

# STURGEON BIOGRAPHY

Written by Charles F. Sturgeon

1-STURGEON'S Biography POW # 86085 Stalag Luft IV & 1 Written 12/20/98

NAME: Charles Franklin Sturgeon, S/N 37415946

NOTE: The first section of this Biography is a repeat of some parts of my "Diary". Received Basic Training at St. Petersburg and Clearwater, Florida, Aircraft and Engine Mechanic School at Amarillo Air Force Base, Amarillo, Texas, and Specialist Factory Training at Douglas Aircraft Factory in Long Beach, California, Advanced Training Salt Lake City, Utah, Crew formation and training in B-17's at Sioux City, Iowa. I was assigned as Aerial Engineer (MOS 748) on Thomas P. Smith Jr.'s Crew #3349 at Sioux City Air Force Base, Iowa. The other crew members were assigned at Salt Lake City, Utah.

Crew number 3349 consisted of:	Crew on Aug 13, 1944(shot down)
Pilot, Thomas P. Smith Jr.	Pilot, Thomas P. Smith Jr.
Co-pilot, Louis G. Starks	Co-pilot, Joseph Vukovich
Navigator, Alexander W. Calder	Navigator, Alexander W Calder
Bombardier, Ray Rietschel	Bombardier, Robert Bell
Engineer, Charles F. Sturgeon	Engineer, TT Charles F Sturgeon
Radio Operator, Delmer C. Spears	Radio Operator, Delmer C Spears
Ball Turret Gunner, Jess W. Britton	Ball T Gunner, Jess W. Britton
Waist Gunner, Calvin M. Seiler	Waist Gunner, Calvin Seiler
Waist Gunner, Richard H. Hayes	
Tail Gunner, Leonard Rogers	Tail Gunner, Leonard Rogers

On April 18, 1944, crew # 3349 was forced to bail out of a burning B17 # 07 62 near Ontonagon, Michigan, while on a night Navigation Training Exercise out of Sioux City, Iowa. Another story  
BRANCH OF SERVICE/DIVISION; Crew #3349 was assigned to the 8<sup>th</sup> Army Air Force in B17's, 91<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group, 322 Bomb Squadron stationed in Bassingbourn, England.

May 21, 1944, flew a new B-17F from Lincoln, Nebraska to Bangor, Main. Flying 11:25 hrs.

May24, 1944, Left Bangor, Main for Goose Bay, Newfoundland. Flying 6:00 hrs.

May 26, 1944, Left Goose Bay, Newfoundland and landed in Nuts Corner, Ireland. Flying 11:25. Took a Limey ship from Ireland to Stranear, Scotland, landed in Stone, England. Took a train to Stafford, England, then to London, Cambridge, then on to Royston, near Bassingbourn, England.

May 29, 1944, arrived at Bassingbourn in time to witness the build-up of troops and equipment for the excitement of "D" Day.

June 6, 1944, Crew still in training but we made a training mission and flew out to the English Channel to see all the activity, ships and aircraft were everywhere. Some damaged English bombers landed at our field for repairs. Some had fence material penetrating parts of the plane. They were doing low bombing runs and as their targets blew up, they would fly into parts of them, causing damage to the

aircraft. Continued schooling, training and started, making bombing missions over enemy occupied territory.

June 17, 1944, our first scheduled combat mission to Amiens, France, over German occupied territory, mission was scrubbed because of the weather.

June 18, 1944, our second scheduled mission to Hamburg, Germany was aborted because of strong fuel fumes throughout the airplane; we expected it to blow up at any time.

June 19, 1944, our first completed combat mission was to Bordeaux, France in B-17 G, Fifinella. My crew was flying in Fifinella when we were shot down on my 20<sup>th</sup> mission over enemy occupied territory. (See my WWII Diary for account of missions over enemy occupied territory.)

