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EX - P.O.W. #12048



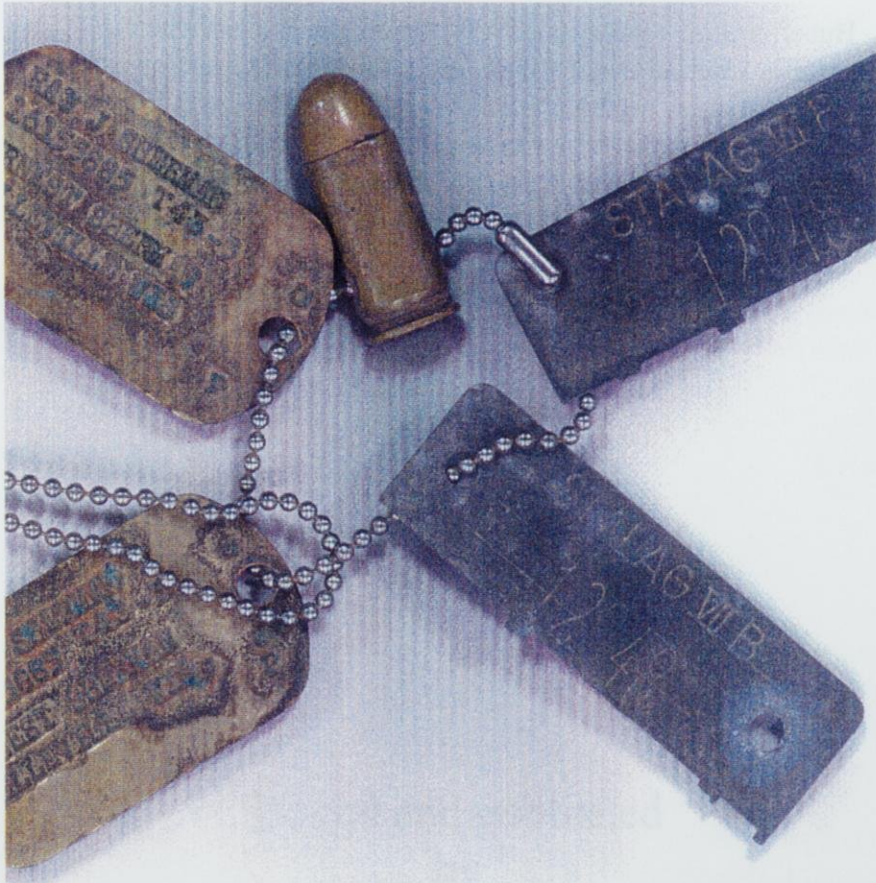


Thank you for story  
your interest in my story

Ray S

9-15-02

# EX - P.O.W. #12048



George L. Dreher  
Delaite, Wisconsin  
2001

Second and revised edition  
by Sonja  
2002



## A TRIBUTE TO PRISONERS OF WAR

Most Americans have no idea what it is like to be in combat.

But prisoners of war have all known combat - both the physical kind, and the special kind that only a prisoner of war faces. In combat, the enemy is largely unseen. He is somewhere out there until the moment the shooting begins, and even afterwards.

And when the shooting stops, the battle stops. There are opportunities for a hot meal, for a furlough, even for reassignment once physical limits are reached.

But if you are a prisoner of war, the enemy is everywhere. He controls your fate, your future, even your bodily functions. You are at war at every second. Your diet is always the same. You are never given leave. You can never leave the combat zone. Even today, more than fifty-five years after the end of your captivity, your lives are still shaped by your experiences.

- Borrowed from a P.O.W. Publication -

# EX-P.O.W. #12048

## Diaries of Ray J. Sherman 1942-1945

Bound and published  
by  
George L. Dreher  
Beloit, Wisconsin  
2001

Second and revised edition  
by Sonjia  
2002



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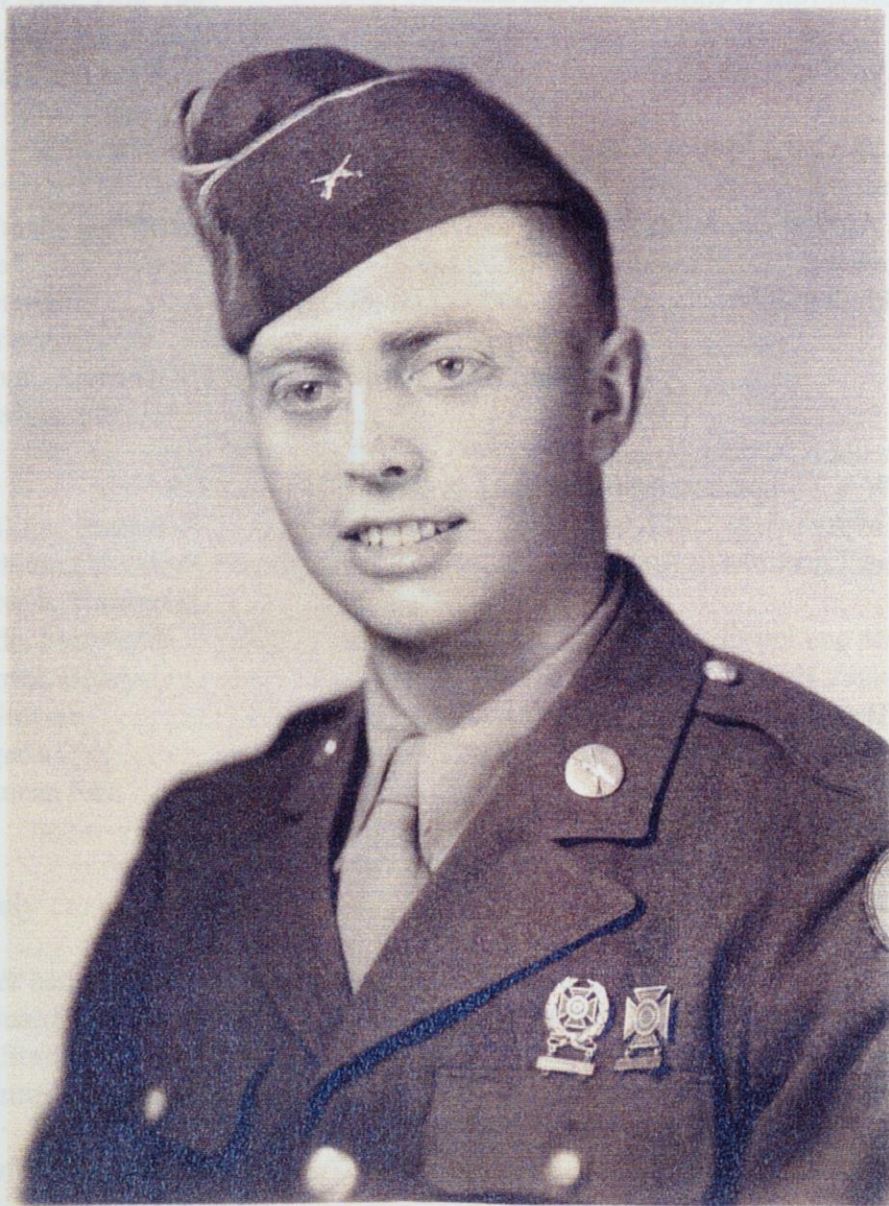
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**EX - P.O.W. #12048**

**RAY J. SHERMAN**

Ser. #16155885

Pfc. U.S. Army, Company L, 302<sup>nd</sup> Regiment, 94<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division

Enlisted - 30 November 1942, Discharged - 26 October 1945

Marksmanship Medals - Expert Machinegun - Sharpshooter Rifle



Private 1<sup>st</sup> Class Stripe  
February 9, 1945



Corporal Stripes  
July 1945



Combat Infantryman Patch



94<sup>th</sup> Division  
Shoulder Patch



45<sup>th</sup> Division  
Shoulder Patch





**P.O.W. #12048**  
**RAY J. SHERMAN**  
Ser. #16155885

Pfc. U.S. Army, Company K, 179<sup>th</sup> Regiment, 45<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division

Captured: Anzio Beach, Italy, February 16, 1944

Liberated: 26 April 1945

## U.S. Army and P.O.W. Dog Tags



Inscription on U.S. Army dog tags -

Ray J. Sherman  
16155885 T43-3  
Ernest Sherman  
Belleville, Wis

Inscription on German POW dog tags –

Stalag VII B  
12048

Note: You can see this bullet hanging down in the previous photo below the sign board. The Germans wanted to take the bullet, but Ray was able to convince them it was not a threat because it could not be used.



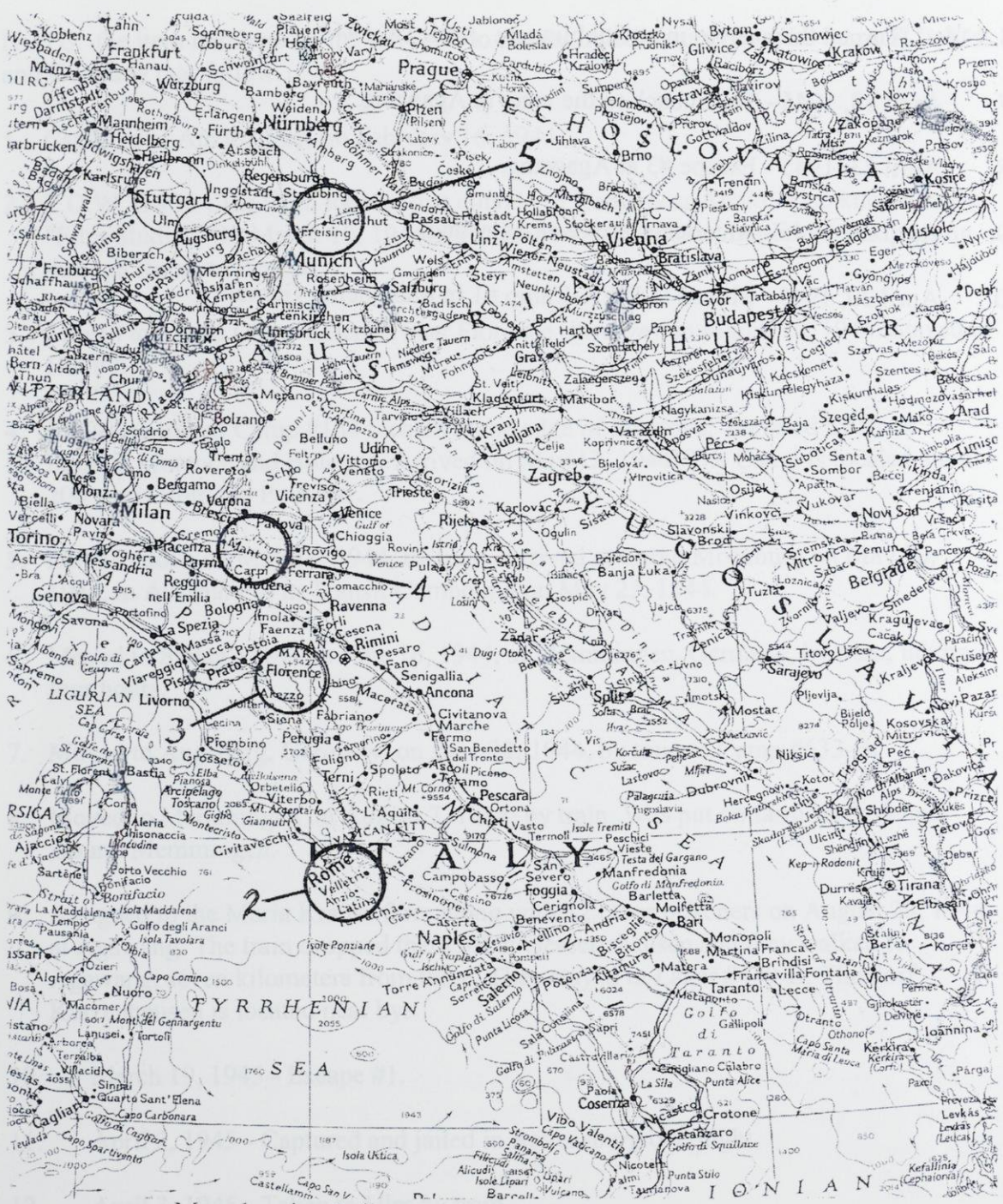
## P.O.W. Camps and Prisoner Movements in Italy and Germany

NOTE: the item numbers on the left refer to the encircled numbers on the maps of Italy and Germany that follow.

1. Captured at Anzio, Italy, on February 16, 1944.
2. P.O.W. Camp Cine Citta located just outside of Rome near Anzio. Also known as the "Film Studio." On March 10, 1944, the prisoners were moved north by truck passing through Rome to Arezzo.
3. Moved to transit Camp Laterina near Florence (Firenze) on March 10, 1944. Stayed in Hut #7.
4. Moved to transit Camp #132 located at the edge of Mantova; Traveled by truck through Florence and Bologna. Arrived on May 12, 1944. The Camp is located about 200 yards from the Po River.
5. Left Mantova on May 16, 1944, by train. Arrived at Camp Moosburg on May 20, 1944, in Austria. Put in Transit Compound on May 23, 1944.
6. Moved to Stalag VII-B on June 16, 1944, at Memmingen, Germany, by train, taking four hours.
7. Moved to Augsburg, Germany, on June 22, 1944, by train to Camp #633-B.
8. Moved to Memmingen on August 7, 1944, by train. Was put on farm work details around Memmingen.
9. Assigned to the Maria Krause farm along with 12 other prisoners on August 29, 1944, at Agawang. The train dropped them off at Gessertshausen and they walked to Agawang, seven kilometers from there. They stayed in Lager #449-B. The dorf Kutzenhausen is located near by.
10. March 19, 1945 - Escape #1.
11. April 2, 1945 - Captured and jailed in Ravensburg overnight.
12. April 3, 1945 - Taken to Ulm by train.
13. April 4, 1945 - Taken to Stuttgart by train to a P.O.W. Transit Camp #5-A. (The camp was evacuated by foot.)

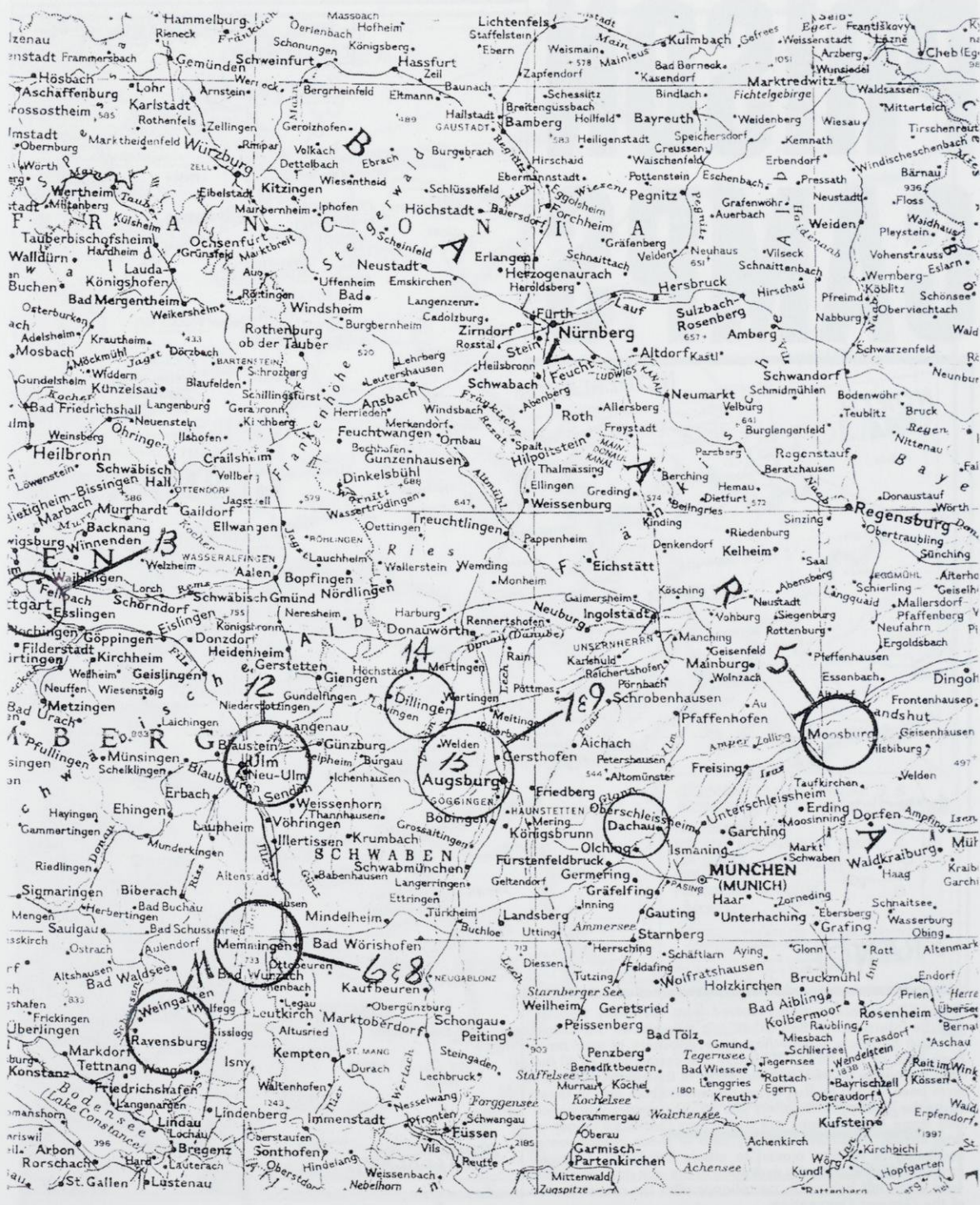


14. April 13, 1945 - Escape #2 near Dillingen (also near Gobblingen).
- 15 & 16. Turned themselves in at Gobblingen: April 16, 1945.
17. April 18, 1945 - Taken back to the lager at Agawang.
18. April 23, 1945 - Escape #3 at Agawang.
19. April 26, 1945 - Americans arrive at Agawang.
20. April 29, 1945 - Moved to PWX-Camp #1 in Mannheim, Germany.



Map showing Italian P.O.W. Camps, giving the Route used to transfer prisoners from Italy to the P.O.W. Camps in Southwest Germany.





A partial map of Southwest Germany giving the locations of German P.O.W. Camps and one German Concentration Death Camp at Dachau.



# PRISON CAMPS



**B**ASED on information received from Germany through the International Red Cross, this map shows the camps and hospitals where American prisoners of war have been held by the Nazis. Naturally, the correctness of all the data cannot be guaranteed, but many of the places indicated have been visited by Red Cross representatives and in those cases the location is definitely known. The reader will notice that some of the camps are in territory that is no longer in Nazi hands. Prisoners formerly held at those camps were, according to reports, moved to others before the German armies fell back, with the exception of the sick and wounded, who were left behind in compliance with the requirements of the Geneva Convention.

(U.S. map by Staff, World War News)

Map illustration from: American Ex-prisoners of War, Inc., National Medical Research Committee, The European Story, Packet No. 8





## Translations German to English

Americkanische Panzer = American tanks, armor  
Brot = bread  
Brotzeit = mid-day snack  
Deutscher = German  
Dorf = a small village  
Ersatz = substitute  
Frau = Mrs.  
Freitag = Friday  
Gasthaus = hotel, inn  
Grossmutter = grandmother  
Herr = Mr., Mister  
Lager = prison camp, P.O.W. place of detention  
Marks = German currency  
Mist = cow manure  
Nicht arbite = no work (I won't work)  
Pfennigs = German coins of small value  
Rubes = sugar beets, turnips, carrots, etc.  
Soat = cattle feed (spelling not confirmed) (Saat = seed, standing corn, green crops)  
Stalag = P.O.W. place of imprisonment  
Stuckisen = chisel used for removing tree stumps  
Unterensreed = a small dorf near Nefsreed  
Volkssturm = Civilian Militia  
Wehrmacht = armed forces, German Army

### **Military and Slang**

ack-ack = exploding shells shot at airplanes  
Jerry = German  
cat tail = a rope woven/knitted using a spool and 4 nails  
C.O. = commanding officer  
dogfaces = GIs, infantry "foot troops"  
E.M. = enlisted men  
ex-non coms = ex non commissioned officers  
French Knitting = similar to cat tail  
GB = gold brick, faking illness so didn't have to work  
Grey Ladies = Red Cross volunteers  
O.D. = olive drab  
RCTs = Regimental Combat Team  
Rooskies = Russians  
S.O.P. = standard operating procedure

Map illustration from: American Ex-prisoners of War, Inc., National Medical Research Committee, The European Story, Packet No. 5



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have been repeatedly told that I should write about my time in service, especially during my P.O.W. days. Without the diary I kept, I would not be able to. There are many entries I can no longer read because it was written on strips of cement bag paper which was the only paper available. When we were in Italy, we didn't even have toilet paper, nor did we have writing paper.

Each individual can give his or her version of an event which takes place in their life; that is what this is all about. It is the way I saw the whole episode. Many things may seem uneventful or of no consequence. My good friend George said, "Don't leave anything out. Write everything that comes out of your notes." It was George who gave me the final push to write.

Much credit has to go to my wonderful wife Lynn; she copied word for word much of my notes before we were married. Some of the notes were easier to read fifty years ago. Both of our daughters, Rita and Sonjia, have encouraged me to write about my experiences.

I have often wondered if I could have somehow done something different to avoid capture. These thoughts also contribute to my P.T.S.D. (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) When you are a P.O.W. you are constantly aware that at any time someone can, without provocation, execute you.

As a soldier you are taught to "make trouble" to the enemy in the event you should fall into their hands. I did at every opportunity. There were many times when other P.O.W.s were beaten or killed, so I am thankful to have survived. During imprisonment in Italy, it was said that we only got approximately 500 calories per day. I lost about forty pounds by the time I got to Germany. There we got an occasional Red Cross food parcel, which made life more tolerable. Enlisted men were sometimes able to go on work details and were rewarded with more food, which I did.

Since my discharge from service, I have many times given thanks for a nice warm place to sleep. When one is deprived of simple everyday things it is real easy to appreciate what we have.





November 30, 1942

This all began on November 30, 1942 when I enlisted in the mechanized cavalry. With twelve or thirteen other fellows, I left Madison, Wisconsin and took my medical exam in Milwaukee. We were shipped to Fort Sheridan, Illinois for more processing and then on a troop train going west. My army pay started on December 14, 1942, at \$50 per month.

Camp Phillips, Kansas

December 7, 1942

I must have arrived at Camp Phillips, Kansas on the seventh of December. We were surely a bunch of perplexed people when we got off the train. The camp was so new, there were no sidewalks, no streets, and the barracks were set out in a cow pasture. By the end of December the place was a mess.

## 1942 & 1943

I was assigned to Company "L" of the 302nd Regiment, 94<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. There were only a handful of us for about two weeks, led by First Sergeant Smallwood, a man from the South. Our duties were primarily to keep fires in each of the three stoves in the six company barracks. They were all without insulation. If you had wet shoe soles at night, they froze to the floor. We also built "dockboards" to serve as sidewalks, had watches and KP duties.

After Lt. John S. Lockwood became our C.O., things began to get organized. Some "acting" squad leaders were appointed and were designated by a bit of white paper on their shoulder.

December 23, 1942

It was about this time, on December 23<sup>rd</sup>, that I was admitted to the station hospital with catarrhal pharyngitis. The hospital was filled to capacity through December to February. I hope I am never as ill as I was that week. I was released on the 29<sup>th</sup> to return to Barracks 760. Everyone had colds.

Staff Sergeant Frank Papp, in charge of the weapons platoon, had me wearing a hunk of paper while we were drilling, but I didn't like it. I could see then that if orders had to be given, I wouldn't be the type to give them.

It seemed that we got shots in the arm every time we turned around. I know some got more than I did though, which numbered six plus one vaccination.

Before the end of December I discussed my status with our company commander, explaining that I had enlisted in the *Alachua* Cavalry and shouldn't be in an *Infantry* Company. No action was taken; this was a verbal attempt.





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### **Camp Phillips, Kansas**

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Before the end of December I discussed my status with our company commander, explaining that I had enlisted in the *Mechanized Cavalry* and shouldn't be in an *Infantry Company*. No action was taken; this was a verbal attempt.

