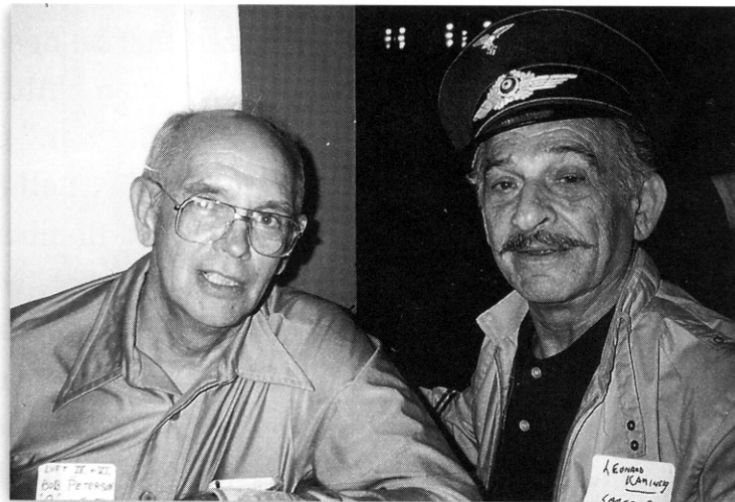


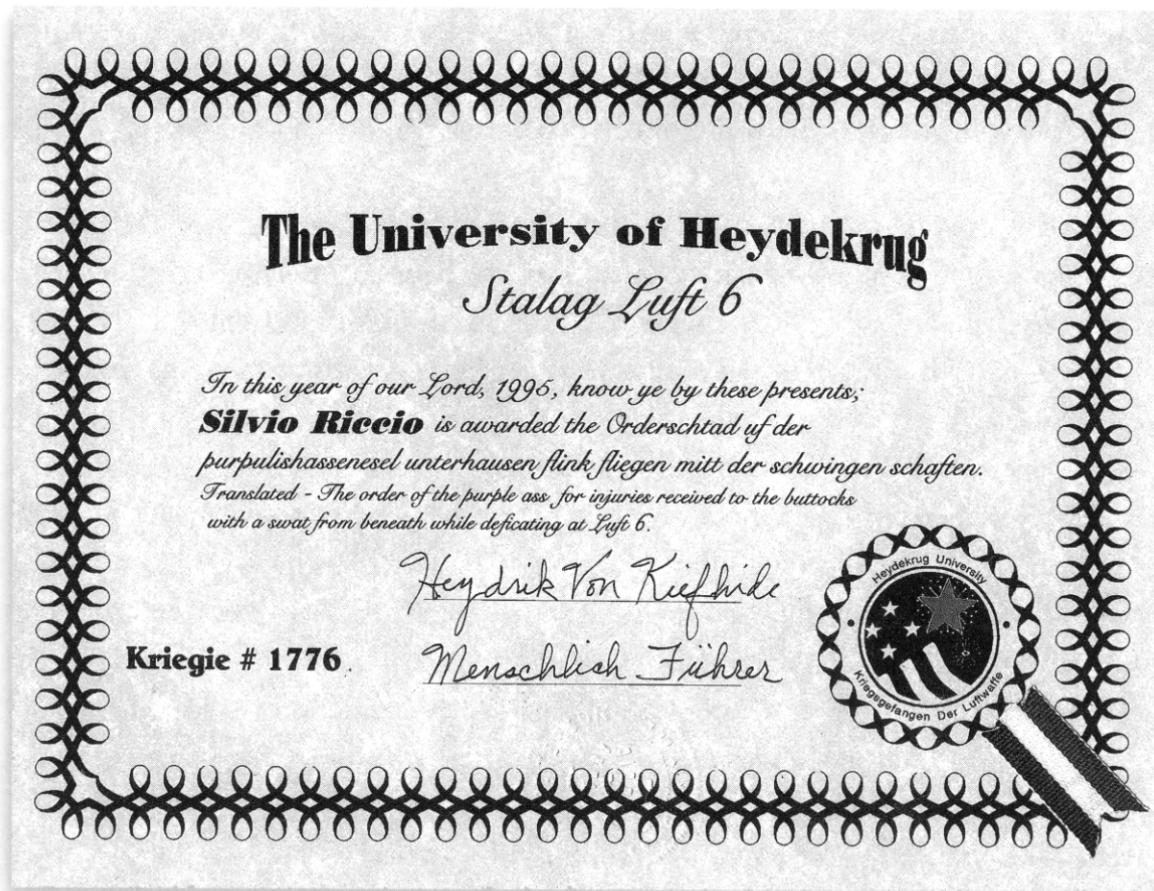
SHE'LL ALWAYS REMEMBER!  
 She'll always remember  
 When you were only four,  
 Your favorite game was playing with  
 Your soldiers on the floor.  
 The time when you were seven  
 And tumbled down the stairs  
 An angel up in heaven  
 Answered all her prayers.  
 You will always remember  
 The tear drop in her eye  
 The first time she discovered  
 There was lipstick on your tie.  
 Now a soldier boy you may be  
 But you're still her baby,  
 She'll always remember  
 So don't you ever forget.

Words recalled from a song popular before Peterson left home.



