time to check all the guns. A few rounds were fired from each of the ten 50-caliber guns. As they were fired, you could see the arch of the tracer projectiles. Now at a distance we could see the shoreline of Yugoslavia. As always a view of enemy territory would send chills up and down one's spine. Oxygen masks had been in place since we reached 10,000 feet and we all looked like men from Mars. Heat cords were connected to the twelve volt system to keep our bodies from freezing at 60 degrees below centigrade. Flak suits and helmets were on. There was now complete silence. Enemy planes could pick up voices and call in German anti-aircraft who could zero in on our position. Our eyes were staring into space watching for any enemy planes that might be approaching.

The sight below of the white capped Alp mountains was a sight to behold. This grand view was not to be enjoyed as we were approaching the I.P. (initial point at the start of the bomb run). Our fighter escort had been with us for the last fifteen minutes or so but would now peel off and pick us up again after we have dropped our bombs. Under us now were clouds and we recalled that we were not to drop our bombs unless we could visually see the target. Would we have to fly through the flak and not drop our bombs? Through the clouds we could now see black puffs of smoke. The 600 anti-aircraft guns were firing a volley of shells. We could see planes ahead entering the flak area. Soon there was a plane trailing smoke from an engine. Another plane was losing altitude and leaving the formation. We were now entering this dreaded area. Shells were exploding all around us. Some exploded so close that the concussion from the explosion would lift the plane twenty feet into the air. Exploding fragments of the shells were penetrating the wings of our plane. Holes appeared in the fuselage. Suddenly, the plane banked sharply to the right. We were out of the target area. The bombs, nestled like large cocoons, still remained in the bombay. Flak was still bursting all around us.

A quick check of the crew members found everyone without a scratch. We were now heading for the alternate target which was Maribor, Yugoslavia.

All seven planes in our flight came through the Vienna raid still able to fly. We reformed our tight seven plane formation to give us maximum fire power in case of an enemy fighter plane attack. Heading southwest we were bucking a 60 mile-an-hour wind. Flying into the wind decreases the air speed equal to the wind velocity. Flying with the wind increases air speed by the speed of the wind. Our briefing orders were to fly the bomb run from the southwest to take advantage of the wind. The flight commander made a decision to make the bomb run from the northeast. His thinking must have been, if we came through the flak of 600 anti-aircraft guns still able to fly, surely we would have no trouble with 19 guns as was reported at the intelligence briefing.

In a distance we could again see black puffs of smoke from exploding anti-aircraft shells. On this run only scattered puffs could be seen. The planes ahead seemed to move through with ease. We could now see the railroad yards we were to bomb. Everything was going as planned until suddenly an explosion took place directly below the plane. It seemed as if the plane wanted to move in every direction. Smoke started pouring from engine number two. Soon fire could be seen. The call came over the intercom "Bail out!" With no hesitation I slipped through an opening no more than ten inches wide and eighteen inches long. Ordinarily a pull of the seat release would have dropped me to the floor of the plane. The oxygen hoses, electric heat suit cords, flak suit and intercom lines were left dangling. My only thought was to get my parachute which was near the radio operator's desk. I quickly grabbed it and snapped it onto my chute harness. My army issued shoes were lying near but I forgot all about them. My only thought was to get to the bombay and out. Moving into the opening leading to the bombay, the dreadful thought of jumping went through my mind. The bombs were still neatly stacked in their moorings as I moved to the catwalk. The nose gunner, with his chute just beginning to stream from his pack, passed underneath me as I sat on the catwalk preparing to jump. To me it seemed that his chute would not open. The plane also seemed to level off in the sky. I turned to ask if we had to jump. The co-pilot was standing immediately behind me. The pilot was next to the co-pilot's seat and was setting the C-1 (or automatic pilot). Without hesitation and with the last words he ever spoke to me came the reply "Get the hell out of here"! With that command I closed my eyes and with my hand on the chute release, I rolled out of the plane and into space.