January 12, 1943

On January 12<sup>th</sup>, I submitted a letter to Major Henson at Fort Knox asking for information regarding a transfer. Capt. James Cheek answered my letter. I answered his letter and stated my qualifications. His next reply was very favorable, stating that my qualifications met with the requirements as a student instructor in his department, but I would have to apply through proper channels, which I did on February 7<sup>th</sup> in a letter to my company commander, enclosing the Captain's letter.

February 9, 1943

On February 9<sup>th</sup>, I was appointed to Private First Class, an increase of \$4 per month!!

After another plea to Capt. Cheek on April 27<sup>th</sup>, I abandoned hopes from him.

The period of training from January until April consisted of close order drill, calisthenics, obstacle course, care and cleaning of equipment, map reading and basic tactics. Due to the fact that all these buildings were simply 2 x 4's covered with 3/4 inch sheathing, it got very cold inside. At times my ink would be frozen until noon. As I mentioned before, if your shoe soles were wet at night, they would freeze to the floor in the morning. Cups were often frozen to the overturned plates in the mess hall. Milk and orange juice or fruit was often frozen. During extremely cold weather when we had classes inside, we would often go for a run round the block during our break. Much candy was consumed during the cold months for additional energy. At night shelter halves were put up around the bunks to help quell the spread of colds.

I found it quite hard to accustom myself to all the southerners in our barracks. There were two of us from Wisconsin, quite a few from the East and the rest from the Southern states.

When it warmed up, the mud was everywhere, especially on the drill field when we tried to do "to the rear march." We held several full dress parades and reviews in the mud dressed in our best O.D.s. After you got just so much mud on your clothes, it didn't matter anymore and you just passed it off as "one of those things."

We extended our hikes and were frequently doing eight to ten miles. Often we would start out in the morning wearing overcoats and wish we could take off our shirts in the afternoon. In mid afternoon mud would stick to the shoe soles and you would get two or three inches taller until you could stop and clean it off. The army has very little regard for the elements. We got so we could sit in it, stand in it and even lay in it. We always walked in it.

After long and aching hours of "dry practice" we went on the firing range. These proved to be long days. We would wait for daylight so we could see the targets and begin firing. Under the steady coaching of Lt. Guy, twelve of us out of thirteen made "expert" on the



machine gun range (both moving and stationary targets). I fired the Garand and made "sharpshooter." Some of us also qualified with the 45 Caliber pistol. We were now becoming soldiers! Lt. Guy was mean and tough. We took a thirty minute run every week, practice with bayonet, extended order drill, map reading, use of compass, obstacle course, hand to hand combat, chemical warfare, air and mechanized defense, hand grenades, sex hygiene, articles of war, guard duty, films, charts, demonstrations, lectures and bull sessions.

I was gunner, assistant gunner and ammo carrier on machine gun during these times. We carried that cotton picking weapon everywhere, took it apart, cleaned it and learned all its parts, dismantled it in the dark and reassembled it until it was part of us.

We never took a hike without it. If there was enough men for two squads, we took two machine guns. The mortar section had their troubles too; they carried their mortars (stovepipes, we called them). But they could sit on the reverse side of a hill while we double-timed out in front under orders of Popovich and Martin, both corporals.

We would often fall out in the company street with the wrong uniform or equipment three or four times in the morning due to orders being mixed up. Then it was back into barracks until it became a joke and we didn't care if we kept it up all day.

We used to come in from a hike or exercises and when we approached the company street we would all sing *This Is The Army Mr. Jones, Yellow Ribbon, Praise The Lord And Take Us Out Of Kansas and Kansas Is A Hell Of A State, Parlez vous* and also *Roll Out The Barrel*. Then if we couldn't make more noise than the 3rd platoon, Sergeant Papp would blow his top and say, "OK we'll have a singing lesson in the sixth barracks tonight."

March 31, 1943

Basic Training was over and the much talked about things called "Furloughs" were next. I was on the first group and left on an old Santa Fe bus at five AM on the 31<sup>st</sup>. It took ages for the trip, both coming and going. The time at home was swell. I gave my motorcycle, "Charlie," a good workout and was sorry to leave again. I returned to Camp Phillips on April 9, 1943.

April, 1943

We were in a new period of training with Lt. Guy, the C.O. We went on longer hikes and stayed in the field for a week at a time on exercises. I temporarily served as a Runner, both for the weapons platoon and also "L" Company. I was somewhat independent of the weapons platoon. We would carry lots of candy and sweets in our packs on these hikes and bivouacs as much as possible. We often hiked fourteen miles back to camp after a hard week. We dug *millions* of slit trenches and foxholes with our little shovels. We would walk a few miles, stop, then the orders were shouted, "dig in!" No sooner did we finish our hole, than it was, "Fill them up. We are moving out!"



On Saturdays, we always had inspection of some kind, either "barracks or full field." Certain layout of your equipment was necessarily displayed and if it was not right, you were put on "report," with extra duties resulting. Very seldom were we done before three PM.

During May or June the barracks were skirted with boards from the ground up to floor level. We also got hardwood floors and window screens. During the next three months we encountered lots of dust and heat. One afternoon during a hike, you could hardly see the men in front of you. Dust got into everything. Our barracks was located next to the mess hall and when the wind didn't blow, we got dirty from soot. It was S.O.P. to mop the floor every day except Sunday.

Sgt. Papp was busted and did thirty days in the guardhouse for insubordination. Lt. Travis was C.O. for a time after Lt. Guy left, then Capt. Rigdon, then Lt. Morgan. First Sgt. Smallwood was replaced by a fat guy from Pennsylvania by the name of John Stracelsky. The Lt.'s couldn't pronounce his name so they called him Sgt. John.

It was during this month that a captain from the Inspector General's office was in camp to interview E.M. I again put in a request for a transfer. Lt. Morgan also "interviewed" all who had visited the Captain. After insulting words were exchanged, I still wasn't sorry for my actions. I was sent to the Classification Headquarters with my records. After waiting until the last of July, I also gave up hope of a transfer to the 94<sup>th</sup> Recon. Troop.

June - July, 1943

We spent some miserably hot weather in the field during this month. It was in June or July we turned in our folding cots for wooden bunks with springs! We were going on Battalion and Regimental operations. Twenty-five mile hikes were quite common. Often we would start at midnight and hike with full field equipment. You would be wet all over from perspiration. Several of the weaker ones would drop out from fatigue. Many tramped doggedly on until they passed out. Officers began to complain to the medics after some higher up officials got the bright idea of a *higher physical standard*. They found that the training was tearing down, more than building up.

We often sat around in our underwear while writing letters or studying in the evening. It was miserably hot during the day and half the night. I attended church on base every Sunday and was a member of the regimental chorus. We were invited to Salina several times and sang over radio station KSAL once. The people of Salina often would invite us to their homes for dinner.

We were finished with RCT's and taking part in Division Corps maneuvers. During these times, I was company runner and sometimes Battalion runner. Sometimes when the weather was cooler, we would spend the night in the field with only a raincoat to cover up



with. One particular night I would awaken from the cold and dig my slit trench deeper to stay warm. By morning it was hip deep.

We practiced knocking out pillboxes under real artillery and infantry fire. We crawled undergrazing machine gun fire on the infiltration course. On several occasions when our canteen of water was gone, we would scoop up some from a puddle and put iodine or halizone tablets in it to kill the "bugs." This was a practice that was not authorized and several penalties were meted out if caught.

August, 1943

I took a GI driver's test and got my license the first of August. I qualified for jeep, 3/4 ton and 2 1/2 ton trucks. After Lt. Morgan's statement, "Where in hell did you get your license," I declined the offer to drive for him and was on his "shit list" after that.

Transfer fell through also. We packed our barracks bags, winter issues in "B" and the rest of our stuff in "A" bags. We waited all forenoon outside the barracks on August 1<sup>st</sup> to be shipped. At about 1:30 we shouldered our weapons, with full field packs plus "A" bags and got on the troop train.

We left Kansas at about 2:00 PM, went through some of Missouri, Arkansas, Tennessee, Kentucky, and back to Tennessee. We got off the train at 4:00 AM on September 4<sup>th</sup> in the rain.

**NOTES**

- To be issued only after strict and practical examination.
- Old original permit to be canceled and new one issued to include any new qualification.
- Rule out and initial types of vehicles operator not qualified to drive.
- List accidents below. If more than three are charged to the permit holder, his driving ability and mental attitude should be investigated before issuance of new permit.

---

**RECORD OF ACCIDENTS**  
(List all in which permit holder is involved)

Date \_\_\_\_\_ (1)  
Responsibility and cause \_\_\_\_\_  
Estimated cost of damages \_\_\_\_\_  
Officer's initials \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ (2)  
Responsibility and cause \_\_\_\_\_  
Estimated cost of damages \_\_\_\_\_  
Officer's initials \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ (3)  
Responsibility and cause \_\_\_\_\_  
Estimated cost of damages \_\_\_\_\_  
Officer's initials \_\_\_\_\_

No. T.302.538

**MOTOR VEHICLE OPERATOR'S PERMIT**

\_\_\_\_\_  
(ORGANIZATION)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(STATION)

10-22286 GPO

Q. M. C. Form 228  
(App. Apr. 17, 1923)  
(Rev. May 12, 1941)

(Place) \_\_\_\_\_

27 July, 1943

R. Roy J. Sherman  
(Operator's signature)

Roy J. Sherman, Pvt. 16155885  
(Name, rank and organization)

I CERTIFY THAT Pvt. Roy J. Sherman has demonstrated proficiency in driving (par. 16, A/R 850-15) the types of vehicles listed below as per signed authentication.

TYPE VEHICLE	AUTHENTICATION (Signed by a Commissioned Officer)
Car, halftruck	<u>DSJ</u>
Car, passenger	<u>St. Dan K. Jewell Jr.</u>
Motorcycle	<u>DSJ</u>
Tank, heavy	<u>DSJ</u>
Tank, light	<u>DSJ</u>
Tank, medium	<u>DSJ</u>
Tractor	<u>DSJ</u>
Tractor-truck (semi-trailer)	<u>DSJ</u>
Trucks, cargo, M-1 1/2 ton	<u>St. Dan K. Jewell Jr.</u>
Trucks, cargo, 2 ton & larger	<u>St. Dan K. Jewell Jr.</u>
Vehicle, wheeled, combat	<u>DSJ</u>

M. T. O.

10-22286

**Motor Vehicle Operator's Permit**



## Tennessee

September, 1943

We boarded trucks, formed a convoy and went to our camp; a cow pasture! Pup tents were erected with two men per tent. The next day the rain stopped and we dumped our "A" bags out to dry as best we could.

I was assigned to Service Company as an assistant driver on a 2 ½ ton 6 x 6 truck. I was with Private Frank Mitchell, the driver for "L" company's kitchen. Frank and I took turns driving and taking trips to town. We hauled dishes, beds, rations, pots, stoves, water, and most anything. I was now the envy of everyone. I had a warm, dry place, got to town and was seldom hungry. I took baths more often than the boys did in the rest of the company. As a whole, my job was *soft*, but quite dangerous as we were on the road during night maneuvers without lights, with just little green slits. You had to be awfully close to the vehicle in front of you so you didn't get lost. We had numerous close calls. I would have changed jobs only to be a motorcycle driver. Even the company commander would like to have had my job. September went fast. We moved often and drove one thousand miles this month.

October 1, 1943

My position as assistant driver ended today when I found myself on a list with 39 others slated for overseas duty.

Someone threw a blank cartridge into the fire this evening. Nobody would admit to it, so Lt. Morgan said we would all have to stand around the fire at attention until someone confessed. We stood, under guard, from 9:00 PM until 10:00 AM, when we cut cards and an innocent person took the rap. We all expressed our love for Lt. Morgan!

We boarded a troop convoy and proceeded to Camp Forrest, arriving at about 1:00 PM and pitched shelter halves in an old six-man tent area. We ate dinner of K-rations at about 4:00 PM. I was on KP.

## Camp Forrest, Tennessee

October 3, 1943

I am dubious as to our future; 1700 men from the 94<sup>th</sup> Division; it seems that lots of them were ex-non coms and were shanghaied. Period of processing again, checked clothing, turned in web equipment, gas mask and barrack bag.

October 5, 1943

I got a tetanus shot and a physical exam today, right along with the rookies, also the usual "short arm" inspection and prostate exam. It is pretty cold sleeping on the ground with only two blankets. There are lots of rumors about when and where we are going.

I wish to recall the different places I have slept since becoming a GI. I have slept in slit trenches with just an overcoat, Camp Phillips, on the shoulder of a road during a fifteen minute break, in a pup tent with one and two blankets, on top of grass or dirt or mud, in snow with overcoat, on truck canvas between bows, in Tennessee, in canvas covered trailer, under low branches of a cedar tree with one blanket, on a flat rock in the daytime with field jacket for a pillow, under a 2 ½ ton truck with one blanket, on the hood of a 2 ½ ton truck with one blanket (too small), slept leaning against a tree on October 1<sup>st</sup>, in a barn with no blankets, sitting in a truck cab, in the back of a 2 ½ ton truck on a steel floor with two blankets and a heavy canvas cover, on a Post Office porch, cement floor with no blanket (in the rain), near an open fire with only a field jacket, in the rear of a truck on top of "A" bags. Also during lots of night problems in Kansas with no jacket or blankets, just a GI raincoat. At one time I wouldn't have considered laying a nice army blanket in the mud, dust or snow. Now it is S.O.P.

October 7, 1943

I wore woolen drawers, sun tans, fatigues, field jacket, shoes, two blankets, raincoat in a pup tent and still almost froze last night. Got new *dog tags* and some new clothes today. Orders came down to get rid of all extra clothing. Lots of it was burned. Some guys slipped past the guards and shipped things home. Still no mail. We leave tomorrow.

### **On troop train**

October 8, 1943

Haven't slept in a bed since September 3<sup>rd</sup> on a Pullman car and here I am again in an upper berth on a troop train. We left this morning at 9:30, going through the Cumberland Mountain region. Went through Chattanooga, Knoxville and a corner of Alabama, I think. I'm in a car with "K" company. Lots of Jewish (independent fellows.) I slept real warm with two blankets and a raincoat. Seems queer to be in bed by 8:30.

October 9, 1943

Wow, did I sleep! There must be something wrong, they let us sleep until 6:30 this morning. They also gave us ice cream and cookies yesterday afternoon. We went through Charleston. A favorite question of the "dogfaces" is what state is this? I have yet to see any of those smiling USO gals passing out candy and cigarettes when a troop train comes through a town. In Alexandria, two little kids about six and ten, gave away some old but welcome magazines. Sometimes some colored boys come down and sell nickel candy bars for ten cents each. We saw the capitol and Washington Monument after crossing the Potomac River.

### **Fort Meade, Maryland**

October 10, 1943

Arrived at Fort Meade, Maryland. This is great; good food, hot showers and beds! We got here about 11:30 AM. Today is Sunday, but one would not have known it. I got a typhus



shot and another physical. We also had a clothing inspection. It's now 9:15 PM and I will hit the hay. Wish the mail would come.

October 11, 1943

A very uneventful day. I drew out some used equipment and went on a three mile hike this PM. I walked about two miles to a theatre. *Sweet Rosie O' Grady* was showing. Still no mail.

October 12, 1943

We had a First Aid and gas lecture this morning. I drew out some new clothes and equipment this PM. The shoes are a greenish-buckskin color, with the smooth side inside. Also got two new barracks bags, gas mask, dark colored towel and underwear, OD handkerchiefs, good raincoat and overcoat. All good stuff.

October 13, 1943

Sure appreciate being able to sleep in a bed. I got a GI haircut and want to have it clipped just before I leave, if it is not too soon. We are going over basic tactics, bayonet, close order, cover and concealment, map reading, compass, etc. Passes are available from retreat until midnight, I guess. I bought three rolls of film, 127, and want to take them along. No mail yet.

October 14, 1943

Class on censorship today. No diaries allowed over seas. We have some real rookies for officers. They know they will not go with us and try to be real tough. A Lt. Arden Darden is obviously green and gets left and right confused, resulting in some real "screw-ups" Classes in the disassembly of the M-1, bayonet practice, close order and rifle exercises were held. Went to show *Corvette*. We had to put up cubicles between bunks. Still no mail. Some got mail direct from home in near by states. No forwarded mail though.

October 15, 1943

Close order drill today. Also typhus shots again. Applied for and got a three day pass starting at 6:00 AM tomorrow!

October 16, 1943

Went to Washington, D.C. on my pass. Met a nice WAVE in the Archives building. We visited points of interest together, had supper and went to the stage show *I Dood It* with Virginia O'Brien. After searching in vain for a hotel or other room, I went to "Tent City," operated by and for Army with free coffee and doughnuts for breakfast.

October 17, 1943

I visited the Jefferson Memorial, Lincoln Memorial, Arlington Cemetery, etc., today. I dated Y 3/c Francis Bowen this evening. We went to a church program, then to a show and lunch. I slept at the USO tonight.

October 18, 1943

I saw the house where Lincoln died, the Ford Theatre, visited the Capitol and saw the Senate in session. I went to a show, *Bombers Moon*, also to the Stage Door Canteen and saw the Virginia OBrien stage show again. I had lunch and caught the 2:15 bus back to Fort Meade.

October 19, 1943

Today we were on the obstacle course. This morning I was awakened by two green Lieutenants because all cubicles were not put up properly. Got eleven letters and a package from Dot containing a neat little picture holder. Haven't gotten all the mail from Tennessee yet.

October 20, 1943

I was on KP today, washing dishes and pans continuously most all day. Got a package from Sis and one from home containing a hunting knife. Expected to be awakened again tonight on the cubicle deal.

October 21, 1943

Well, well, we went on a night problem from eight to twelve. That gets my goat. These Lieutenants think we are learning something. I have been on more night problems than they have been on day problems. We pitched tents, got to sleep and were awakened by a real gas attack. I went back to sleep wearing my gas mask. We were back to barracks by 12:30 and get tomorrow free!! We used to hike all night in Kansas and not get *any* time off the next day. This is boring.

October 22, 1943

Gas drill again today in the PM while on a hike. I got seven letters today and went to a show in the evening. One letter was from Pat, a gal I had dated in Washington.

October 23, 1943

I got a pass for tonight until tomorrow to 2400 hours.

October 24, 1943

Got into Washington at about 8:30 and bought a pair of goggles for Ed for \$3.95. Also bought a hunting knife for \$10.95. The other guys will come back from "Boom Town" with a hangover and I will have a knife tomorrow. Visited a swell USO on North Street. I burned my name on the knife sheath with a wood burning pencil. They have many nice hobby facilities there.

I slept in some guy's bed in the Salvation Army USO. I got chased out of the first one. Went to bed about 3:00 AM. I didn't like to see all those empty beds going to waste. The two Marines that were with me got cold feet after being chased out the first time. I went



to the Stage Door Canteen, then to a dance in a Catholic Church parlor and then to a stage show. Called Francis Bowen, but was unable to keep a date. I came back to Laurel, as per last night. The bus was full and I had to stand for the entire trip. I got here for supper.

Walked about two miles with Private Tweet to theatre #4 to see the show, but the theatre was full so I walked back via "Boom Town." The latest rumor has us moving about October 28<sup>th</sup>.

October 25, 1943

I got more equipment and packed bags in the PM. Included were two blankets, one OD colored fatigue outfit, eight pair of OD socks, one OD bath towel, one pair of shoes, all to go into a pack or "A" bag. The "B" bag has three sun tans, one pair of shoes, mosquito nets, one blanket, one mattress cover and other stuff. Our "B" bags are to be retrieved at the destination. I received partial payment of \$15. We drilled in rain all morning.

October 26, 1943

It rained all day. I was assigned as table waiter, not a bad job. I turned in both bags and was checked again. We had classes in the barracks. All the new equipment is stuff I wear when we leave. I wrote a couple of letters. Things seem to disappear awfully easy here. So far I have lost a helmet liner, a rifle sharpshooter pin and an OD garrison cap.

### **Camp Patrick Henry**

November, 1943

It is not clear how we got to Camp Patrick Henry from Fort Meade.

November 2, 1943

We left Camp Patrick Henry, Rhodes, Virginia, on a troop train at about 9AM, receiving two sandwiches and an apple as we got on. At about 12:00 or 1:00, we were broken up into proper lengths and sided into the loading docks alongside the ship. While we sat on the docks with our "A" bags, two "Grey Ladies" passed out hot chocolate and coffee. As the first of our group started boarding the ship, a band about one hundred yards away started playing *We're Going Over* and various other numbers. The line passed a desk where you answered roll call with your first name and then went up the gangplank on the Liberty Ship SS John Stevens.

We were ushered into hold #2 by a Lieutenant and assigned bunks, which were canvas on a pipe frame. Mine is a top one of five, only one tier on my right and innumerable tiers to the left, head and foot. The fourth from the floor comes up to my head. I also have a light at the foot and to the right of me. The workers were not through securing the deck cargo, so we slept in the bay in between.

## **Norfolk and Newport News**

November 3, 1943

We spent the day at anchor, watching the gulls and numerous craft assembling. Two meals a day are served on board ship. We left harbor late tonight.

## **On board troop ship, SS John Stevens**

November 4, 1943

At sea. Nope I don't like it!

November 5, 1943

I had to force both meals down today.

November 6, 1943

Same as yesterday. I am still seasick! Today I was on KP duty.

November 7, 1943

We had Catholic services today, but no Protestant service. I was in the mood for supper and actually liked it.

November 8, 1943

I tried some tactics on breakfast, but had to force it down. I didn't go to supper at all. The sea is very rough.

November 9, 1943

The same sea today. I took a capsule last night and slept pretty well. It was hard to stay in my bunk. There is lots of vomit all around, I ate two slices of white bread for dinner and begged one from a pal for supper. It is very rough tonight.

November 10, 1943

I dreamed I was in Uncle Daves (Patchin) eating a stack of wheat cakes with honey and butter and a soft fried egg. Later I was at home, eating a steak sandwich with lettuce and tomatoes, with salad dressing. This was a very vivid picture! I tried to carry over my enthusiasm for food until breakfast, but got only to the steps and "cashed in my cookies" in my canteen cup. The breakfast menu was coffee, dry cream of wheat, two slices of white bread, butter, jam and dehydrated eggs. Few went and fewer ate. I stayed topside until about 10:00 when a corporal grabbed me and others for officer's latrine detail. I worked about five minutes and then went to the doctor. He gave me two capsules for motion sickness to be taken morning and night. I made for my bunk, but vomited some greenish fluid in my cup before I got there. After taking one of the capsules, I slept. I didn't go for supper, but got a slice of bread from the fellow in the bunk below me and forced a square of tropical chocolate and water down.



We were called out for boat drill just before dark. I got two K-rations while up there. It is rough when the ship goes down in a trough, You can't even see the other ships in the convoy. It is raining tonight.

November 11, 1943

Well, this is more like it. The sea is quite calm today. At times I can see other ships in the distance. It's getting rough again tonight. I ate most of a K-ration this morning and a whole C-ration tonight. I feel much better. Several cases of rations are taken from the storeroom every night. It is very common to see eight or ten men standing around in a group and when the case is opened, they pounce on it like hungry wolves. They emerge with two or three or an armful of cans. At length one or two stragglers find their footing, stand up, and stagger away, beaten but wiser. Their tactics on the next box bring amazing results. It is said that even the officers play the same game. I'm not worrying about the chow line anymore. What I eat usually comes back up.

I am in need of a shave and a bath, as are the others. The hold is unbelievably dirty and foul smelling. I'm only the fourth bunk from an air vent, so that helps.

November 12, 1943

The sea got rough again. I ate four "biscuits" from C-rations. I was topside for about fifteen minutes. Sea is very choppy and windy. I don't feel too well!

November 13, 1943

Still choppy and rough. I ate breakfast and dinner and some K-rations. Feel better tonight. We got instructions to keep a full canteen of water at all times. Had boat drill.

November 14, 1943

Sunday, shaved a week old beard today. It is quite windy again. I got partial payment of \$10. Card and crap games were interrupted long enough to hold a simple mass for the Catholics, but no service for Protestants. Ate K-rations for breakfast and C-rations for supper.

Most everyone has his normal stomach back again. The sea is quite smooth. Along with pay, we received a carton of cigarettes and a Baby Ruth candy bar from the Red Cross. I sold the cigarettes for thirty cents and was offered twenty-five cents for the candy bar. It's 1:00 AM and few have gone to bed.

