

SHORTY'S LONGEST BOMBING MISSION

Written by Amy M. Zielkiewicz

The Story of Lt. George F. Lausted



The Mighty 8th Air Force

323rd Squadron of the 91st Bomb Group

The Delta Rebel Crew

Abstract

Early in the morning on Aug 12, 1943, Shorty began his longest bombing mission. Gearing up for his mission on the airbase in Bassingbourn, England between 0300-0400hours, Shorty was having some difficulty seeing. He spotted a soldier with a flashlight and flagged him over asking for his light. The soldier turned out to be a childhood friend he knew as a kid growing up in South Buffalo, Robert 'Bucky' O'Conner. The two talked for a few minutes and decided that they would meet at a pub in England later that night to catch up on things. Shorty didn't return that night; he was shot down over Dortmund which is Buffalo's sister city today. He spent the remainder of the war as a prisoner of the German prison camp, 629 days. Two years ago, Shorty was telling the story to someone who happened to know Bucky and the two got together for that drink-57 yrs later and the local newspaper did a segment. The reunion inspired the creation of this story. What lies within the text of the pages that follow is a story of strength, faith, hope and courage. As well, among the many documented historical facts contained herein are the details of Shorty's incarceration in a prison camp, Stalag Luft III. Under the 'X Organization', Shorty contributed to the footwork of the Great Escape that pulled 5 million Germans away from the war effort. He remained there until evacuated and marched in the winter snow to Moosburg, another story in itself, until April 29th, 1945. Shorty was liberated that day by the GIs of

General George S. Patton's Third Army.

Hundreds of American and R.A.F. bombers and fighters roared over the Channel in broad daylight to pound German-occupied air-fields in Northern France in the big day attack, July 10, 1943. The Eighth Air Force was the greatest Air Armada ever to cross the South-East Coast of England, it was the first raid and the clouds were heavy. As it can be recalled by Shorty Lausted, 2nd lieutenant navigator, airmen reported visibility was poor and the formation was attacked by 25 Focke Wulfs. Without dropping bombs, the Flying Fortress was fortunate to fight its way back home. Abbeville airfields were attacked without much fighter opposition and the night attacks ensued on the Central Ruhr, including Gelsenkirchen (Sunday Chronicle, 1943).

Raid number two, much the same scenario, this time the two forces set out to destroy four Luftwaffe airfields and a key aircraft depot. Bombs were dropped as the flying Fortresses droned over Villacoublay, hammering the aircraft repair and assembly plants. Reports by intelligence officers claimed that B17s destroyed more than 45 enemy fighters that day which was a mark well within the six-to-one ratio (Sunday Chronicle, 1943).

U-boats and shipping yards at Kiel and the Heinkel factory at Warnemunde, both in northern Germany were the next targets. Shorty's recollections reveal that this was the fifth heavy USAAF attack in six days and the third raid for the 91st bomb group. The Flying Fortresses managed to hit 59 targets together with the R.A.F. and destroyed more than 200 enemy aircraft. The Forts took out 180 of these. Thousands of soldiers and sailors were saved by these missions. The round-trip attacks ranged from 1000 to 1800 miles and the toll as taken on the Luftwaffe's strength (Sunday Chronicle, 1943).

Travel was estimated at 1000 miles roundtrip on the fourth raid to Warnemunde on the Baltic coast of Germany. That day the Germans attempted to cover their target with smoke pots but the Forts were accurate in their hits which ultimately disabled the Heinkel Aircraft Works. Shorty recalls the day, July 30th, 1943 as a heavy bomber mission to Kassel, Germany. The main objective was to blast the aircraft plants and push the renewed Allied air offensive through its second day. Kassel lies within the Luftwaffe's innermost defense belt, however, the 8th Air Force heavies shot down 27 enemy fighters for the loss of 11 bombers of its own.

Same day, the mediums kept on hammering away at Nazi targets across the Channel in a sixth successive day with the first loss since the day the blitz began. P47 Thunderbolts maintained constant fighter cover. The blow at Kassel turned out to be significant since this was the key source of the Luftwaffe fighter strength. To this point, this was the farthest that the P47s have traveled from home and it was the largest day of fighter engagements since the battle for the skies over Dieppe (Sunday Chronicle, 1943).