We had limited instructions on parachuting. We were told to count to ten before opening our chutes if at low altitude. If at high altitude do not open your chute until you can see forms of trees on the ground. Those instructions never came to mind. My only interest was to get my chute open. I said to myself, "1-2-3 pull" and pull I did. The chute

streamed from the pack. With a sudden jerk my downward velocity was changed to an upward velocity. I began oscillating from side to side like a giant pendulum, but I soon settled down to an even decent. Anti-aircraft shells continued to burst around me. I looked frantically for my fellow crew members, but I could see none. I looked for the plane but it was nowhere in sight. The feeling of loneliness suddenly hit me. All decisions now would have to be mine alone. The first thought was to get myself away from the bursting flak. I had heard that you could control a parachute by pulling on the nylon cords leading to the chute. I starting climbing up the harness straps to the nylon lines. It seemed that I was hanging in midair. I gave up that idea and sat back down in my parachute harness and let the chute carry me in the wind. I knew the chute would deposit me in some location, but where that was to be I did not know.

As I think back now after 40 years I can still vividly recall thoughts of prayer and how I was saved from shrapnel while the shells were exploding around me. I also had thoughts of the crew members and whether we would be getting together on the ground. Did all of the crew get out or did the plane explode before they could jump? I also had thoughts of where I was going to land and what kind of reception I would receive. Would I be lucky enough to get with the Partisan forces of Yugoslavia who were fighting the German army? Would I be captured by the German armed forces or by the civilians in that area? All these thoughts would soon be realized as I drifted slowly earthward. As I looked I could see the white capped Alp Mountains in the distance. The foothills that surrounded the mountains were directly beneath me. Gradually I could see small villages scattered about the countryside. Soon I could see the forms of trees.



As I continued to descend and drift in the wind the earth became larger and larger. Now it was not a matter of me descending, it was the earth coming up to meet me. The nearer I came to the earth the faster it seemed to be coming to meet me. I now knew I would be landing

in a wooded area. An electric high-line built through the forest was close by. I had to lift my feet to miss it. I hit the top of a small tree, carrying it to the ground with me. I landed on my feet and then on my seat in about a foot of snow. I landed so hard that for a few seconds I was dazed. I pulled myself up wondering if I was still in one piece. Finding my body in good manueverable condition, I quickly gathered my parachute together, unbuckled my harness, removed my life preserver, (which we used when flying over the Adriatic Sea) and piled them next to a tree. I reached for my compass which we all carried in case of an emergency. I determined my direction and headed south. I was hoping I would meet up with someone who was friendly to our side. I walked for 20 minutes or so through a foot of snow. The area was covered with trees which hid me somewhat from the view of the enemy. The tell tale tracks could easily be traced however. I stopped in a clearing to again make sure I was heading south. I lit a Camel cigarette. I can still remember the camel on the package. I again proceeded in a southerly direction. I walked another ten minutes or so when suddenly I heard voices behind me. I turned looked and saw nothing. Stunned and still peering through the trees all around me I again heard voices. This time the voices were louder.

I saw seven soldiers in German uniforms running towards me with their rifles in hand. Knowing I had no place to go I turned towards them with my hands held above my head. One of them yelled "halt". I was already dead still and was not about to make any false move. They approached me running with their guns drawn until they were within fifteen or twenty feet from me. Six soldiers surrounded me with their guns pointed at me as the others approached. His first words were in German, "Haben sie Pistole?" which means "Do you have a pistol?" In a hurry to get out of the plane I had left my 45 caliber pistol behind. He seemed very disappointed, much to my dislike. He then searched me. He took my wallet and everything in my pockets. Going through my wallet they found a card all airmen carry. The card had my name, rank and serial number listed. When they read my name "Metz" the spokesman said, "Ah gross vater kom von Deutschland." Being of a German nationality I understood what they had said. "Grandfather came from Germany." I replied with the only German words I knew, "Ya! Ya!" They seemed to be much more relaxed after learning my name. They then decided it was time to retrace my steps in the snow to the place where I had left my parachute. On the way back to where I had landed, fragments from exploding anti-aircraft shells began to fall. I had no helmet so they took me into a grove of trees to protect my head from falling flak. As the falling metal discontinued to fall, we again continued to the area where I left all my equipment. As we were leaving the wooded area two deer suddenly jumped up. All seven soldiers must have fired two or three rounds of shells at the deer. Their marksmanship was poor because the deer continued over the ridge. A thought did go through my mind, but a little rationalization told me I could not run like a deer. We finally arrived at the place I had piled my flying equip-

ment.