November 15, 1943

It is quite nice today. They chased us out on deck at 8:30 AM so that filthy place could be cleaned up some. It is filthy. The center of the hold is covered with heavy canvas, which is slippery with grease and grime. This area is often filled with crapshooters and really presents a problem to go below. Ate C and K-rations and went through the chow line tonight. I had ½ a yellow pill, two slices of "pilot bread," stale butter, jam spaghetti and hot cocoa. I didn't even drink all the cocoa; K-rations are better. I still crave fresh fruit of

any kind, or lettuce or tomato. The crew gets fresh fruit, but not us. I feel pretty good, even on the equivalent of two meals a day. The sea is smoother now.

November 16, 1943

Ate K and C-rations. Don't go through the chow line, which is inferior to rations. I was "acting Corporal of the Guard" at 4:00 to 6:00, 10:00 to 12:00 and 4:00 to 6:00. They fired the 20-mm guns today for practice. I got one empty case. The sea is smooth and it is really a beautiful night, moon, etc. It is also very good for subs too. The convoy zigzags quite a bit to avoid being a good target.

November 17, 1943

Still no sign of land. Ate up the K and C-rations and now must try to replenish them. It is darker than the inside of a black cow out tonight. I saw several phosphorescent areas of plankton or something in the water along side the ship.

November 18, 1943

We were aroused at the usual 8:00 AM and chased out on deck so that the stinking hold could be cleaned. Body odors are strong after about three weeks without a bath. Had boat drill today. It is real dark tonight. I ate rations again today.

November 19, 1943

The sea was really rough again today. The ship rolled over on its side farther at times than ever before. Tin cans were falling, guys were hollering and sliding around, canteen cups, forks, spoons and helmet liners were falling and at times you had to hang on to keep from falling out of your bunk. I did my usual reading out of the New Testament. Still no land in sight. I removed my shoes to sleep last night.

November 20, 1943

I think we encountered an enemy sub at about 5:30 PM. I was forward and saw a destroyer on the left front drop a depth charge about three-quarters of a mile from us. It sent a blinker signal and circled the spot for some time. Nothing was officially confirmed.

I think we passed the Rock of Gibraltar at 8:30 to 9:00 PM. There were a couple of lights visible to the North at this time. Ate rations and was down in the hold looking for K-rations. The sea is very still. I got my hair all clipped off tonight. I ate part of an onion, which I got from Pvt. Verville. It was sure good.

November 21, 1943

Land! Africa! I saw it at 6:00 AM, but the sun wasn't up and there was room for debate as to whether it was mountains or clouds. It is 12:00 now and you can see it both on port and starboard sides. We are apparently nearing the "Rock", although I can't see it. I must have been wrong about last night. After twenty days of water, all one can do is gaze out over



the tree covered bluffs and say, "It's beautiful." Yeah, we passed the "Rock" tonight. I saw a whole school of porpoises. Ate rations again today and read daily gospel as usual.

November 22, 1943

Anchored in harbor tonight. Supposed to get off tomorrow. Very interesting, they even have electric lights. What will tomorrow bring?

November 23, 1943

We moved in and tied up. Most interesting to a kid from the Midwest of the USA. I now realize how fortunate we were to reach port without misfortune. Evidence of the conflict in which we are engaged is visible on many ships here. Gaping holes where torpedoes have hit, a half a ship and a partially burned tanker.

Had cornflakes for breakfast, went through chow line. C-rations again for supper. I wish I had some fishing equipment. An old guy sat out here in a rowboat on our starboard, catching little chubs all forenoon. The sailors got shore leave this AM. I was among the many that swiped onions and potatoes last night. I stored a couple in my barracks bag along with other rations.

### **Oran, Algeria**

November 24, 1943

It was sure impressive coming into harbor. We raided rations and got off the SS John Stevens. By the time we got on trucks, it was dark. Everything I could see was very interesting.

November 25, 1943

We slept in squad tents at the foot of Lion Mountains. Our bunks are of rope slung between 2 x 4's. Woke up with rope marks all over my body. It's OK. I'm just glad to be on *solid ground*. It's sure a swell view of the mountain. We had the *most beautiful dinner*: turkey, dressing, boiled hearts, sweet potatoes, a salad of cheese and pineapple, pickles, peas, cranberry sauce, bread, pumpkin pie, nuts, candy and coffee. I went to a free show *Bataan* on the side of a hill. They have only one projector, so it takes quite sometime. I took an "open air shower" and nearly froze. We are sleeping on straw filled mattress covers.

November 26, 1943

Saw some natives wearing a draw string barracks bag with two holes cut in the bottom for feet to go through. Can get a pass to town. It is quite interesting to see the veiled women and "wrap around dresses." You can buy local produce right on the street. Lots of carts pulled by donkeys and kids begging for chewing gum. Sanitation is a problem in town. Open gutters are sometimes seen with all manner of crap and garbage.

November 27, 1943

We got our "B" bags and turned in some clothing. I saw a white woman. She must have been from the Red Cross. I went to the show *Thank Your Lucky Stars*.

November 28, 1943

Attended Protestant services at 9:15 and answered the "invitation hymn". We got gold seal currency for the money we turned in on the ship. The Red Cross sold 3/4 of a canteen cup of ice cream for two francs, which was delicious. Went to the show *Stormy Weather*. Heard jackals yipping again tonight. I did my washing in my helmet.

November 29, 1943

They started processing; I am a messenger. Went to a show again tonight; *Crazy Horse*. We have swell meals.

November 30, 1943

It was just a year ago when I enlisted at Madison, Wisconsin. Got tickets for PX rations. Went to the show *White Savage*. Stopped at the Red Cross building, but it was packed with a show going on.

December 1, 1943

We are restricted or in quarantine yet. It rained or was cold and foggy most of the day. The summit of the mountain was hidden by clouds quite a lot of the day. I waited in PX line for about twenty-five minutes and bought 2 cigars, 9 cigarettes, 2 bars of soap, 1 roll of candy wafers, 1 life saver, a box of hard candy squares, 1 five cent bar, 3 razor blades and one bottle of ink, all for \$1.03 - my rations for a week. I was changed to the first platoon of "B" Company yesterday. I have been in Companies A, B, C, D, L and R so far. Went to the show *Andy Hardy's Double Life*. Went to the Red Cross early in the evening and got ice cream in my canteen cup for two francs.

December 2, 1943

We were on formal guard mount at 11:00 AM. I was Corporal of First Relief, twenty men. Went down to the villa to inspect the guard in the afternoon. Nice buildings, but dirty with goats, chickens, sheep and kids all in the same rooms. One guard is posted in front of the courtyard entrance and other walks along side. The purpose was to keep soldiers out of the villa. I gave some Italian prisoners candy and cigarettes. Slept in the guard tent tonight.

December 3, 1943

Mounted a new guard and through Sgt. Martin, he and Santilli, Reed and I got a pass from 1300 hours to 2200 hours. We headed for St. Cloud and walked all six miles. We wandered around; it was very interesting. I took a couple of pictures. Lots of bullet holes. Bought oranges and tangerines at about forty-eight cents per dozen. Trading is better than



cash. I traded an old fountain pen, which I had saved for that purpose, for eight tangerines.

Cigarettes are also very good for trading. We had lots of fun trying to understand French and Spanish. I saw lots of people at a public water hydrant filling jars, pitchers and other containers. Saw several foreign motorcycles. I was surprised to see the size of the motors in French cars, which go by like a "bat out of hell" when you hitchhike. Ate supper of soup, some kind of cornmeal, etc., two eggs, sunny side up, sausage, highly seasoned, bread comes in fifteen-inch loaves, quart of wine, tangerine and spaghetti. Cost 60 francs.

The Market Square was being filled with wares. It would be interesting to visit it on Saturday when everything is in full swing. I saw a funeral procession, led by a red robed priest and altar boys, a horse drawn coffin with flowers and canopy. Four men carrying a sheet with a cross preceded the coffin. Mourners followed on foot. We removed our headgear when it passed by.

Very few American soldiers here. The French use almost all U. S. equipment such as jeeps, cycles, staff cars, etc. I might add that they act very unappreciative too!

We started back to camp at 7:15 and helped two Arabs push their cart of wood up a hill and made a little over six miles in an hour and five minutes.

December 4, 1943

I am the only one in "D" company and the only "L" company replacement that I know of that is on shipping alert. I didn't have to fall out with the rest of the company this morning. Had Spam and eggs, cream of wheat, bread and *civilized coffee* for breakfast. Participated in tent and personal inspection, then went to show *Frankenstein Meets The Wolf Man*.

December 5, 1943

Sunday, I was to pack my barracks bag and be at the supply room at 3:00 PM. When I returned from church, someone had already packed it. I waited until a checkup disclosed it to be an Armored Force man, Leonard L. Sherman, instead of me. I thought for a while that my prayers were going to be answered. For nine months, back in the States, I prayed every night that I might get an army cycle to ride, but with all that and the physical efforts, I am still in the Infantry. I went to an evening Protestant service and then to the show *Star Spangled Rhythm*.

December 6, 1943

A shipment went out. I fell out for drill and hiked ten miles in the forenoon. Took a shower and did some laundry.

December 7, 1943

Our tent got passes at 8:00 AM. We walked about a mile and got a ride into town. I traded cigarettes for three oranges. I think I got gypped. Ate at the Red Cross: Spam sandwich, doughnuts, coffee, and ice cream for five francs, Registered in State Log Book and saw one name from Evansville (Woodstock.) Bought a French language manual and had a Frenchman help with interpretation. It's quite difficult to get the sounds of vowels, etc., but I hope to get a basic idea of the language.

Went into the projection booth of the American Red Cross theatre. They have two American super simplex machines operated by a Frenchman. We met a couple of "D" Company cadremen and got a ride in a truck back to camp by 10:00 PM.

December 8, 1943

I lost or can't locate my pearl handled pocketknife with the little scissors; missed it this morning. There sure are lots of motorcycles in town. While looking down from the balcony of the Red Cross building, I saw lots of interesting sights below; an open wagon with butchered beef, sheep hides, heads and hooves all together. The one end of the beef dragged on the street when they unloaded it. Kids stood below us and begged gum, candy and cigarettes when we dropped them. Veiled women with baskets of oranges, wine or bread carried on their heads had as much right of way as carts or vehicles in the narrow streets. I pinched myself to see if I wasn't watching a circus.

I tried to increase my allotment (bond), but can't until I get assigned to a permanent outfit.

December 9, 1943

We had a night hike up the mountain for four hours.

December 10, 1943

We went on the firing range this morning; fifty yards just for practice. It rained quite a bit last night and the clouds were so low over the range at one time, you could hardly see the targets. I fired twenty-nine shots with the M-1. Got a partial payment of \$10. Woke up this morning with the GI's. It must have been something I ate. I got PX rations; 8 cigarettes, 3 cigars, 1 soap, 2 razor blades, one candy bar, a Tootsie Roll and two rolls of candy wafers for \$0.95. Drew the fourth blanket and went to the show *Henry Aldrich*.

December 11, 1943

We had close order drill, calisthenics and a ten-mile hike this morning. You would think we were a bunch of *rookies!* We had chicken for dinner, grapefruit juice to drink. We have had quite a lot of tomatoes, pineapple, grapefruit and lemon juice to drink. Have lots of Spam too. I had a small piece of fried chicken for supper and went to a show.



December 12, 1943

Went to 10:00 Protestant Services. It is cold and rainy. I got the most beautiful box of Fanny May candy from Natalie; was two pounds, however, still no letter. I went back to the mailroom and there was a letter from her with a Virgin Mary medal inside, also a Christmas card with a note. I usually get a piece of mail almost daily. Much more than lots of other fellows get. I write more than they do too! The weather is very miserable. We can't have fires in our tents to dry things either. We went on a fifteen-mile hike in the rain and all my shoes are wet.

December 13, 1943

All the guys in our tent went on pass in the rain except me. I was Company Runner again. I went to Battalion Headquarters to see about getting a job typing. I got it. I'm working at depot headquarters. Wednesday it cleared up and the sun came out. I worked on payroll and did some filing etc.

December 15, 1943

Worked on payroll. Got a box of stationary from Aunt Mary Sellick. I got PX rations after standing in line for nearly two hours.

December 18, 1943

Typed payroll as usual.

December 19, 1943

I worked from 9:00 to 10:00, went to church services and then typed until noon. Went to evening services and then to a movie.

December 21, 1943

Attended a French class in the Battalion recreation hall in the evening while the Company went on a hike up the mountain.

December 24, 1943

After I returned from personnel this noon, a B-25 flew over the area quite low. I went outside the tent when I heard a dull puff and the engine stopped. Through the clouds, I could see the flames and smoke where he hit. Rain and low clouds obscured the mountain until about five minutes after the accident, it cleared up.

December 25, 1943

We had turkey and all the trimmings for Christmas dinner. I went to midnight Mass with Elmer Buynak. The Company fell out for a hike, as usual, before dinner. I went to the barber and had a haircut for twenty cents. We went on shipping alert this PM.

December 26, 1943

I went to church and then to the Personnel Office. I was to have an interview with a Major to see about cavalry. It did not materialize.

December 27, 1943

Left on truck in the PM, boarded Dutch ship and cast off on December 28<sup>th</sup>.

### **On board the Dutch ship in the Mediterranean Sea**

December 29, 1943

Water is quite calm and the ship rides nice and smooth, but I guess I am allergic to water. I'm not hungry. It is a good thing because the food seems terribly scarce or perhaps the English eat like this all the time? There are twenty men at our table. I have been put in charge of it. I appoint two men to go to "mess" to bring the food for every meal. We had a real tiny hunk of rose fish, about the equivalent of two slices of bacon and two oblong crackers, terribly hard, for breakfast.

Dinner was two golf ball size potatoes with the skins on, a tablespoon of boiled liver, some kind of bread pudding, a slice of frozen corned beef  $\frac{1}{2} \times 3 \times 4$ , a tablespoon of stewed carrots and peas, (I still think they were soy beans) coffee and a hunk of bread the size of two slices and a square of butter. The ship's canteen sold canned peaches for \$1.60 and a tin of sardines for forty cents; Australian peaches and American sardines. Our hold is about the size of the one on the SS John Ericsson; about 340 men in it and lots of roaches. (*Note: the SS John Ericsson was the ship that Pfc. Ray Sherman returned to the United States on.*) In one corner near the ceiling is a colony of roaches the size of the circumference of a bushel basket! We sleep in real hammocks, which we put up over the tables. We are also carrying Italian officers, who travel first class with white table clothes, rugs, nice chairs, etc. I doubt if they even have to contend with all the cockroaches!

Our crew are apparently natives of the Dutch East Indies. They are definitely queer looking ducks. They all appear to be lacking some kind of vitamins or are undernourished or something. They are all dark skinned with dark hair and eyes. All carry some kind of knife. We have all kinds of uniforms or persons unimaginable on board. We are flying a barrage balloon for added dive-bomber protection.



Arrived at Naples, Italy

January 1, 1944

Docked at Naples, Italy and disembarked on the side of a bombed out ship lying on its side; it had been gutted by fire. The ruins still cluttered the streets and alleys of the city. Had the same greeting of beggars and people trying to sell their wares.

We rode on one of Mussolini's streamlined electric trains through a tunnel to the outskirts of the city. Then we walked a couple of miles to a staging depot, which is quite similar to the last one in Africa we left from Oran, Algeria.

Food is excellent. Italians skip past the garbage cans to get any scraps of food and coffee that we left behind. They come with some kind of pot or other container for that purpose.

1944

January 3, 1944

We were at some kind of Athletic Field watching a local wing band this evening when the music was interrupted by anti-aircraft firing and tracer bullets streaking skyward, accompanied by an air-raid siren. We were cleared the ground quickly and dispersed around the track seeking cover. The alert lasted about twenty minutes and all was forgotten. Was able to send a cable or telegram back home for sixty-three cents.

January 4, 1944

We were moved by Italian taxicab to a staging area, then by truck about forty miles to a Red battalion, where we were housed in six main tents with straw on the floor to sleep on. This was once a large dairy farm, but the buildings were somewhat in ruins. One barn has six hundred cows in it. Italian work it and they gather around our garbage cans to collect food scraps. When all the scraps are given out, the mess personnel set out the pigs and they are cleaned out quickly by locals of all ages.

January 7, 1944

I volunteered for parachute training. The set up is like the Rangers and Commandos and Ski Partisans all combined. Took a hot shower in one of the barns today.

January 9, 1944

We shipped out this morning via trucks. We crossed quite a few new engineer bridges where the old ones were blown up. We arrived at the 179<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment bivouac where I was assigned to Company K, of the 45<sup>th</sup> Division. They have been in use for some time, but are now back here about forty miles from the action. I am assigned to the machine-gun section of the weapons platoon. It sure is cold at night. I still have four blankets, but the cold comes right through.

January 16, 1944

Rided about four miles to the rear to see Joe E. Brown in person. All bridges have been blown up. Caught rides back to camp. We have dug holes and slit trenches for our own





## Arrived at Naples, Italy

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Food is excellent. Italians slip past the guards and wait by the garbage cans to get any scraps of food and coffee thrown out by the Americans. They come with some kind of pail or other container for that purpose.

January 3, 1944

We were at some kind of Athletic Field watching a local swing band this evening when the music was interrupted by anti-aircraft firing and tracer bullets shooting skyward, accompanied by an air-raid siren. We sure cleared the grandstands quickly and dispersed around the track seeking cover. The alert lasted about twenty minutes and all was forgotten. Was able to send a cable or telegram back home for sixty-three cents.

January 4, 1944

We were moved by Italian boxcar to a staging area, then by truck about forty miles to a Rpl battalion, where we were housed in six man tents with straw on the floor to sleep on. This was once a large dairy farm, but the buildings were somewhat in ruins. One barn has six hundred cows in it. Italians work it and they gather around our garbage cans to collect food scraps. When all the seconds are given out, the mess personnel set out the pans and they are cleaned out quickly by locals of all ages.

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January 16, 1944

Hiked about four miles to the rear to see Joe E. Brown in person. All bridges have been blown up. Caught rides back to camp. We have dug holes and slit trenches for our own

protection and safety. These were to be our *homes* for several days. You get your food from the mess tent, then return to your hole to eat and sleep. One of the foxholes I made was deep enough to crouch and sit in with a shelter half over the top to keep snow, wind or rain off. It had a degree of comfort.

### **Landing at Anzio, Italy, beachhead after the invasion**

January 24, 1944

Early on the 24<sup>th</sup> our weapons section boarded the L.S.T. #125 and proceeded up the coast to land at Anzio. While enroute on this craft, I was thrown against some part of the ship, suffering a contusion on my right hip. This caused a bruise and swelling, which was painful for several years. We were greeted by the German Luftwaffe. All the larger ships, which were in the harbor, had barrage balloons or small dirigibles flying overhead. The enemy made numerous attempts to inflict damage. Our planes usually drove them off, sometimes with *dog fights* with losses to both sides.

The invasion at Anzio took place on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January 1944. Records indicate that American casualties were 23,865. British casualties were 9,203. We disembarked and made our way through the city to the North. The machine gun section, which I was in, set up and covered various crossroads and routes of infiltration. We were spread out along a dry canal not far from the "pickle factory" when the Germans made a big push on the fifteenth and sixteenth of February.

### **Captured at Anzio, Italy**

February 16, 1944

The Germans occupied the higher ground, where they could cover every foot of the beach area with all kinds of weapons. They had railroad mounted guns which fired five hundred fifty-pound shells as much as twenty miles. They also used six-barrel mortars, which would encircle an area and completely cover us with devastating shrapnel.

During one particularly heavy concentration, I was lying near another soldier who had an entrenching shovel lying nearby. I hollered and told him, "If you are not going to use it, throw it over here!" I lay on my belly and dug a little trench real fast for myself. When some of the shells came in they made a screeching noise. We called them "Screaming Memmies." The trees in the area were only stubs and stumps due to the heavy shelling.

The Germans had remote controlled machines about five or six feet long. They carried two hundred pounds of explosives, which they could detonate at will from a safe distance. On the sixteenth of February 1944, they made an all out attack, which was very severe with tanks and hordes of troops. We were completely overwhelmed and our commander sent word down the line to dismantle our weapons and surrender.





**Shrapnel and firing mechanism from a hand grenade.**

The long bent piece is gripped with the main body. You pull the ring which releases the bent handle. When the grenade leaves your hand, the handle flies free and grenade is “live.” Then in about 15 seconds it detonates – KA BOOM!! (duck first!)

The enemy kept some of us right on the front lines to go out and pick up their dead. We did this mostly at night. We just piled them up like cordwood. Lots of them had bowel movement when they died, so we didn't enjoy the job. It was during this time that I suffered from frozen feet. They let us go into a barn or stable in the daytime to rest and warm up. The door facing the American lines was missing and at one time I was lying on some straw when a sniper's bullet hit the wall about three inches above my body. I moved away from that spot in a hurry.

Two of us went out to a pump with a German *aid-man* to fill a water can and pick up some wounded, when an American machine gun opened up on us and we hit the dirt. The aid-man waved his Red Cross flag and they momentarily stopped firing. We managed to get one German wounded back to the barn and tried to convince them that *we* were supposed to be taken to the rear of the danger zone. They promised to take us to the rear before daylight. I ate the remainder of a K ration. The enemy didn't make any attempt to feed us. I went through my pack and gas mask and left my home address in it. I buried a good hunting knife in cow manure so the Germans wouldn't find it and use it on me.

February 18, 1944

On this day two of us were on the protected side of the building with some Jerries and watched tracers and artillery go by for some time. An American had just taken a couple loaves of bread inside when a shell hit the backside and another demolished a shed about twenty-five feet from us. After aiding the wounded American, two of us took off to the rear on our own. Simpson and I were together, staying in the ditch alongside the road as much as possible. About thirty-five other P.O.W.'s and their guards joined us. A British Spitfire saw us and strafed us as we followed the ditch. Tracers missed me by about five feet.

We were taken to a building and questioned. We only gave them our name, rank and serial number. Our officers were separated from us and we walked until about 11:00 PM. We saw Lt. Crane in the evening. We descended into a deep valley and spent the night in a grape vineyard. Because I could speak a bit of German, one of the guards took two of us under his blanket with him. It was very cold.

February 19, 1944

We left the valley at about 8:00 AM and walked all day without any food. We were finally put on trucks that delivered us to a house where we were locked in an upstairs room and given a quarter of a loaf of bread, a dark heavy rye. The loaves were about the size of a brick. We slept on straw and were very cramped for space.

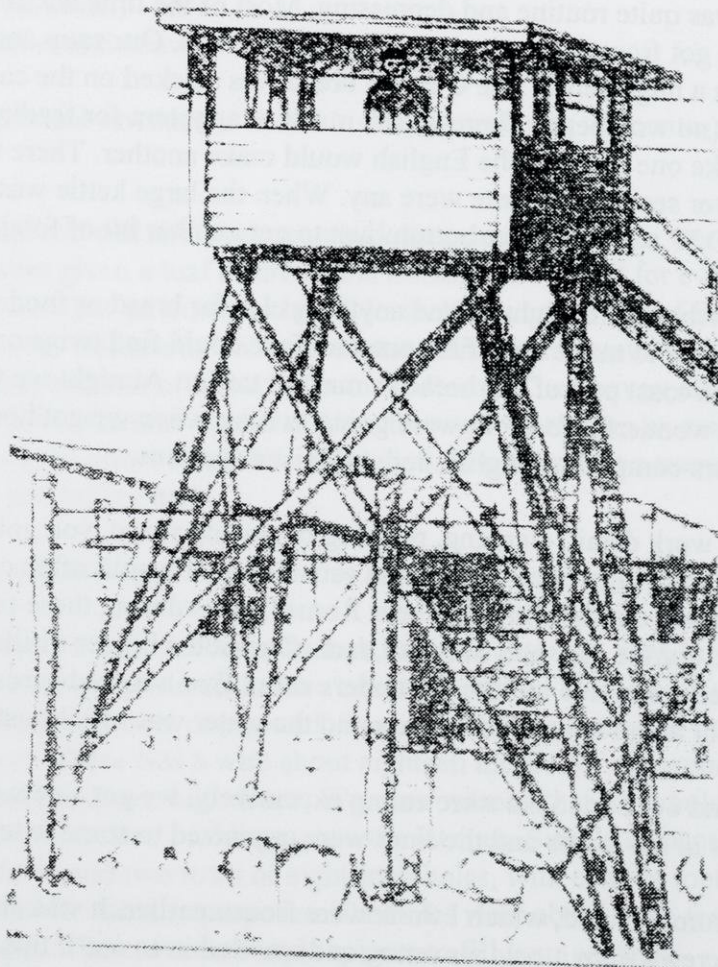
February 20, 1944

We got one quarter of a loaf of bread per man and some green tea in our canteen cups about noon. We were interrogated again and gave them our name, rank and serial number. They knew our family history and outfit. We left about 8:00 PM and walked about five



kilometers to the "Film Studio," where warm food, etc., was promised. There was a twelve to fifteen foot high barbed-wire fence with about an eight-foot space and another outer fence, with wooden guard towers on all four corners with armed guards. The space between the fences was patrolled with dogs and armed guards. We signed a book, which was said to be for the Red Cross so they could contact our loved ones.