**Peterson and Kaminsky**

POW Reunion, 1985, Milwaukee, Wisconsin  
 (Kaminsky is wearing the German officer's cap  
 acquired in Halle, Germany, 1945.)



The diploma given to **Riccio** by Peterson to commemorate his night "in the hole" at Stalag Luft VI.

The longer the men were imprisoned, the crazier they became. A common response to outrageous behavior was, "how long has he been here?" The wiser the man the more he realized that he needed to occupy himself. Games became more and more inventive and often childish. One such wise man could later tell about "how he was injured in the war." One hot summer day in 1944, Rocco Russo (New York state) and Tommy Bell (Boston) were whiling away their time at their favorite game, "Fighters and Bombers." Rocco, with his elbows outstretched, was pursuing the longer "winged" Bell around and around the dog houses the POWs called home. The bomber rolled a tight bank around the corner of one of the buildings. With slick maneuvers and mounting speed, the Messerschmidt came in at nine o'clock and with an explosion of dust, a sickening thud and cracking echo . . . both planes tumbled to the ground. Casualties: one broken leg! Russo sustained a truly memorable and quite remarkable war injury!

Darrel G. Hammond (Snake) was awakened by Peterson one morning. He instantly focused on Peterson heroically trying to hold on to a threatening black reptile wriggling just over Snake's face. With intensity, Peterson questioned, "Do you think this snake is poisonous?" Hammond bellowed, his body convulsed and the bunk collapsed! Actually, the "snake" was an elongated roll of soft tar Peterson had fashioned to appear a bit more menacing. The bunk had been five wooden slats covered with a thin paper mattress stuffed with excelsior.

Their basic diet was potatoes, cabbage, turnips and bread. In fourteen months they never saw apples, oranges, pears, plums, cherries, bananas, berries, corn, or eggs . . . except in their heads. But they survived . . . at least, many of them did! They did see a very small amount of salt and coarse sugar and sometimes a tablespoon of sugarbeet jam. When they got cabbage soup (fondly called "oak leaf stew") they also got a little extra protein. The soup was generously laced with bugs and worms! Many of the men would sort them out, but Peterson just ate, preferring not to look. Hugh Hamilton, however, went about it in an entirely different way. He would show everyone his insects and then savor their texture and tastiness. (*Hamilton now lives in Wallace, Idaho. Many years later, when asked about something that they were given to eat called "fish paste," he said, "I ate every bit of food the German's ever gave us, but that wasn't food!"*) The fish paste was clearly unidentifiable but was most likely entrails left over from a fish cannery. It came in bloated containers and it looked and smelled like a baby diaper, but Peterson ate it . . . however, the other men made him go outside first.

Entertainment varied. After "lights out" the men had to find their way to the toilet

by *feeling* their way along the bunks in absolute darkness. The 20 gallon bucket was in the corner of a little alcove off the end of the main room. So the men would work their way down along the bunks to the end, feel for the door, and then work their way over to the corner where the bucket was. It was against camp law to do anything but urinate, but with dysentery it couldn't always be helped. By morning it was always filled to the brim. Wisely, the men would not *feel* for the rim but instead *listen* for the sound to know they were aiming squarely. On occasion, some joker would just move the bucket so it couldn't be found in the dark. It was particularly entertaining once when someone decided to adjust, slightly and progressively, each bunk a couple of inches out from the wall, each bunk a little further out than the last one. The innocent mark would depend on a guiding touch to lead the way, but this time it led the way at an angle instead of straight toward the door. The dupe would expect to be able to turn and find the open doorway and now could only feel a solid wall. The door wasn't where it should be, and in absolute blackness the poor soul had to resort to quietly retracing his steps, talking himself through it again, and finally, mumble in total disorientation as he struggled to find relief.

The guards would sporadically come into the bunkhouses to spot check without warning. They carried flashlights that were powered by pumping a noisy little friction mechanism. When one room was inspected, sometimes the guys in the next room would be forewarned. Just to frustrate and confuse the guards, the prisoners had set up a card game beforehand, and when they were alerted, they jumped into position to appear to have been caught in the midst of play. The guards would frown and mumble, "Was ist los?" as they inspected the light in the ceiling, trying to determine how the men could be playing cards and get light when the power supply had been cut off.

When it was really cold, men would double up and share blankets. And, of course, when two men are under the same blanket, body odors and noises are readily exploited. The problem was how to get someone to put his head under the covers at the appropriate time, so . . . "Cover your head, I'm gonna spit on the ceiling" became a common tactic and inside joke.

