

On March 15th, we were sent to Heydekrug by train arriving there on March 20th. The Germans took us into the compound of Stalag Luft VI and assigned us barracks. Here I met many of my friends from back in the States. The fellows in this camp were all but starving. These men were very weak and in order to make them answer roll call the Germans sent vicious dogs into the barracks. They soon started to feed us better and things went well for awhile.

Staff Sgt. John Walker and another prisoner were killed while attempting to escape on April 29. These men died due to a traitor in the Security Council who planned these escapes. The traitor was not caught so further escapes were impossible at this camp.

On May 29, 1944, a fellow prisoner started for the wash house about five of six. Half way he was shot thru the side by a German guard who claimed he was trying to escape as he was five minutes early in coming out of the barracks.

About July 1 we heard from B.B.C. reports smuggled into camp that the Russians were within twenty-five miles of us. From then on till we were moved everyone imagined they heard Russian guns. On July 14th the Germans ordered us to pack for a trip. At 3 A.M. on the 15th, we started out of camp but were recalled because transportation was not available. At 4 P.M. we were informed of our leaving and also warned against damaging any of the buildings whatsoever. If any were, every tenth man would be taken out and shot.

They marched us to the station in Heydekrug where fifty men were packed into a box car and the cars locked and sealed with no ventilation. At 6 A.M. on the 16th, we arrived at Kefel. We were sent here as there was no other escape from East Prussia except from this port. Two thousand men were crowded aboard an ear boat and all our belongings were thrown in the holds. Then one thousand men were put in each hold where there was hardly room for five hundred. This trip took seventy hours during which some men stood, others sat, and still others laid. We had no water or relief all this time, and little air as the hold was covered with a canvass. If water was begged for, it was taken from the North Sea and thrown on us. Men were nauseated, fainted, and many lost their minds. One prisoner, by the name of Gatsy, tried to escape by racing past the guards and jumping overboard. Shots were fired which ended his life.

When we arrived at Stettin, they boarded us on trains to be taken to Kiefhiede. We received no food but used what we already had to bribe the guards for water. We made Kiefhiede July 19th at 6 A.M. and were lined up in marching formation to go to camp three kilometers away. Instead of marching, they forced us to run at bayonet point the whole distance. One man had sixty-three bayonet wounds. Many were deliberately tripped by German guards and then bayoneted. Dogs were let loose upon others, another excuse to stab the men. Even the guards passed out along the road as well as our own. Those that did received no better treatment. One guard was shot for refusing to bayonet a prisoner.

We had access to all lagers in the camp. This was the first time we had such a privilege.

Being the officers were here with us, they took over the running of the enlisted men's lagers as well as their own. In all other camps there were no American officers, so the enlisted men were left to run the camp in a democratic system. As we were now under the officers' rule, all food, clothes, and equipment was first passed out to them and the enlisted men got what was left. The Germans would assign wagons of food and coal to the enlisted men's lagers and the officers would short stop them taking what they wanted and sending the rest on.

At approximately this time it had been about six months since my last bath. The sanitary conditions in all other camps were fairly good. This camp proved to be about the worst. The fleas and lice were abundant causing many sleepless nights and typhus was prevalent. We had no way whatsoever of combating these menaces and diseases. There wasn't a man in the camp who escaped dysentery. We went two and a half weeks without food and the doctors estimated that if we had to go another few days there wouldn't be many men left in the camp. We were saved by three American Red Cross trucks loaded with parcels of food. This gave us enough for two or three weeks.

On Easter day the American officers told us to get ready for a march as the American forces were nearing. On April 4 we were given a Red Cross parcel and were told to pack. Our destination was not given but we did know it was south. About three miles from the camp at a town named Feucht, two F-47's dived from the clouds and dropped a bomb in a railroad yard along the line of our march, killing several British prisoners and two Americans. Feucht, Ochsenbruck, Iffelferhutte and Folling were the towns we passed thru the first day. On April 5 as we pulled out of the town of Folling, a large raid of American bombers and fighters hit Nurnberg flattening the camp we had just left the day before. We were forced to stay on the outskirts of Folling until the raid was over as our own fighters would have strafed us if marching. That afternoon at Newmarket we were given our first German food since we left camp. This was nothing but a thin German stew.

That night we slept in a woods with the rain beating down on us as we had no cover. On April 6 at 4:30 a.m. we were ordered to march through the rain. As I had caught cold in my side, I left most of my equipment and food behind in the woods. We marched as we pleased because it was too dark for the Germans to see us. There was not more than three American prisoners in one place at a time and here we lost a good half of our men who turned back to try and reach American lines.

We passed thru Mulhausen, Ernesdorf and Berching. Here we were met by the Red Cross trucks with English Red Cross parcels. We then went thru Flankstetten, Beilingries, Paulaschafen. At all these towns where we stopped for the night, we were bedded in barns.



At Paulschafen we received more German stew. As we passed these towns we traded American cigarettes, toothbrushes and soap for bread, eggs or any other foodstuffs we could buy from the Germans.

We went thru Amtmannsdorf, Bondorf, Schamhaupten, Sandersdorf, Mindelstetten, Forcheim, Marching, Neustadt where we crossed the Danube, Muhlhausen and Siegenburg where we got another British Red Cross parcel. The next town Umelsburg, we settled down for the night.

The following day April 9, we went thru Irach, Schwienbek, Hintlaber and Pfeffenhausen. Here we heard about President Roosevelt's death and allowed to blow taps. Even the Germans removed their hats.

In Kalyhausen we stopped for the night. The S.S. troops chased us into our shelters. Some men were shot, others just stripped of belongings and still others beaten. We stayed here for three days as we were coming close to our destination and there was no room at the camp yet.

On the 13th we started again passing thru Obessussback, Obermunchen and Sammelndorf, where we were bedded down until April 16th. Then we moved into Mooseburg, Germany and Stawmayer 7A.

At Mooseburg we lived in tents which were put into a hollow. Every time it rained the water would fill the hollow getting us wet and also wetting everything in the tents thru and thru as we slept on the ground.

Here the only water we got was that brought each day into the lager in a 500 gallon wagon. We had enough food except there was no way of cooking it. On April 29 the Commandant told our American officers that the American forces would be there in a few days. He asked their permission to evacuate all German guards and equipment. Our officers refused the permission to remove the equipment but granted the removal of all Germans except a skeleton crew of guards to protect us against civilian attacks.

Approximately eleven o'clock of April 30 the first American tanks was seen and at 12:45 the American flag was raised over Mooseburg and we were liberated.

On May 8th we were evacuated by plane to Reims, France where we had our first American meal which was nothing extra special to a regular G.I. but was a feast for kings to us. We were then sent to camp Lucky Strike and were given new clothing and our records brought up to date.

On the third of June, we left for the U. S. arriving on June 12th. June 14th I received a sixty day furlough and on August 16th reported to Atlantic City. Here I met once more my Kriege partner Curly Branchi, who shared all my adventures as a prisoner.

On the 26th, I was sent to Dover, Delaware where I was assigned for temporary duty to have all my records straightened prior to discharge.

On Oct. 25th I was sent to Mitchell Field, L. I. and on Oct. 26th, was discharged. This was exactly three years to the day I enlisted.