My 20<sup>th</sup> mission on Sunday, Aug. 13, 1944. This was the first day for our regular copilot, Joe Vukovich, was on his first combat mission into enemy occupied territory. B-17 crews utilized only one waist gunner during their missions. Richard Hayes flew that position for us most of the time. Today Hayes was on "sick call" so Calvin Seiler, our waist gunner, was flying his third mission with us. Seiler's other two missions were flown when I was grounded two missions for ruptures ear drums. This was bombardier, Robert Bell's fourth or fifth mission with us, since replacing Ray Rietschel. Our target was a double railroad trestle across the Seine River at La Manor, France, south of Paris. Knocking out the trestle would make it more difficult for German military forces to retreat from one area with their heavy equipment or bring in more reinforcements. Moments before bombs away, around 12 noon on this Sunday morning, our B-17 G Fifinella number 42107030, LG T, took a direct hit to the cockpit area by anti aircraft fire. The oxygen storage, the hydraulic system and the fuel transfer system were hit. All three systems burning at the same time caused an inferno in the cockpit area, especially around my station, the upper turret, which is just behind the pilot and copilot. The small fire extinguisher I used had no effect on the flames. Our bombs did hit and destroy the railroad trestle. We were forced to bail out of the burning aircraft. My flight suit burned and only the pockets and seams were left. The cover burned off my parachute; it popped and was consumed by flames. I escaped the fire by going through the bomb bay to the waist of the plane. I was burned at every opening of my clothing, my forehead, back of my neck, wrists, buttocks, and I had breathed in some of the hot flames into my lungs even though I had disconnected the oxygen hose from the regulator and breathed through it. When I removed the oxygen mask, the area around my nose and mouth was burned and blistered. I picked up one of the three spare parachutes that I had stored in the waist area for emergencies; this was an emergency. I wondered how serious the pilot and copilot were burned and if their parachutes had burned. There were two spare parachutes left, enough for them to have one after I got mine. The leg straps on this seat type parachute had been adjusted too short and I was unable to adjust them to fit around my legs. Seiler was the only one still in the waist area that I could see; apparently the others had already bailed out. Seiler extinguished the fire on what was remaining of my flying suit and chest chute harness. Seiler tried to fasten the leg straps on my seat chute but thinking we would crash at any moment. We were standing in at the open escape hatch and at one time we were low enough that I saw trees and a house as we passed by, I told him to bail out and he jumped. As I was practicing jumping without leg straps by going through the motion of pulling my rip chord and grabbing my opposite elbows, I saw the ball turret turning and Britton getting out. He evidently had not heard the "bail out" warning but knew we were no longer with the formation. Britton beat out some smoldering cloth on my flight suit and tried to fasten my leg straps. I told him that we didn't have time to work on the straps so he jumped out. Now I was the last one, so I jumped. Realizing the leg straps were not fastened, I pulled the rip chord and in one motion, crossed my arms and grabbed both elbows and was able to hang on to keep the arm straps secure under my arm pits. Shortly after my seat type parachute opened with a jerk