In camp it wasn't unusual to hear someone starting to recount his "bail-out" story and then hear, "I'll listen to your story for a candy bar!" Everyone had a story. One came down in a floating plane tail without a parachute, another survived a streamer via evergreen trees on a snow-covered mountain slope. Joe Peters jumped holding his chute like a bundle of laundry. Bob Woodruff was putting on his harness when

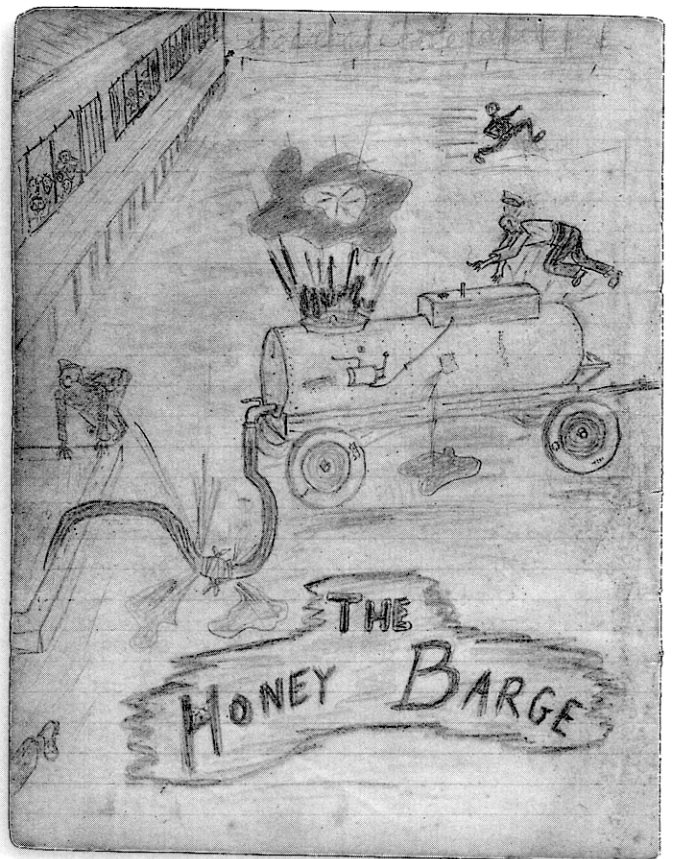
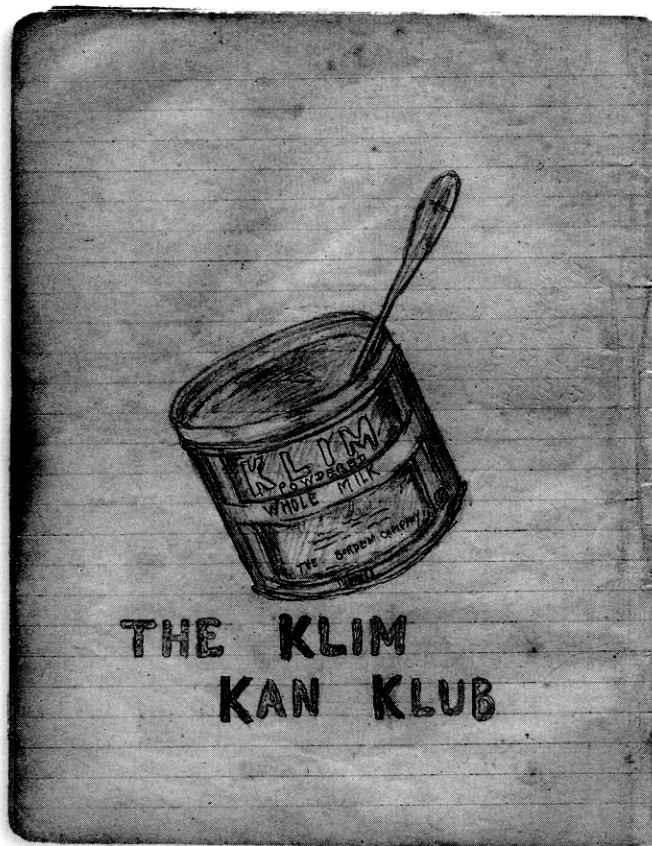
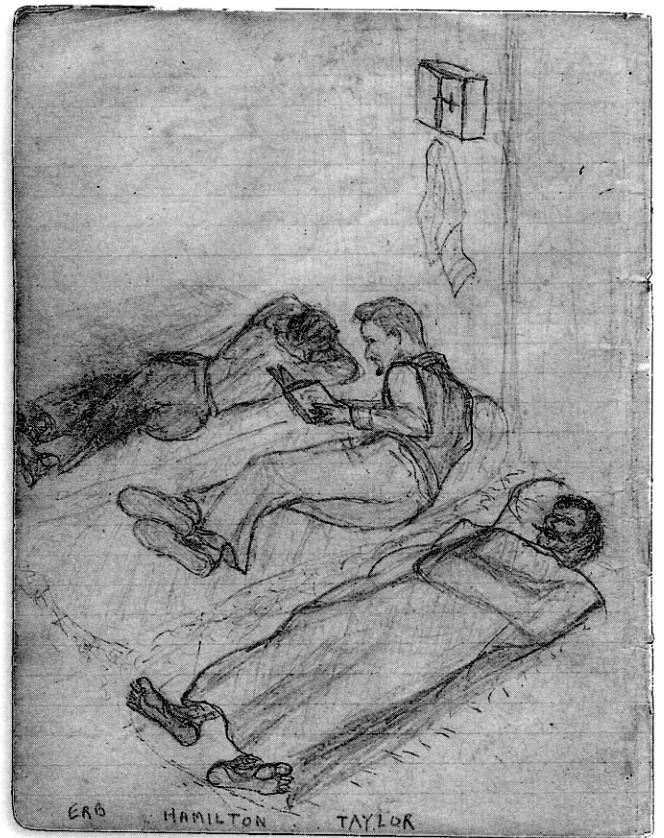
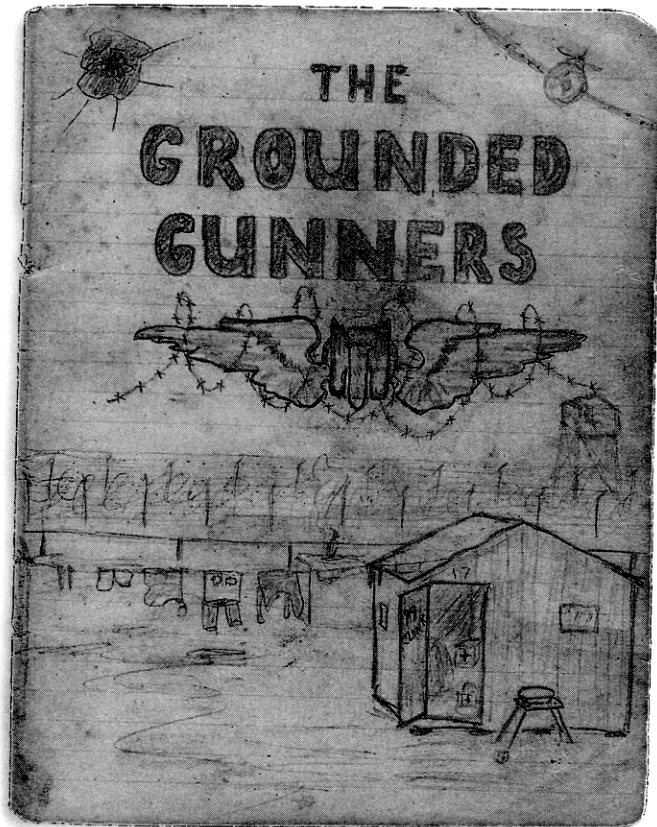
the plane blew. He had only one arm in the harness but couldn't get it on any further, so he pulled the D-ring anyway. He regained consciousness as he was nearing the ground. The chute lines were only attached to one wrist, snagged on his military-issue wristwatch.

