

hour and back at the barracks. The others came straggling in. It had been rumored that if you didn't come back in about an hour or so (some didn't show up for a day or two) you were talking. So, all of us who ended up back in the barracks that day were of the opinion that no one had "squealed". But, who's to know for sure.

Now, I can't quite remember for sure but, I met Tom Qualman and Ed Kasold in a hallway (Navigator and Co-pilot, respectively). We met briefly, and that was that. I never saw Tom Qualman again (we do, now, correspond however). I did meet Ed Kasol briefly in Santa Monica, California later, at R&R around August 1945; never saw or heard of him again.

In a few days, enough POWs had arrived and been interrogated, and now there was a big enough "group" to travel to our next destination. It was an intermediate camp where we spent a week or so. We were now meeting POWs from the other branches of the service. Most of them were in pretty good shape. I must have presented quite a sight with my bandaged head and burned and blackened jacket. I hadn't given it much thought, but to most of the fellows I was quite a "character". I hesitate to use the word "hero" because of my inherent modesty and shyness, but you could see that I made quite an impression and would always be asked to tell "all about it". They didn't realize how much I held them in awe (infantrymen, tankers, artillerymen, etc.) I suppose we each had seen too many John Wayne movies and really didn't know exactly what the other person actually did; however, it made for good camaraderie as we all respected one another and knew for damn sure some kind of action had taken place or we wouldn't have been there.

It was a good compound. I didn't realize just how good it was until later. The food was ample and after practically nothing but black bread, jam and cocoa, it tasted delicious. There was also a library, courtesy of the Red Cross & relative freedom to roam, within the confines of the camp, of course. I remember, with humour and amusement, the air raids. Approximately at noon each day the sirens would wail; we could hear and see the bombers overhead. We then had to leave our comfortable rooms for the dark and dismal damp bomb shelters where we mumbled and grumbled amongst ourselves for such a useless and wasteful half hour or so. Finally, a few of us would hide under our bunks when the alarm sounded. They would always have a so called "bed check" to make sure everyone had answered the call, and supposedly weren't goofing off. We had just simply gotten tired of running down to the air raid shelter for nothing. Well, this one day, the alarm had sounded, we hid, the fellow checking stuck his head in each room, passed on. Soon it was deathly

quiet. One by one we snuck out of our hiding places and resumed the prone position on our bunks and commenced reading. All of a sudden someone yells ... "Jesus Keerist!, This is a real one, head for the shelter."

"Goddam," I never saw such a flurry in all my life; I hadn't realized just how many had been ditching the raid. You can't imagine the noise, yelling, doors being slammed open and everyone running for their life! ... At least we thought so at the time. The funniest sight, (it was funny even then) was a poor bugger on one leg with crutches. Jesus, you should have seen him go! Literally, flying down the hall. One foot on the ground, two crutches, one foot on the ground, two crutches ... Boy! He was really making time, about 6 feet each thump. We all just couldn't keep from laughing, it was so comical and ridiculous. Needless to say, it was all for naught as it turned out to be just another false alarm.

Finally, the day arrived when the "group" had achieved sufficient proportions to warrant a full troop train to take us to our final camp ... where we would stay until freed by the Russians.

The "troop train" was quite long, composed of box cars filled with tiers of bunks and a coal stove in the center. "Side door pullmans", we called 'em. It, of course, was still the midst of winter and colder than "a bat's ass in an ice house". I don't remember for sure exactly how long the trip was, but it was close to a week, with all the shuttling around we took. We were always shoved in a siding while the more important trains went by. The trip was one I will never forget due to three memorable events; one being an air raid. We had been sitting in a big rail yard on the outskirts of Berlin. We didn't know it at the time, but we were only 20 miles from our destination. It seemed like we had been there for days ... it had been quite a few hours anyway; then came the air raid sirens. *Shit!* no place to go ... couldn't even run! We heard the drone of the planes; an even, *Carr-umph! Carr-umph!* ... "Jesus" they're dropping 'em this time!! They were getting closer and closer ... *Carr-umph!* The box cars shook and rattled now. Someone says "Aw, you don't need to worry until you hear one that sounds like a "ssssss". Just about that time we heard one coming, ... no loud whistle or screaming like in the movies, but just like a shell going over, ... a long mournful "whoosh" ... only this was not passing overhead horizontally --- this sound --- THIS "whoosh" was coming straight down, and getting louder every tenth of a second. "Son-of-a-bitch", this was it-we all thought! Everyone had the same idea at the same time ... we all dove for the center of the car and ended up pilot atop of one another. What a ludicrous sight we must have presented. That is the only time in my life I can say I was really scared "shitless". It had hap-

pened so fast, with no place to go; the sound was terrifying, and it seemed that "this was it!" The bomb landed not far away, but for some reason didn't do anymore damage, or sound as loud, as some of the others. We sheepishly picked ourselves out of the tumble of arms and legs and quietly resumed our former positions. No one spoke for a few minutes ... by then, the bombers were passing over, and it grew quiet again.

Another event I'll never forget, and which was the cause of the third event, was the manner in which we relieved ourselves. The train would stop and we were all herded outside to stand or squat along the side of the train on the tracks. Now, if you can, imagine hundreds of POWs about 6 inches from one another, squatting in the open ... with their pants down trying to do their "business". You could look, it seemed, for miles in each direction to the right or left, and all you saw was lily white asses staring you in the face ... and to make it just a bit more uncomfortable, you could look up and straight ahead and, nine times out of ten, you would be staring back at the back yard of someone's house or farm and, most of the time, someone was staring back at you. Well, needless to say, I just couldn't do it. I wasn't the only one, however, so I didn't feel so bad. The infantrymen were accustomed to slit trenches so were not the least bit self-conscious. I don't know why the train always stopped on the edge of a town, but thinking back on it now, that's where the sidings were. Anyway, by the time we reached our main camp, Luckenwalde, near Berlin, I was, as the saying goes "Quite bound up". I figured it up, and it had been 8 days since I had a bowel movement. With the help of some little red pills, the grace of God, and a finger, I managed to clear it out. Yes indeed, quite a relief. I knew then how pool ole "Dan McGrew" must have felt.

The prison camp at Luckenwalde, about 20 miles from Berlin, was not a typical US Air Force compound. In the early years of the war, Air Force personnel were kept in camps of their own; the infantry and other support groups were also in their own camps. Besides, the Armed Forces camps, which consisted also of other Allied countries, there were political or civilian camps housing dissidents of the Hitler regime. These various types of camps had been segregated ... but now, because of the war situation, Germany was losing and did not have the space, nor compounds to keep everyone apart ... therefore, as Germany retreated to Berlin, so did the POWs. Consequently, I ended up in a camp near Berlin which was composed of soldiers from all branches of service, plus political prisoners, most of whom were Russians, with a smattering of Yugoslavians, French, etc. I will describe the camp and the daily routine, and then tell about some of the