and after swinging a while, it seemed I was going up instead of down. Then I saw that I was near the same altitude 25,000 feet, as a formation of B-17s' going by, not the same we were with. Evidently our plane had gone into a steep climb after diving toward the ground at least a couple times. We were flying lead of our formation and the other crews tried to follow us through our maneuvers until they realized that we were in trouble. German anti-aircraft guns were shooting at the formation of B-17 and there was heavy flak all around. I could hear and feel the shells as they passed by my open parachute. The shells seemed to get closer and closer, then there was a pause in firing, when the firing started again, the shells were passing on the other side of my parachute. I think the gunners stopped firing to allow me to pass through their sights. After falling a short time, my chest parachute harness, which I had failed to remove, started to burn again. I couldn't try to extinguish the new fire because I was hanging on the arm straps with all my strength. My arms didn't seem to have any feeling in them and I was exhausted. Since I couldn't reach the fire to put it out and was feeling very weak, I thought that I could stop all this in a short time by just turning loose my elbows. I wondered how we were able to stay in that airplane at that altitude without oxygen that long and not pass out. As I watched, our plane went into a dive and it appeared to crash into a house and explodes into flames. Underground pictures, belonging to Jess Britton, show the airplane crashed, narrowly missing the house. Flames, smoke, and dust covered the area and made it appear that the house had been hit. I remember thinking that anyone in the house would have been killed. Forty seven years later, Jess Britton gave me copies of the pictures taken by the French underground of our B-17 bomber just before and just after it crashed, it didn't seem to miss the house. He also had pictures of our target, the destroyed railroad trestle. Britton also had a picture of one of the crew, (the underground told copilot, Joe Vukovich, that he was the one in the picture), still descending in a parachute. I landed in a fence row, I couldn't control the parachute because I was too busy hanging on. Several German soldiers were waiting and pulled me out with a broken leg that was caught in a fence row. Now I had burns on my face, in my nose, neck, wrists, buttocks, and aching shoulders and arms, caused when my parachute opened and now a broken leg. My parachute harness and the seams and pockets of my flying suit were still smoldering. Our pilot 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Thomas P. Smith Jr. was killed, four crewman, copilot-Joe Vukovich, navigator- Alexander W. Calder, waist gunner- Calvin M. Seiler, and tail gunner- Leonard Rogers, were picked up by the underground and evaded capture. Three crewmen were captured by the Germans, radio operator- Delmer Spears, bombardier-Robert E. Bell, and myself, engineer- Charles Sturgeon. I had landed in the German Field Hospital yard hedge rows, my captors took me in and treated my burns by removing the loose, hanging skin and splinted my leg. My burned rags were removed and I was given a short tee shirt that didn't cover my privates. Later that day I was taken to an anti-aircraft gun site and ordered to get out of the car so the gunners could see one of the airmen they had shot down. I was then taken to a small building where they were keeping Spears. The building was a small room with one table and one bench. Spears had been the first one out of the waist of the plane, he couldn't get the door to fall out, and so when he bailed out, he had to squeeze out through the partially open door. I was the last one out but we were together again. Spears saw my predicament, no clothes, and told me that he wearing two OD's instead of a flying suit. He pulled off the other suit and gave it to me, what a Friend and a life saver! Spears helped me remove the splint, put on the suit of OD's and replace the splint. This suit of OD's turned out to be the only clothing that I would receive while a Prisoner of War. There is another story about this suit of OD's and General Eisenhower.

August 14, 1944, Spears and I were loaded onto a wood burning truck and taken to a castle; it looked like a castle to me, at Galleon, France. I do not know the directions to Galleon but it was a couple of miles from the Seine River, you could see the river from the second story veranda of the old castle. American troops were within 10 kilometers and we could hear firing from both sides of the line. The

