Title: The Biography of a Rabbit

Author: Roy Benson, Jr.

Release Date: December, 2004 [EBook #7190]
[This file was first posted on March 26, 2003]

Edition: 10

Language: English

Character set encoding: US-ASCII

The Biography of a Rabbit

by Roy Benson Jr.

Introduction

This is the story of a young man, my uncle "Bunny", growing up in Canandaigua, New York, including his joining the Army, training to fly, and flying a P51 on missions over Germany. He was ultimately shot down, taken prisoner and liberated about a year later. The story

concludes with clips from his return to a normal life back in Canandaigua. Bunny knew that he had Colon and liver cancer when he he decided to write this book and he died shortly after its completion. I hope the story will be of interest to other students of history. Roy (Bunny) Benson was my mother's youngest brother. Burr Cook

Chapter 1 Background

My father, Roy Benson, was born in 1879 in Centerfield, New York, and my mother, Frances Lorraine Gulvin, was born in 1880 in Sittingbourne, England which is about fifty miles southeast of London. Sittingbourne is approximately thirty miles from Rochester, England. She came to the United States with her parents when she was three years old and settled on a farm in Seneca Castle (which is thirty miles from Rochester, New York).

When my father was courting my mother he would walk to Canandaigua from Centerfield and rent a horse and buggy from a livery stable on the corner of Chapin and Main Streets. He would then drive to Seneca Castle, a distance of some ten miles, to see her. on the way home, late at night, he would sleep in the buggy and the horse would find its own way back to the livery. He would awaken when the buggy rolled to a stop, then walk back to Centerfield.

They were married in 1901 and went to one of the beaches in Rochester for a honeymoon (perhaps Charlotte). At that time such a trip was an all day affair. They traveled from Canandaigua on the trolley that ran all the way to the beach and carried their picnic lunch, I was told. After their marriage, my parents made their first home in a house on the corner of Bristol and Mason Streets. In 1903 their first child, Clarence was born. A few years later they moved to a farm on Route 5 and 20 about one and a half miles from Canandaigua. My father worked for a painting contractor in Canandaigua at the time and Clarence has told me that Dad used to ride a bicycle to work, wearing a derby hat and carrying his paint buckets on the handle bars. there was a big oak tree on the road, about half way from home to town and the children would walk as far as the tree and wait there each day for my father to come home from work. They would all then walk on home together.

My brothers and sisters were: Clarence, Gordon (born 1904), Leon (born 1905), Adelaide (1908), Mildred (1910), Dorothy (1914), and Helen (1916).

The family moved to the first big house on the West Lake Road and I was born there July 23, 1917. I remember only a few incidents during the time we lived there. One time I rolled a Croquet ball off a high front porch and across a lawn to where it went over a bank and hit my sister Dorothy on the head. I recall sleeping in a downstairs bedroom with the window open (there were no screens at this time). We kept a cow for milk and early in the morning it stuck its' head in the window and gave a loud moo next to my head while I was still sleeping. We also had large barns and did some farming. We grew potatoes for home

use and my brothers raised cucumbers to sell. My older brothers used to catch rides to school on passing farmers wagons whenever they could. They went to the Palace Theater on the corner of Saltenstall and Main Streets for five cents. We had a horse that would refuse to pull the hay wagon up the hill to the barn and I remember standing on the wheel spokes to push the horse and wagon towards the barn.

In 1922, when I was five years old, we moved to the house on Chapin Street where my father lived until his death. I attended the Adelaide Avenue School for grades 1 to 3 then went to the Union School, which stood where the YMCA is now. My father bought the house, almost new at the time, for $1400. During these years there were nine of us children (my brother Robert having been born in 1919) and our house was always the center of activity for the neighborhood. All of our friends would come to our house to play and we had childhoods filled with love and good times. My father had horseshoe beds in the backyard with lights above them so the men could play at night. All my uncles and the neighbors would come often to play.

It was about this time that my father opened a wallpaper and paint store on South Main Street. He intended to run the store with Clarence, Gordon, and Leon and also do the painting and wallpapering for his customers. I don't know how many years he had the store, but it was not a success. He then built a large addition to the two car garage at home and moved the paint and wallpaper there for storage. There was plenty of wallpaper he was unable to sell and we kids used to have pieces to cut flowers and patterns with. We would glue the small pieces to bottles and shellac them to make vases. Raymond Smith was my buddy then and was at our house most of the time. They lived a couple of houses down the street and our mothers attended church on Sundays and Wednesday night prayer meetings together. I recall that our Sunday night suppers were always cornmeal with milk and brown sugar. We had a large dining room table, a cherry drop leaf, that would seat ten. I always sat next to my mother at the table. She would make large sugar cookies with a seeded raisin on top and put them on newspapers on the dining room table. We would eat them there while they were still warm. You can imagine what it must have been like cooking three meals a day for ten or more people on the old coal stove. I believe we had gas on one side and coal on the other. We kept the coal fire going to heat the back part of the house. My mother would wash my hair by having me lay on the ironing board with my head hanging over the sink. We took our Saturday night bath in a large washtub by the kitchen stove. We had no bathtub until I was about eight years old.