I sought out Dale Diefenthaler and went to bed on a little pile of straw in the "Hollywood of Italy."



**A typical Guard Tower located at the corners of German Prisoner of War Internment Camps**

## The "Film Studio"

February 21, 1944

Three lights stay on all night in the huge dusty place. There were several pails and some barrels for about one thousand of us to use for sanitary purposes. By morning they were usually overflowing. For breakfast we get some kind of tea made from roasted grain. For lunch we get some kind of real thin soup, cabbage, rutabaga, macaroni or barley; about 3/4 of a canteen cup. At about four or five PM, we have a head count and get a loaf of bread for five men. At 5:30 PM, we get another tea and a spoonful of jam or a piece of cheese.

The time spent here was quite routine and depressing. Most of the time we sat around and picked lice, which we got from the straw, and talked about food. Our soup and tea was brought in on a cart in a huge kettle. The German bread was stacked on the cart like a bunch of stove wood (no wrappers). There wasn't much of a system for feeding the soup. The Yanks would make one line and the English would make another. There were always fights breaking out over seconds, if there were any. When the large kettle was empty, there were always P.O.W.s scraping the bottom just to get another bit of food.

Everybody traded watches, pens, lighters and anything else for bread or food with the guards. We were allowed to make little fires outside if we could find twigs or scraps of wood. We would often toast part of our bread to make it tastier. At night we would sit and talk about all the wonderful food we were going to have when we got home. We spent quite a few hours comparing English and American customs.

If you could get on a work detail, cleaning, painting or sawing wood, you got an extra quarter or fifth of bread or cigarettes. With great satisfaction, I would often count twelve to sixty bombers carrying out their mission near Rome. It was during these times that a few P.O.W.s escaped out the gate and hid until dark. One of the bigger thrills came when dive-bombers dropped some five hundred pounders about five hundred yards from us. The lights were off for about twenty-four hours and the water was off almost as long.

After the Jerries found out our cooks were eating excessively, we got a new crew. There was an improvement in our soups and the lines were organized to some extent.

I have painful feet from the cold, which I think were frozen earlier. It was about this time that I removed the screws from a cold air return and crawled in to see if this might be an avenue of escape. Dale replaced the grate after I entered, then we replaced the screws when I returned with bad news. The duct ended in an occupied boiler room! We constantly got rumors about prisoners who were killed after they tried to escape.



There were all kinds of allied prisoners here; English, South Africans, Australians, Serbians, French, India, New Zealanders and Irish. There were frequent shipments going to other camps. When the Germans needed a work detail somewhere, they would make a shipment of P.O.W.s to do the job.

After the war, I got the black bread recipe that was used. It came from the "Food Providing Ministry," (top secret) Berlin, 24x1, 1941 and the Director in Ministry, Herr Mansfeld and Herr Moritz:

50% rye grain

20% sliced sugar beets

20% tree flour (sawdust)

10% minced leaves and straw

We always said it had sawdust in it, and it did, but sure was welcome.

March 10, 1944

8:00 AM, we had roll call and were searched. Impromptu searches were frequently rendered. We were given a loaf of bread and a small tin of meat for every three men. All the Americans were put on trucks to head North. We caught sight of St. Peter's Cathedral twice, went past the Coliseum, Victor Emmanuel Memorial, statues of Christ and the Twelve Disciples, and lots of historical ruins in Rome. The convoy didn't stay together and we met very few German soldiers. Went through Arezzo, an ex-rail center. The church was about the only complete building left. We arrived at a transit camp not far from Florence, just before dark.

### **Transit Camp at Laterina**

This was Laterina. There were barracks here, which contained fifty, three-tiered wooden bunks. There were twenty barracks. Two twenty-foot high fences with wooden guard towers surrounded the whole compound. Guards with dogs patrolled the perimeter outside the fences. There was a wire about eighteen inches off the ground that was about ten or twelve feet inside the high fence, We were warned that we would be shot if we stepped over this wire. Two buildings were the latrines. Simple cement block structures with concrete floors and two rows of eight-inch holes, with cement footprints on either side, to squat over for sanitary purposes. The holes were about three feet apart, no privacy and no toilet paper. There were a couple spigots to fill your canteen.

Dale and I were assigned to Hut #7, full of English and lice. We were searched and given three quarters of a canteen cup of barley soup and a blanket. We found a corner bunk with straw and fell asleep. The time spent in this camp was mostly a game of survival. I read the gospel every day, the Germans allowed me to keep my new testament, and picked lice.

Prisoner of War Postcard

PRISONER OF WAR - POST  
POSTCARD

FELDPOST  
22.3.44

TO

MRS. ERNEST SHERMAN  
Box 226  
BELLEVILLE  
WISCONSIN  
U.S.A.

TRANSIT CAMP FOR P. O. W.      Date MARCH 13-1944  
FP. Nr. 31979

I am prisoner - ~~slightly wounded~~ 1) - in German captivity, and in perfect health. From here I shall be transported during the next few days to another camp, the address of which I shall give you later. Only there I can get your letters and can reply to them.

kindest regards

NAME AND CHRISTIAN NAME SHERMAN RAY-J.  
RANK P.F.C.  
UNIT 179TH INF.

1) CROSS OUT IF NOT CORRECT  
BESIDES NAME, RANK AND UNIT ADD NOTHING.  
WRITE IN BLOCK LETTERS AND SIGN LEGIBLY.

*Ray J. Sherman*



April 1, 1944

I got up once through the night. The cramps and diarrhea are much better. I got seconds on coffee this morning. It had some sugar in it. At 7:30 I took a pill they gave us. They said it was a vitamin tablet. We talked a lot and I read the Gospel. The rumor about Romania and Hungary came around again. Twenty-four bombers flew over at about 10:00 AM. We had cabbage leaves and very little barley for soup. Forty-eight bombers passed over at about 2:30. Max Schmalling stopped in camp. He wanted to erect a boxing ring and put on a show. He promised a fantastic meal and drinks to anyone who would participate. To my knowledge, nobody took him up on the offer. Everyone was too weak and undernourished to do any activity like that.

April 2, 1944

My kidneys seem to be back to normal again; however, stools are still bloody. I feel quite good, but am weak. Had the usual roll call and ersatz (substitute) coffee at 7:00. The church bells of the town on the hill sound real inviting. We had a short informal worship for all religions this AM. Got cabbage soup for lunch. Dale was on yard detail, so he shared. I made a toasted sandwich with my rations. Had pea soup for supper; made seconds. Read the Gospel, lay in the sun and picked lice. Twenty-four bombers flew over this PM.

April 3, 1944

Got seconds on tea and feel about normal, but hungry. Had some sweet rice at noon. Ate bread, margarine and jam after soup. Quite a number of prisoners collapsed at roll call tonight. We talked about lakes and cottages before bed to night.

April 4, 1944

Today's menu - Coffee, pea soup with strings of meat in it, bread ration plus jam, real thin barley and peas for supper.

April 5, 1944

At 6:00 AM a shipment of Americans left. Dale left too. We had thick barley soup; very flat. I counted bread as they unloaded it. About five hundred fifty loaves so there must be about fifteen hundred prisoners left here. Got a new butter tin. We have been working on a tunnel. Carry the dirt in our pockets and pants cuffs and drop it outside. The place is bare ground. We stand around in groups to conceal our actions and shuffle our feet to mix the dirt into the ground. We went down about seven feet, then dug towards the fence. It was slow using tin cans and a hunk of steel to dig with. I think there are too many people involved in this operation. Washed a handkerchief and fixed my bed (four blankets) and read the Gospel. Roll call, tea, bread and soup at about 4:30.

April 6, 1944

Had seconds at noon; leaves, barley, macaroni and meat. Very good. Sat in the sun and picked lice. Some dive-bombers east of here! Same soup for supper. I had my usual headache. Met an English motorcycle enthusiast.

April 7, 1944

Both roll calls before soup. Jerry took off this PM. Leaves and macaroni for dinner.

April 8, 1944

I got new straw, new fleas and lice today. My bed is on the floor in straw. One killed and two wounded on a break attempt at nightfall.

April 9, 1944

We had simple services by an English officer. I got seconds on leaves and cauliflower and macaroni for supper. Got a bit of cheese and butter with the bread ration. Five men on a loaf.

April 10, 1944

Both roll calls in AM. Sunday was quite warm. I built a little fire and boiled my underwear to kill the lice. We had about an hour's entertainment. The Russians danced and sang a couple of numbers. English and Americans told jokes and sang. It was okay. I picked the oats out of the straw and ate them. We get awfully hungry. Today was some kind of German holiday.

April 11, 1944

We had simple rites for the P.O.W. who was killed. I guess they buried him in a cemetery on the hill. I started a *cat tail* with old wool socks I've been collecting.

April 12, 1944

We had entertainment tonight by twelve New Zealanders who sang, six Russians who sang and thirteen South Africans who also sang. There were also a couple of American numbers.

April 13, 1944

Got my hair clipped by a P.O.W. The lice are terrible lately. I washed my shirt in hot water in my helmet. I did lots of *French Knitting* the last two days. It passes time real well.

April 14, 1944

Lots of dive-bombers and heavy bombers today. I lost my jam ration to Matthews for the past two days. I boiled my underwear and socks in my helmet. Also knitted about eight feet yesterday.



Western Union MIA Telegram

# WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

FOR QUICK SERVICE ANSWER BY BEARER

MR. ERNEST D. SHERMAN,  
BELLEVILLE, WISCONSIN.

NUMBER
CHARGES

Pay no charges on this message unless indicated on delivery sheet

<p><b>CLASS OF SERVICE</b></p> <p>This is a full-rate Telegram or Cablegram unless its deferred character is indicated by a suitable symbol above or preceding the address.</p>	<h2>WESTERN UNION</h2> <p>A. N. WILLIAMS PRESIDENT</p>	<p><b>SYMBOLS</b></p> <p>DL = Day Letter</p> <p>NL = Night Letter</p> <p>LC = Deferred Cable</p> <p>NLT = Cable Night Letter</p> <p>SR = Ship Radiogram</p>
<p>The filing time shown in the date line on telegrams and day letters is STANDARD TIME at point of origin. Time of receipt is STANDARD TIME at point of destination.</p>		
10 50AM	34 GOV'T	APR 12 '44 Feb 18
WASHINGTON D C	9 20PM APR 11	
ERNEST D SHERMAN	BOX 226	
	BELLEVILLE WIS	
<p>THE SECRETARY OF WAR DESIRES ME TO EXPRESS HIS DEEP REGRET THAT YOUR SON PRIVATE FIRST CLASS RAY J SHERMAN HAS BEEN REPORTED MISSING IN ACTION SINCE EIGHTEEN FEBRUARY IN ITALY . LETTER FOLLOWS.</p> <p>DUNLOP ACTING THE ADJUTANT GENERAL</p>		
<p>THE COMPANY WILL APPRECIATE SUGGESTIONS FROM ITS PATRONS CONCERNING ITS SERVICE</p>		



April 15, 1944

We had entertainment again tonight. Africans (colored) put on a Zulu War Dance and sang a couple good numbers, The Russians sang a couple good numbers. Dark skinned New Zealanders put on a War Dance and a couple songs. A Frenchman sang *Ava Maria*. Lots of dive-bombers and heavies today. I could hear planes going South through the night for a time.

April 16, 1944

I picked some clover and cooked it, but it was too strong to be good. The bread and jam seemed extra good today. We have been getting lots of greens and cauliflower of late.

April 17, 1944

Got a hot shower and was deloused today. (This usually meant he had a soapy shower, his head was shaved, and his clothes were steamed to try to kill the lice.) Also got a piece of black Italian soap tonight. Our section seems very unorganized yet.

April 18, 1944

Slept well. I started making a pair of carpet slippers out of burlap and blanket material. Anti-aircraft guns have been moved into nearby hills.

April 19, 1944

I slept well, but have terrible hunger pains. Finished the carpet slippers that I started yesterday. I found a fellow who will trade a needle for some of my bread ration. We have a new crew that has taken over the kitchen. Now one person is present at all times to see that all rations are used for the men. It sure is horrible waiting for food. At times it seems unbearable.

April 20, 1944

I traded a pair of socks for two needles and a thimble. Worked on other carpet slippers today. We had a small serving of fish today. It sure was good. My hunger pains have been especially bad today. Worked on the outside detail this AM, got nothing. Zollner traded my OD socks today for two bread rations and eight leaves of tobacco.

April 22, 1944

Lots of heavy bomber action today. I got my shipment card yesterday. Underground work on the tunnel is carried on for twenty-four hours. Bed slats are used to shore-up the tunnel roof wherever dirt wants to cave in. I traded tobacco for three bread, three jam and one butter ration. Traded shoes for two oleo (butter), one bread, two jam and one pair of size eleven or twelve Italian shoes. I found a beautiful large potato this AM. Gave one ration of bread to - ? -. During the day I ate three and one half bread rations.

(They would use twigs and leaves to fuel fire and cook in a tin can or helmet)



April 23, 1944

I traded a field jacket and bread ration for a combat jacket. I had quite a bad stomach cramp after coffee (too much bread). We had sweet rice for supper. I gave most of it away.

April 24, 1944

Rumors about landing are going around lately. I darned a sock. Hundreds of planes went over. Saw one go down from anti-aircraft fire. The Russians seem to be saying it is OK.

April 26, 1944

We had sweet oatmeal for dinner. I traded a slice of bread for a soup ration for supper. Made pudding with bread and soup. Obtained several addresses to write to for stamps after the war. (One of Ray's hobbies was collecting stamps.) Made oleo and jam trades.

April 27, 1944

Quite bad indigestion today.

April 28, 1944

(My notes are not legible). Two parachutes came down from bombers today. Had thin bean soup. Had simple rites for P.O.W. who was killed by locals after he escaped last week.

April 30, 1944

**Hole was discovered last night.** We were called out for roll call. The guards came in with dogs and went directly to the spot beneath the bed where we were excavating. We were going to surface the following night. Someone squealed. The three who slept above the hole and hut commander were put in solitary on "special" rations. Most of us were moved to hut #7. About one hundred fifty old P.O.W.s came in this morning. I learned to knit straight from an Indian. I took an old sock toe and watched an Indian for about an hour. Made needles from wire. It is quite slow. I was moved to hut #1 and now have a bottom bunk. Lost a ration and half of bread wrapped in a handkerchief and rolled up in a blanket. It was stolen.

May 1, 1944

We had Italian mess kits issued last Saturday. I ate my last extra bread ration from my shoe trade. We had three on a four-man loaf today. Washed some old wool sock tops and did some knitting, made two handkerchiefs and picked lice; an every day ritual.

May 4, 1944

(Illegible notes again) ---- last night. Cooked part of my bread ration. Mixed it with the soup. Made it nice and thick. I tried to sell shoes yesterday. Am now knitting on the heel of sock. Lots of rumors about shipment. They have put up a loudspeaker. We heard German news broadcast plus music and picked lice.

May 5, 1944

I traded a fountain pen (ninety-five cents at Patrick Henry) to Russians for a bread ration today. Traded tobacco for bread, oleo and jam. Exchanged shirts and got two leaves of tobacco. Traded them for one half-bread ration and butter and canteen cup of thick soup. Exchanged a combat pack for one with three small holes, which I patched and traded for a tobacco and butter and jam ration. I gave Zollner my bread ration today for his bread, butter and jam ration tomorrow.

Soups consist of seasoned vegetables, mostly leafy lettuce, spinach, sliced radishes, onions and a bit of barley and lots of water and a bit of bully beef with flour for thickening.

May 6, 1944

I traded my Eversharp to the Russians for two leaves of tobacco, two sugar, one butter and jam ration. Made a sweet pudding of two sugar, one butter and one jam and one half-bread ration. Small sugar ration of approximate one tablespoon was made today. I made a candy of two sugar, one butter and three jams, but I didn't boil it long enough.

May 7, 1944

Got on an inside work detail today. Got two extra soups plus butter, jam and cheese with bread today. I finished my first sock. Attended services outside search hall this evening. Mother's Day today. A few days ago I had a feeling that Grandma Lange had passed away. (She hadn't.) I started working on my second sock.

May 8, 1944

Got a hot shower and deloused. Traded Italian shoes for two bread and one butter ration. Made a pair of carpet slippers for a guy. Got two bread and one butter ration.

May 9, 1944

I think quite often about the good times on my Milwaukee Journal paper routes. Long to return to that simple, peaceful life.

May 11, 1944

Rumor came in that Rome had fallen last Sunday. I was picked up with Stacy for questioning about shoe trading. Don't know what he got. I started to embroider an AMA insignia. All Americans with shipping cards are to go tonight by truck. We got on an open trailer at 1:00 AM.

### **Transit Camp # 132, Montova**

May 12, 1944

Rode all day. Air raids several times. Important fortifications in the mountain area around St. Lucia. The road went above the clouds several times. We went through Florence and Berlonga (Bologna?). Quite nice farmland on this side of the mountains. Lots of poppies



and iris growing wild. Many poplar trees are trimmed so that they grow tall and slender; very nice. We stopped in one town and the Italians began to throw bread until the guards stopped it. Some trucks did very well.

We arrived at Transit #132 camp at 1:00 AM. Rations for the day was one half loaf of bread and one-third slice of beef per man. The camp is located on the edge of Montova. Got a small cup of coffee.

Breakfast was sweeter than others. Four on a German loaf and jam and a nice dipper of soup with quite a bit of macaroni (no greens) for dinner. Supper was rice and greens chopped fine.



**The AMA (American Motorcycle Association) patch embroidered by Ray while in P.O.W. prison camp.**

May 13, 1944

Coffee for breakfast with an Atabrine pill. Barley, meat and greens for dinner. We have to come inside during the frequent air raid action. A water tap in the yard is always running out. We sleep on wooden bunks, blankets, but no straw. The Po River is about two hundred yards away. Three men on a loaf of bread for supper. The latrine at night is a barrel like at Studio.

May 14, 1944

Coffee, Atabrine and roll call. I got a pair of size eight and one half shoes from the British Red Cross. Three men on a loaf of bread, butter, rice and greens at 11:30. Thinner soup at 5:00.

May 15, 1944

Shipment rumors are about. Got two thirds of a loaf of bread from an old 1923 dollar. They also sold cigarettes. A nutty German comes into the compound on a bike and waves a pistol around and hollers. I bought -----for a bit of butt tobacco from the garbage heap. I also found seven or eight radishes and ate them. They were pithy, but edible. Packed my belongings for shipment tomorrow. (Two blankets, mess kit, canteen, helmet and sewing stuff.)

May 16, 1944

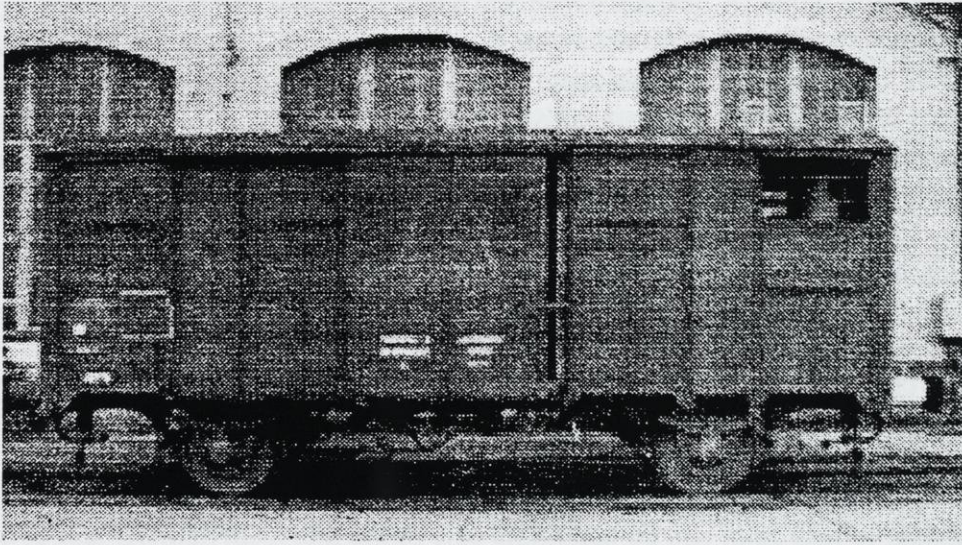
We got up at 4:00 AM. Had three on a loaf of bread with coffee and jam for breakfast. Was searched and fed good macaroni soup at 9:00. Walked about five blocks to a train. Fifty of us were locked up in a 40 x 8 boxcar. Left Montova at about 5:00 PM. A five gallon pail was provided us for a urinal. It was so crowded we could not lie down. Two P.O.W.s cut a hole in the side of the car, but to no avail. When we stopped, irate guards under arms searched us and they deprived us of our bread ration. Others got theirs at 3:00 PM. There were three cars deprived of bread and water. We stopped several times because of air raids. We were lucky we were not bombed or strafed.

May 18, 1944

At 9:00 AM the scenery is mountainous with more wooden houses. We got a canteen cup for a urinal for all fifty of us. At 1:00 PM we crossed the border after passing through several tunnels. Still no bread or water!

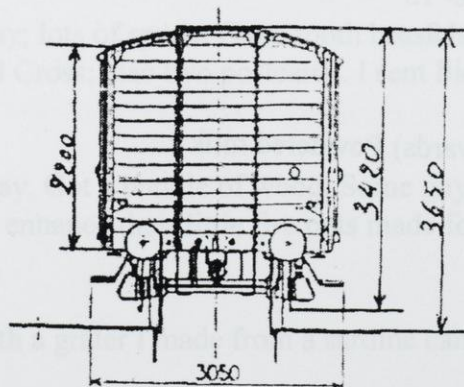
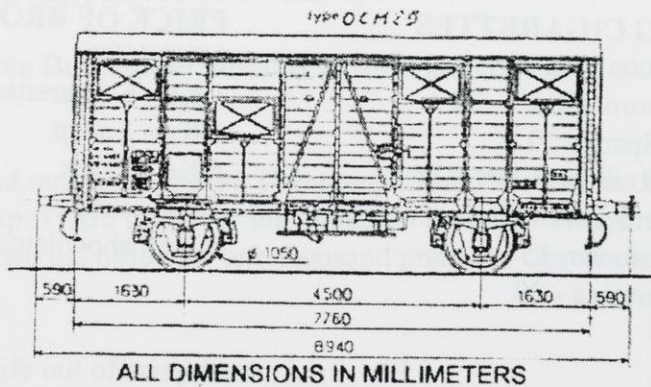


## The French "Forty and Eight" Railroad Boxcar



The type of boxcar used by the Germans to transfer American Prisoners of War to Germany from Italy during World War II in 1944.

40 x 8 box cars - Each car was stenciled with its capacity: 40 men or eight horses.