castle was being used to hide a German mess kitchen for the front line soldiers. There was also a fenced-in area that was housing several POW's. Our bombardier, Robert Bell, was in this group. Bell was covered with bruises; he looked as if someone had beat him up. He told me that he received the cuts and bruises when his parachute dragged him across a pasture when he landed. After staying at the Galleon for two days, the American front lines were getting closer, so we were told we would be leaving on foot. I was concerned that I would not be able to walk any distance so I hid under some straw bedding in one of the rooms in the castle. I could hear the guards looking for stragglers but they failed to find me. After waiting a long while, I went to a window and could see the column of POW's walking down the road toward the Seine River bridge, about 2 miles away. While I watched, a P-51 flew over and saw the column walking down the road, the Germans forced prisoners to stay on the road by threatening to shoot anyone who tried to leave. The P-51 pilot must have realized that they were prisoners so instead of strafing the group, he made a circle and fired a rocket into the river and destroyed it. The column of prisoners couldn't cross the river, so they were forced to return to Galleon. The next morning Aug. 17, the prisoners were again ordered to move out; again I hid in straw. This time a German guard found me and made me join the group. Since I was wearing a splint, I was allowed to ride on a two wheel, horse drawn cart loaded with kitchen equipment. Two rowboats, manned by two Frenchmen, were waiting at the ford near the destroyed bridge and rowed the group of prisoners across a few at a time. The horse swam across the river at the ford with the small two wheel cart, helped along by the two row boats. While some POW's were waiting to be ferried across the river, two amphibious jeep type vehicles came to the river. The first one drove out into the water and one occupant pulled a rope starter of a small engine, with a prop, on the rear of the jeep. The engine started and the jeep proceeded across the river and drove out onto the opposite bank and drove off. The second jeep drove out into the river and an occupant turned to start the small engine. It did not start and the jeep started to drift down the river mid stream. The German was still pulling on the rope trying to start the engine as they went around a curve in the river and out of sight. I'm not sure but I think they were heading toward the American troops. After crossing the Seine River, the group of POW's headed into Germany, sometimes marching sometimes riding in German trucks. After the first day, riding on the two wheeled horse drawn cart, I always rode in a truck. We spent nights in lice infected chicken coops, out building, and in school houses. Other POW's were added to our group as we traveled through France. One of our first stops in a small French town, Les Andeleys schoolhouse, where we met up with several seriously wounded POW's, with gun shots and gun shot legs with compound fractures. One prisoner had received a shot through his chest that clipped a lung but missed his heart by one eighth inch, he was told. He had a band aid in front and one on his back to cover the wounds. One prisoner had a gun shot wound just above his belt buckle and he had to hold himself together with his hand, I wonder if he made it. We did receive some medical attention from some French nurses in the city park and in a theater after it started raining. I was glad it started raining because my treatment would require me to drop my pants to get treatment for the burns on my buttocks. I was dreading exposing my buttocks to all the French people out in the middle of city park. It wasn't so bad inside the theater but bad enough since the nurses were also young. We received our first food that I can remember since being shot down, and I was hungry at that time. Some French women brought some bread and jam for us and there was a hand water pump just outside the building, so we had all the drinking water we wanted. One lady made a second trip to bring me a single edge blade razor because of the several day beard growth. The razor blade was so dull I couldn't shave with it. I tried to sharpen it on the window glass, which helped some but I still couldn't shave my chin so I also left my mustache; the French lady especially liked my goatee. I had an opportunity to escape while at this schoolhouse. I was standing at a window on the second floor of the schoolhouse when I noticed two Frenchman standing on the ground below the window. They motioned for me to jump from the second floor window and indicated that