It isn't very difficult to assume that all this couldn't have happened over night. Much training and preparation was involved since the day when Shorty Lausted was drafted on January 5th, 1942. His journey began with the US Army Medical Corps in Ft. Niagara, New York. It didn't take long after his January 10th arrival to Camp Lee, Virginia to train as a paramedic that Shorty decided that he wanted to fly the skies and become a navigator. Shortly after, on February 1st, 1942, he was well on his way. He spent many months at Aviation Cadet – Pre flight school in Santa Ana, California

After graduating January 23rd, 1943 as a Navigator and a Commissioned 2nd Lt. from Pre-flight school, Shorty entered flight training. Initial training began with AT7's which were small 8-seated passenger planes with one pilot and one co-pilot. Subsequent training ensued with B17 aircraft. This training occurred in phases and lasted over one year. What follows is a delineation of how it was broken down:

January 25th, 1943 – First phase AT7- Mather Field, California

February 10th, 1943 – First phase B17 – Blyth, California

March 8th, 1943 – Second phase B17 – Pyote, Texas

April 26th, 1943 – Third phase B17 Dalhart, Texas



Shorty's travels continued

On May 29th, Shorty met crew and new B17 plane. The crew flew together and broke in the engines to prepare for overseas excursion.

May 29th, 1943 – Kearny, Nebraska – Furlough

May 31st, 1943 – To Langley Field, Florida

The crew flew together to England and Shorty separated from them to fill in for a mission. The crew was in-waiting until receiving orders to complete their mission. He reunited with his crew at Basingbourn after his mission to Amiens, France.

The Delta Rebel Crew



Pictured above is the Delta Rebel Crew: Left to right-Front Row

1. Sergie Klimkow--2nd Lt.--Co-Pilot—Chicago (POW, Stalag Luft III)
2. George Lausted—2nd Lt.—Navigator—Buffalo (POW, Stalag Luft III)
3. Robert Thomson—2nd Lt.—Pilot—St. Paul (POW, Stalag Luft III)
4. Mickey Leyngle—S/Sgt.—Right Waist Gunner—Pittsburgh; KIA
5. Carole Goodwin—T/Sgt.—Engineer & Top Turret Gunner—Maine

Left to Right—Back Row

1. Robert Ziernicki—S/Sgt.—Asst. Engineer—Left Waist Gunner—Penn.; KIA
2. Charles Blonstein—S/Sgt.—Tail Gunner—Brooklyn; KIA
3. Wayne Kienberger—S/Sgt. Asst. Radio & Ball Turret Gunner—Minnesota; KIA
4. Robert Brooks—T/Sgt. Radio Man—Radio Gunner-Billings, Montana
Not in picture; wounded in action
5. Michael Couzzi—2nd Lt.—Bombardier—Hamilton, Ohio (POW, Stalag Luft III)

*KIA=killed in action

The trip to England began with departure from Bangor, Maine.