## TYPICAL CONTENTS OF RED CROSS PARCELS

### AMERICAN

5-9 pks of cigarettes  
 2 bars of soap  
 milk 1 lb  
 margarine 1 lb  
 jam 6 oz  
 coffee 2-4 oz  
 chocolate 4-8 oz  
 salmon 12 oz  
 corned beef  
 pork luncheon 12 oz  
 or Army C-Ration  
 Rose mill pate  
 C biscuits  
 prunes or raisins  
 cheese 8 oz  
 sugar 8 oz  
 vitamin pills

### CANADIAN

50 cigarettes  
 1 bar soap  
 16 oz butter  
 16 oz jam  
 16 oz milk  
 cheese  
 7 oz sardines  
 salmon  
 12 oz corned beef  
 crackers  
 7 oz prunes  
 6 oz raisins  
 salt and pepper  
 12 oz Spam  
 6 oz chocolate  
 8 oz sugar  
 4 oz tea or coffee

### ENGLISH

50 cigarettes  
 16 oz crackers  
 6 oz cheese  
 8 oz margarine  
 eggs  
 chocolate  
 dried fruit  
 sugar  
 2 oz tea  
 Nestles milk  
 jam  
 oatmeal  
 salmon  
 cottage pie  
 bacon  
 meat rol  
 pudding

Contents would change from time to time, but they were always welcome.

### PRICES IN 7A USING CIGARETTES

milk- 30	corned beef - 30
soap - 5	Spam - 30
butter - 30	Rose mill - 15
jam - 25	crackers - 20
coffee - 40	prunes- 15
tea - 30	raisins - 20
candy American - 7-15	
Canadian - 20	
salmon - 15	cheese- 15
sugar - 20	oats - 15
bacon - 15	eggs - 6

### PRICE OF BROT IN MUNICH

1 Kg - 6 cigarettes  
 1 Kg - 1 soap  
 5 Kg - L. tea  
 5 Kg - coffee  
 3 Kg - chocolate

KLIM - (milk spelled backwards) Powdered milk



## Camp at Moosburg

May 20, 1944

We got three men on two loaves of bread and three on meat. At about 8:00 AM, we also got water. We arrived at Camp Moosburg at about 9:00 AM. Moosburg was one of the largest P.O.W. camps in Southwest Germany. It could accommodate about one hundred thousand prisoners. We were all interrogated and assigned to barracks with wooden bunks and a sack of straw to be used as a mattress. There were all types of prisoners here, usually sort of divided up by the country of origin.

The Red Cross parcels were twelve inches by eight inches by six inches, weighing ten pounds. They contained four packs of cigarettes, a D-ration chocolate bar, a box of sugar cubes, a package of cocoa, instant coffee, a can of sardines, evaporated milk, a can of salmon, corned beef, liver pate, Spam, American cheese, a box of raisins, powdered milk, dry biscuits and Oleo. The boxes were not identical, but similar.

At about 9:00 AM, we got sweet tea. I had to turn in \$15 invasion money. I got three boiled spuds, German meat and kraut; also eight men on one large loaf of bread. Received a Red Cross parcel #17. Just like Christmas! Lots of trading all night in the hall. Many got sick from eating rich food. I traded carrots for two eggs (powdered) and five biscuits for one can of eggs.

May 21, 1944

Everyone seems to have an excess of rich food

May 22, 1944

I met a fellow from Burlington, Wisconsin. He is Lavern Cate's cousin Kenneth Potter.

May 23, 1944

Was deloused and moved to *Transit Compound*. Met Dale and the rest of the bunch who left Laterina in April. Are they ever fat compared to us. Fried eggs and warmed spuds for supper. I traded two oz. of tea for one thousand grams of German bread.

May 24, 1944

Made a bread knife out of scrap iron.

May 25, 1944

Went on spuds detail today; lots of spuds. Got a tooth brush, soap, comb, sewing kit, and razor blades from the Red Cross; also two postcards. I sent Sis one.

May 26, 1944

Went on gravel detail today. Got a bundle of wood. Some guys have made clever little blowers out of tin cans to enhance their little fire pots made for cooking.

May 27, 1944

Made potato pancakes with a grater I made from a sardine can.

May 28, 1944

Went to church in the hall. Baked a kind of pie with milk, eggs, margarine, jam and pancake flour. Shortened a pair of pants for a guy and got cake flour for doing it. Traded two cigarettes for some dehydrated soup. Jerry gives us tea, a tablespoon of sugar and five or six on a loaf of bread and a vitamin pill at 11:30. We get soup and three boiled spuds once a day, a spoon of margarine three times a day and sometimes a slice of cheese or bologna. "Christmas" almost every Friday at 11:00 AM. The Red Cross parcels arrive. The food is good. I got a loaf of civilian bread across the fence today for twenty *fags* and nearly lost it.

May 30, 1944

Sure had bad gas pains the last two days. I got a canteen and cup; they were not the same ones I turned in. This one had a penknife wrapped inside of the canteen.

June 2, 1944

I got a Canadian parcel today. Traded ten *fags* for a can of KLIM, real butter and one quarter pound of blood cheese. It seems strange not to be picking lice out of your clothes everyday since we got here.

June 8, 1944

Got OD pants, underwear, wool undershirt and handkerchiefs, socks, an overcoat and a sun tan shirt, all from the Red Cross. I made a necktie from some extra material from the shorts. Got deloused. I took off for the latrine so fast that I had my shoes on the wrong feet. Read the New Testament every day, as usual.

June 10, 1944

We were issued a Scottish parcel today.

June 11, 1944

Went to church service, as usual got two loaves of bread Friday and sold one for twenty *fags* and two oz of tea while on "ration detail."

June 13, 1944

Rumors are coming quite steadily about an invasion. Our planes came over the northwest in large numbers today. This camp is quite well marked as a P.O.W. camp. I am to be shipped out tomorrow. I have been eating all *opened* canned stuff. Made a good pot out of two KLIM cans this week. Been having lots of gas on my stomach of late, (too much food).





**Standing at far right is the Commandant of Stalag VIIIB Memmingen, located 30 to 40 miles from Augsburg, Germany**

Ray recently obtained this photo from George Szweada, one of the other P.O.W.s he served with in the Agawang area.

## Stalag VII, Memmingen, Germany

June 16, 1944

Arrived at Stalag VIIB, Memmingen. Registered, had my picture taken, and was issued prisoner # 12048. Received a British parcel. Got nothing on the four hour train ride in boxcars again. The country is nice but cool. I slept in a large *tent* on wood shavings. We carry all of our possessions with us wherever we can.

June 18, 1944

Still in a tent; one hundred seventy of us. We have two or three roll calls a day. They seem to find little things to make big issues over. We do get pretty good food; lots of kraut and quite a few boiled spuds in everything. Twenty-five men to a pound of margarine or a spoon full of jam once a day. Three to six men to a loaf of bread. We got some fried hash with kraut this noon. Some kind hearted American took up a collection of *fags* for the German Compound Sergeant yesterday.

June 19, 1944

It has rained every day for the past week. I shaved yesterday.

June 20, 1944

You get more opportunities for trading if you go on work details. Worked on *spud detail* picking up potatoes in the fields. I worked near the airport. Saw lots of bombcraters and wrecked airplanes. Traded ten cigarettes for twenty French biscuits. Bought a pocketknife for fifteen cigarettes and sold it.

June 21, 1944

I went out on spud detail again today, but was unable to get any to keep. I saw a German plane going *faster* than the speed of *sound*.

June 22, 1944

About three hundred of us were loaded into boxcars for shipment to another camp. I got one third of a loaf of bread and a piece of sausage. Was able to see out through a crack when we went through Memmingen; a nice looking town. Saw small kids in uniforms. Maybe school clothing.

## Augsburg, Germany

June 23, 1944

We arrived in Augsburg, a larger city, at 9:00 AM. Met others at work camp # 663B on the edge of town. They had left Moosburg before us. We got kind of a cold reception from them. There is lots of bomb destruction here. South Americans gave us spuds over the fence. Germans issued one-quarter loaf of bread at night. Lots of arguing over pieces. Jerry said OK, but buddies not?







German Currency (Back side)





German Currency Twenty Marks



(front)



(back)

June 24, 1944

Cold coffee. Worked on shelter, a bomb shelter of sorts, not even large enough for the number of P.O.W.s. No dinner. Got a Canadian parcel at noon; had to share two to a parcel. Some ladies next to the camp try to slip us chunks of bread. I got from a buddy a small one thousand grams of soap. We saw a Jerry rocket plane again. The guard says it travels at twelve hundred kilometers per hour. It makes me concerned. No work this PM. Got blood sausage, oatmeal, fried spuds, pickled beets, tea and one quarter loaf of bread - OK.

June 25, 1944

Worked in town today. Dug into ruins for Singerrat 3 op ??

June 26, 1944

Traded a loaf of bread for soap.

June 27 to 30, 1944

Sent English soap out and got one and one half loaves of bread back. Working in a cemetery that had bomb damage. One GI wheeled a cart full of dirt around with a nice skull on top for some time. I got one and one half bottles of beer. Sold two cigarettes for two marks and bought six bottles of lemon soda, six boxes of matches and have one hundred twenty pfennigs left. We are able to have one of the German guards go to a nearby store to buy things for us if we have German marks (money). The people nearby treat us surprisingly well. They give us bread, beer, etc. The Secret Police clamped down on trading and searched us for cocoa, tea and soap. I think they are jealous that we have some of these commodities. (My notes are not legible here) Rumors that Allies -----  
---

July 3, 1944

I sold soap for two marks and two kilo bread stamps. We voted to appoint Henry Kaufman as our interpreter and camp leader. Henry was also in the 45<sup>th</sup> Division, 157<sup>th</sup> Regiment, Company K. He was also captured at Anzio and could speak German quite well. He had been in most all of the same prison camps in Italy that I was. Henry was Jewish, but was able to hide that fact from the Germans.

July 4, 1944

I went with the guard to the store and bought bread. The civilian lady gave three of us a bag of bread and cake. I am still on the cemetery detail. Some of the Germans are hostile towards us when we walk to work, making threatening remarks and spitting at us. It is a good thing we have the German guards with us!

July 5, 1944

Worked on the shelter in camp and put more earth on top for added protection. Lots of air raids, but so far no bombs near us. I got three and one half bottles of beer (pretty weak) at



work detail today. I got an American 10# parcel today. It is really good. Worked on the shelter again tonight. Electric lights came on tonight. I got paid six marks and donated it toward a keg of beer. Water isn't always turned on. We went swimming in a small pool for ten pfennigs. I made a pocket in the back of my combat jacket. Sewed a zipper in the seam. It makes a good secret storage place where I can carry trading goods.

July 9, 1944

Sure drank a lot of beer today and got a headache out of it. The boys put on a little show in front of all of us.

July 10, 1944

I worked with the cemetery detail. I'm still looking for a NAZI swastika armband. Traded Canadian and English tea and twenty fags for a wristwatch and four and one half leaves of tobacco. Plea was made to turn in all coupons and maps with threats of a shakedown of all tools. One was caught with a bayonet.

July 12, 1944

We had a two-hour raid with lots of ack-ack, but no bombs here.

July 13, 1944

Changed work detail. Now work in bombed out apartments. Had a two-hour raid over Munich again. Our shelter isn't finished yet. We have POW letters on the roof of one of our buildings, so it gives one a bit of assurance in the daytime.

July 14, 1944

I got an American food parcel again today.

July 15, 1944

I got a strawberry jam ration and three bread rations for two soaps and five fags. The water was off. I got a bottle of beer tonight.

July 16, 1944

Hear bombing from 9:00 to 11:00 AM, one wave dropped bombs on the other side of the city. Rumors of Stimpson arranging for a truce conference (propaganda).

July 17, 1944

Went on a new detail working for the nuns in bombed church. Get tea and bread in the forenoon and afternoon and eat lunch there. I met a nineteen year old Ukrainian, nice looking. Gave me cheese, onion and radish. She has been working for Jerry for two years. I bought a pair of wool socks for twelve fags. Sent a Frenchman for 1000 grams of bread and he brought me 2000 grams. All the civilian allies give us a salute and V. German civilian's attitude is more aggressive lately.

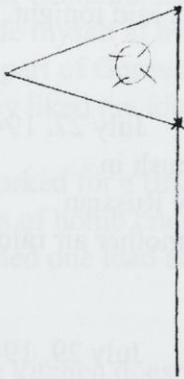


**Deutscher Volkssturm Wehrmacht**

The Deutscher Volkssturm Wehrmacht were Civilian Militia of the German Army (Civilian Defenders).

The armband above is a German souvenir that Ray picked up in Germany at the end of World War II. It was worn by the Volkssturm Wehrmacht.





**Warning flag for hidden mines**  
(shown approximately actual size)

The Germans tied these flags on a stiff wire staff and placed them wherever they planted an explosive mine. Once they finished “planting” an area, they removed the flags.

July 18, 1944

Went on detail, a defense type of operation. I told the guard that we couldn't work on that type of thing. Watched Russian women shovel coal and wheel sand and cement; we went back to camp. Went to a bombed warehouse in the PM. Saw Russian females loading scrap iron. Had an air raid at 10:45AM. No bombs here, but we could hear them seven to ten miles away. Didn't feel too well in the evening. Something I ate.

July 19, 1944

Had two air raids in the AM. Fires were started on the West Side of the city. Worked in camp in the afternoon. Kaufman left camp with a prisoner who had gone off his rocker. They took him to the hospital, a mental institution.

July 20, 1944

Worked in a bombed warehouse, a six story building. All the material was on the ground floor. Had an air raid from 9:00 to 11:00. No bombs here. Slept as usual. Rumor came that civilians in Moosburg killed twenty-five Yanks. Got Canadian parcels; fried spuds and carrots for supper. We had to shovel gravel for our washroom after supper.

July 21, 1944

We stay in camp when we have air raids early in the day.

July 24, 1944

Had an air raid from 12:00 to 1:00; no bombs here. Had beer in the AM and PM on work detail. Worked on air raid shelter in the evening.

July 26, 1944

Rumor that Ribbontrop, Churchill and Roosevelt are in Switzerland. Had a raid tonight. Heard bombs and went back to sleep. Bought KLIM for forty cigarettes

July 27, 1944

Guard says the war will be finished in three weeks. Rumor from French; push in Normandy sector. Sugar and jam issued. Bought lemonade for work. I saw Russian women pulling a plow today. Got English food parcels today. There was another air raid alert last night.

July 29, 1944

I didn't hear it, but the guard unlocked the doors during an alert so we could go into the shelter if we wished. I got eight 500-gram loaves of bread and ration stamps for Canadian coffee. I made a shelf by my bunk for my parcels, etc. Had blood in my stools yesterday and today. Always have beer or soda on detail. The doctor buys bread for us. Gave the guard American propaganda sheets dropped by planes in the PM. I washed my shirt yesterday. We had a show in the kitchen tonight (Can't read the entries in my notes). They have been shipping out P.O.W.s. Twenty or more going tomorrow. Our guard has invited us to visit his home when the war is over.



(My notes are not legible at this point)

August 7, 1944

We left Augsburg after being thoroughly searched. We took our parcels in the boxcars with us. Thirty-nine in ours. I have an American parcel box filled with my possessions.

## Memmingen

August 8, 1944

7:30 AM. We didn't travel much overnight. Arrived in Memmingen. Walked to the stalag, was searched and had tea. The guards bought four barrels of beer, as the water mains are broken, *-kaputt* and water is only turned on a couple times per day. Saw some bombed out buildings. Lots of arguments over English and American parcels.

August 9, 1944

We sleep on straw and wood shavings in a large tent. We have two German blankets per person. The water is turned off because the water mains were bombed. We got 3.2 beer; thirty men per barrel. Had an alert, but no bombs.

August 10, 1944

I was drafted to a fifteen-man detail. We walked seven kilometers to a farm and were split up and worked from 9:30 AM to 8:00 PM. We had pancakes the size of silver dollars and lettuce sandwiches. The table was set with three bowls and spoons. Had a bowl of milk and a loaf of dark bread with a dab of real butter. I wonder if they always eat like this. I think Grandma has taken a liking to me. I washed *after* supper and have more or less made myself at home. Can't Ka-pish their lingo worth a darn. (This was in Buvaria, not the part of Germany where Grandma Lange was from, so they spoke a different dialect. They liked the idea that I had a German grandmother.)

I worked for a time in a field near the airport and saw eighteen planes scattered about. Lots of bomb craters. Had an 11:00 AM alert as usual. Raked hay with a wooden rake, loaded one load and we moved it up by the barn. We fed seven cows and one young ox.

August 11, 1944

The kitchen doesn't seem to be very well stocked with dishes. We finished work at 6:30.

August 12, 1944

Didn't feel well today, went on sick call (GB) got two days NICHT-ARBITE. Still no food parcels. (Can't read my notes)

August 14, 1944

Went on sick call again. Didn't see the doctor. I bet Archie Shultz a motorcycle buddy seat cover that I would visit him in Lansing, Michigan before he would visit me. Got

American parcels, two men per box. Everything was opened or punctured, even the cigarettes. I went to get half soles on my shoes, got two kg of bread with food stamps from town. Got a month's supply of parcels.

**German P.O.W.  
Sick Pass**



August 15, 1944

Worked at a new farm today. The eats were not so good and there was not so much work either. Had a twelve-year-old kid and a female Pole with me.

August 16, 1944

It hailed like the German guard predicted. Also got wet, as the tent leaks. Got one half of an American parcel. Had a bomb alert at 10:00 to 11:00. Heard bombs.

August 17, 1944

Dinner was not good. The kid was scared and crapped on the floor during the air raid. I worked in oats in the PM. Carried bags of oats into the attic of the house, up a narrow rickety stairs.

August 18-19, 1944

Had shirts on in the sun all day. The tent still leaked and we still sleep on wood shavings. We cut around Jerry planes. We used a scythe to cut the hay. They get upset if it isn't cut short enough.

August 20, 1944

I wrote eight cards and a "V-mail" letter today. This is the first opportunity we've had to write to people. Got shoe polish and had a chance to go swimming.



August 21-22, 1944

An eighteen-year-old German gal and a nineteen-year old Russian worked with me. Bought cheese and chocolate this week. Had a chance to become "involved". Not worth the risk. The cider is not so strong here; I can drink more. I gave the Russian gal chocolate and the Pole some cigarettes.

August 23, 1944

Worked for a different farm with a Polish P.O.W. and a nineteen year old Russian gal. Not so much work here and more eats.

August 25, 1944

Parcels Tuesday and Wednesday. Alarm at 1:00 AM.

August 26, 1944

Got paid 4.20 "lager money." Finished work on the farm.



**This P.O.W. camp money had no value.  
One could not buy anything with it.**

August 27, 1944

We got new straw to sleep on.

August 28, 1944

The detail worked in town today. We took the roof off a damaged building. I had two "brotzeits" and three beers.

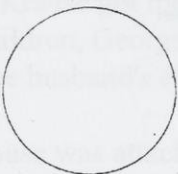




## V-Mail Service

This is the other side of the V-Mail form. The message was written in the space provided.

Print the complete address in plain block letters in the panel below, and your return address in the space provided. Use typewriter, dark ink, or pencil. Write plainly. Very small writing is not suitable.

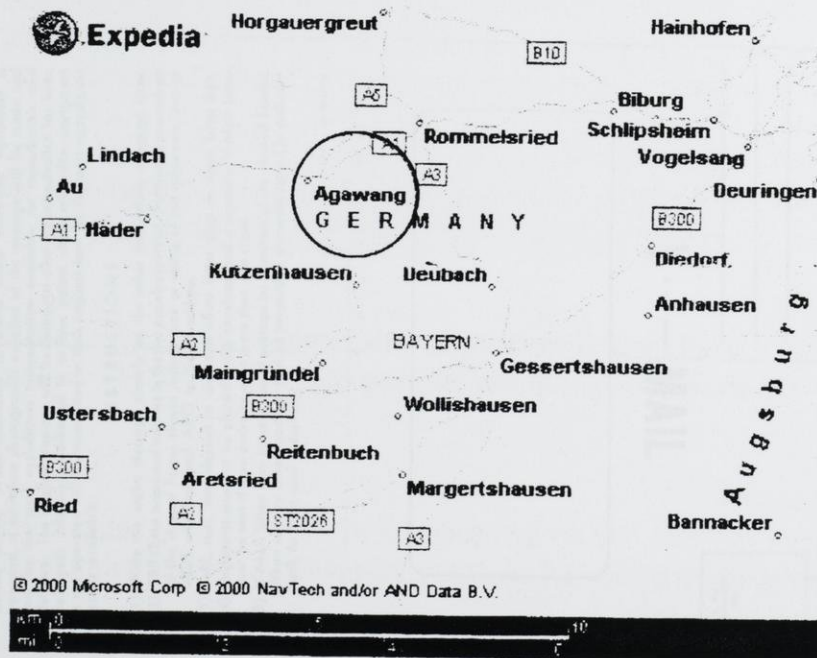
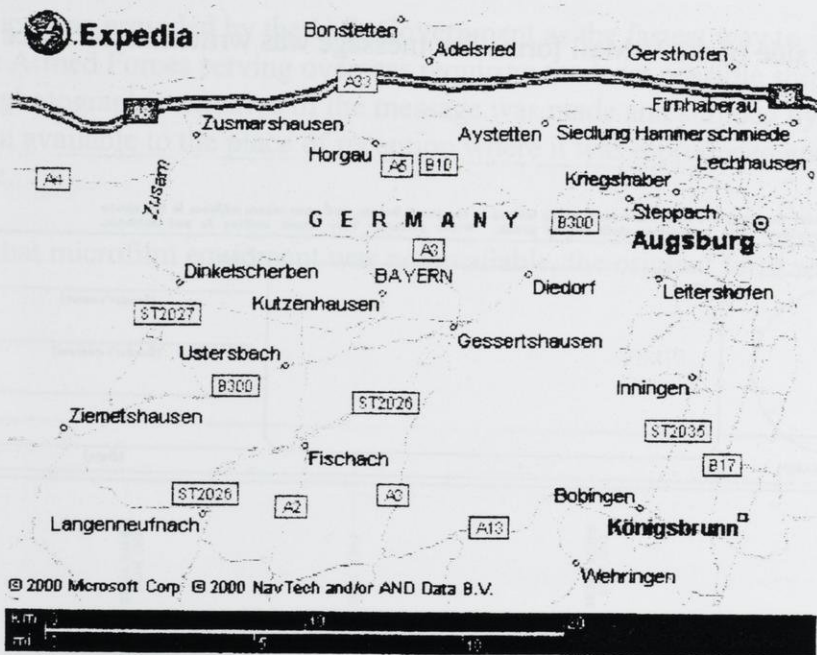
No. _____	To _____ _____ _____ _____	From _____
 (CENSOR'S STAMP)		(Sender's name) _____
		(Sender's address) _____
		(Date) _____

FOLD SLITS OVER AND HOLD FOLD BOTTOM UP AND SEAL  
NO OTHER STAMP REQUIRED IF USED PROPERLY

**V...-MAIL**

36 - 2

U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE : 1943 16-28148-4



Maps of the area around Agawang, Germany, where 13 P.O.W.s were assigned to Lager #449-B and Ray worked on Frau Krause's farm.



## Arrive in Agawang

August 29, 1944

Went out with twelve others, was searched and rode *third class* with a sergeant and guard and no parcels with us. We arrived in Agawang after a hike from the railroad station at Gessertshausen. We were put in a room with thirteen single beds with a feather type mattress and a lighter feather type coverlet. We still carried our blankets and other meager possessions. A mixture of male and female Germans came to pick us for work.

Maria Krause got me for her farm work. Her husband was on the Russian front. She has two children, George and Maria, as I remember; about six and eight years old. They lived with the husband's elderly parents. No one could speak English.

The house was attached to the stable; of stone construction with a tile roof. An outhouse sat over a cement pit, which contained manure from four or five cows and three oxen. Chickens can roam through the kitchen and stables. The people we worked for fed us at their table. At night we all returned to our room and were locked in. There were bars on the windows and door. Our trousers and shoes and jackets were taken by the guard and locked in another room every night. The guard is quartered in a room above where the thirteen of us live.

August 31, 1944

We were searched again this morning and then we all walked to our destination where the farmers were in charge of us. There are people all over the fields and roads, so escape is out of the question. The food was good where I worked. We started at 8:00 AM and worked until 6:00 to 8:00 PM. On my farm we had a cloth tablecloth and they said grace before the noon meal. We have a "brotzeit" in the forenoon and afternoon. Usually ersatz coffee and bread is served.

September 1, 1944

I plowed behind a team of oxen after watching the grandfather do it, using a light rope and verbal commands. Maria gave me an old pair of trousers to wear during the day at work.

September 3, 1944

We had chicken for dinner, the floor was scrubbed and flies were being killed. She bakes white bread or biscuits every two days. They are good. I saw a Frenchman who worked there a year.