At Stalag Luft VI, the prisoners were locked in all night and the doors were secured with 2 x 4's from the outside. By morning the buckets were usually full and the men were anxious to use the latrines instead. POW Walter Nies spoke some German and was well liked by the guards. However, the tower guard's orders were to shoot anyone seen outside the barracks before the guard, with his dog, had finished removing all the 2 x 4 's. Walter had awakened early one morning in May and when he found the door open headed down to the latrine. He was unaware that the guard had not yet finished his rounds. S/Sgt. Walter Nies of the 96th Squadron, was shot and killed.

*(Nies's plane went down over Albania because of insufficient fuel on 24 Jan '44, Mission #133; target: Sophia, Bulgaria. Bolt and Nelson were on the same crew and also survived the crash. Four other planes were lost on the same mission, crashing into the waters of the Adriatic due to insufficient fuel. Additionally, it is unknown where Nies is buried, along with two other prisoners, George Walker, who was shot trying to escape, and Sgt. Teaff, who died of pneumonia.)*

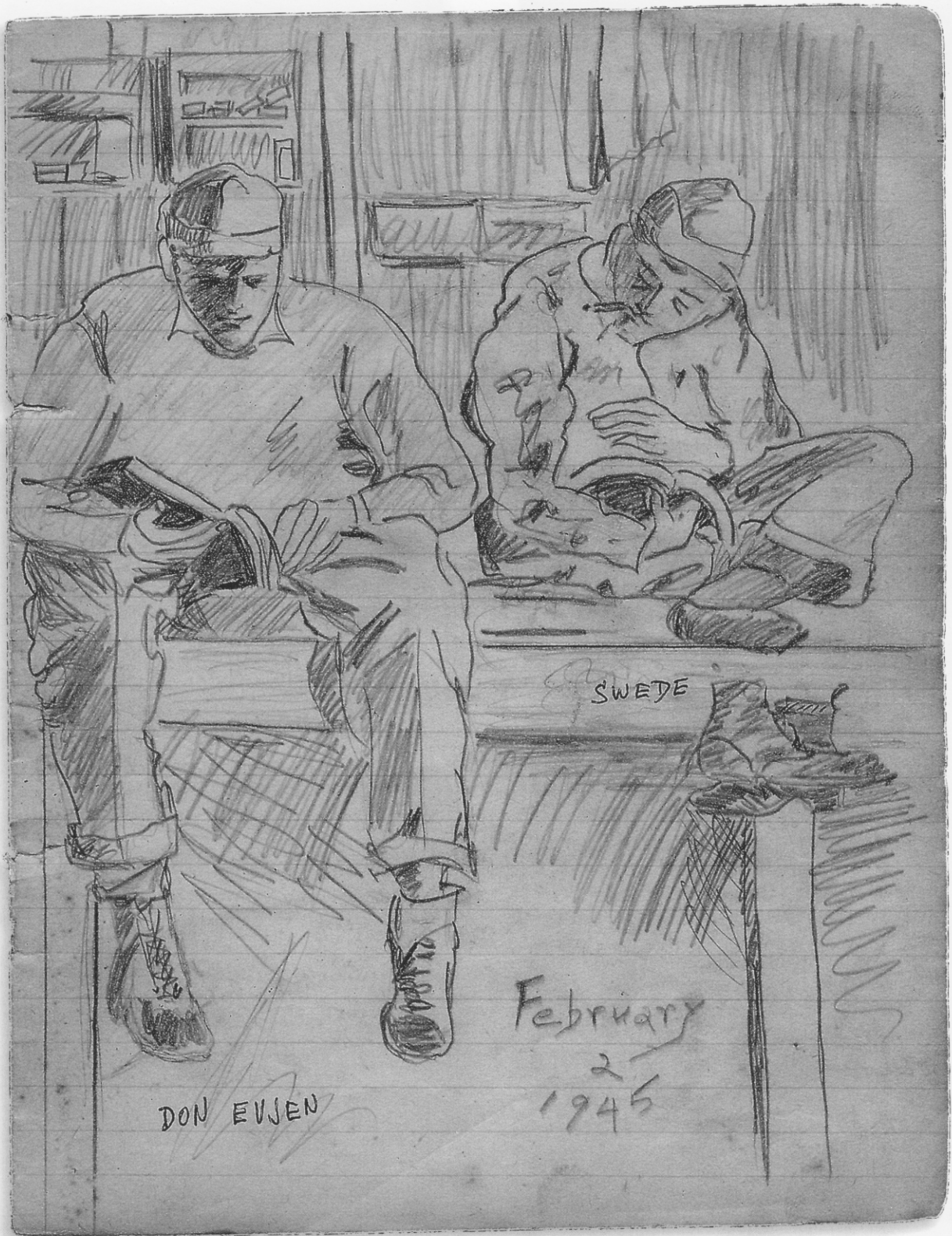
The POWs were moved out on July 14, 1944, and were herded by the hundreds into the hold of the coal ship "Masuren." They were shipped west across the Baltic landing at Swinemunde (near Stettin, now called Szczecin, on the Polish/ German border). The prisoners' shoes and belts were taken at the port to deter escape attempts. They were then loaded into boxcars at a rail station named Kiefheide (now called Podborsko) for transport to Stalag Luft IV, which was near a village named Grosstychow in Pomerania, Poland (northeast of Berlin.) Before leaving they were all given two Red Cross parcels to carry. As POWs, they were supposed to get one of them every week, but they almost never saw them. Because the camp was being evacuated, the Germans needed to move all the stored-up supplies. They didn't want them left behind for the advancing Russians, and the Germans needed the parcels relocated, so they gave them to the prisoners to carry. The prisoners couldn't eat any of the provisions because most of them were dried foods such as, powdered milk and coffee, and they had no water.

On July 18, they made "The Bayonet Run" to Stalag Luft IV from the rail yard. On



## PAGES FROM PETERSON'S JOURNAL

Peterson's drawings depict the "dog house" and some of the men he knew as they rested inside. The "honey barge" was equipment used to empty the latrines, it was then sprayed on the fields as fertilizer. The drawing illustrates a POW lighting the fumes.