June 1st, 1943 – To Bangor, Maine

June 3rd, 1943 – To BWI, Newfoundland

June 4th, 1943 – To Reykjavik, Iceland

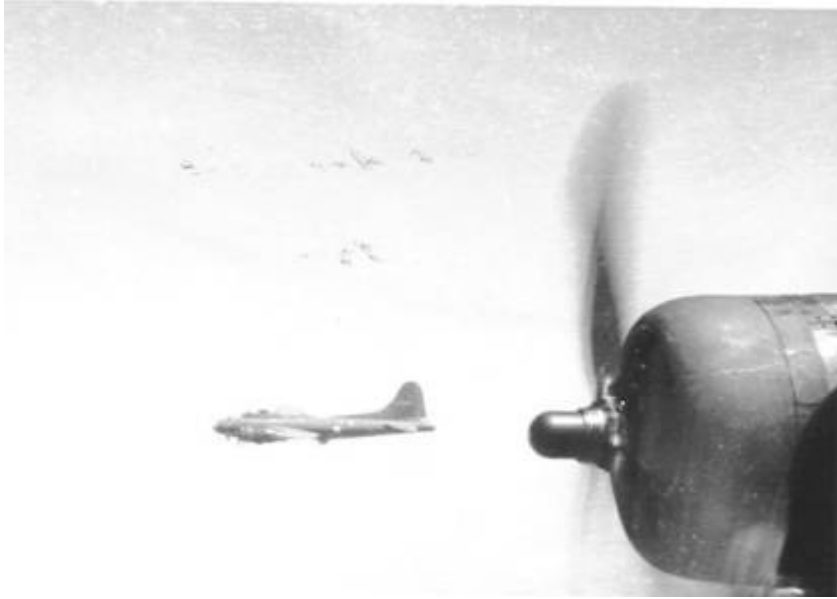
June 6th, 1943 – To Greenland

June 12th, 1943 – To Prestisle, Scotland

June 12th, 1943 – To Wharton, England

Shorty arrived at Bassingbourn, England on July 1st, 1943 with the 91st Bomb Group, 323rd Squadron. He didn't exactly expect the events that would soon follow. One day, while at Bassingbourn, Shorty met up with a childhood friend, "Bucky" O'Connor. They knew each other as kids growing up in South Buffalo. Two weeks later he was preparing for combat. They had a funny way of breaking a guy in, he recalled. Shorty remembers another GI handing him a helmet that had blood in it. He said, "I guess that's the way they did things back then."

July 14th, 1943 was combat day. The method of determining who would go on what Shorty called the "milkrun" consisted of flipping a coin. Two Navigators having arrived at the base-they only needed one to fill in for the mission. This mission was short and expected to be completed with little difficulty, but not that day. Shorty lost the coin toss, and it was a lucky thing that he did. The other Navigator was killed in action. Shorty separated from the Delta Rebel crew to fill-in as a navigator for one mission. This was his first combat mission to Amiens, France. Several losses would be sustained in the missions that followed. Shorty recalls looking out the window at a former flight school comrade waving hello, minutes later the plane positioned laterally in formation burst in to flames and went down. The Germans were attacking B17 formations from the front resulting in a shortage of Bombardiers and Navigators. Shorty remembers this as combat day. Next would be the two missions to Kassel, Germany - where the Flying Fortresses were sent out to destroy Hitler's Aircraft works. The squadron was ultimately successful in accomplishing their objectives.



Flying those missions to Kassel and Keil became increasingly difficult; Fighter Escort P47s could only go so far because of fuel capacity. The Germans spent time occupying Norway and jamming up the radar so the navigator had to use other methods for direction. It was no small task. The Schweinfurt mission was aborted because there was too much cloud cover over the target. Bombing operations were suspended out of England for one month because they endured such heavy losses of men and planes. This came to be known as the Schweinfurt Recall. As Winston Churchill once said, "Never were so many indebted to so few", he couldn't have said it better than that. The situation later improved. Hitler pulled back his planes that were bombing London because he wanted to fight with the Russians and there was time to rebuild.

Shorty's last and most memorable mission occurred on August 12, 1943. Second Lieutenant Navigator George "Shorty" Lausted was loading up gear in the nose of the Delta Rebel in preparation for a mission at an airbase in Bassingbourn, England. As recollections have it, it was about 3 or 4 in the morning and he was having a little trouble seeing, so he flagged over a Sgt. from a ground crew to use his flashlight. The soldier turned out to be "Bucky" again. The two planned to meet up later that night and go to the Eagle pub in Cambridge for a drink. "Give it to me tonight," Bucky replied to the Shorty's attempt to give back the flashlight. "Take it now; I'm not sure I'll be back." Shorty never returned to Bassingbourn for that drink. That was the first and last time that Bucky ever got drunk.

The *Courier Express* (1943) headlines read, "Buffalo flier is missing on bombing raid over Germany... Lieut. Lausted fail to return to base." A few days before, Shorty's parents had received a letter from him stating that he was in splendid health and that he participated in numerous missions over Axis territories. The navigator was one of four brothers in the armed services. Lieut. Edward M. Lausted of the Navy, stationed at Norfolk, Virginia; John Lausted, attending the quartermaster school at Sampson- later killed in action, and Corp. Robert Lausted of the Army Air Corps radio maintenance unit, Foster Field, Texas.