they would take me away. Since my leg was already broken, I didn't want to try it. I was afraid of getting them caught; they couldn't see that I had a bad leg. I spoke to several others who were also afraid to jump out of the second floor window; it was quite a distance from the ground. During this time the German guards were on the ground floor out of our sight; they were tired and hungry also. I often wondered how it would have turned out if I had jumped and often thought that I should have. I was separated from the original group, including Spears and Bell. I was loaded onto a truck with two American and two German soldiers that were so ill that they could not move. All four had compound fracture wounds to their legs caused by gun shots and evidently not received medical attention. The first day with the seriously wounded soldiers, we traveled all day from daylight until dark without seeing an American aircraft. I sat on one side of a bench just behind the cab of the truck with the German guard sitting on the other side. The guard dosed off several times during the day and I could have just fallen off the truck and escaped but with a bad leg; I didn't think I would get very far. As darkness was setting in, the two Americans and I were unloaded and put into a chicken coup. The truck left with the Germans, probably to get them medical attention. We had been without water or food all day. I asked the German guard for food and water for the wounded men. The German informed me that there was no food but found a bucket and led me, in the dark, to an underground water supply. I dipped up a bucket of water and carried it back to the chicken coup, hobbling along on my broken leg. I found a can and gave the soldiers a drink of the water and took a drink for myself. I noticed the water was lumpy but I needed a drink, it was so dark I couldn't see what was in the water. The next morning the soldiers asked for another drink, but when I saw the condition of the water, tadpoles and mosquito larva, I had to strain it through my fingers before giving them another drink, we needed the water. The two soldiers were loaded into a truck and taken away, I was returned to the original group. I hope the two soldiers were taken to a hospital and received badly needed care. We finally reached a small French town where we were loaded into a 40&8 box cars for a 7-day trip, we traveled mostly at night because of the American fighters, to Dulag Luft located near Wetzlar, Germany. The boxcars were rated to handle a load of 8 horses or 40 men. I couldn't count the number, probably over 150 prisoners in the car. The car was so crowded that there was standing room only. There were no seats, no room to sit, after a couple of hours we took turns kneeling on the floor. There were no toilet facilities other than a bucket that could be passed around, no food or water. The train traveled very slowly and stopped often, a couple of times we were allowed to leave the train to use a nearby field for a restroom. Once or twice while we stopped, some food was given to the men near the door. There wasn't enough food for half the men in the car. No food or water ever reached the ends of the car where Spears and I were standing. It did rain and I was able to hold a can out the barred window of the box car and catch some rain water. Everyone near the corner of the car received a small amount of water. Dysentery was prevalent in the group that did not receive food and water and the one bucket wouldn't begin to go around fast enough. The box car was a stinking mess. It was a great relief when we reached Dulag Luft, we were assigned POW numbers and had "mug shots" taken. Spears was assigned no. 86084 and Sturgeon became no. 86085, I have my German identification with mug shots that I retrieved after being liberated in Barth. We didn't receive German POW "dog tags" as most of the other POWs did. Robert Bell was separated from us and we never saw him again. I received a bar of soap, a tooth brush, a razor, one pair of underwear, a badly needed jacket and a pair of shoes that "didn't fit". I received medical attention for my wounds and burns, received a delousing shower and a Red Cross food parcel, the best treatment we had received since being captured. Every time we were ordered to take a delousing, we were leery because the thought that this might be a gas chamber instead of a shower. We were aware of the atrocities of gassing the Jewish people and political prisoners by the Germans. About a week later we were "enjoying" another 5-7 day train ride, again mostly during the night, to Stalag Luft IV, Grosstychow, all the way across Germany. I think, on this trip, but it could have been the trip from Luft