Another page (actual size) from Peterson's journal. This drawing by **Wayne Warren** is of **Don Evjen** (left) and **Swede** (right).

that day they were lined up, handcuffed into pairs, and forced to run 2-3 km (1-2 miles), many barefoot, carrying two boxes of supplies at about 11 lbs. each. A red-faced and ranting German Captain incited and frightened the young, 15 to 17 year-old Kriegs Marines by accusing the "American gangsters" and encouraging the use of bayonets to "prod" the prisoners to the camp (in German, "Kriegs" means "war"). As the prisoners stumbled and struggled toward the camp, they could see soldiers armed with machine guns and positioned in the shrubbery and trees along the road, just waiting for an escape attempt. The word spread, warning the men not to try. The guards, dogs, and young marines kept pushing, jabbing and stabbing with their bayonets. Prisoners started dropping the Red Cross boxes. Some prisoners were falling as others tried to drag them along. They were weak, suffering from lack of food and water, and having been cramped in box cars and the ship's hold for three consecutive days. As the boxes fell, the German trucks and wagons came along behind and reclaimed the supplies. It was now legitimate to recover the food that the prisoners "threw away!" As hundreds of bayonet wounds were wielded, the prisoners dropped most of their supplies. Some say that over three hundred wounds were delivered. However, no one was known to have been "run through." Even one of the guards fell, suffering from exertion as he tried to make the run.

Earlier Peterson had taken a pair of long underwear, tied knots in the ankles and had slung it around his neck, making the legs into long pouches in which to carry his supplies. He made the entire run dragging his manacled and stumbling partner, while scooping up and stuffing down the legs of the underwear an additional 11 lbs. of discarded Klim. (Klim was a powdered milk packaged in one pound cans. The name "Klim" was "Milk" spelled in reverse, and was the trade name under which it was produced by Borden's milk and dairy product company.) The prisoners were held outside the camp for more than a day. Other prisoners warned them through the fence that any supplies they managed to get to the camp would be taken from them anyway. The only food product Peterson was able to get into the camp was some coffee substitute he had wrapped up inside of a very dirty handkerchief. The guards didn't want that! Once inside the camp, they were given water but no food.