We always had baseball equipment to play with due to my brother's interest. We would play ball in the street and in a lot at the corner of Chapin and Thad Chapin Streets. The trees, High banks and uneven ground helped me to become a good center-fielder when I played on a flat baseball field. That was easy after running up and down those hills and I could catch anything. The only toys that Ray and I had were very simple. We took the wheels off an old baby buggy and nailed them on the end of a stick. We would run around the house pushing it

by the hour.

At Christmas time we were allowed to open one toy when we got up in the morning. My favorite, which I asked for every year, was a wind up tractor with rubber treads which we would try to make climb over stacks of books on the floor. We would also roll marbles down the groove in the bottom of skis to knock down houses made of cards. My older brothers and sisters who were married would arrive around noon for Christmas dinner and there were usually about twenty there. After dinner we would open the presents in the parlor. There were so many of us that we would draw names for the person to whom we gave gifts.

My brothers and I slept in an upstairs bedroom with the window open a couple of inches in the winter time. When we woke up in the morning there would be snow in a pile on the floor under the window. We had one floor register about four feet square in the living room and we would sit around it for warmth. I remember the babies would sometimes crawl on the register and wet their diapers. My mother would sprinkle sugar down the flue to the hot furnace dome to get rid of the smell. Above the register, on the wall, was a shelf which held my mother's chime clock.

There was a small room upstairs where we had a library. My brothers had about three hundred books there and there was an army cot there on which I slept for several years. The library contained the Zane Grey westerns. These were all lost later when my father moved out and rented the house for several years during the war. All my possessions, except for clothes, were lost at that time. After my father remarried, he and my stepmother moved back into the house.

My brothers built a wooden platform in the backyard and we had a tent on it for several summers. We would sleep out there when the house was too hot in the summer time. There were three army cots in it. Dr. Behan lived on Thad Chapin Street just around the corner. He had several large farm horses which would get loose and come running down the street in front of our house. If we were playing out in front and heard the horses coming we would run for the front porch. Sometimes the horses would run across the front yard and barely miss us. We were so small that the horses seemed twenty feet tall. That is probably the reason I never cared much for horses. During this time my father got his first car, a second hand 1917 Ford. I can just remember that the tail lights were small kerosene lamps that you fill up and light for night driving. On one car that Clarence had, the windshield would tip out from the bottom for ventilation and the windshield wipers were worked by hand. I can remember pushing it back and forth while Clarence drove.

In 1926 my grandfather, Peter Orson Benson, would come up to pitch horseshoes with me. He lived with my uncle Jim across the street and down the hill a little. I would see grandfather coming and would have plenty of time to get ready for him because he was 96 years old and it would take him about twenty minutes to walk up. He would toss the horseshoes and I would bring them back to him. He was an active man

and had a good size garden until he was about 95 years old. I remember that he had a long white beard that came down to his belt.

My mother did not get to take very many vacations in her lifetime. One time we went up along the St. Lawrence River and another time we went to Buffalo and took the boat trip across Lake Erie to Long Point Park. Another time we went, in two cars, to Pennsylvania. She spent all of life cooking, washing, sewing and caning. Saturday night was the big night of the week for everyone. to make certain we got a parking place downtown, my father would take the car down in the late afternoon and after supper we would walk down to shop and watch the people in town. I can remember sitting on the front fenders of the car and watching the shoppers. There was a popcorn wagon by a building on South Main Street and I suppose, if we had the money, we would get some popcorn or candy. I can remember walking down Chapin Street with my mother to see a movie in the evening.

The Playhouse Theater on Chapin Street had what they called Bank Night on Wednesdays. They would announce a person's name in the theater and by loudspeaker, outside. You did not need a ticket to be eligible and I guess they picked names at random from the phone book or a list of city residents. There would be crowds outside and you had several minutes to answer, so if you were not there someone could come to find you if they hurried. The prize would build up if there was no one to claim it. I remember the time Ray Smith and I were inside and they called our number. We won two bags of groceries. There was also a dish night when they gave away dishes.