IV to Luft I, we were caught in a British night time bombing raid on the marshaling yards of Berlin, Germany. Our boxcar received some damage; we were sitting ducks with no way to escape. I'm sure the British were unaware that we were there but their bombs damaged the rail tracks around our train to continue our trip. Conditions on the train were about the same as the first, very crowded, about 80 men in each car, double the capacity. Most, if not all POWs were suffering from exhaustion, hunger, little or no water, and dysentery. We were happy to reach Grosstychow to get out of those stinking rail cars and maybe get some water and food. We were marched from the train station at Grosstychow to Stalag Luft IV camp, about two miles. Spears and I were housed in a Larger-D of Stalag Luft IV, population of around 2500, in late August or early September 1944. I celebrated my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday on September 25, 1944 at Stalag Luft IV, "turned 21 in prison". The camp had four compounds or Lagers for a total of approximately 1000 POWs, mostly American airmen but some RAF enlisted men. The barracks were very crowded even before we arrived; there were eight double bunk beds for 16 men and one small potbelly stove. Spears and I were assigned different rooms directly across the hall from each other. The rooms were built to house 16 prisoners but the camp was so crowded that there were 24 or more prisoners in each room. This meant that at least 8 or more prisoners did not have a bed and were required to sleep on the floor. The floor had cracks wide enough that the guard dogs could be seen wondering under the barracks. These cracks gave us ventilation after dark when the windows were closed and shuttered. We had plenty of refrigeration from these cracks when the weather was cold. My total bedding was two blankets, so I piled on everything I had, which wasn't much, to try to keep warm during the night. I sure didn't remove any clothing when preparing for bed and I don't remember ever getting warm the extremely cold winter days. During the day I would borrow a bunk and try to get warm and catch up on the missed sleep during the cold nights. The night time rest room was a pit located at the end room of the barrack next to our room, you couldn't miss it unless your nose was stopped up. There was no water in the barrack, our drinking water source was also our bathing and laundry facility consisting of a hand pump and cattle watering tank. It was located outside, and froze during winter; each water source was used by several barracks. Needless to say, bathing was scarce during the winter and sponge bathing was the normal during pleasant weather. The same water tank was used to wash our clothes, without soap. Food was scarce and we were always looking for something to eat. Red Cross parcels were distributed occasionally with one parcel to 4 men. We were told that before we got there that each man would receive a whole parcel every week. Every container, in the parcel, was opened by the Germans before distribution and mixed with sardine oil. The oil spilled into everything, even the cigarettes tasted like fish, I always tried to trade my cigarettes for food, when you are really hungry nothing else matters. Early in February 1945, everyone that was sleeping on the floor was told to fall out with their belongings. I thought we were being moved to a new compound that was under construction. Spears didn't fall out as ordered; I never knew his reasons. Instead of going to a new compound, 3000 POWs were marched to the train station and crowded into 40&8 railcars, there were several other cars loaded with sick and wounded. I left Stalag Luft IV February 1945, without Spears, on another 5-7 day train trip with very little water and food and lots of dysentery, to Stalag Luft #1 camp, near Barth, Germany. As I stated earlier, this may have been the train that was bombed while in Berlin, not sure. We were marched from the train station at Barth to Stalag Luft #1 camp. Several German people lined the streets through the city, they seemed very unhappy with us and several tried to get the prisoners to hit them with rocks or spit on them. The German guards did a pretty good job of protecting us. I was housed in building #14, room # 13 with 31 other fellow Kriegsgefangenen. The barrack situation in Stalag Luft I was more crowded than in Stalag Luft IV, I would be sleeping on the crowded floor, no beds available. Other living conditions were about the same. The floors had large cracks and as usual, dogs could be seen under the barracks on

nights with a bright moon. The barracks were constructed with floors two to three feet above the ground setting on support blocks about every ten feet and open all around. Our sanitation approached medieval standards. The night time restroom was a concrete pit at the end of the barracks that always smelt bad. There was a window that was always open for fresh air. If you leaned out the window for fresh air, the dogs that were turned loose in the compound at night would jump up and try to bite you. We also had an outside pit restroom that we used during the day after the barracks were opened. The concrete pits had to be emptied about twice a week because of the number of people using them; Russian POWs were assigned to this task. Two Russian POWs equipped with a horse drawn tank emptied the pits and spread contents onto farmland around the camp. This tank was an ingenious piece of equipment. A compartment located at the front end of the tank had a baffle between a firing chamber and tank sufficient to fill the tank with the waste from the pits. The old horses didn't even flinch when the loud explosion occurred but every POW within hearing did. A hand pump and tank for water was located outside, about fifty feet from the barrack. The pump furnished our drinking water and the water tank was our bath water and washing water for our clothing. On nice days there were several men using the tank, some washing clothes some bathing. There were no drying towels so when you took a bath you were in a hurry to replace your clothing for warmth. In warm weather, when I washed my only suit of OD's, the suit Spears gave me, I could wrap up in one of my blankets or go in naked, until the sun dried. There was a little problem going naked because there were thousands of girls just across the fence from us. There was an Anti-Aircraft School across the fence from the POW camp and it appeared that all the students were female. Occasionally one or several of the girls would come up to the fence and try to start a conversation with the Americans. There were two tall fenced, topped with barb wire, separated about eight foot on the outer parameter of the compound, with a single wire one foot high, twenty foot inside the tall fence. So the girls were about thirty feet away. Sometimes I would wash and put on my clothes wet and let them dry while wearing them. When you wanted to press your clothes, you had to wear a blanket while they were being pressed. In my case, the pressing took place under someone's borrowed mattress, the same as before. The drying process took all day but the ODs sure looked sharp with creases. The climate near the Baltic was extremely cold and it was very uncomfortable at night with only two blankets. When I first arrived at Barth, food seemed to be better because it was prepared in a kitchen, and we received ½ Red Cross parcels per week. During the month of March all parcels were stopped and camp food also was reduced, everyone lost weight, I reached 98 pounds. The first of April, parcels were again distributed and things greatly improved. April 30, 1945, German guards marched out of camp, leaving the POWs behind. POWs took over guarding the camp to prevent other Germans from coming in and keeping POWs orderly. I used an axe that I had traded from a German guard, for two packs of cigarettes, to chop a hole in the fence. Several POWs headed for a farm house about a mile from camp, to get one of those chickens we have been hearing for so long. By the time I reached the farm, another group had already arrived and had a cow hanging being butchered. We at last had more food than we needed if we could find a way to cook it. Martimuchi and I were in the group selected to go out into the town of Barth and look for and confiscate any transportation we could find. We found two new cars, turned them in, and they were used to go out to contact the Russians. The first one's engine locked down because it had no water, the second group located and brought the Russians to our camp on May 1, 1945. We heard that the Russians wanted to take us to Russia but we were told to refuse to go with them. May 6, 1945, an officer from the camp was flown to England and reported the situation to the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force Headquarters. May 13, 1945, B-17s from the 91<sup>st</sup> BG, my BG and BS, landed at the air field, the Germans used for Jet aircraft training, about three miles from camp. I went to the field to see the first plane land and entered the plane to visit with the crew from Bassingbourn. When the plane was loaded and preparing to leave, I intended to get