The longest of bombing missions occurred that day in August of 1943. The Delta Rebel flying at 30,000 feet was shot down on the way back from bombing synthetic rubber plant at Gelsenkirchen, Germany-Ruhr Valley. Shorty took a bullet wound to the knee as he bailed out over Dortmund, Germany. He was one of six men able to bail out from the 10-man crew. Four of the Delta Rebel Crew members were killed in action.

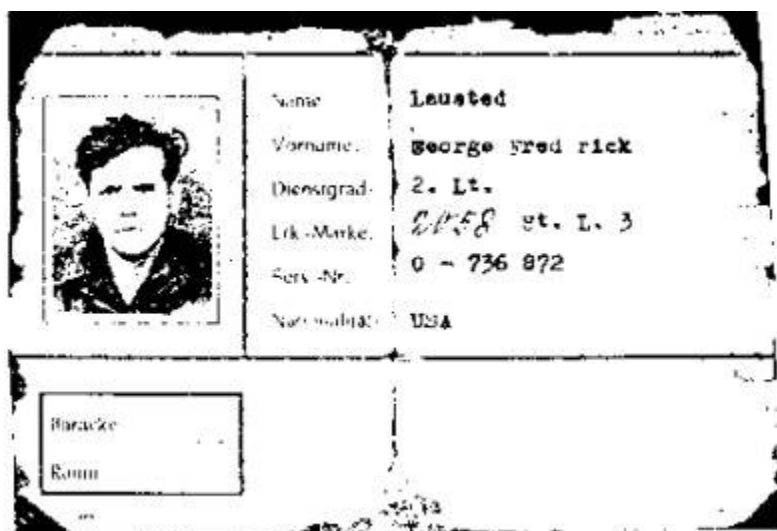
Shorty recalls a bombardier trying to open the Bombay and not being able to do so, just then one engine failed. Shorty called the Pilot to drop down to a lower altitude and try to get back to England. The pilot refused and Germans came in disabling the Delta Rebel and setting it on fire. As Shorty opened the hatch, he got caught up in the oxygen supply hose, but the bombardier pulled the unit from the wall. Shorty bailed out with the oxygen system attached; all gages off the wall and hanging off him when he hit the ground. It might have been a close call. Landing over what is known today as our "sister city," he later remarked, too bad that it wasn't our sister city then." Shorty spent the remainder of the war in a German prison camp, 629 days, approximately two years.

After the bail out, Shorty came down on a coal pile. Civilians started punching him and knocking him down. It was shortly after that the four German soldiers appeared in a truck and rescued him. They took him to an officer who gave him a tetanus shot for his knee. This was the only treatment he received. The Germans took him to Frankfurt, Germany and he spent 11 days in solitary confinement. The Germans brought Shorty to the Gestapo to be interrogated. He wouldn't tell them anything but name, rank and serial number. When it came down to it, it was just as well, the Gestapo knew everything without needing to be told.

Shorty recalled that the next thing he knew, he was put on a train with guards and sent to Stalag Luft III. Destination-Sagan. The Germans promised many good things such as swimming pools, golf courses, and countryside walks, but the train ride was a dead give-away. The 40x8 boxcars, captured from the French, were used to haul sheep and there were many droppings to prove it. There was little room in the cars for any comfort. Furniture consisted of planks too low to the floor to crawl under and too narrow for sleeping. The car was dark and tight with a six-inch crack in the door for ventilation. Not only was there a lack of fresh air, there was no water, no toilet facilities. Just when it was thought that it couldn't get any worse, the Germans took everyone's shoes to prevent any chance for escape. It was a cold, dark and long ride to Sagan.

The establishment of Stalag Luft III was originally slotted as a soldier camp, hence, "stalag" was the term used. Technically, "Offlag" was the term that denoted an officer camp. The German's, despite their orderliness and precise planning processing, did not anticipate the great influx of American Air Corp Officers that came with the bombing missions to Gelsenkirchen, Hamburg, Regensburg, and the Schweinfurt raids of latter part of 1943. The result was that many of the American Eight Air Force were placed in the camp, Stalag Luft III with the British officers who arrived before them. This emergency resulted from the decision of combined chiefs of staff to destroy the German industry and blow the Luftwaffe out of the sky (Spivey, 1984).