One Fourth of July we had a bushel basket of fireworks and were to set them off after dark. I was sitting on the steps with the other kids when someone threw a lighted punk (used to light firecrackers, etc.) into the basket. The whole bushel went off at once! You never saw such a sight; kids running in all directions with Roman candles and pinwheels swirling around them. The house did not catch fire, but the event charred the siding and the porch floor. Nobody was blamed for it because no one was quite certain how it happened. It was probably the fastest celebration of the Fourth that I ever had.....and the most exciting!

Ray and I went to the movies every Saturday afternoon to see the old western movies. We would run all the way to the theater and the first one there got the corner seat in the first row of the balcony. After the movies we would go up to my house and my mother would make each of us a slice of bread and butter with sugar on it. Next we would run up to Arsenal hill and play cowboys. We had a cave dug out of a mound of dirt and we would defend it with spears made from long goldenrod stalks sharpened on the thick end. In the winter we nailed a wooden box on two barrel staves and would sit on the box sliding down hill trying to dodge the trees. In those days they did not plow or sand the streets and when we finally got sleds we slid down Chapin Street. One friend had a bobsled which held about ten kids and we rode that from Brigham Hall, down Thad Chapin, down Chapin Street to the Sucker Brook bridge. The only dangerous intersection was at Chapin and Pearl

Streets and we would take turns watching for cars. There were very few cars in those days so it didn't bother us very much.

My brother Robert was two years younger than I and he was sick for a long time before he died at age eight. He was in a wheelchair for quite a while. He had what was called rheumatic fever and the doctor had to drain fluid from his back. The wheelchair was one of those old large ones with a wicker seat and back. I would go to the corner store where VanBrookers is now (Pearl and West Avenue) for groceries for my mother. Robert would sit in his wheelchair by the window and time my running to the store and back. I ran as fast as I could and it must have been good practice because, by the time I reached high school, I was the fastest runner there. The only boy who could keep up with me was "Horse Face" Johnson from Cheshire.

One of our favorite times of the year was when we had the family reunion. In those years we would have from 50 to 100 people. Some of the games we played then were fun and would be even now. There was a pile of sand and they would bury hundreds of pennies in it then let the kids loose to find as many as they could. There would be a ten (or more) gallon container of ice cream from Johncox Ice Cream Plant. After dinner we were allowed as many ice cream cones as we wanted. I remember we could only eat two or three before we were full, then we'd feel bad that we couldn't eat more. Our favorite reunion was the one held at my Aunt Alice's down on Seneca Lake. She was such a nice person, everyone loved to go there. Her husband John was a huge man and just as nice. They lived on a farm and raised food for Lakemont Academy, a school for boys. Their farm was next door and owned by the Academy.

Sometimes we would go to the farm the night before and stay over, sleeping in the house, on the porches, even in the hay in the big barns. The older boys used to drink beer and play cards all night out in the barn. The house was on a hill about one quarter mile from the lake with a lane running down to a boathouse on the shore. In later years I can remember going down with Clarence and Gordon to sleep in the boathouse which was out over the water. It was a wild spot in those days with no cottages nearby. The hill from the house to the lake was all grape vineyards and there was a railroad track right through the vineyard. When we heard a train coming, we would run down and toss big bunches of grapes to the train crew as the train went very slowly due to the up hill grade.

In 1925 Clarence and Gordon went to Florida for a couple of months in the winter. In those days the roads were not very good and the cars undependable. While in Florida, living in a tent, they worked on the road repair gang and also picked fruit. I remember they picked apples all that fall on a farm near Geneva in order to earn enough money for their trip. I recall their return from Florida late one night during a bitterly cold snowstorm. They came in the back door with bags of oranges.

In 1926 there was an older couple, Mr. and Mrs. Rundel, from Omaha,

Nebraska, who were traveling through Canandaigua when they had a serious accident. They were hospitalized and their car was in a garage being fixed. Due to their injuries they did not feel up to driving to Nebraska so they advertised in the paper for someone to drive them home. Gordon answered the ad and drove them back. They all got along so well, they asked him to stay with them and he did ... for three years. He bought himself a pickup truck and started a painting business there. He sent us pictures taken of the tornado damage in that area. I remember one picture he took of a wheat straw that was driven into a telephone pole.