*(An attempt on Hitler's life was made on July 20, 1944, two days after "The Bayonet Run.")*

The prisoners in Stalag Luft IV were predominately American with a number of English, Canadian and Australian Air Force as well. The compound was divided into four sections, A-D, with most of the British Commonwealth prisoners in section D. Almost without exception the POWs were non-commissioned officers.

Both camps had similar prevention measures against escape attempts. There were armed guards in numerous towers all around the perimeter. There was an outer and inner fence with rolls of barbed wire sandwiched in-between the two. The outer fence was electrified. Most of the men were “dying to get out” and some did just that . . . they died. None escaped any other way from Luft VI and Luft IV. It was said that several men who had tried to escape fried on the wire instead. One was an American GI who just “went off the deep end” and ended up on the electric fence. A German guard also died on the fence. About 20 feet inside the fencing was a warning wire. Anyone nearing or touching it was apt to be shot. One day, about a month before Peterson arrived at the Luft IV, a Sgt. Teague decided to exit the barracks by going out an open window instead of using the door. A walking guard watched and waited about five minutes before he shot and killed him.

While Peterson was interned many of the buildings had not been finished and there were a number of temporary shelters and tents. Much of section D was incomplete. He started out sleeping in what they called a “dog house” or “kennel” in Section A. Each kennel was about 7 x 18 feet and housed 10-12 men. The men couldn’t stand up in them, except at the very center of the slight pitch, and they slept side-by-side on the floor. When one turned over, they all did. At one point Peterson remembers that a German plane flew overhead and crashed just outside the fence near his dog house and into the densely wooded area. An automatic cheer went up . . . *until* the guards swung their machine guns around and the POWs dove for cover. The guards in the tower nearest Peterson didn’t fire, but some of the others may have. Once lightning struck one of the dog houses, about 20 feet from Peterson, killing an Englishman and injuring several others. Most were carried out. The lightning burned the nails off the walls. Men in the surrounding area complained of jaw pain following the strike (perhaps as a result of an electric charge to the teeth and dental work).

Later Peterson was moved to another section of the camp and was upgraded to Room 11, Barracks VIII, in Section C, but continued to sleep on the floor as there were an insufficient number of bunks at the camp. Upon awakening one morning, he found his blanket frozen to the floor. There was a little tin stove in each room, but it was rarely warm. Each man was to receive a ration of one lump of coal each day, but as usual, they seldom got it.

*(Two of the Englishmen that shared a doghouse with Peterson were brothers, Kenneth and Peter Corry. One of them later became a member of parliament. Peterson thinks it was Ken).*



Almost 10,000 men were evacuated from Stalag IV on February 6, 1945. The Soviet offensive was advancing and the Germans were being forced west. Large companies of prisoners (2-3,000) were formed and sent with armed guards deeper into German occupied territory as they lost control of their front lines. Word spread that Hitler had given orders to execute all prisoners of war. The captives were forced to march toward an unknown destination.

Food was desperately needed - even the civilians were starving. There simply was very little food, and it didn't come often. A loaf of bread might be split among 10-20 men. They took shelter wherever they could find it. It was mercilessly cold (north of the 52 degree latitude, similar to central Canada). There was disease, dysentery, frostbite, and amputations (some lost both legs). Sometimes the prisoners slept under trees or shrubs, and when especially lucky, they would commandeer a farmer's barn. Fields occasionally provided cabbage stalks that were left in the ground after the cabbage had been harvested. They were very valuable and exceptionally tasty. Once Peterson found an animal carcass in a barn. It was skinned, headless and footless, but it was food. Peterson worked off a chunk and about twenty other men swarmed and ate. *(He still doesn't have any idea what it was.)* He also found an old, dirty T-shirt hanging in a barn with some seeds in it. They looked like little blue "BBs." They tried soaking and boiling them, but they remained like rubber. Nevertheless they were consumed. *(He doesn't know what they were either.)*

About the 45th day of the forced march, Peterson took a bath on the sunny side of a barn. He broke the ice on a puddle and dipped the water up with his "Klim" can. When he removed his clothes, he noticed how emaciated he had become. For the first time it occurred to him that he might die. His clothes were full of what looked like talcum powder. It was an enormous amount of dead skin, and who knows what else. Each rib had scabby tissue damage running along its length. The men were crawling with lice, and even in their sleep they would constantly rub and scratch their bodies in an attempt to alleviate the itching. The skin had worn thin, and there was nothing between it and the bones. Time seemed to be running out.

*(In several other POW accounts, men who stood 5'8" and weighed 160-70 lbs., dropped to about 80 lbs. Peterson, at 6'1", thinks he was between 80-100 lbs.)*

John Clark *almost* made it out. He died on April 10th, 1944, not knowing that the march . . . and the war . . . were almost over.