They gathered all that I had left and proceeded to a small village nearby. A half a mile before we reached the village there was a walking path in the snow. Three German guards preceded me and four followed. I could see at a distance that I soon would have additional company. What to me seemed like the whole village was coming out to see what a U.S. airman looked like. As we approached, they would step out of the path and let us by. I can still see the expression of hatred and wonderment on their faces. We continued to the village and into a small courtyard. They opened the door to an officer's office, clicked their heels and shot up that right arm in the German salute and shouted "Heil Hitler". They were then dismissed by the officer.

There was no interrogation here, but only another complete search of my clothing. I was left in the office alone for a short time. Soon another soldier came in and led me into another room. In this room sat the radio operator from our crew. He had landed in the courtyard of the village. Another fifteen minutes or so went by and the navigator of our crew walked in. He had landed in a small river. He let his chute drift downstream and hid himself under some bushes near the river bank. He was there only a few minutes when an old German soldier approached and said "Come, come". The three of us were now escorted through the courtyard to the town jail.

The whole population of the village followed us. Some were very angry. Some stones were thrown but none hit us. It makes me wonder today what would happen in this country if the same situation were presented. We were escorted to a room in the jail. In the room was a wooden table with a long wooden bench. Five German guards stayed in the room with us. The three of us were seated on the bench with our backs to the wall and the table in front. The guards were at the door and scattered about the room. One of the guards was an officer. He came to the table and started talking German to the navigator. He was very angry when he could not return the conversation in German. He stated that every German officer had to speak some English. He thought it an insult that our officers could not speak German. He switched his conversation to English and brought out a German magazine. On the cover was a picture of a German cover girl. He asked us for our comments on her looks. As good American soldiers we offered our favorable comments. As the magazine came to me I was going to start paging through it. I received a quick slap on the hand. He forbid us to look at anything but the cover and we obliged. It was now 6:00 p.m. and growing dark. We continued to sit on the bench the whole night, resting our heads on the table and sometimes on each other to catch a few winks of sleep. The German guards sat on a blanket in the corner and for many hours that night played a game we know as tiddlywinks. We talked sparingly among ourselves but were too concerned of what might happen in the future to

have any sustained conversation. The night was very long. It seemed that daybreak would never come.

As the morning light rays started filtering through the window we wondered what this day would bring. It was about 9:00 a.m. and the door opened. We were led out of the jail and to a horse drawn carriage. There was room for the driver and a guard on the front seat which was elevated above the center seat where we sat. Two additional guards sat in the rear seat which was also elevated above us. We pulled out down a gravel road headed for Maribor, the city we had bombed the day before. As we left the small village, I noticed a sign which read 18 kilometers to Maribor. This is the distance I drifted in my parachute the day before. We traveled along the gravel road with no signs of destruction from the war that was going on.

Nearing Maribor signs of destruction appeared. Bomb creators dotted the area. Some homes were damaged but were still liveable. The result of concussion rather than direct hit was evident. As we entered the city we looked skyward and saw flights of bombers approaching. Flights of seven bombers each equally spaced one behind another. The guards became nervous. You could tell they knew another attack was coming. We continued on our journey but the closer the planes came the more excited the guards became. The planes were nearing an overhead position when suddenly we heard a loud shrill whistle. Words cannot describe the sound. The guards knew that the whistle meant destruction. A bomb landed a few hundred yards from us. The three of us found ourselves alone with the driver in the buggy. When another bomb landed near, we quickly became close comrades of the German guards. We threw ourselves next to them in the road ditch. Still another bomb landed even closer with the dirt from the explosion landing all around us. We pressed even closer to the guards. If I were to return today there would probably still be an imprint of my body on that spot. As the bombing ceased, we slowly raised our heads to look skyward. The bombing was not yet over.