In 1927 Clarence and John Timms started for California on motorcycles and they got as far as Kansas when they could no longer ride the motorcycles due to the bad roads. The roads were all red clay and when wet they were worse than ice. After falling off them too many times, they pushed the motorcycles into Kansas City and sold them. They took the money and went by train, to Omaha where Gordon was living. They talked Gordon into going on to California with them in his truck. The roads were very poor, dirt mostly, and it took them a long time. In California they picked grapes, then they came back to Omaha, where they left Gordon, and returned home by train. When Gordon finally came home in 1929 he drove all the way without stopping and it was several years before he got over it. He developed car sickness and could not ride in a car for some time.

I was in the Boy Scouts for several years and really enjoyed it. I got all the merit badges up to the one for swimming and that was when I quit the Scouts. I found that the friends you make in Scouting are sometimes your friends all your life . . . ones like Ray Smith and Skip Dewey. We had a lot of good times at Camp Woodcraft near Cheshire, New York. One of our favorite games there was "Capture the Flag". The lane through Camp Woodcraft was the line between sides and the flag was on a pole way back in the woods. Some would guard the flag while others would circle around, try to get the other side’s flag, and return across the center line with it. If you were touched by anyone on the other side, you were out of the game. It is similar to the game they play now with those dye guns. I was in the Beaver Patrol and can remember the meals that we used to cook. Some patrols did fancy things, but we always ended up with Campbells soup. We were known as the "Soup Patrol".

Every year we used to plant pine trees at Camp Woodcraft. It would take all day and we carried the seedlings around in a pail. When noon came, we would wash the pail out in the creek and heat our soup in it. There was a small cabin with a dirt floor, loft and an old cook stove. One time Ray Smith and I went up to stay overnight and it was cold. We were quite young at the time and got scared as it grew dark so we tried to sleep in the loft. We had a wood fire going in the old stove to keep warm and it made so much smoke that we coughed all night and didn’t sleep much. We were still too scared to come down from the loft. L. Ray Stokie was our Scoutmaster and he ran a chocolate shop on Main Street. We would go down to the store and he would let us go down in the basement to watch him make chocolates and pull taffy.

Most of my possessions during these years were bought for me by my brother Clarence. My most prized possession was a pair of leather high top boots with a pouch on the side for a jack knife. He also bought me a hatchet, which I still have today. It is the only one I've ever owned and it must be sixty years old. It is getting dull, but it's never been sharpened. He also bought me my first bicycle and it took me forever to learn to ride it. I don't know how many years I had it, but it was my only bike. My mother and father had little money in those days, especially during the Depression in 1929 and 1930, so if I had anything at all it was bought for me by my older brothers.

It was some time during these years when I was in the little corner store on West Avenue and I stole a five cent candy bar. I was scared for months that I would be found out. It affected me so much that the feelings have remained with me throughout my life. It was a great lesson because I never did anything like that again. Jack VanBrooker ran the store and when he had bananas that were too ripe to sell, he would tell Ray and I that if we could eat them all we could have them for free. We would sit on the lawn by the store and watch the cars go by while eating bananas until they came out of our ears. We never did have to pay for any.

We had many other enjoyable pastimes outdoors. We would cut the cover off a golf ball and unwind some of the miles of rubber bands inside. By putting half on each side of the street we could stretch it across and when a car came down it would stretch the rubber about a quarter mile. We would also go to the top of Arsenal Hill and hit golf balls with baseball bats. They really go a long ways. We found our golf balls in the bottom of the creek down by the golf course.

On the west bank of thad Chapin Street there was a row of black oxhart cherry trees belonging to Doctor Behan's widow. When they were ripe we could not resist trying to get some. As soon as we got in the trees, "Old Lady Behan" as we called her, would come running down the street yelling and waving her arms. Guess she watched those trees all day long. One night Ray and I went over and filled our pockets with cherries and ran through the tall weeds back to the tent in our backyard. To our utter dismay, we had run through the weeds where a skunk had just sprayed and we had to throw away all the cherries and change our clothes.

During the harvest season the wagon loads of pea vines passed up Thad Chapin and, when we saw them coming, we hid along the road until we could run up behind the wagon and pull off a big armful of pea vines. Sometimes we would get enough to take home to our mothers. You understand this was not like stealing candy from a store to our way of thinking, so we were certainly not doing anything wrong. There is a big difference between stealing and mere survival. Besides, we had to have something to do to keep us out of trouble.

There were many sheep pastured in the open fields around Camp Woodcraft in the summer time. They were taken to the farm barns north

and east of town during the winter. The herders drove the flocks down the road by our house every spring and fall. They were driven down West Avenue and up Main Street. There were so few cars at that time that traffic was not a problem.