September 4, 1944

Still plowing with the oxen. Frau Krause washed my shirt and handkerchiefs for me. We heard bombs in the distance. It could be Augsburg.

September 5-6, 1944

We cut hay with a scythe and hauled it to the barn. Grandmother gets upset because I don't cut the hay close enough to the ground. One day when I was about to go and cut a

load of grass for cattle feed, I was hitching up the oxen to the wagon. Grandma was standing at the rear of the wagon with her feet spread apart. I heard water running. I looked back and sure enough, she was relieving herself. The first time this occurred I was rather surprised! After that it was sort of routine.

September 7, 1944

The Krauses had their own threshing machine, which was driven with an electric motor. We threshed in the PM today.

September 10, 1944

Grandma got word that her son is missing on the French Front. The guard says that we can't talk to civies or Poles on our day off.

September 12, 1944

Approximately one thousand bombers came over today! We could hear the bombs being exploded. Am still threshing. I feed the machine and have to remove "binders", which are made of a swatch of grain around the bundle. Lots of thistles. I had to carry oats in bags of about seventy-five pounds each up two flights of stairs. Frau Krause washed my shirt and trousers today. Boy these people are stubborn and thickheaded.

September 16, 1944

Today we spread out manure piles with a fork. Also started plowing out spuds. I bought ten eggs for ten cigarettes.

September 17, 1944

Frau Krause gave me a liter of milk and four eggs and a kilo of flour. I made a raisin, milk, egg and flour pie. I also made cookies with chocolate chips. Didn't have baking powder, so used some *toothpowder*. They were edible. We had a small wood cook stove to heat things in our room.

September 18, 1944

I went seven kilometers to Gessertshausen to a dentist in the PM to get a tooth filled.

September 20-30, 1944

Finished digging spuds Saturday. These farmers sure are dumb. No matter what I do, it's wrong. Sunday during grace, Grandma tried to pick up something off the floor. It was soft cow shit! She said "Sacrament" right in the middle of prayer. I made a custard and meat pie Sunday. On Monday I went to the dentist again. He put a permanent filling in the tooth. It still hurts.

October 1, 1944

Grandma wants me to learn to use the scythe, but I tell her I won't be here in the spring. I dug a hole to store rubes (cow beets). Tuesday. Nearly everyday they hold services for some veteran. The church is right next to our lager. The congregation wears black. Planes



came over Wednesday, so we didn't turn the cows out until about 2:00 PM. It was common practice to turn out all the animals in the village for grazing. The children would watch them and bring them back in the evening to be put in the stables.

Thursday

The Americans have advanced to Koln. We still hope it is finished in November. I asked for an arm full of fire wood and nearly broke Grandma's heart. "Lawrence only asked for half as much." (Lawrence was the Frenchman who worked for them before).

October 7, 1944

Five of our bunch got letters from home.

October 8, 1944

I made a raisin pie and cheese cakes.

October 9, 1944

I went to the dentist in the PM with the Frenchman's bike.

October 11, 1944

I had a good cold and slept in for three hours. Turned in my lager money for civi marks.

October 12, 1944

I refused to work and slept in. Frank Saboril visited me.

October 13, 1944

I went to the doctor and got three days G. B. (Gold Bricking). Five of us went with the guard to Dinkelscherben on the train to get shoes, sweaters, towels, handkerchiefs and scarves.

October 15, 1944

We made quite a hit in town with all our new clothes.

October 16, 1944

No work in the PM. We played ball in the yard.

October 17, 1944

We threshed in the PM.

October 21, 1944

I made a raisin pudding. Bought fifteen eggs. Went to Kutzenhausen on the Frenchman's bike. Bought two rings from Rooskies for forty cigarettes.

October 24, 1944

I went with Grandfather to Gessertshausen hauling bags of oats on a wagon with oxen. I lost one of my rings today. Planes dropped five bombs just outside of Agawang. We explained that they were just returning from targets and didn't want to take them back so they dropped them harmlessly. We had to fill in the craters.

October 27, 1944

I got a pair of wooden shoes with leather uppers from Frau Krause.

October 29, 1944

Got a letter from Dot. A German officer came into camp and blew his top about us not working enough.

October 30, 1944

Rumor that sixty thousand planes would come over on November sixteenth.

October 31, 1944

We made another trip to Gessertshausen with grain.

November 1, 1944

We refused to get up at 5:30. The sergeant came and agreed with us. They also wanted us to open all of our tin cans and puncture them, but we won out. Freitag, so we didn't work except to do chores.

November 2, 1944

We cut up hay and straw real fine with a machine for animal feed.

November 3, 1944

We butchered a pig and saved the blood for sausage. The official came and stamped the meat. They can't kill their own stock without permission.

November 4, 1944

Another funeral today. I got nine letters from home tonight. The lager got twenty-five units of coal for all winter.

November 5, 1944

Bombers come over every day. Art cut my hair. It's long enough to comb now. (I had it all cut off when I was deloused). Wrote to Mom. Got a month's supply of parcels. Six were opened; cigarettes and cheese were missing. Bombs were blamed.

November 7, 1944

We went out with the whole dorf to dig out a ditch along the road. I got wet.



November 8, 1944

We refused to go to work. The guard chased us out with his rifle and bayonet. It snowed a little. Rumor- F.D.R. was re-elected. We finished the work on the roadside.

November 10, 1944

We drew names and two others and I went with the guard on the train to Memmingen. Got pants, shirt, undershirt and drawers, caps and shoe polish, buttons and safety pins. It snowed quite a bit; about one and one half inches.

November 11, 1944

Got twelve letters and wrote two cards. My English shoes came back from repair with sixty-seven hob nails and toe and heel plates.

November 13, 1944

Hauled *mist* and straw and plowed alone.- Boy! These brats have no manners.

November 18, 1944

Lots of dive-bombers around. We are working in the woods grubbing out stumps about five kilometers from the dorf. A forester for each farmer marks the trees. Nothing is wasted. We make small bundles of pine boughs and grub out stumps. We learned to use the "stuck isen," a three foot chisel to cut roots. Frau Krause gave me schnapps a couple of times. "Don't tell Grandma."

December 1, 1944

Got a swell package from home.

December 6, 1944

We got a Ping-Pong set, boxing gloves and some phonograph records.

December 8, 1944

Borrowed a phonograph player. The guard has let us keep our pants and shoes at times lately. We bought the phonograph for one hundred and thirty cigarettes.

December 20, 1944

We butchered a pig again and helped with all operations.

December 23, 1944

I cut my left ring finger when I was filling the *soat* machine. We went to Buch to have the wheelbarrow repaired.

December 24, 1944

I gave the kids one half pound of chocolate, Grandma a pencil, some coffee and soap. In the evening they lighted candles and gave me a nice plate of cookies and schnapps. The

Americans have lost ground is the rumor of the past week. This makes all of us P.O.W.s feel low. We bought four liters of wine and a bottle of schnapps with cigarettes. We had Sunday, Monday and Tuesday off.

December 29, 1944

We tipped a huge load of *mist* over and broke the coupling pole, over on the other side of Kutzenhausen. The kid says, "Don't tell Grossmutter."

December 31, 1944

I sewed zippers on my trousers. It snowed about three inches.

The Red Cross gave us a shipment of toothbrushes, some puzzles, playing cards, shoe polish, toothpaste and some games. Included was a small chess board about five inches square and one inch thick.



#### **Chess board**

The fabric covered, cardboard cover folded across the top and back into itself. It kept the drawer closed which in which the pieces were stored.



January 1, 1945

We got two days off. Still had to do the morning chores.

January 7, 1945

Got a letter from Dottie and Aunt Mae; Fred died. I got new blouses and new shirts. Two parcels per man for January. Also books.

January 22, 1945

Snowed and drifted. Went to Kutzenhausen brewery for yeast. Rapp (nearby neighbor) is OK. He has a nice daughter and he wanted me to work for him. We talked a lot, I didn't understand it all. He gave me a beer.

January 23, 1945

We shoveled snow from the roads with all the dorf people. (No snow plows here). The whole village gets out and shovels. I made a snow plow for George out of a couple of boards. Am making a doll house for Maria.

January 26, 1945

More snow in the AM. I made old snow pants for Maria.

January 27, 1945

Made a doll cabinet for Maria.. Rooskies are doing swell! Our lager 663-B in Augsburg was said to have been hit and burned completely in ten minutes on the seventh.

January 28, 1945

Got a letter from Mom and Lillian D. and Ray S. I cut a hiding place in my chess set for diary. Lawrence brought me a map and took my watch to get it repaired. Played chess and Ping-Pong.

February 1, 1945

Got a new guard. He woke us with his rifle the first day. Van, Tincher and I went to Memmingen with the guard on the ninth and got GI blankets, tooth brushes, etc.

February 15, 1945

Hitched up a young steer to try to get him broke to work. We had him pull a log.

February 17, 1945

Got a compass needle from a French prisoner from a neighboring town who was working in the same field as I was. Am putting stuff in hayloft. Art quit smoking. We are saving our cigarettes and biscuits, etc. All the guys talk about escaping, but Art and I are quiet and are doing something about it.

February 27, 1945

About one thousand bombers passed over and dropped a couple of bombs about one half mile from my fields. All the farm buildings are located in the *dorf*. Each farmer has strips of land scattered around the village; no fences. This way no one has better land than his neighbor. I guess it has merit.

February 28, 1945

We have been hauling and spreading manure by hand. You unload it in piles on your strips of land, then later spread it out. (They don't have spreaders). Also have been in the woods, working on our marked trees. Zenci was out too. I think she must have been farmer Rapp's daughter.



Top view



Side view

### **Compass needle used to determine direction during escape**

Ray placed it on a pin and it would point north, so they knew the direction they were traveling. At night they followed the north star or watched the moon.





**P.O.W.'s Ray Sherman was with in Agawang, Germany, 1944 and 1945.**

BACK ROW. Left to right.

Joe Wolbert, Garfield, NJ; James Stone, Tolu, KY; John Tincher, Fayetteville, WV; Leonard Shoemaker, Wilmington, DE; Odis Tanner, Alma, GA; Glen Showalter, Harrisonburg, VA.

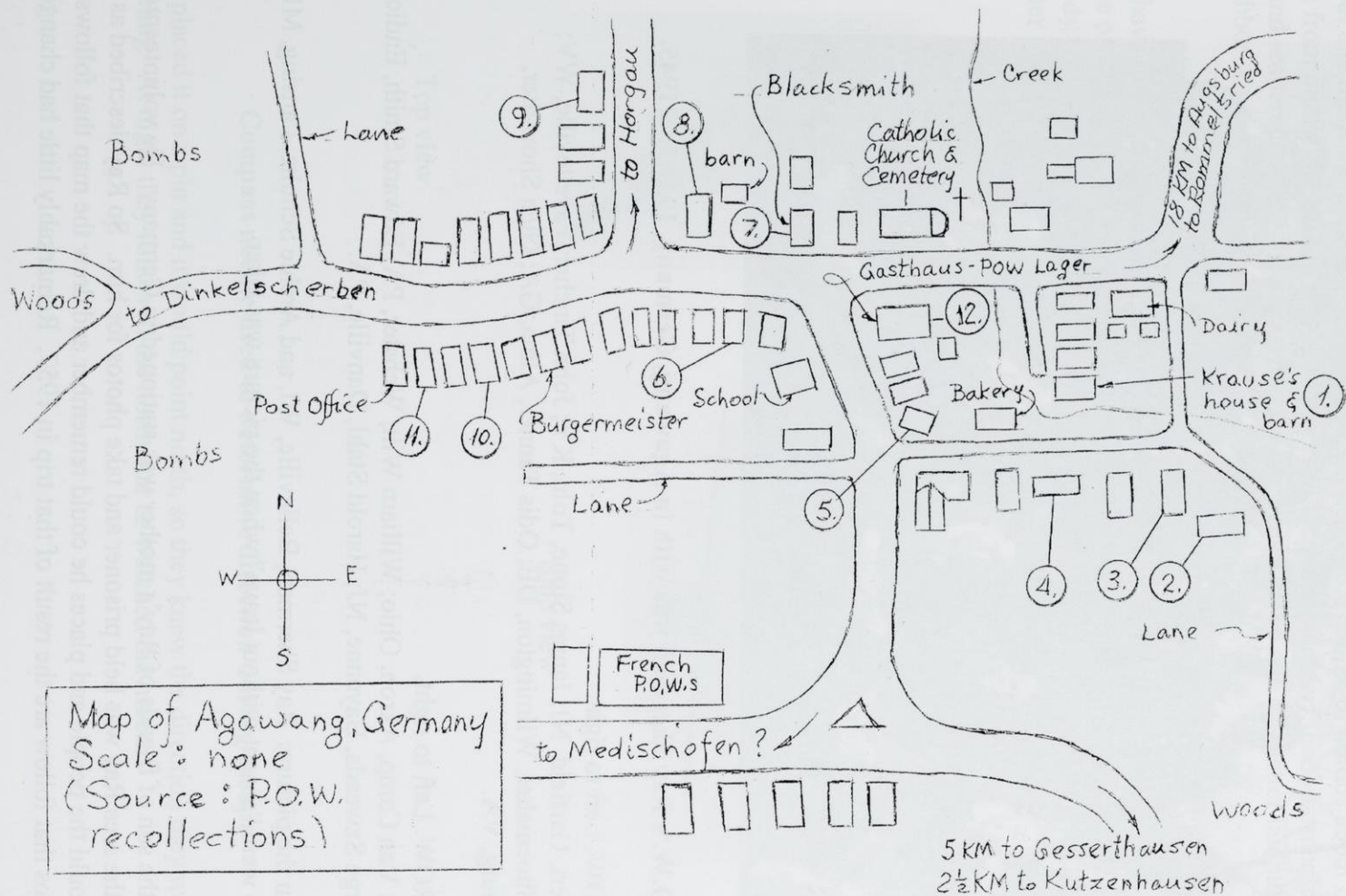
FRONT ROW. Left to right.

Lawrence Van Camp, Akron, Ohio; William Wilt, Webster, PA; Edward Smith, Endicott, NY; George Szweada, Bayonne, NJ; Harold Stahl, Danville, PA.

Missing in the picture: Ray Sherman, Belleville, WI, and Archie Schultz, Lansing, MI; both who were "absent without leave" when the picture was taken.

In 1957, the son of friends of Ray's mother was stationed in Germany. He volunteered to travel to the area Ray was held prisoner and take photos for him. So Ray described as best he could the people and places he could remember and drew the map that follows. The photos that follow are the result of that trip in 1957. Remarkably little had changed.

Map of Agawang, Germany (key for numbers on next page)





## Prisoner Work Locations in Agawang

The thirteen American P.O.W.'s held at Agawang, Germany and the locations of the families they were assigned to work for. The locations of the last three soldiers is not recollected

1. Sherman, Ray
2. A Polish P.O.W. worked here.
3. Van Camp, Lawrence
4. Shoemaker, Leonard and a female Polish P.O.W.
5. Boots, a local German girl
6. Stone, James
7. Shultz, Archie
8. Szweada. George and Wolbert, Joe
9. Wilt, William
10. Tincher, John
11. Showalter, Glenn
12. Gasthaus, the building in which the P.O.W.s were housed at night

Location unknown;

Tanner, Odis

Smith, Edward

Stahl, Harold

House of Joseph and Maria Krause located in Agawang.  
This house is attached to the barn.



**Herr Joseph Krause and Family - 1957**  
From the left - Frau Maria, wife and mother,  
Herr Joseph Krause, husband and father,  
Grossmutter, Maria and George

Map of Agawang, Germany (key for numbers on next page)





Road to the Krause house and barn located at the end of the road.  
The picture was taken from the main road.



House of Joseph and Maria Krause located in Agawang.  
This house is attached to the barn.



Herr Joseph Krause's barn.

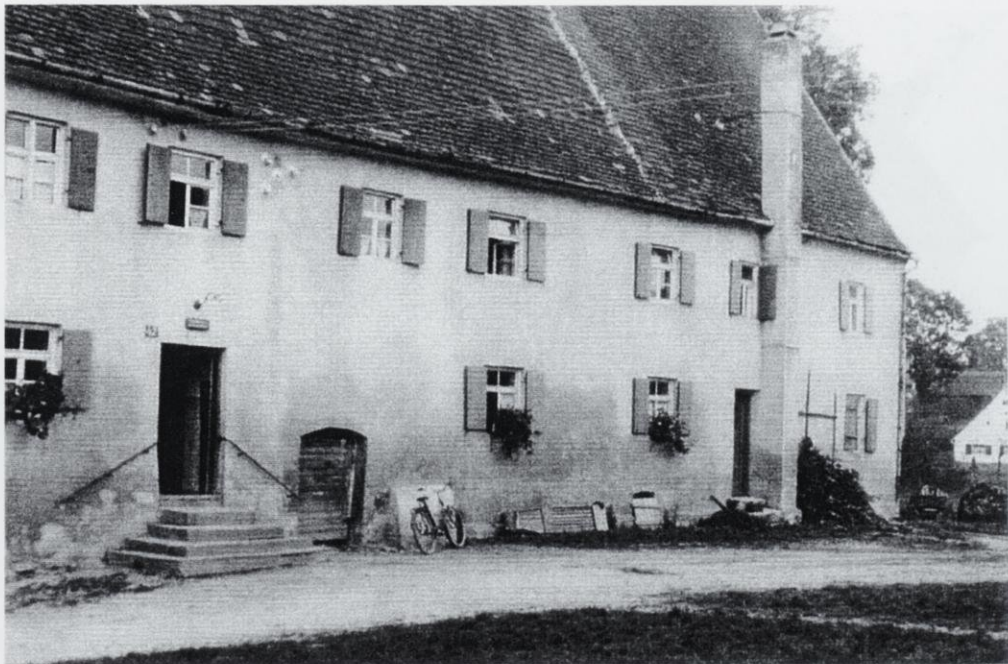


Road leaving the Krause house and barn towards the main road.

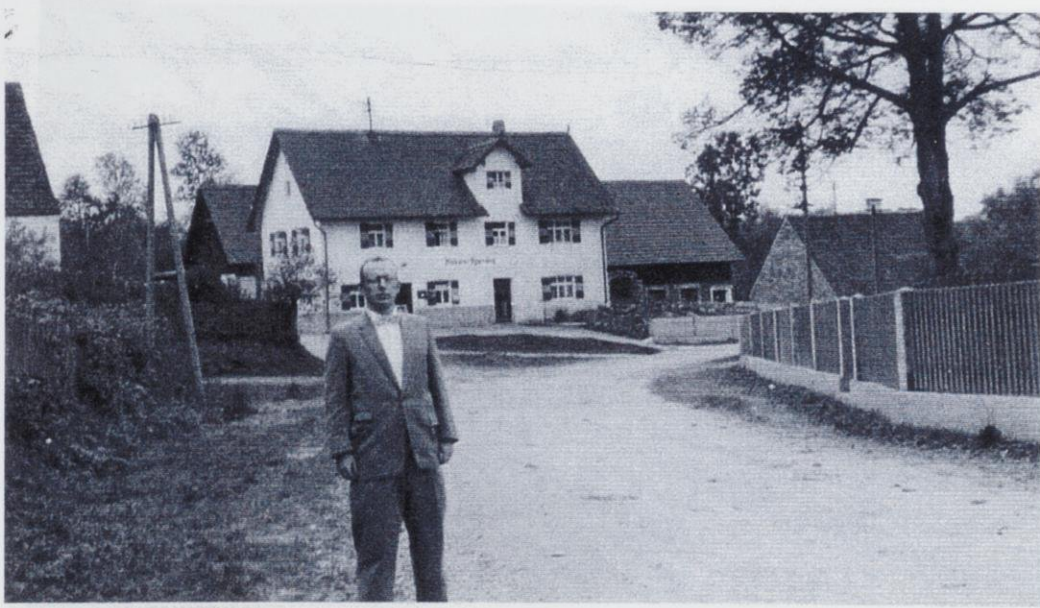




Agawang Gasthaus, which also served as Lager #449-B for thirteen captured American prisoners of war.



The American P.O.W.s were housed in the rear corner of the Gasthaus. The door shown in the rear corner next to the chimney was the entrance to the P.O.W. quarters. The door and windows were barred and covered with barbed wire.



The Agawang dairy as seen arriving from the East.  
Earl Zimmerman in photo above, from Belleville, Wisconsin,  
took the pictures of Agawang, Germany, in 1957.

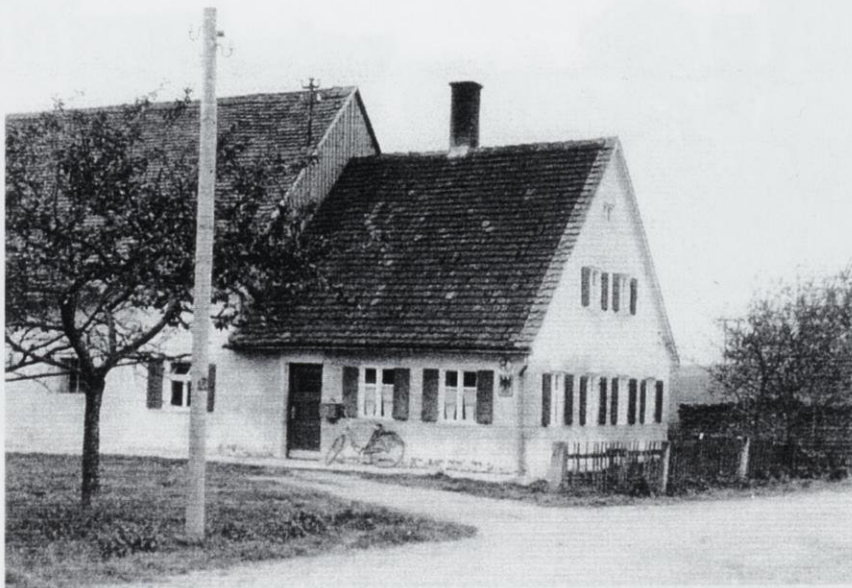


The Agawang blacksmith shop converted into a residence when photographed in 1957.  
Herr Geiger was the blacksmith. His shop is now located across the street.





Agawang Catholic Church and cemetery as seen from the corner of the Krause road and the main road.



The Agawang Post Office located on the west side of town.



Agawang main road looking towards the west.



Agawang main road looking towards the west. The cattle crossing the main road is a typical scene in this area.



March, 1945

Worked in the woods quite a lot, with no gloves. Did chores, cleaned the barn, etc. studied a geography book which had a pretty good map of the area. Archie worked for a blacksmith. He brought a hacksaw blade. In the middle of the night, we tried to saw window bars, but it was too noisy. We didn't want the other eleven guys to know of our plans. The hinge on the door had screws, which we loosened and put candle wax on when we weren't observed. We could reach through a hole in pane and reach the screws. We made plans to escape at night when the moon was full, on March 19<sup>th</sup>. Art's boss had two backpacks in his shop which we would need for the food I had hidden in my haymow.

On the 18<sup>th</sup>, I got an opportunity to rip \_\_\_\_\_ which I thought was of use.

## 1945

### First Escape

Art went back to the shop in the evening of the 19<sup>th</sup> and stole the packs. We had extra shoes and trousers hidden in our beds. All was ready! When we determined that all were asleep, we got dressed and worked on the screws on the barn. One would not come out. We were desperate and gave the door a jerk. It opened!

We collected our blankets from our beds. We wondered if the guard in the room above us might have awakened. We went out of the door and headed for my haymow. In short order, I picked up our food and we were on our way south towards Switzerland.

We traveled at night and avoided towns. When it was almost daylight, we would find a secluded spot to spend the day. Twice during our travels, we met people on the road. No one spoke. If we saw them in time, we got off the road to avoid them. One time when the moon was obscured, we ran smack up against a high, woven wire deer fence. We laughed about it. We hid in the haymow of a couple barns. Mostly we stayed in woods during the day. Archie was sick one day.

We had a sizeable river to cross, the ILLER. We knew the bridge would likely be guarded, so figured on crossing elsewhere. When we got to the high bank and got down to the water, there was a rowboat! We used it and were thankful to say the least! We only traveled at night, heading for Switzerland.