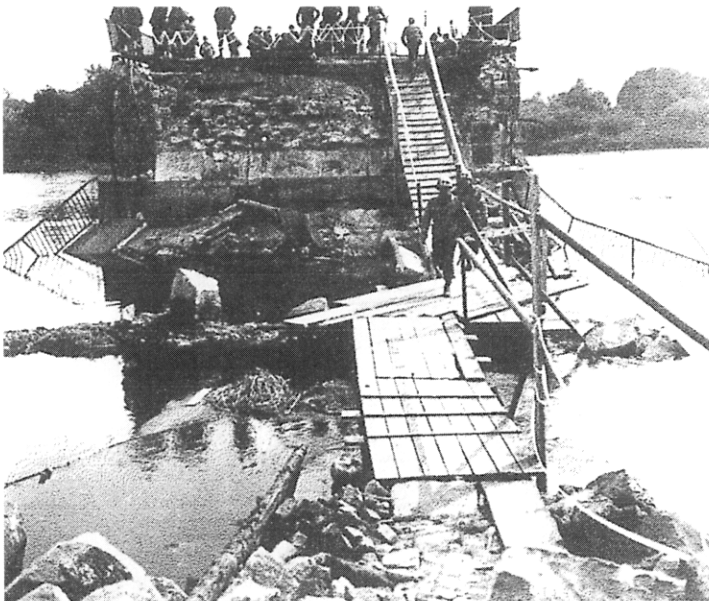
Woodrow Lundquist  
(A.K.A. Swede)  
Wayne Warren  
Hugh Hamilton  
Robert Peterson  
Frederick Eib  
Darryl G. Hammond  
(Snake)  
Otto Sands  
Chester Harver



## W.W.II POW'S CROSSING THE MULDE RIVER

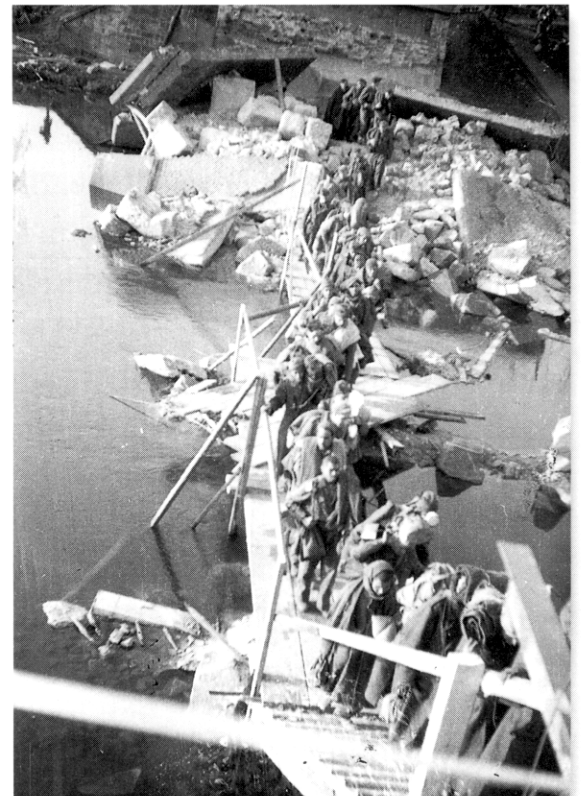
Bitterfeld, Germany, 26 April, 1945

This photo was given to Swede in 1949. He was in a tavern in Minnesota and while engaged in idle conversation, discovered that the man to whom he was speaking had been in the 104th Infantry Division. Swede, a little stunned, said that it had been the 104th that had met him at Bitterfeld, Germany, and ushered him into freedom. The gentleman pulled out his wallet and handed the photo to Swede. Immediately, Swede recognized the men in the photo.



MULDE RIVER BRIDGE

This photo was sent to Peterson by former POW, Ed Hilding.



MULDE RIVER BRIDGE

This photo was sent to Peterson by former POW, Henry Lively, from Wichita, Kansas.

Special Snack  
 Hot or Cold pie w  
 Cinnamon Rolls with  
 Hot Corn meal muffins  
 Toasted Coffee cake  
 Spice Cake

Orange Juice  
 Dry Cereal with  
 Hot Cakes with Banana  
 (Brown)  
 Gregle Special  
 Breakfast No. 1  
 Cocoa

APRIL 27, 1945

W.M. Lundquist  
 O.G. Beebe  
 O.J. Sands  
 K.W. TAYLOR

The First Day of Freedom

We got up at dawn after about an hours sleep  
 + started looking for grub. Got rice, sugar, salad  
 oil, cinnamon + a chicken. Grabbed the stew pot  
 + set the rice to cooking. Swede skinned the  
 bird while the rest of us added spice + sugar  
 to the rice. Tossed the rice in our Klim cans +  
 put the chicken on to fry. Ate the rice + took  
 off for K ration. Came back + the chicken was  
 burned to bits. Scaped the pan + traded some  
 sugar for 10 lbs. whole wheat cereal. Put some  
 of it on + traded more sugar for bread +  
 pulled the cereal off. A-G.I. Threw a box of cookie  
 + some Jerry cheese to us so we ate one kilo of  
 cheese the bread cookies + cereal. Started out  
 for more food + bumped into the police station  
 where field glasses cameras etc. were given out.  
 Were issued C Ration Unit which was very good +  
 then we got on a GI truck + rode to Halle. Got 6 3/4  
 pounds Peanut Butter, candies, crackers + Butter. Sweated  
 a chow line for a couple hours + got Stew, coffee +  
 + crackers. (First GI Chow line). Put up at de Jerry  
 bks. + started on Peanut Butter etc. ~~the~~ Went through  
 chow line again + hit the sack - First bed of any kind  
 since Feb 5.

sugar + cr  
 Special Snack  
 old pie w  
 Rolls with  
 muffins w  
 ee cake wi  
 e + milk  
 e with a  
 heat with  
 ese with  
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 + Oatmea  
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It was apparent that something was happening as they were being moved along. It seemed that there were fewer guards than before. The Russians were now only a few miles away. The prisoners didn't have any information but something *felt* different. When they came into a small village, it may have been called "Krina," they saw white sheets hanging out of the windows. A wave of "knowing" pulsed through the long line of men, and they knew it was over. Peterson noticed a young village boy throw down a well-eaten apple core . . . it was consumed in a split second . . . but he blew it off a little first.