The ice truck came around in the summer with ice for everyone's ice box. Mother would put a sign in the window for 25, 50 or 100 pounds and they would chip off a piece and weigh it. While the driver took the ice into the house, all the kids would run up to the back of the truck and get loose pieces of ice. The ice man would yell and chase us away when he came out.

During the Civil War there was an arsenal built at the top of what was thereafter called Arsenal Hill. Weapons were stored there in the event that the city had to be defended. Of course the buildings were gone by the time we played there as kids, but we found the old foundations by digging down a ways. There were a lot of old red bricks. The gully down the other side of the hill had a creek running down it. Ray and I would dig in the mud looking for cannon balls and one time we found one, four to five inches in diameter. It was very heavy. We eventually took it to the Historical Museum as a donation and I believe it is still on display there.

Arsenal Hill (West Avenue) was a steep and dangerous hill. There were many accidents at the bottom and near the corner of Pearl Street. We could hear the crash of accidents from our house on Chapin Street and the kids would all run down to see them. One time a truck load of prunes tipped over and there were prunes everywhere. Another time a load of butter in wooden crocks tipped over and the crocks rolled down people's lawns. People were coming out and carrying them into their houses, but we didn't know enough to get any. Once a car hit a tree and the driver was thrown through the roof and landed on the sidewalk. When we got there, he was sitting up and asked us for a cigarette. Probably he wasn't hurt because (he looked like) he was drunk.

My grandfather, Peter O. Benson, was born September 12, 1831 and died in 1931. Sometime in the 1920's there was a full page article and his picture in the daily paper. It told of his attending the Ontario County Fair for 90 consecutive years. The Fair was held in September then so all the farm products were on display. The fairgrounds were off Fort Hill Avenue where the present High School stands. There was a grandstand, barns and a race track for harness racing. It was a big day for us, as kids, as a picnic lunch was packed and we would park the car in the center of the race track and stay at the Fair all day.

I remember one day when we were playing in the front yard a big black car, with a Philippine chauffeur, stopped. Inside was Ada Kent, from California, a cousin of my father. Her husband had helped finance George Eastman when he founded Eastman Kodak. She came to set up an annuity for my father and all my uncles. They cost $45,000 each and my father received $100 a month for the rest of his life. I remember that he was able to get a better car and buy my mother a new coat (which I recall was blue). When I was in the service, Ada Kent died in Carmel

by the Sea, California and left two million dollars to the old woman who cared for her.

We had a big garden and in the fall I would build a little house of sod, sticks, boards and anything else I could find. It was just large enough for me to squeeze into. In one side of it I made a little fireplace out of clumps of dirt and I would break up the sticks to have a little fire for heat. We had a large prune tree next to the garage and my mother would can a lot of them every year. My father loved them. We would take the pits out of some and put them on the flat garage roof to dry in the sun. We covered them with wire screen to keep the birds away. When dried, they were stored in large bags in the bottom of a big kitchen cupboard. In the winter I would get into the cupboard and sit there eating prunes. We had a large sweet cherry tree in the side yard and mother canned nearly 100 quarts every year. I helped her with all the canning--cherries, prunes, peaches, and pears. when she did the cherries she always left one cherry with the pit in it per quart. The person who got the pit when the cherries were served was given a dime. This was a big treat for us.

Our house was always the gathering place for kids and we were likely to play games like "Red Light", "Hide and Seek", and Holly Golly". We used to make guns out of old tire tubes, sticks and a half clothes pin. We would cut loops of inner tube to shoot as bullets then play cowboys and Indians.

Chapter 2 Years at Berby Hollow

My Years in Berby Hollow (Egypt Valley)

My older brothers were always interested in the Bristol Hills and around 1927 they rented a small house on the Egypt Valley Road which we called a cabin. It had a kitchen, living room, pantry and two bedrooms. There was a porch on the front. The cabin was heated by means of a wood stove. we used to get our wood by dragging in limbs with a rope, sometimes for quite a distance. The painting business was very slow in the winter and sometimes Clarence would stay over there for more than a week. He wouldn’t want to spend all of his time gathering wood. Halfway down the hill into the valley there was an old man who lived alone on top of a ridge beyond a deep gully that ran beside the road. He sold firewood, delivered for $3.00 a cord. Sometimes we would buy wood when we had enough money.