Flights of seven planes each could be seen as far as the eye could see. Realizing the danger we were in the guards gathered us together, loaded us again on the carriage and we proceeded up the road another half mile or so to a bomb shelter dug into a hillside. The three guards quickly ran us down a hill and into the shelter leaving only the carriage, the driver and the horses at the top of the hill. Where they went after we left I do not know.



As we entered the shelter we were surprised. The tunnel must have been dug into the hillside at least 200 feet with side tunnels running off from either side. There were a hundred people or more in the tunnel. Their faces told a story of great fear of our bombings. Some faces had tears running down their cheeks. Women and children were crying. Others were cursing the Americans who had bombed their homes and had left some of their loved ones dead. These faces sent chills into every bone in my body. I felt that at any moment they might attack.

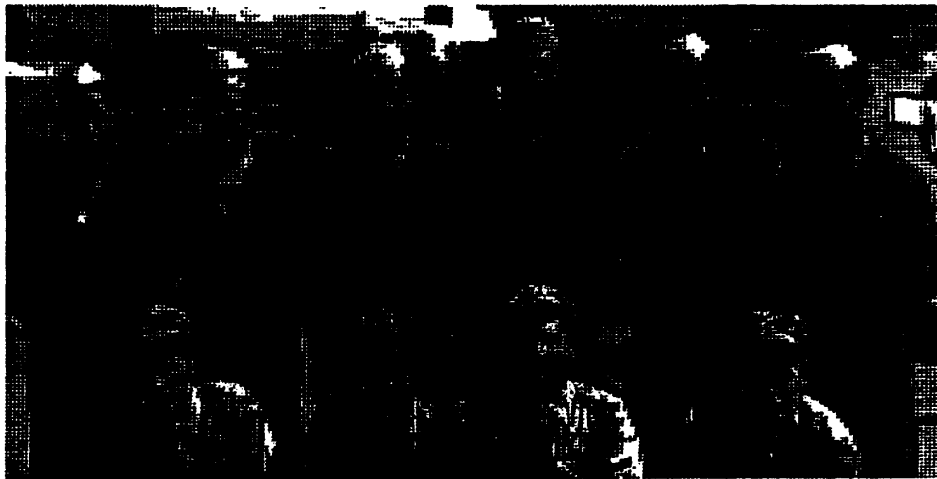
Bombs again started to fall, some of which landed directly above the shelter. Dirt and stones began to fall from the ceiling of the tunnel. As we thought the tunnel was about to collapse, the bombing again stopped. We waited for about a minute of what seemed to be an eternity. One guard opened the entrance. Seeing no more planes approaching he quickly ran up the hill to see if our transportation was still available. He found only the driver. The driver had been hit by fragments of the bombs. He had a broken leg and a wound on his head which had blood streaming down his face. We were quickly summoned to carry him back to the shelter. As we approached the shelter with him, many were coming out. Upon seeing this wounded man they began shouting in anger in their native tongue. At this point the three of us worried about our lives. The guards stood close to us and held them at a distance. Only a stone or two was thrown.

One of the guards now went looking for the horses and carriage. He called from the top of the hill that he had found our transportation. We were marched to the top of the hill and again the people surrounded us and began yelling in anger. This time an old gentleman, probably in his seventies, told them in a sharp voice to stand back. He then approached us and in very good English explained that he had been educated at the University of Pittsburgh, U.S.A. We loaded onto the carriage and headed for headquarters in the city.