Registration and processing were done and after receiving his POW number Shorty and the rest were sent to the "outer lager" of the camp to get our Red Cross food and clothes. The Compound was encased in four feet of barbed wire as was the rest of the camp. Every hundred yards stood a twenty-five foot guard tower that was manned by guards with machine guns twenty-four hours a day. The Germans were not always fair and easy in their dealings with the Prisoners-of-War. It was a continuous fight to get anything, much less the things that were needed for survival in both physical and mental health.



However, how one was treated as a Prisoner-of-War depended largely on what camp they ended up in. The highly publicized camps run by the Gestapo and prison camps under the Luftwaffe were known as Concentration camps and people were sent there to die. Even in POW camps, the treatment widely varied depending on the camp administration and the overall attitude of the POWs.

The Germans participated in the 1929 signing of the Geneva Convention and the camp at Sagan, Stalag Luft III adhered to it as much as they could without hampering their own war effort. *The 2000 officers and men who remained together as a unit* were all returned safely to Allied military custody after liberation. According to the Geneva Convention, it was an officer's duty to attempt to escape as doing so would, in fact, disrupt the war effort. The German guards knew this and exercised sanctioning those who were caught with the penalty of 10 days of solitary confinement in "the kooler". The prisoners kept trying, but Stalag Luft III was built to be escape proof. The camp was set deep in the woods and constructed on soft sandy soil. The sandy soil was to ensure that any tunneling activity would be immediately detected because of the color contrast between the sand and soil. It was thought to be impossible to ever breakout.

Little did Shorty know of what events would soon follow, but quickly he would learn of the contribution he would make in disrupting the German war effort. In 1943, the "X organization" was formed by a network of 600 men. Every waking moment would be devoted to the objective of escape. In order to ensure success, everything had to be well thought out and everyone had to play a particular part. The network was comprised of forgers, map makers, compass makers, machinists, tailors security, intelligence operations, tunnel diggers and "penguins". The hierarchy was as follows:

Camp Commanding Officer

Chief, Escape Department

Camp Escape Committee _____ Barracks Escape Committees

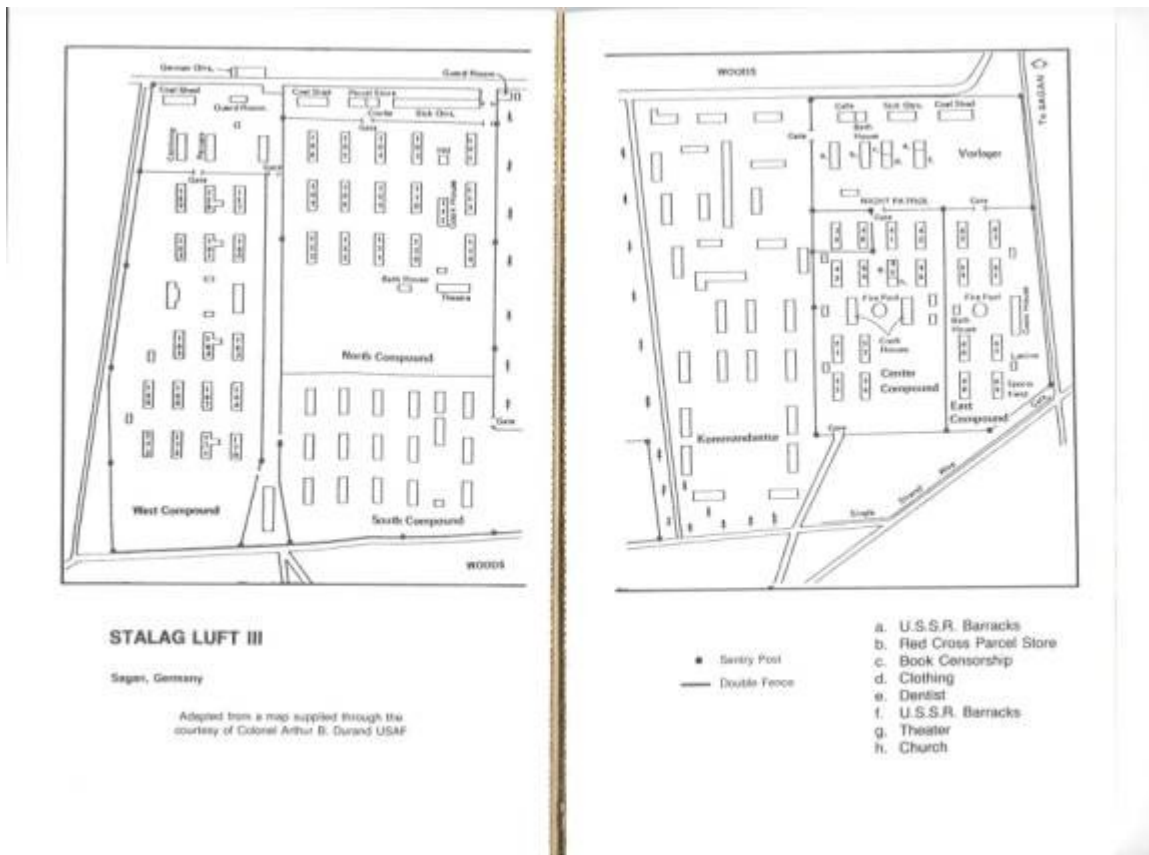
Tunneling Tailoring Security Communications Maps/Compass Conduct/Language