The nearest house to the west was one half mile away and to the east there was one a mile beyond us. The roads were dirt and were never plowed in the winter time. Most days in the winter, the only car to come by was the mailman. In the deep winter he might only make it once a week. In the spring when the snow melted the roads were bad and we would simply drive in the ruts that were not too deep. I spent all my Christmas vacations and weekends with Clarence, and sometimes Gordon, at this place.

If the roads were very bad in the winter, my father would take Clarence and I as far as the main road went and we would pull a toboggan, loaded with our food and supplies, about six miles to the cabin. We would have set a time and day for him to pick us up when we were ready to come home. The corner on the main road where he met us was at the top of the hill that goes down into Honeoye. There was Jones' gas station there where we would wait. When we were at the cabin and the weather was good, some of the family would come over for Sunday dinner. My older sisters and their husbands would sometimes join my father in coming. Clarence's friend would often come over to hunt. The rabbit hunting was very good.

When I was old enough to have a gun, Clarence, Gordon and I would start out about 11:00 am to hunt for dinner. We would go in opposite directions and try to get a rabbit then beat the others back to the cabin. I remember one time we got a rabbit and were back in less than an hour, but Gordon was already back and had one ready to start cooking.

The cabin was interesting because we were told that a man who had lived there some years before had sat in the kitchen in a chair and blown his head off with a shotgun. The bullet holes were all there in the plaster in the ceiling so we supposed it to have been true. Clarence was always interested in fox hunting and had a trap line too. I guess at this time I had a BB gun and just followed Clarence around. When I was about twelve years old Clarence bought me a single shot 22 and I used it to hunt fox with him. I don't remember what we ate in those days at the cabin, but Clarence did the cooking. I do remember one time Gordon made a raisin pie. He made the crust and put in a box of seedless raisins then put it in the oven. When he took it out it was just as when he put it in, so we poured the raisins back in the box and ate the crust. Across the road about a quarter mile up in a field there was an old chestnut tree that was killed by blight that eventually killed all the chestnut trees in the East. This tree still had a few green limbs coming out of the trunk and we used to get the chestnuts and roast them. The remainder of the tree was dead and we used it for firewood.

The cabin was on the edge of a deep gully and the creek ran down the gully in back of the cabin. It went on to Honeoye Lake. We used to set traps in the creek for muskrats. Sometimes we would hear wildcats scream in the middle of the night down in the gully. The stove we used for heat had a big ornate top that slid to one side to expose the cooking top. we took this off and had it hanging on a nail in the pantry. One night Clarence and I were there alone and the wildcats were down in the gully. Just about midnight we were awakened by a terrible crash somewhere in the cabin. Between that and the wildcats it made our hair stand on end and the chills go up and down our spines. We finally got up enough nerve to get out of bed, get a flashlight and investigate. The heavy iron stove top had come off the nail and knocked down all the pots and pans. After a couple of hours we got back to sleep again. Down the road, not far from the cabin, a church had burned down at midnight under mysterious circumstances. All

these happenings made the place very spooky to someone only ten years old.

During these years I used to tag along behind Clarence while he was hunting and taking care of his trap line for fox and muskrat. Fox pelts were worth about $20 then, which was a lot of money. In all the years that we hunted them, I can not remember getting one. It was fun setting and baiting the traps and finding where the fox had gotten the bait without springing the trap.

One winter Leon stayed at the camp and worked for Tony Miller on his farm down the road. This is where he met Louise as she was the school teacher at the school the other way from the cabin. At that time teachers would board near the school and she stayed at the Miller's. Leon said he worked very hard there, from sunrise to sunset, cutting wood and doing chores for small wages and one meal a day.

For a change sometimes in the summer, we would go down about two miles toward Honeoye and there was a place you could drive a car along the creek away from the road to where the banks got steep. There was a nice point by the creek where the ground was level and there were lots of tall pines. Clarence had a panel truck and there was a mattress in the back to sleep on. We would set up a canvas cover to cook and eat under. It was a beautiful spot where we could stay for the weekend. Sometimes I would take Ray Smith or Chuck Spears with me. There were places where the creek was a couple of feet deep and we would go skinny dipping. I often think of all that I would have missed doing if it had not been for Clarence.