Our guide to the city was to be the most irate of all the civilians. He was riding a bicycle with one hand and with the other he held a German pistol. This guide kept mumbling something in German which the guards must of understood. They showed great fear that the guide might accidentally fire the pistol he was carrying. After about a half hour ride in the carriage we arrived safely. We unloaded and as luck would have it, the guide put his pistol to my back and motioned for me to proceed up the steps of the headquarters building. I believe this was the fastest I have ever moved or will ever move again. After arriving at the offices on the second floor the officer in charge dismissed the guide after his proper heel clicking and arm raising with a "Heil Hitler" that you could have heard all over the building. I was relieved to see him leave. Again

we were searched. Finding nothing I was given back the pictures they had confiscated the day before.

After some delay we were taken to the railroad station which was close by. While waiting there for a train, I walked with Pat the armored gunner, Sam the bombardier and Krepps the tail gunner. None of them knew what had happened to Gaddy the ball turret gunner or the replacement



for Grossman on this flight. Krepps was being carried by Pat and Sam. He sustained a broken ankle when bailing out. He landed in a plowed field. Sam, as I remember, slid from the roof top of a building into the awaiting arms of his captors. I do not recall how Pat was captured.

We were then loaded onto a train and headed for Graz, Austria. It was just the break of day as we arrived in Graz. None of us had more than a few winks of sleep in the past 48 hours. We were unshaven dirty and must have looked shabby to all the depot as we left the train that morning.

Our next trip, which we were told by a guard who could speak English, would be a walk to an airfield about 20 miles outside the city of Graz. Krepps could not walk so we took turns assisting him. We carried him by having him put his arms around two of us. In this way he could hobble along. I do not know how long the walk took. I do know we were very happy to reach our destination.

Our home for the next nine days would be a small basement cell. The size of the cell for the six of us was about 9 by 10 feet. A small window let in some light. There was straw on the cement floor for bedding. On the walls were written the names of many American prisoners who had been there prior to our occupancy. To my amazement, in bold letters on the center of the wall was the name and address of a high school friend of mine from Slayton, Minnesota. We found the straw very inviting after only having a

few winks of sleep in the past two days. By the way, the bathroom facilities consisted of a gallon can located in the center of another open cell.

About mid-afternoon we were awakened by German guards who informed us that we were to be interrogated. Both were very young privates about 18 years of age. They also told us to hide any belongings we still had as they would be confiscated at interrogation. I hid my high school ring beneath the straw as did other crew members with whatever they had left. One by one they took us from the room. Each was taken to another room where we were to wait until called. Soon we were taken back to the original room but no interrogation. It did not take long to find out that the two young privates had taken us each to a different room long enough for them to confiscate all of the watches, rings and whatever was left there.

This evening we had our first meal. What a meal it was, rutabaga soup and artificial coffee. I had never been a fussy eater but the one thing I never liked was rutabagas. I found that disliking some foods is all in your mind. When you are hungry you can eat anything. The first few spoonfuls were hard to swallow but with each additional spoonful it tasted much better. The small bowl full hardly satisfied the emptiness in each of us. It was better than nothing at all. Little did we know that this meal would be our diet for the next nine days. I can remember only one exception to this diet. One afternoon when the guards took us out for a walk the guard in charge, a man about 50 years old from Vienna, Austria, received a telegram from the postman. It told him that his house in Vienna had been bombed. It also said that his family and dog were not injured. He shed a few tears when reading the telegram but was happy that his family and dog were alive. For that happiness he took the large pot of artificial coffee and dumped it in the woods. He filled the pot with beer. This evening we had rutabaga soup and beer. I might add the beer was not aged too long because it had very little kick to it.

In the nine days we were locked in this cell we became well acquainted with this guard. At times he would bring us into his office and show us a map of where the battle lines were in the east and in the west. At one point we even asked about escaping. He would only say the mountains were too far and we could not make it.

To pass the time in this small cell with six men for nine days we would ask each other trivia questions about each of the 48 states. To this day I can name every capital of every state. I could tell you also, without hesitation, the five state capitals which began with the letter "A".

On the third day after arriving at this airfield they finally came to get Krepps and take him to a hospital to mend his broken ankle. After three days his ankle had swollen to