out but was invited by the pilot to stay in the cockpit with the crew. The crew suggested that I go back to Bassingbourn but I declined. When we landed in Camp Lucky Strike, I left by the front exit and was the first off the plane. Martimuchi and I went to a restricted warehouse looking for food and were caught. As punishment, I had been told that I would be last on the list to leave Luft I, that didn't happen. Camp Lucky Strike was a tent camp, set up to receive POWs and care for them until they could be shipped back to the United States of America. I was able to locate Spears after a day or two, I'm not sure when he arrived or when he was scheduled to leave. I missed a couple of schedules because after waiting a day or two I would go sight seeing in Paris. One day General Eisenhower flew into camp to give the prisoners a pep talk. I made my way up to the stand where he was making his speech and when he was finished, I asked him if he knew his radio operator. He did not, and asked me why I asked. I explained that my brother, John Sturgeon, was a radio operator in the Air Transport Command and as I understood, his job was flying on aircraft, transporting ranking officers. General Eisenhower asked an officer to see if their radio operator's name was Sturgeon. The officer returned to inform us that John Sturgeon was not on their flight. Eisenhower then climbed down off the stand and asked me if I had eaten my evening meal. I told him that I had not eaten yet. As we walked to the mess tent, Eisenhower noticed my clothing and asked why we had not received a new clothing issue. I told him the story about Spears and my suit of Ods that had been my only clothing for the nine months plus as a POW. About one hour later a notice was announced over the PA for all who had not received a new clothing issue to report to the supply tent. I received a new issue of clothing and an Eisenhower jacket. Returned to the good old United States of America on the USS ADMIRAL H. MAYO as a Technical Sergeant. I went back to school for one year, got married to a beautiful girl, moved to Amarillo, worked at Pantex Plant, the only nuclear weapons assembly plant in the USA, as Section Head of Maintenance for 32 years. Raised a family consisting of four girls; Sheri, Sandra, Dana, and Kim and one boy, David. Now I have several grandchildren and one great grandson.

C.F. Sturgeon

The story above was written from memory, I did not have a diary after being shot down and captured. The accounts are as accurate as I can remember. There are several incidents that I do not remember as clearly as others. I was on a train trip with hundreds of other POWs through Berlin and the train was bombed. The rails were so badly damaged that we were unloaded from the bombed area and marched to and loaded into another train inside a tunnel. I also remember being somewhat nervous because of the number of German SS soldiers around the train that day. I just can't remember which trip it was; maybe some one can help me with this one.

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