About 1930 or shortly there after, Clarence and Gordon bought five acres of land from Tony Miller along the edge of his farm. They paid $30 an acre for it and about four and one half acres of woods, then the creek with a clearing beside it. After we had it surveyed we put up some markers at the back corners which were up the hill. It was level for about 1/2 to 1 acre at the bottom and the woods went up the hill fairly steep. About two months after buying the land we were walking around the property line and found that Tony Miller was cutting down the big trees, 2 to 2 1/2 feet in diameter, and dragging them onto his property. He had cut about ten of the big trees and didn't think we would be over there to find out. We went down to Bristol Center and got the local Sheriff (big deal) and had him serve papers of some sort on Tony Miller. We never got any of the big trees back, but he didn't cut any more. There was one big oak about 3 1/2 feet in diameter that had been cut down and still on our property. I would go up there and sit on it and hunt squirrels. We never did cut it up for firewood as we never had a saw big enough to do it. The knowledge of trees that I learned in Boy Scouts gave me an interest in the trees that were on our property. There were pine, oak, maple, beech, basswood and a very hard wood. The ironwood did not grow very big and had a twisted trunk. The bark was slate grey, smooth and it was properly named because it sawed like iron.

We bought the lumber for the cabin at Davidson's Lumber Yard on West

Avenue in Canandaigua and they delivered it for us. I remember being over there and waiting for the truck to get there. The driver got lost and it took him half the day to find us. After we had unloaded the lumber, he sat and visited with us the rest of the day. I was about 12 or 13 years old so could help my brothers saw the boards and nail them up. I recall putting the wood shingles on the roof. We even had a front door that we could use when we had company. Gordon was good with mason work so he put in the cement block foundation and built the big stone fireplace at one end of the cabin. We had a lot of good fireplace fires and used to sit around it by the hour. Sometimes we would find a piece of apple wood to burn, which makes a beautiful fire. We also had a wood burning stove which we used for cooking. The cabin had one large room and two bedrooms partitioned off at one end by six foot high partitions. The walls were just the clapboards on the outside so it was not very warm in the winter. Just about like Horseshoe Camp I imagine. It was nice and warm, however, if you kept the fire going.

We had a wood bin in the back of the cabin that came out into the room a couple of feet and had a cover that lifted up. On the outside we had a door on hinges that would raise up and thus we could fill the wood box from outside. One time someone broke in through that woodbox and stole a couple of my brother's guns, but that was the only time we were ever robbed. We used to drink the water from the creek even though there were cows pastured not far up stream. We thought that if the water ran five hundred feet from the cows that it would be pure again. It never hurt us but we soon found another way to get water. There was a small gully next to the cabin that was wet most of the year, so we drove an iron pipe back in the shale three or four feet and put a pan under it to catch the water that dripped out. In the summer it would drip about a gallon a day which was enough for drinking.

I forgot to mention that the first thing we had to do before we built the cabin was to build a bridge across the creek. We cut two trees about the size of telephone poles and nailed boards on top. At least twice during our years there, the bridge was washed out by the spring floods. Usually it was found not very far downstream so we would drag it back and renail the boards down. I mentioned before, the Scout trips to Camp Woodcraft which usually took place on a Saturday. It must have been nice to have all the energy that we had at that age. After running all day at Scout Camp, Ray Smith and I would walk to Berby Hollow after the rest of the troop left for home. We followed the edge of the big gully down into Bristol Valley and then walked south on the road until Mud Creek passed under the bridge to our side of the road. It was too deep to cross anywhere else. Then we would climb the hill to the west, which is about where Bristol Mountain Ski Area is now located, then cross the top of the hill, which was fairly flat, and Down into Berby. We Couldn't get lost because I knew this area very well and when we came to the Berby Hollow Road I knew whether to turn right or left to get to the cabin. It was about a six mile walk and we could make it there by dark. We only did this when Clarence was planning to be there and we could spend the night and

come home with him the next day.

After we got the cabin built we planted some pine trees in the yard along the creek. I remember getting six pine trees from a nursery. They were so small that I carried them inside a small cereal box. The last time I was by there they were all living and about fifteen feet tall. We named the camp "Hunting's End" and we had a sign on a post out by the road near the gate we made to keep people from driving in. When you crossed the bridge we had three stone and concrete steps up the bank and Gordon cemented a sundial on top of a three foot high stone and concrete base. It was accurate and we used it to tell time.