The "no-man's" land between the two front lines had been reduced to a narrow passage. Gunfire grew closer and closer on both sides and then suddenly the sound just stopped. The gaunt and dying prisoners raised their heads to see an American officer standing firmly and heroically in an advancing jeep. He had crossed out of the safety of American lines to meet the weary soldiers. It was an epic in a moment. Tears began to flow. The German guards piled their arms in quiet surrender. New energy strengthened the ex-prisoner's weakened legs. The forced march had ended, and the pace quickened on the 80th day as they crossed the Mulde River at Bitterfeld, Germany, and into U.S. lines. They had been met by the 104th Infantry Division (Timberwolves) on April 26, 1945. Peterson's mission had lasted one year, two months, and two days and he had walked for 80 days and almost 500 miles. It was over! They were all going home!

*(On May 8, 1995, U.S. Senator John Warner read a moving statement from the Senate floor regarding the forced march. The following is a brief excerpt from that reading describing some of the conditions the prisoners suffered.)*

*"The 86-day march was, by all accounts, savage. Men who for months, and in some cases years, had been denied proper nutrition, personal hygiene, and medical care, were forced to do something that would be difficult for well-nourished, healthy and appropriately trained infantry soldiers to accomplish. The late Doctor (Major) Leslie Caplan, an American flight surgeon who was the chief medical officer for the 2,500-man, section C from Stalag Luft IV, summed up the march this year: 'It was a march of great hardship . . . We marched long distances in bitter weather and on starvation rations. We lived in filth and slept in open fields or barns. Clothing, medical facilities and sanitary facilities were utterly inadequate. Hundreds of men suffered from malnutrition, exposure, trench foot, exhaustion, dysentery, tuberculosis, and other diseases.'*

*A number of American POWs on the march did not survive. Others suffered amputations of limbs or appendages while many more endured maladies that remained or will remain with them for the remainder of their lives. For nearly 500 miles and over 86 days, enduring unbelievably inhumane conditions, the men from Stalage Luft IV walked, limped and, in some cases, crawled onward until they*

*reached the end of their march, with their liberation by the American 104th Infantry Division on April 26, 1945.*

*. . . I'm sure that my colleagues join me in saluting . . . all the brave Americans who were prisoners of war in World War II. Their service was twofold: First as fighting men putting their lives on the line, each day, in the cause of freedom and then as prisoners of war, stoically enduring incredible hardships and showing their captors that the American spirit cannot be broken, no matter how terrible the conditions. We owe them a great debt of gratitude and the memory of their service, our undying respect."*

*(The complete reading was published in the "Ex-POW Bulletin," May 1996.)*

The prisoners began splitting up, looking for food wherever they could find it. Otha Beene was with Swede and Peterson when they liberated some corn oil, rice, cinnamon, and peanut butter from a truck. They warmed up an unusual conglomeration over a fire and ate well. *(So well in fact, that as they were later told by a doctor, they could have died from bloating (as horses do) had they not, by chance, mixed the oil in.)*

They were now on their own to try to find American troops, food, and shelter. After Bitterfeld, they descended on Halle (where Herman Goering's fighter pilot training camp was located). *(Peterson still has a German Luftwaffe pilot's cap from there.)* It took them about two weeks to make it, first to Reims, then on to Camp Lucky Strike, a tent camp and hospital for Recovered Allied Military Personnel (RAMP) near La Havre, France. They arrived on May 12th.

They stayed at Camp Lucky Strike for three weeks, mending, reading, eating and sleeping. Most of the stay was comparable to moving slowly through a dense fog. It seemed as though they had been drugged, with their minds and bodies preoccupied with healing. Eisenhower, the "Supreme Commander," visited the camp, but Peterson didn't go to see him. Many of the men did and had an opportunity to talk with him, some expressing a bit of dissatisfaction.

It was here that one more extraordinary event, perhaps one of the most traumatic, took place. It was May, 1945, when Swede, Beene, and Peterson put on raincoats and went down to the Red Cross tent to get in line for an egg-nog and a cheese sandwich. If there was a line, they were in it expecting and hoping to find food. This time the line was long, and just after they had received their ration, all "hell" broke loose. Gunfire tore through the tent! All the ex-POWs flattened out on the dirty, wet stones until the firing stopped. Peterson lifted his head, but the young man next to him did not. He had been shot through the head, another through the arm. The dead and wounded had been standing right next to the three friends. What made it so gut-wrenching was that moments before those young men had been *saved* from the war. They were finally *free* and they were going *home*! It was later reported that some GIs who were based at the