Early in the morning on April 2nd, we were washing in a little creek when a stranger with a rifle and two older Germans came upon us. The young fellow wanted to shoot us. We were paratroopers! We finally convinced them we were escapees from a P.O.W. camp.

We were stripped down to our underwear and marched through the center of town. They put us in a stable and guarded us until an armed policeman came and escorted us to a jail in Ravensburg that was cut into the side of a mountain. We were booked by a couple of policemen and heard them say, "These birds won't fly out of here." We went down a





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corridor, through four heavy ancient doors, each locked with a large ring of keys. Our cell had two iron cots suspended from the wall. They let us use our own blankets. It was a cold and primitive dungeon type cell. They kept us over night until they contacted the military, which sent two soldiers who apparently were on leave and on their way home.

We boarded a train and got to Ulm. The tracks had been wiped out where we were supposed to go. The two soldiers held a conference and we were marched down the tracks to where an open, partially filled gravel car was parked. We were ordered into it, with the guards on one end and Art and I on the other. They held another discussion, which we could not hear, during which I prayed for our lives.

We were ordered out of the car. I'm sure they intended to shoot us. If they had shot us, nobody would have known about it. The Germans had no knowledge of our whereabouts. The U.S. government didn't and our P.O.W. buddies had no idea where we were. We were just lucky again! I can't remember how far we walked, but after a conference with some other German soldiers, we were taken by another train to Stuttgart, where there was a P.O.W. transit camp. The P.O.W. transit camp was said to be "5-A."

We were questioned, searched and put in a room which contained French P.O.W.s. We could hear voices through the walls. There were Americans, recently captured, but they wouldn't give us any information about the progress of the war. They thought we were Germans trying to extract information!

March 31, 1945

Allied troops were making progress. The retreating Germans began taking their prisoners with them so they would not be reunited with the advancing Allied troops.

April, 1945

The camp was evacuated on foot, all eleven hundred of us. There were many guards and dogs. We had threats and warnings about any escape attempts. At night we were simply put in an open field with no effort for shelter. Machine guns were placed so all avenues of escape were covered. We were on very short rations. They gave us a cup of ersatz coffee and four or five men to one loaf of "sawdust" bread per day. A loaf of bread was about the size of a brick.

I'm not sure when the evacuation started. It might have been April 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup>. I didn't make diary entries every day. We were getting weaker and weaker and more desperate.

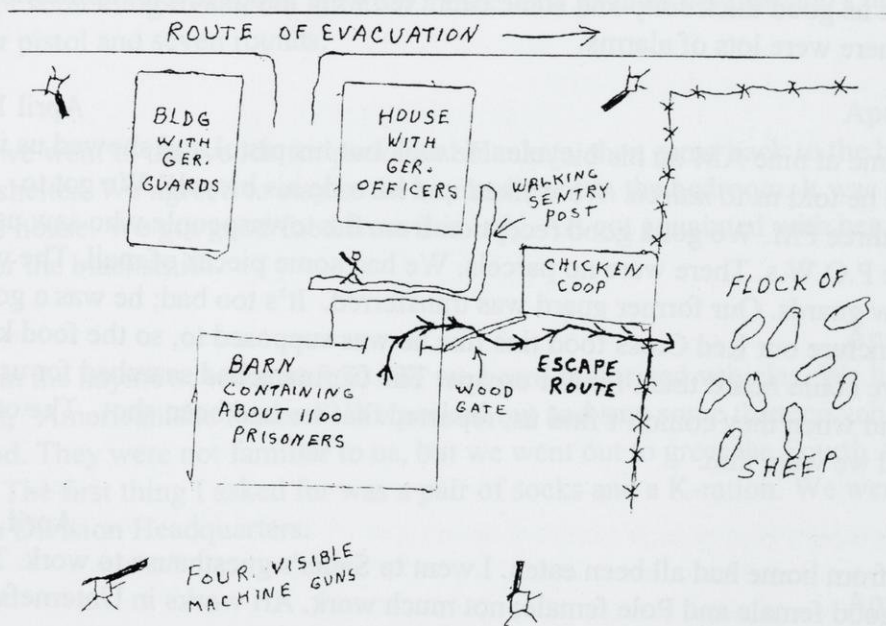
We agreed to try to escape at the first opportunity. Once we cross the Danube River, we'll try to get to Agawang or Memmingen. If we escape on the West Side of the river, we'll try to get to the allied lines. Several prisoners fall down because of weakness everyday. If they can't or won't get up and continue on the march, they are shot or bayoneted.



Art and I buddied up with three other Americans. That way we had more warmth and blankets at night. In desperation for a drink of water, some prisoners would try to scoop water from puddles along the road. They were often bayoneted or struck with rifle butts. We could hardly stop to relieve ourselves without recriminations.

April 13, 1944

We were allowed in a large sheep barn for shelter. Art and I told the other three P.O.W.s about our plans to escape. They said it was too risky! They wanted no part of it! (See the sketch below.)



**Escape route of Ray Sherman and Archie Shultz  
on April 13, 1944, near Dillingen, Germany**

**Second Escape**

After dark we bid the other three American P.O.W.s good luck and slipped out the door just behind the walking guard, crawled through the wooden gate and lay behind the chicken coop until the guard's back was toward us. Then through the fence and wormed our way into the field where the sheep were. As soon as we got amongst the sheep, they scattered, to our dismay! We were lucky no shots were fired. After crawling about fifty yards, we put on our shoes and were on our way.

We were in the area near Dillingen, so we were headed towards Agawang.

April 14, 1945

We hid out in the haymow of a barn. We have no food.

April 15-16, 1945

We found a garden and dug up some potatoes they had planted. We ate the spuds raw. We sweat out a bombing raid in a hay barn near Gobblingen at about three AM. In the morning, we went into town and found the burgermeister. We told him about our situation. He told us how to get to a P.O.W. work lager which was nearby. It was occupied by French and Russians. They fed us good and wanted us to stay and work with them. We were able to convince the guard to call the guard at Agawang to come and get us. They gave us good thick soup and some beer. We were about seven kilometers from Augsburg. There were lots of alarms.

April 18, 1945

The guard came at nine AM on his bicycle. He took out his pistol and showed us it was loaded. Then he told us to *march*. We walked and he rode his bicycle. We got to Agawang at three PM. We got a good reception from the townspeople who saw us and also from the P.O.W.s. There were no parcels. We had some pieces of mail. The work lager had new guards. Our former guard was transferred. It's too bad; he was a good guy. He didn't puncture our Red Cross food tins like he was supposed to, so the food kept longer and we could hoard them for our escape. The Germans had searched for us on horseback and when they couldn't find us, reported that we had been shot. The other P.O.W.s said we were thin.

April 19, 1945

Art's parcel from home had all been eaten. I went to Sauer's guesthouse to work. They had good food, good female and Pole female; not much work. Art works in Unterefsreed on farm.

April 21, 1945

I took a wonderful bath in a porcelain tub! Thirteen new P.O.W.s came to the lager from Moosburg.

April 22, 1945

Not much work here. People are scared stiff. Got Maria's picture.

April 23, 1945

The guards woke us at two AM. We must leave for Memmingen. We were given three days rations. Going to load personal stuff on a horse drawn wagon. There was lots of activity in loading. We had determined that we weren't going if we got an opportunity to do otherwise.



### **Third Escape**

At five AM we both approached the wagon from the rear, while the guard walked to the front of the horses. We ducked around the building and were gone! We hurried down a small streambed and were soon hiding. We found a swell place in the woods to dig a couple of slit trenches for safety. After dark, we got a shovel, carried dirt in a blanket and dispersed it. We made a couple of contacts in town and got some bread.

April 24, 1945

We made three contacts at ten PM. Stayed in an upstairs bedroom. Two AWOL Jerries stopped for something to eat, but left after a time. She gave us her husband's nine-millimeter pistol and seven rounds.

April 25, 1945

At night, we went to the woods for packs and blankets, then came back to the building for food and shelter. We agreed to stay in the haymow, not in the bedroom. It was too risky to stay in the house. We got good food from this lady. Art got acquainted with her when he worked for the blacksmith.

April 26, 1945

We were in the haymow, when at 5:30 PM we heard motorized vehicles. We heard the lady shout, "Americanische Panzer!" We peeked out and saw some thirteen vehicles going on the road. They were not familiar to us, but we went out to greet the Fourth Army Division. The first thing I asked for was a pair of socks and a K-ration. We were taken to Horgau to Division Headquarters.

April 28, 1945

Art and I were taken with two Englishmen to the Twenty-first Reinforcement Battalion South of Wurzburg.

### **PWX Camp #1, Mannheim, Germany**

April 29, 1945

We got tired of waiting for transportation, so Art and I took off on our own for Mannheim. We arrived at PWX Camp #1 at about six PM.

May 1, 1945

We saw lots of Stalag VII-B men. They were liberated by American troops. Prisoner files, photos, etc. were taken from Stalag VII-B. Someone gave me my P.O.W. registration photo. We got shoes and clothing and all the food we wanted.

May 2, 1945

German P.O.W.s are on KP duty, cleaning rooms, etc.

May 8, 1945

We left Mannheim on C-47's. Thirty men in our plane plus other gear and supplies, including our barracks bags from January seventh or eighth. Art got airsick. I spent the entire trip by the window at thirty thousand feet. I could see craters, trenches and other fortifications and bivouac areas. One could notice the different colors of tile roofs. The German's were red brick color and the French had many blues. We flew near Paris and landed at Le Havre. Got coffee and doughnuts, gum, matches and cigarettes from the Red Cross.

May 10, 1945

We got to camp Lucky Strike where we were deloused, given new clothes, went through lots of processing and answered lots of questions. I got cognac and wine from celebrating French whenever we were on the streets.

May 11, 1945

I sweated out a Red Cross line about two blocks long for hot cocoa and a cheese sandwich. There are sure lots of ex-P.O.W.s here. A large percentage are officers.

May 15, 1945

We left on trucks to La Havre, boarded an LST at 6:22 PM and went to a transport ship in the harbor, the MS John Erickson, of Swedish registry. We left the harbor after dark on the sixteenth of May 1945.

May 17, 1945

We docked at South Hampton, England at about noon. I bought PX rations from the ship's store. All the candy you want! I got a box of Hersheys, Baby Ruth bars, Walnettos and two cans of peanuts and a bottle of hair oil, all for \$2.87. Boy! We get wonderful food. Had ice cream twice, chicken and everything!

May 18, 1945

Ship departed at about 7:00 PM.

May 19, 1945

I ate very little breakfast. While getting rid of it in the latrine, a guy asked if I was seasick? I said no, just homesick.

May 20, 1945

I ate an apple, but got rid of it suddenly.

May 21, 1945

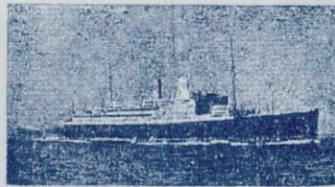
I ate an orange, which I had saved up. It stayed with me!



# M. S. "John Ericsson"



Captain John W. Anderson, Master  
Colonel Ward E. Schrantz, Transport Commander



This is to certify that

<i>Ofc.</i>	<i>Ray J. Sherman</i>	<i>16155885</i>
Rank	Name	ASN

has returned to the New York Port of Embarkation from overseas service on the  
**M. S. "JOHN ERICSSON"**

which left France on May 16, 1945 and  
the United Kingdom May 19, 1945.

*Docked NY - May 29, 1945*

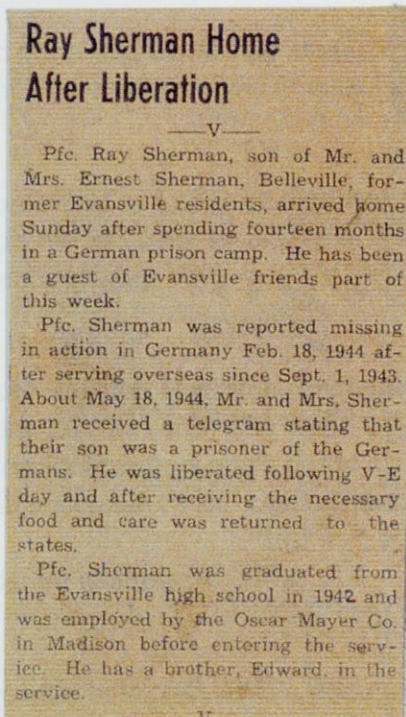
*William J. Demier Major*  
Detachment Commander

## Arrived in New York Harbor

May 29, 1945

Had tears when I laid my eyes on the Statue Of Liberty. Our ship was greeted by some tug boats shooting streams of water in the air. We docked at the forty-second street pier amid cheering people and Red Cross persons serving coffee and doughnuts.

I didn't record anything in the diary after getting back to the United States. I was shipped out to Fort Meade and got new uniforms. Made a trip by train back to Wisconsin for about a week, then went by train to Miami Beach, Florida for a thirty day R & R at a nice hotel, all meals included! I think it was the Poinciana, just off the beach. Then it was back to Fort Meade where I was promoted to the rank of corporal and worked with recruits until I was discharged on October 26, 1945.



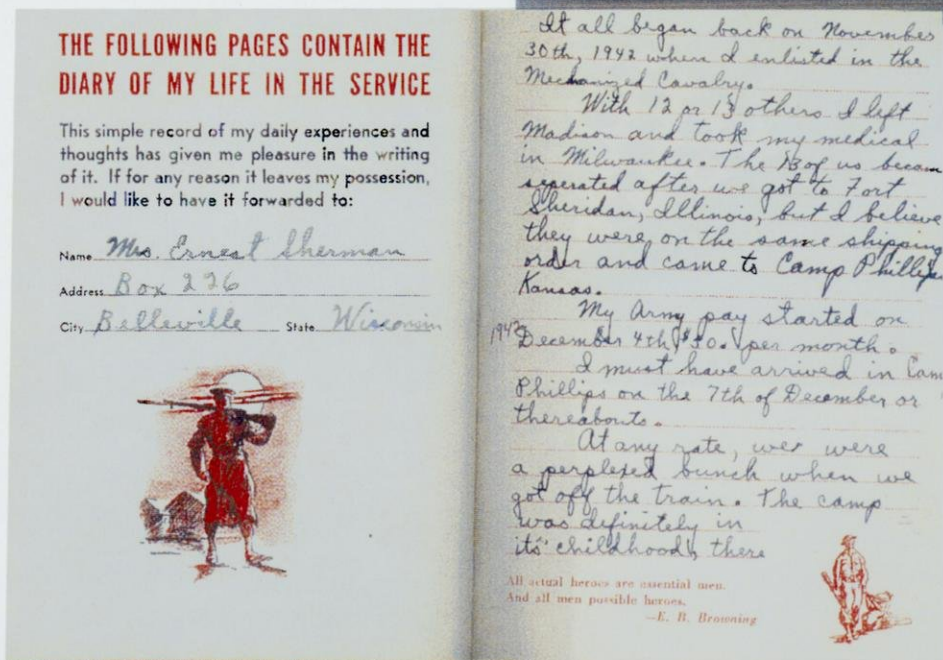
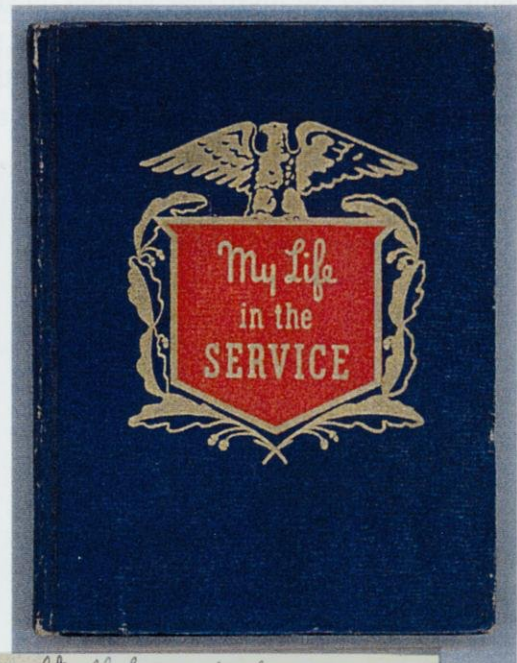
Local papers reported Ray's return.



## My Diary

I began keeping a diary on day one of my military service. I started writing it in a journal that someone had given me. My entries in this journal end when we left the ship in Naples.

Shown less than actual size of  
4.5 inches by 6 inches.



I decided to keep writing a diary as a P.O.W. for a number of reasons;

- for something to do – it was really boring to just sit around picking lice and thinking about food,
- to prove I could – that I could out smart the Germans and not get caught with it
- to cause trouble – we were taught that all good soldiers should cause trouble whenever they could. That's why I kept trying to escape, too.



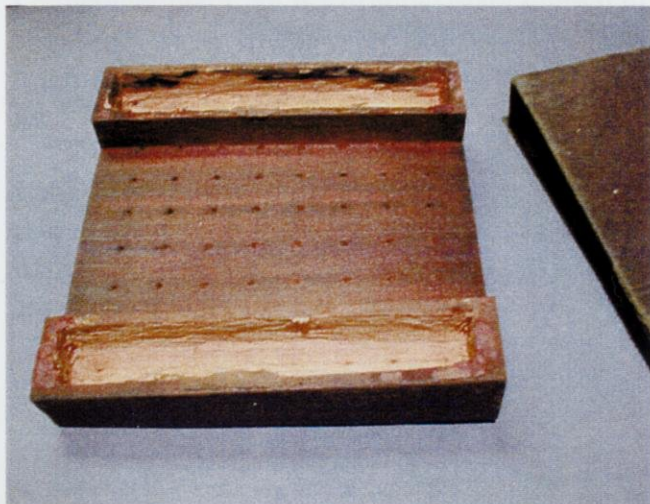
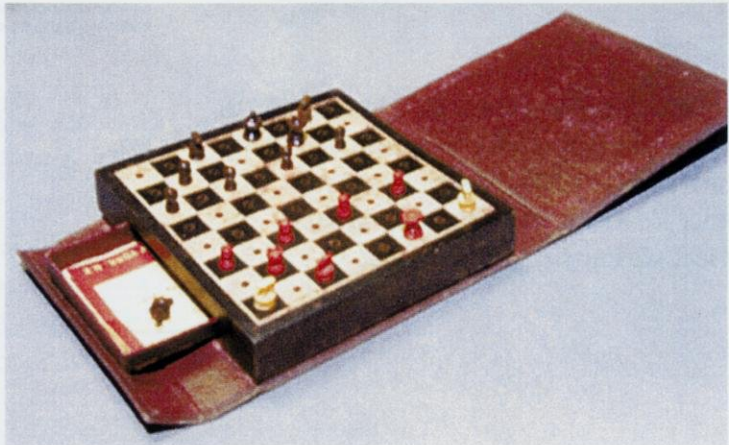




I rolled up the strips and hid them in various locations. As written in my diary, I carved a place in the chess board.

Cover closed around the chess board, holding in the drawer that housed the pieces.

Open as though in play. The board was glued onto the cover at the bottom.



I peeled the board off the cover and carved out the wood so several rolled up strips of my diary would fit inside.



Another place where I concealed some of these strips was in the toe of my combat boots. I used a razor blade to cut the inside of the toecap where I could fold them and carefully tuck them in.

After we got to Germany, we started receiving mail. I was able to write between the lines or at the bottom of the censored letters. My German guards didn't read English, so once they saw the censored mark on the front of the letters, they didn't look further.

Feb 5  
Apr 16-33

PRISONER OF WAR POST  
KRIEGSGEFANGENENPOST  
SERVICE DES PRISONNIERS DE GUERRE

BY AIR MAIL  
PAR AVION

RANK AND NAME (CAPITAL LETTERS) PFC. RAY J. SHERMAN  
UNITED STATES PRISONER OF WAR.  
PRISONER OF WAR No. 12048  
CAMP NAME AND No. M.: STAMMLAGER 7 B  
SUBSIDIARY CAMP No. KOMMANDO--Nr.: 663B  
COUNTRY DEUTSCHLAND (Germany)

11825 U.S. CENSOR

WRITE VERY CLEARLY WITHIN THE LINES. IN ORDER TO EXPEDITE CENSORSHIP, LETTERS SHOULD BE TYPED OR PRINTED IN BLOCK CAPITALS.

Note that this was censored by both the US and German (red oval) governments. Any information my family sent about my brother Edward, who was also in the service, was always blacked out.

Mother's letter:

Belleville, Wisconsin  
P.O. Box 226 Oct 19-4

My Dear SON RAY Just a few lines  
to let you know we are all well.  
WISH WE COULD HEAR FROM YOU TO KNOW THAT YOU ARE  
WELL : SAW ANNA AND LAVERNE SUNDAY EVENING THEY  
WENT TO BURLINGTON : LAV'S MOTHER AND ALICE AND  
LOUISE WENT ALONG WITH THEM, I HAD A CARD FROM ANNA  
TUESDAY SAYING THEY HAD A NICE VISIT AND ALSO A  
GOOD DINNER, SAY DEAR I WISH WE KNEW WHAT YOU  
WOULD RATHER WE WOULD SEND YOU IN YOUR PACKAGE .  
I MAILED YOU A SECOND Pkg THE 13th OF OCTOBER  
I HOPE YOU HAVE GOTTEN THE FIRST PACKAGE BY THIS  
TIME : WELL MY DEAR SON I MUST CLOSE FOR TODAY  
AS I MUST GET BREAKFAST READY NOW :  
MAY OUR DEAR HEAVENLY FATHER BE WITH YOU ALWAYS:  
LOTS OF LOVE FROM US ALL.

Mother and Dad.  
and Edward said to greet  
you when I write

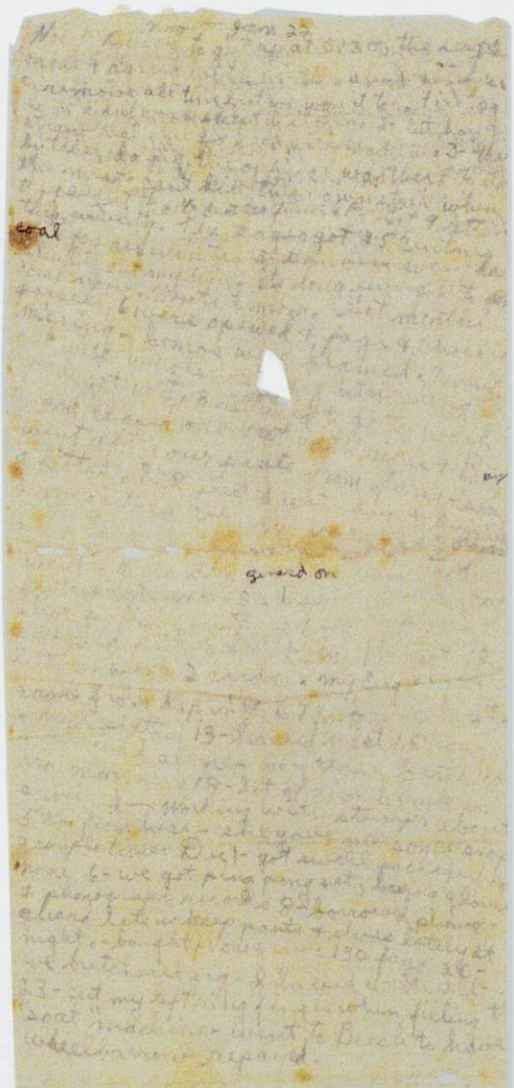
He is at the same address. Anna  
& family also said to give their love  
to you. Love - Mother  
April 1945

(18)

My diary:  
My notes are often quite brief.



I also wrote some on toilet paper. These are quite fragile and very hard to read when double-sided.



I remember that I put my original diary journal in my barracks bag which was left on the ship when we disembarked at Naples, Italy. Where the barracks bag was during my imprisonment, I don't know and don't exactly recall when its contents were returned to me.

Long after the war, with the help of my (then future) wife, Lynn, I began transcribing my diary. She would write as I tried to read and recall my experiences. Unfortunately, the experience was too fresh and the task proved too difficult to do very much. My papers sat for decades before I could try again.