Shorty, and many others, had the responsibility of cleverly disposing of tunneled sand and took on the role of such “penguins” in preparations that were building up to the infamous *Great Escape*. Penguins lined the inside of their pant legs with towels that were sewn into bags to store the soil. The penguins controlled the release of the soil by draw strings and trickled the sand into the gardens and others dispersed it in to the soil. 130 tons of sand were scattered in this way; equaling 25,000 trips from the Compound.

The *Great Escape* took place in the North Compound. Shorty and the other penguins were told by the ‘X’ Organization how to make the sand disappear. Other methods beyond dispersal in gardens included: emptying the sand down latrines (toilets), mixing the sand along the volleyball court and under the theatre that the Germans later allowed the men to build with resources from the Red Cross. The tunnels were secured and lined with the bed boards that the men once slept on. Tunnel diggers were referred to as “moles” and the task was a very difficult one. The tunnel was a dark two-foot square. Careful engineering was required to avoid cave-ins and to avoid the German monitoring devices.

The tunnel diggers had to be extremely careful because too much movement could cause sand cave-ins and disable tunnel lights. The engineering was ingenious. A ventilation system was created that used empty dry milk cans that were made into ventilation pipes. There were three tunnels: Tom, Dick and Harry. Intelligence had discovered that the Germans were building another compound and movement stopped on Dick and Harry because the Americans, including Shorty, were about to be moved out and there was not enough time. The X organization decided to focus on Tom because it was the shortest tunnel.

Through August of 1943, the digging had gone undetected. Unfortunately, a German guard found the tunnel purely by accident. He was running the point of a long speared spike along the floor and it fell into the discrete crack in the concrete floor, hence, the ferret discovered the tunnel entrance to Tom.



The above diagram was extracted from Delmar T. Spivey's (1984) POW Odyssey.

This was quite a blow because the Americans lost their chance to participate in the Great Escape. Digging did not resume until January and by this time Shorty and the rest of the Americans were moved to the Center compound. The organization decided to work on Harry where the tunnel entrance was hidden under a stove. The Germans would never suspect it because this was the longest tunnel, 330 feet. Dick, located in a wash room, had a tunnel entrance under water in a drainage basin. The X organization used it to hide the dirt.

The British finally succeeded in their long awaited efforts to finish the tunnel and 100 men with the best chance of escaping were selected to be the first through the tunnel. 76 men escaped before the guard, who wandered away from his post witnessed the tunnel opening. The Germans organized a mad search to find all who escaped. All were found except for two. The Germans put all the men on a train headed back to the camp. The Hitler ordered the execution of 50 men. As the men got off the train to stretch, the Gestapo shot 50 men in the back of the head. Nobody ever discovered how the 50 were chosen, but Hitler did not order all to be killed in fear of retaliation against the POWs held by the Americans. After this horrific loss, the prisoners were allowed to build a memorial. Ultimately, this event was called the Great Escape because it pulled 5 million Germans off the war effort to search for escapees. All the hard effort and great sacrifice was not in vain (Greystone Communications Inc., 1997).

Shorty recalled hearing the news broadcasted on the BBC. The prisoners had friends and family from home send them radio parts, and then re-assembled the parts to build radios. The prisoners would listen to the BBC before bed after the lights went out.

Shorty related, “The Germans wanted us to know about it, they wanted us to know the consequences if we tried to escape.” Occupying your time would help but thoughts always turned to home, family, friends and the meals that you were missing. The days could get long and lonely and a lot of guys wanted to lay around. Shorty recalled the loneliest day was his second Christmas in Stalag Luft III. It seemed to be never ending.



Still keeping his spirits up, Shorty and his buddy, Overman would try to motivate others by getting people to exercise and walk within the camp. Exercise of any kind was important because being fit was essential. Prisoners would need their strength if they ever got out. Hours behind the barbed wire of Stalag Luft III passed more quickly with the help of the War Prisoners Aid of the World’s Committee of Young Men’s Christian Association, YMCA. To keep their hands and minds busy, the Americans studied books to continue their education, played cards and participated in baseball games. Some played in a band with the musical instruments that YMCA gave them.

The other world-wide organization was the International Red Cross. The Red Cross compiled lists of prisoners and notified prisoners’ government of their capture, assisted with correspondence between the prisoners and their families inspected camps to ensure the prisoners well-being and distributed supplementary food and clothing. The prisoners’ rights and privileges were protected under the Geneva Convention of 1929. This was a treaty that set standards for food, clothing, shelter, sanitation, medical care, labor and ensured fair treatment and the right to worship freely (YMCA, 1943).

Shorty reminisced about the last days in the camp. He remembered looking in the sky and seeing thousands of aircraft droning overhead. P51s Flying slow rolled over the camp to show aid was on its way. Swaying back and forth signaled to the prisoners that there was less resistance. He knew it couldn’t be much longer. The same activities ensued in the evening hours. Shorty recalled the night he was playing cards and received orders to evacuate. What follows is an account of what would come in the days to follow as the prisoners marched to Moosburg and were eventually liberated by General Patton’s Third Army.

A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF MY TRIP BY FOOT FROM SAGAN GERMANY TO MOOSBURG

GERMANY BEGINNING ON JANUARY 29, 1945

LT. GEORGE F. LAUSTED

Saturday Night—

Bridge game interrupted by order for evacuation (time 17:00) After several post-ponments, we left at approximately 3:00 Sunday morning, loaded down with food and belongings. After 12 ½ hours on the road in a blizzard, temperature close to 0 and 17 kilometers covered, our luggage was discarded until

the bare essentials remained. First night 12 hours sleep in a private burial vault in a cemetery, 120 men, some sleeping on top of others to keep warm. Food first in 24 hours, 6 crackers ½ can liver spread, 3 slices of bread, ½ can corned beef, ½ box raisins, water.

Second Day—

Walking, repetition of preceding day distance and temperature the same. Night spent in a hay barn (1000 men) Food for the day 6 crackers ¼ lb. American cheese ½ box prunes 1 boiled potatoe 6 cups of hot coffee at a farm. The coffee was given to my buddy Roman Niemczyk by Polish slave laborers because he spoke the language.

Third Day—

Destination unknown, confusion, rumors all over the place. Day and night of rest at the same place. Days menu Breakfast, ½ can liver paste 1 slice bread 1 cup of coffee. Dinner None Supper 1 cup of coffee 2 crackers ¼ can liver paste. Back to sleep in the hay.

Fourth Day—

Up at 4:30 AM. Breakfast 1 cup of coffee. Walked 28 Kilometers in soft snow and slush, sweating, clothes and shoes all wet— pretty tough, plenty of the kids giving up, tired and sick. Two guards gave up and were shot by the SS boys. Dinner 1 slice of bread ½ can liver paste. Supper 6 crackers ½ can Spam. Went to sleep in a brick factory at 20:00. Air raids during the night but no one was hurt.

Fifth Day—

Still at the brick factory. No breakfast. Dinner 4 slices of bread, a little cheese and 1 cup of coffee. Supper 2 slices of bread ½ can sardines 2 cups of coffee. Germans finally came through with a food issue—1/4 loaf of bread. Food up to this time had been carried from the camp at Sagan. Back to sleep on the floor at 20:00

Sixth Day—

Up at 9:00 Stayed at brick factory all day, back to sleep on the floor at 20:00. Breakfast 1 cup of coffee 1 slice of bread. Dinner 1 cup of coffee 1 slice of bread. Supper ½ cup cooked barley, ½ can cold corned beef.