351

10164



### Honorable Discharge

*This is to certify that*  
 RAY J. SHERMAN, 16 155 885, CORPORAL  
 COMPANY (K) 179TH INFANTRY

**Army of the United States**

*is hereby Honorably Discharged from the military  
 service of the United States of America.*

*This certificate is awarded as a testimonial of Honest  
 and Faithful Service to this country.*

*Given at* SEPARATION CENTER PORT GEORGE G MEADE, MARYLAND

*Date* OCTOBER 26 1945

OFFICE OF REGISTER OF DEEDS  
 DANE COUNTY, WISCONSIN  
 Received for Record Feb 20 1947  
 A. D. 1947 at 100 o'clock P M  
 and recorded in vol. 37  
 of Registers on page 351  
R. J. P. [unclear]

*Leonard R. Westbrook*  
 LEONARD R WESTBROOK  
 MAJOR AC

### Honorable Discharge



**ENLISTED RECORD AND REPORT OF SEPARATION  
HONORABLE DISCHARGE**

1. LAST NAME - FIRST NAME - MIDDLE INITIAL <b>Sherman Ray J</b>		2. ARMY SERIAL NO. <b>16 155 885</b>		3. GRADE <b>Cpl</b>		4. ARM OR SERVICE <b>Inf</b>		5. COMPONENT <b>AUS</b>	
6. ORGANIZATION <b>Co K 179th Inf</b>		7. DATE OF SEPARATION <b>26 Oct 45</b>		8. PLACE OF SEPARATION <b>Separation Center Ft Geo G Meade Md</b>					
9. PERMANENT ADDRESS FOR MAILING PURPOSES <b>Box 226 Belleville Dane Co Wis</b>				10. DATE OF BIRTH <b>29 Jun 23</b>		11. PLACE OF BIRTH <b>Bentley ND</b>			
12. ADDRESS FROM WHICH EMPLOYMENT WILL BE SOUGHT <b>See 9</b>		13. COLOR EYES <b>Blue</b>		14. COLOR HAIR <b>Brown</b>		15. HEIGHT <b>5'6"</b>		16. WEIGHT <b>150</b>	
17. NO. DEPEND.		18. U.S. CITIZEN		21. CIVILIAN OCCUPATION AND NO. <b>Stapler Operator 6-39.135</b>					
19. RACE <b>X</b>		20. STATUS <b>X</b>		22. MILITARY OCCUPATION AND NO. <b>Stapler Operator 6-39.135</b>					
<b>MILITARY HISTORY</b>									
23. DATE OF INDUCTION <b>2 Dec 42</b>		24. DATE OF ENLISTMENT <b>2 Dec 42</b>		25. DATE OF ENTRY INTO ACTIVE SERVICE <b>2 Dec 42</b>		26. PLACE OF ENTRY INTO SERVICE <b>Madison Wis</b>			
27. LOCAL S.S. NUMBER		28. COUNTY AND STATE <b>Unknown Unknown</b>		29. HOME ADDRESS AT TIME OF ENTRY INTO SERVICE <b>Box 226 Belleville Wis</b>					
30. MILITARY OCCUPATION AND NO. <b>Light Machine Gunner 604</b>		31. MILITARY QUALIFICATION AND RATE (I.E., industry aviation and marksmanship badges, etc.) <b>Ex LMG SS M1 Rifle MKM Carbine</b>							
32. SITES AND CAMP SITES <b>Naples Foggia Rome Arno</b>		33. DECORATIONS AND CITATIONS <b>European African Middle Eastern Good Conduct Medal Purple Heart</b>							
34. WOUNDS RECEIVED IN ACTION <b>None</b>		35. LATEST IMMUNIZATION DATES SMALLPOX: <b>Unknown</b> TYPHOID: <b>Unknown</b> TETANUS: <b>Unknown</b> OTHER (specify):		36. SERVICE OUTSIDE CONTINENTAL U.S. AND RETURN DATE OF DEPARTURE: <b>2 Nov 43</b> DESTINATION: <b>Africa</b> DATE OF ARRIVAL: <b>27 Nov 43</b>		37. HIGHEST GRADE HELD DATE: <b>16 May 45</b> GRADE: <b>Cpl</b>		38. SERVICE OUTSIDE CONTINENTAL U.S. AND RETURN DATE OF DEPARTURE: <b>29 May 45</b> DESTINATION: <b>United States</b> DATE OF ARRIVAL: <b>29 May 45</b>	
39. PRIOR SERVICE <b>None</b>		40. REASON AND AUTHORITY FOR SEPARATION <b>WDAG TWX 40094 dtd Sep 24 45 WDTWX 40111 SPXOC_E dtd 19 Oct 45 AR 615-365 dtd 15 Dec 44</b>							
41. SERVICE SCHOOLS ATTENDED <b>None</b>		42. EDUCATION (Yearly) Grade: High School Degree							
<b>PAY DATA</b>									
43. SUBSIDY PAY PERIOD YEAR: <b>2</b> MONTH: <b>10</b> DATE: <b>25</b>		44. TOTAL PAY PERIOD TOTAL: <b>\$300.00</b>		45. SOLDIER DEPOSIT THIS PAYMENT: <b>\$100.00</b>		46. TRAVEL PAY None		47. TOTAL AMOUNT PAID OF DISBURSEMENT <b>\$46.20</b>	
48. KIND OF INSURANCE <b>X</b>		49. HOW PAID <b>X</b>		50. EFFECTIVE DATE OF ALLOWANCE <b>31 Oct 45</b>		51. DATE OF NEXT PREMIUM DUE <b>30 Nov 45</b>		52. PREMIUM DUE EACH MONTH <b>6.50</b>	
53. INTENTION OF VETERAN TO Continuously Enlist / Discontinue		54. REMARKS (This space for completion of above items or entry of other items specified in W. D. Directives) <b>RIGHT THUMB PRINT</b> <b>Lapel Button Issued No days lost under AW 107 ASR Score 67</b>							
56. SIGNATURE OF PERSON BEING SEPARATED <b>Ray J. Sherman</b>				57. PERSONNEL OFFICER (Type name, grade and organization - signature) <b>G A EICHENBERGER 2ND LT WAC</b>					

WD AGO FORM 53-52  
November 1944

This form supersedes all previous editions of  
WD AGO Forms 53 and 52 for enlisted personnel  
entitled to an Honorable Discharge, which  
will not be used after receipt of this revision.

**Enlisted Record and Report of Separation**





**Military Awards Received by Pfc. Ray Sherman, 1942 - 1945**

- Top Row - Army Combat Infantryman Badge.
- Second Row - Bronze Star Medal, Purple Heart Medal, Prisoner Of War Medal.
- Third Row - Good Conduct Medal, American Campaign Medal, European - African - Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with two bronze stars\* and one bronze arrowhead\*\*, World War II Victory Medal.
- Fourth Row - Expert with Machine Gun Badge  
 Sharpshooter with Rifle Badge  
 Marksman with Carbine Badge

Note: \*Bronze Star denotes 2nd and subsequent awards of a service award or participation in a campaign or major operation.  
 \*\*Bronze Arrowhead denotes participation in an amphibious landing or assault. (Anzio.)



**Bronze Star**



**Purple Heart**



**Prisoner of War**



**Good Conduct**



**American Campaign**



**European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign**



**World War II Victory**

**Military Decorations and Service Medals  
Awarded to Pfc. Ray Sherman 1942 - 1945**

Top Row - **Bronze Star Medal**  
**Purple Heart Medal**

Second Row - **Prisoner of War Medal**  
**Good Conduct Medal**

Third Row - **American Campaign Medal**  
**European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with two bronze stars and one bronze arrowhead**  
**World War II Victory Medal**

Note: The Bronze Star Medal was awarded to WWII holders of the Army Combat Infantryman Badge.

Ray was awarded the Purple Heart Medal for suffering frozen feet while in captivity.



Medals  
(back view)



## EPILOGUE

Ray Sherman was with the U. S. 179<sup>th</sup> Regimental Combat Team, 45<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. The landing took place at Anzio, Italy on the 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1944. A beachhead was established and additional troops moved in to secure the front line. On the 24<sup>th</sup> January, the U.S. 179<sup>th</sup> Regimental Combat Team and others were moved to Anzio from Naples.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> of February 1944, the beachhead was still only about ten miles from the sea shore. For a little insight as to the events that took place at this time, the following excerpts and maps have been taken out of the published book *Anzio the bid for Rome*, by Christopher Hibbert. (out of print)

The U.S. 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division was being held in reserve with the British 1st Division just south of the "Flyover" bridge. The U. S. 45<sup>th</sup> Division and the (London) 56th Division held most of the front between them. The 56<sup>th</sup> faced the "wadi" country down from Buonriposo Ridge towards the sea; the 45<sup>th</sup> held the line from Padiglione to the Anzio-Albano road. The 157<sup>th</sup> RCT was responsible for the defense of the road itself and for linking the American defenses to the right-hand of the British south of the Buonriposo Ridge.

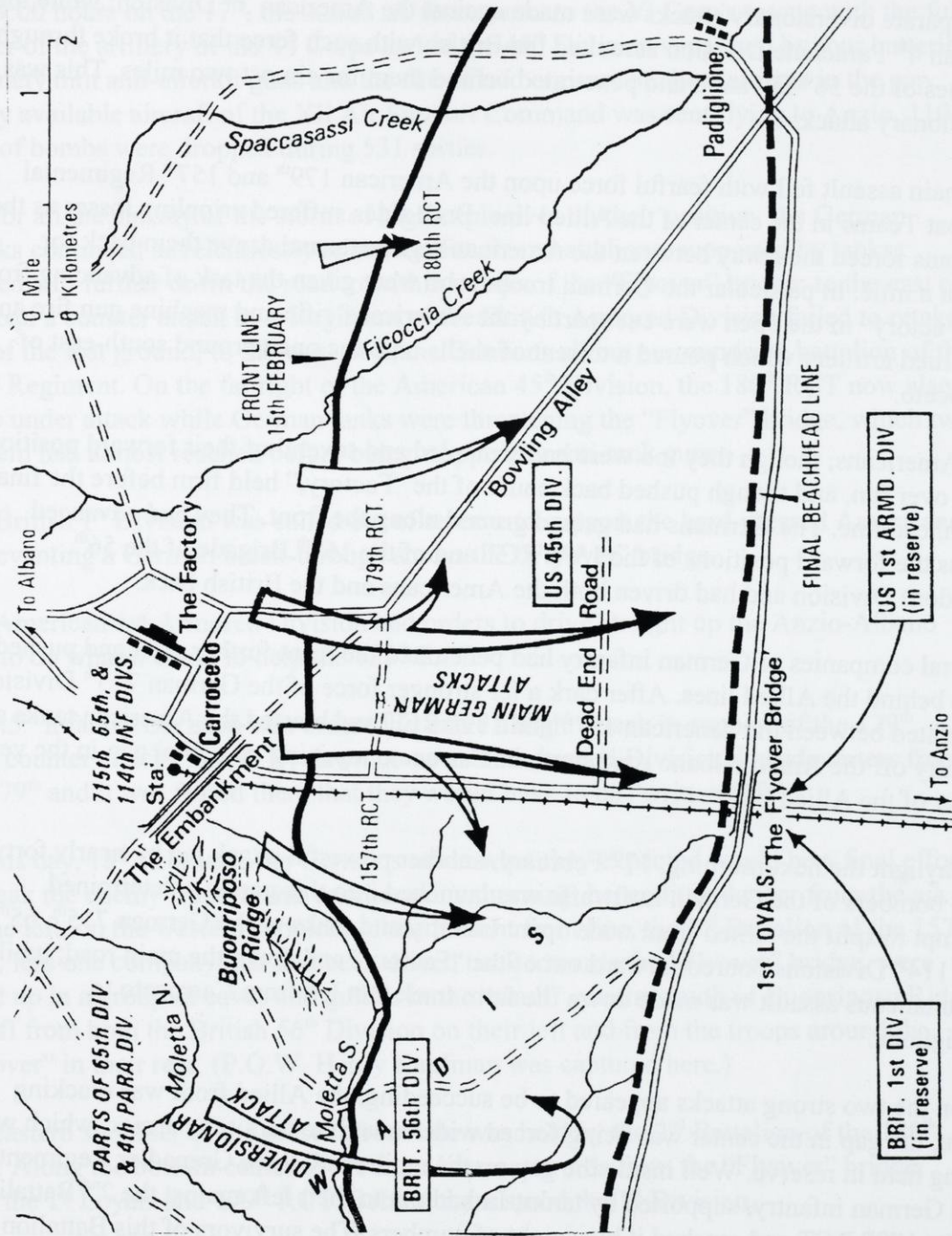
In the center, facing the "Factory" was the 179<sup>th</sup> RCT and on the right, the 180<sup>th</sup>. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Division and the Special Services Force covered the rest of the right flank from the Cisterna-Campomorto road to the sea along the Mussolini Canal.

The attack plan of the German Generals Kesselring and Mackensen involved throwing the whole weight of the reinforced 14<sup>th</sup> Army at the Allied center by night. Part of the 65<sup>th</sup> German Infantry Division and of the 4<sup>th</sup> Parachute Division was to advance through "wadi" country to the west of the main road. At the same time the 715<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, the 114<sup>th</sup> Light Infantry Division, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Panzer Grenadier Division and various units of the Hermann Goring Division were to attack on a wider front to the east of it. Once the infantry had gone through, the 26<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> Panzer Grenadiers, with two battalions of the new Mark V Panther and Mark VI Tiger tanks would quickly follow them.

This plan was approved by Hitler, but modified somewhat to narrow up the width of the thrust and to be led by the Lehr Regiment of select Nazis although they had never been in battle before. The time of attack was also changed from night to dawn. The German Army now would have 125,000 troops opposing approximately 100,000 Allied troops.

The German attack was heralded on the 16<sup>th</sup> February at 6:00 of a damp and foggy morning, by a devastating artillery bombardment. From beyond the "Flyover" bridge the artillery of the VI Corps, numbering 432 guns, replied with equal force. For one half-hour the air was rent with the deafening sound of exploding shells. Then at 6:30 the infantry attacks began.





Map #1 - February 16, 1944, Beachhead at Anzio, Italy.

The German General Mackensen attempts to break into the beachhead and the Allies counterattack.

Six separate diversionary attacks were made against the American 3<sup>rd</sup> Division; while the German 4<sup>th</sup> Parachute Division assaulted the British with such force that it broke through the lines of the 56<sup>th</sup> Division and penetrated behind them for almost two miles. This was a diversionary attack.

The main assault fell with fearful force upon the American 179<sup>th</sup> and 157<sup>th</sup> Regimental Combat Teams in the center of the Allied line. Both sides suffered crippling losses as the Germans forced their way between the American regiments and drove them back for almost a mile. In particular the German troops who were given the task of advancing from the "Factory" in the open were cut apart by the Americans' rifle and machine gun fire and the Allied artillery which poured a torrent of shells onto the open ground south-east of Carroceto.

The Americans, though they too were badly mauled and several of their forward positions were over run, and though pushed back south of the "Factory," held firm before the final beachhead line. The Germans had gained ground along the front. They had advanced across the forward positions of the 157<sup>th</sup> RCT and of the 167<sup>th</sup> Brigade of the 56<sup>th</sup> (London) Division and had driven both the Americans and the British back.

Several companies of German infantry had penetrated the front further west and pushed deep behind the Allied lines. After dark a far stronger force of the German 715<sup>th</sup> Division infiltrated between the American 157<sup>th</sup> and 179<sup>th</sup> RCT and blasted the American tanks and infantry off the Anzio-Albano road south of Carroceto, opening up a vital gap in the very center of the Allied line.

At daylight the next morning, 17<sup>th</sup> February, another powerful attack led by nearly forty dive bombers of the German Luftwaffe was launched into this gap in a determined attempt to split the Allied front wide open. Infantry and tanks of the German 715<sup>th</sup>, 65<sup>th</sup> and 114<sup>th</sup> Divisions poured forward out of the "Factory" and down the main road; while a simultaneous assault was made down the farm track that led from Carroceto to Padiglione.

Soon the two strong attacks appeared to be succeeding; the Allied front was cracking open, the gap in the center was being forced wide enough to admit the armor, which was being held in reserve. Well inside the gap on the main road, three Grenadier Regiments and German infantry, supported by tanks, lashed out to their left against the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the 179<sup>th</sup> RCT and crushed it by weight of numbers. The survivors of this Battalion attempted to reform along a farm track about a mile in front of the "Flyover" bridge, but neither they or the threatened 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion seemed capable of holding out much longer and resisting the German onslaught which had already torn so gaping a hole in the middle of the Allies' front.



At 09:00 hours on the 17<sup>th</sup>, the Allied air force came to the VI Corp's rescue with the full power of the artillery of the VI Corps and of the 45<sup>th</sup> Division supported by four batteries of ninety mm anti-aircraft guns and the fire of two cruisers on the Germans in the gap. Every available aircraft of the XII Air Support Command was sent flying to Anzio, 1100 tons of bombs were dropped during 531 sorties.

Yet for all the density of the storm of high explosives on their position, the German attacks continued as relentlessly as before. Fourteen battalions, supported by tanks, pushed still further down the road to within a mile of the "Flyover" bridge; to the east of the road a counter attack by a Regiment of the British Armored Division failed to retake any of the lost ground; to the west of it, the Germans all but surrounded a battalion of the 157<sup>th</sup> Regiment. On the far right of the American 45<sup>th</sup> Division, the 180<sup>th</sup> RCT now also came under attack while German tanks were threatening the "Flyover" bridge, which two of them had almost reached before being stopped by anti-tank guns.

The British 1<sup>st</sup> Division was called out of reserve to support the hard-pressed Americans in preventing a German break-through across the "Flyover" bridge.

The American 1st Armored Division had orders to drive straight up the Anzio-Albano road to do what it could to help the 157<sup>th</sup> RCT.

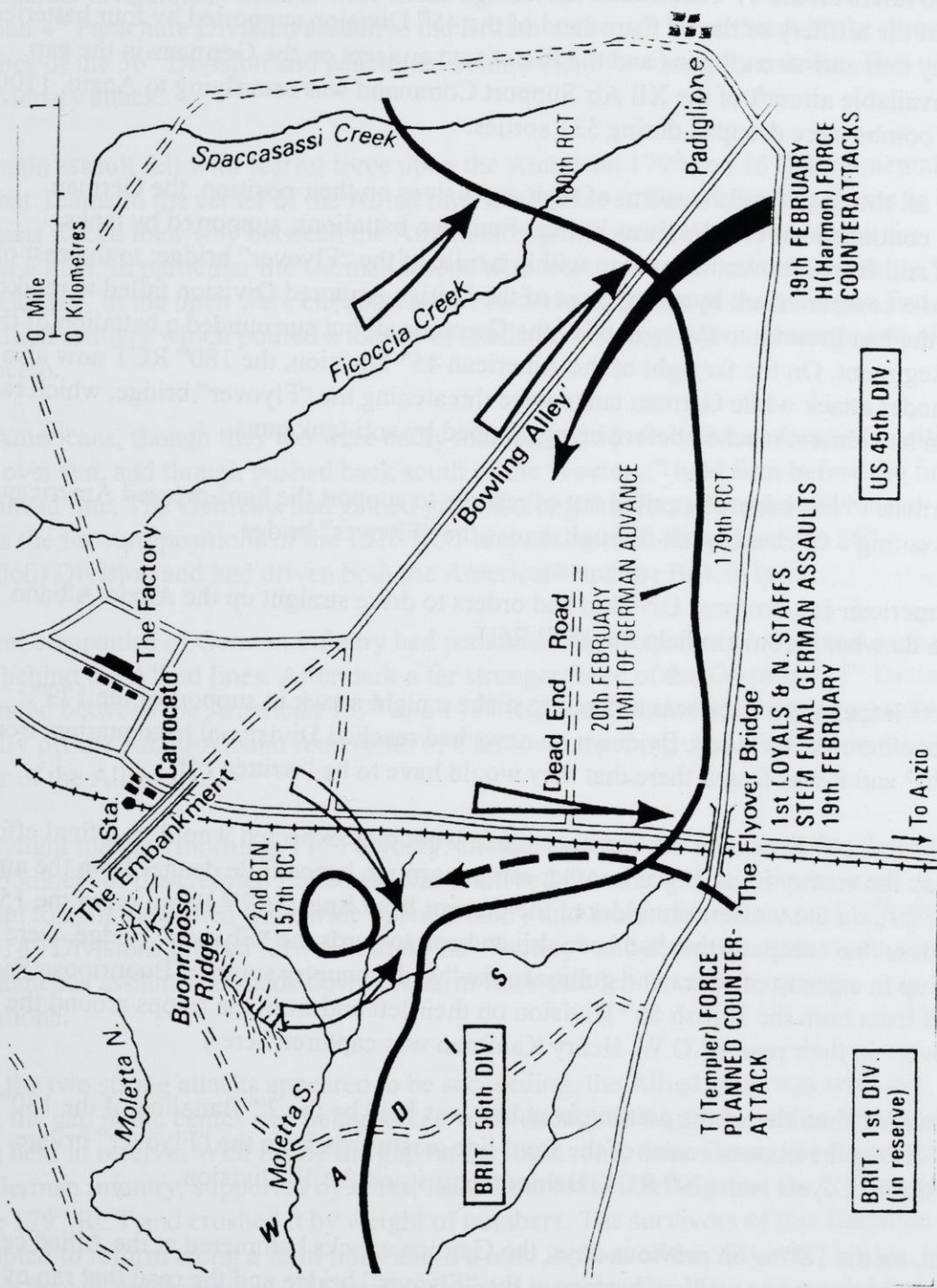
The 45<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division was ordered to make a night attack in support of the 179<sup>th</sup>. Both counter attacks failed. By dawn no news had reached Divisional headquarters from the 179<sup>th</sup> and it was feared there that they would have to be "written off."

On this day, 18<sup>th</sup> February, the Germans made what they expected would be a final effort to break the enemy front. It was another rainy morning, hence little danger from the air. To the left, on the western shoulder of the present front line, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the 157<sup>th</sup> RCT, less one company that had been driven back towards the "Flyover" bridge, were holed up in a group of caves and gullies in the "wadi" country south of Buonriposo Ridge cut off from both the British 56<sup>th</sup> Division on their left and from the troops around the "Flyover" in their rear. (P.O.W. Henry Kaufman was captured here.)

The eastern shoulder of the present front line was held by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the 180<sup>th</sup> RCT. Along the bottom center of the front line, eastwards from the "Flyover" bridge, were the 1<sup>st</sup> Loyals and 179<sup>th</sup> RCT. Behind them stood the 1<sup>st</sup> Division.

Again, on the 18<sup>th</sup> as on previous days, the German attacks hammered at the Allied center, maintaining a savage artillery barrage at the "Flyover" bridge and the road that ran over it.

Tanks rumbled down the "Bowling Alley" and along the main road, swarms of infantry rushed the positions of the 179<sup>th</sup> RCT and the isolated 157<sup>th</sup> RCT in front of the "Flyover" bridge, pushing through to the Loyals.



Map #2 - February 19, 1944, the Final Beachhead Line is Established.



The Germans attempt a second counterattack and are held and defeated at the “Flyover” bridge.

The American troops on both shoulders came under heavy attack. The 180<sup>th</sup> RCT was forced to give ground, but held on north of Padiglione; the isolated 157<sup>th</sup> held out grimly in the caves and gullies.

In the early hours of the 19<sup>th</sup> February, the Germans made a supreme effort to break the front line. They over-ran a company of Loyals and were on the verge of storming past the “Flyover” bridge. The Allies brought up every possibly available man from the rear to stem the tide.

On the right a force (H-force) comprising of the 30<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment and the 6<sup>th</sup> Armored Infantry Regiment with tanks from the 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division had been given the task of attacking up the “Bowling Alley” towards the eastern end of the “Dead End Road.”

On the left, a force (T-force) consisting of the 168<sup>th</sup> Brigade of the 56<sup>th</sup> Division, which had just landed at Anzio, was to move north from the “Flyover” bridge towards the isolated companies of the 157<sup>th</sup> RCT, south of the Buonriposo Ridge.

Although the enemy was still in considerable numbers between Padiglione and “The Factory,” they had been badly shaken by the barrage and had tired themselves out by their continuous exertions over the past twenty-four hours. They were far from being the strong, well-organized force that had begun the attack in such confidence.

The forces on the right moved against the Germans and forced them back to the “Dead End Road,” taking over two hundred prisoners. The crisis of the battle had passed. At the “Flyover” bridge the German attack collapsed. They began to fall back towards Carroceto, across the country known as the Camp di Carne, the field of flesh.