Seventh Day—

Up at 5:30 Marched 21 Kilometers. Stayed the night at another farm and slept in the barn. Breakfast None. Dinner 2 slices of bread Supper 3 slices of bread ¼ American cheese, 2 cups of coffee. Filled up for the first time on some boiled potatoes promoted from a farmer in exchange for some cigarettes. Weather still very cold.

Eight Day—

Up at 5:30. Walked 11 Kilometers to Panzer station. Left at 15:00 Walked 3 Kilometers to train station. Rode all night. 50 men to a small 40 and 8 box car, had to stand, no room to sit down, too crowded. Caught in several air raids, but were fortunate not to get hit. Could not get out of train to relieve ourselves and everyone with dysentery. Breakfast None. Dinner I cup of whole wheat soup 2 slices of bread Supper 2 slices of bread.

Ninth Day—

Still in the box car and still standing and more air raids. Breakfast None. Dinner 2 slices of bread a little corned beef. Supper 2 slices of bread.

Tenth Day—

Still in the box car. Eating a little better. Germans gave us On Red Cross box for 6 men. All food is cold and we are pretty thirsty, no water or coffee in two days.

Eleventh Day—

On train until 14:00 arrived at Moosburg and stood outside in the rain until 21:45, then searched, sent to de-louser, washed for the first time in fourteen days, but still wearing the same old clothes. Went to sleep in a bed for a change. New camp is over-crowded, no heat and no facilities for cooking food. Sick with dysentery and stomach cramps. Boy what I could do with a home cooked meal.

Tuesday Feb. 8—

It's slightly discouraging to walk through Germany lugging your Belongings or parts of them and being passed by the German Army riding In Ford Chevrolet and International trucks—what a war. The Germans proceed to issue the same amount of food as in Stalag 3, but there are no cooking facilities. All meals cold except a cup of hot tea in the morning.

February 23rd—

Feeling fine for the first time. Almost everyone has been sick (in bed) ?with colds and stomach cramps, especially the older (in time) Kriegies. Never knew I could throw up and poo at the same time but I know now. A lot of the men couldn't make the latrine in time and no hot water or no other clothes to change into. Thought I would burst a few times from stomach cramps, and the only Medical supplies are band-aids and aspirins. Constructed a wood blower out of empty tin cans, it heats food pretty good, but have to pay 2 cigarettes for 1 days fuel. The only smokes I have were carried from Sagan. I guess I'll quit smoking, no other choice. Never saw so many fences around us—475 men in a place about the size of 5 city lots—no room for exercise no cards no books no musical instruments—no nothing. About 3 air raids each day and the same at night. I don't think it can be for too much longer, 19 months here would drive anyone around the bend. When kids first get shot down they think of the liquor and the hot spots they'll miss, the girl friend comes next, but here all we think of is the food we used to get a couple of years ago. I think I'll be a gourmet when I get out.

March 6th

Well I guess I don't have to worry about a large Alderman anymore. After struggling along on ½ rations of Red Cross boxes since September 15th they have given out altogether. March 3rd was the last issue. German rations consist of-- Breakfast 1 cup artificial tea. Dinner 1 cup of grass soup Supper 4 small potatoes. Extra for a week ½ lb/ limburger cheese 4 slices of liver or blood sausage, for one day 4 slices of bread and ½ spoon sugar. We're sweating out parcels more than the war.

March 9th—

Food for today—2 cups boiled sauerkraut and 4 slices of bread. Stayed in the sack all day trying to sleep to keep from thinking of food.

March 22nd—

Well I'M full for the first time in quite awhile, German ration of potatoes has been cut to 4 per person 3 days a week and nothing to supplement them, but we went back on full ration of Red Cross food. I'm really going to eat when this is over. Fineweather with air raids day and night/

April 29th—

MY SENTENCE IS OVER. PATTON'S THIRD ARMY GI'S JUST CAME IN THE FRONT GATE. THE LAST OF 629 DAYS IN THE BAG. PARDON THE SNIFFLING, I DIDN'T KNOW I HAD A COLD.

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