This area of Bristol was sparsely populated in those days and there was no house between the cabin and Honeoye. Sometimes we would need extra groceries and would go to Treble's store in Honeoye for them. After high School I went with his daughter Althea for a while. We bought most of our groceries in Canandaigua before we left for camp and could get enough food for two of us for a week for $5. We bought them at a little grocery store on South Main Street owned by Ernie Watts. Most of our meals consisted of boiled ham, Pancakes and jello. We probably had other things but these are what I remember. Most of our meat is what we got hunting. We often had fried squirrel, rabbit or partridge. We used to start hunting partridge right from the back door of the cabin and once Gordon got a bird about 100 feet up the hill. At times in the winter we would get up in the morning and see deer and fox tracks in the snow within ten feet of the cabin. The cabin was in a valley with a hill to the west so it would be almost dark by 4:30 PM so we would start a fire in the fireplace and eat our dinners early. We would heat up the sliced boiled ham and eat it with pancakes. We had a large round cast iron griddle and cooked with it on top of the wood stove. Clarence would make his pancake (always about one foot across) and then sit at a table in front of the fireplace to eat. While he ate his, I would cook mine and he would be done when mine was ready. We took turns like this until we were full and then we would eat our dessert together. We didn't have to hurry any as the evenings were long.

Sometimes in the summer we would go up the Lower Egypt Valley Road to where the spring was (I'll tell more about that later) and there was a lane that went up the hill to where a farmhouse once stood. There were found a lot of blackberry bushes which we called thimbleberries because they were big, over 1 1/2 inches long. We would have them for dessert with sugar and evaporated milk. We had a concentrated flavoring mixed with water to drink. It was called HO-MIX and came in flavors. Whenever we got thirsty we'd stop for a glass of HO- MIX. It was probably the forerunner of KOOLAID.

The only lights we had in the cabin were Coleman gasoline lanterns and we would read by it at night. We had an outside "john" about 30 feet up the hill in back of the cabin with stone steps cut in the bank. It was a one holer surrounded by blinds we took off an old house somewhere. You could sit inside and run the slats up and down to see out. Sometimes we would take a gun with us and watch for partridge

while we sat.

One weekend we arrived at camp to find a dead partridge on one of the beds. It had flown through a window and couldn't get out again. Another time a red squirrel got down the fireplace and really made a mess of the cabin. He even chewed off the wood around the glass in the windows. He didn't get out and we found him in there dead.

We built a dam in the creek to make a place for our Saturday night bath and it was about two feet deep with a nice smooth rock bottom. We had an overflow in the dam to raise or lower the level by inserting or removing planks. We took the planks out during the spring floods. The level area between the creek and the road was large enough so we could have softball games and park cars there.

In those days we often hunted squirrels as I have mentioned. There were many pure black squirrels then and we would hunt for them just because they were different. One place up on top of the hill there were fox squirrels but we never killed one of them. Fox squirrels are much larger than gray squirrels and they have a long bushy tail like a fox. We could see them in the woods but were never able to get close to one. Most of them were up on top of the hill on posted property belonging to the Sanetarium in Clifton Springs. It was called the Sanetarium Farm and they raised farm and dairy products for use at Clifton. It seemed strange that they would have a farm so far away.

You can check the map for the location of some of the places I write about. We were told about a spring on the Lower Egypt Valley Road where we could get water that was really pure. Just down the bank at the side of the road there was a pool of clear water about three feet across with the water bubbling out of the rocks at the bottom of it. This water was so cold that it didn't even freeze in the winter time and on the hottest summer day it was so cold that you couldn't hold your hand under it. Eventually, Stuart Caves of Caves Lumber Company in Holcomb, built a lovely summer home on the lot including the spring, but they always allowed people to get water there.

There was an intersection in the road just down from the cabin with a telephone pole. We made arrow signs with cities and mileage painted on them and nailed them to the pole. They pointed towards Honeoye, Naples, Rochester and Canandaigua. They were still there for years after the camp was sold. Several times Clarence and I walked home to Canandaigua just to see how long it would take us. It was about 15 miles distance and we always made it in about four hours and fifteen minutes. One time when it was snowing I was wearing a heavy pair of overshoes and about halfway home they got too heavy for me, so I took them off and hid them under a large rock beside the road. The next time we went to camp I picked them up.

We had a black and white cow hide for a rug in the cabin. Across the road and up on the hill was a berry patch and in the spring there would be berry pickers up there, when they looked our way, I would put the cow hide over me and chase Clarence around the yard. They were

just far enough away that it may have looked real to them. At least they used to stand there watching us.

One of Clarence's friends had a fox hound that we would keep with us for fox hunting. His name was "Shimmer-boo" and he was large. One Christmas vacation we got snowed in and the fellow who owned the dog came after us in a truck. I lost three days of school which was a treat. We slipped and slid around in the snow on the hill, but finally made it up the hill, on to home and back to school. We all rode in the front seat of the truck with that big smelly dog on my lap all the way home. You know how big and gangly those fox hounds are. I'll never forget that ride home.

We had a trapdoor in the floor of the cabin with a four foot square pit dug out beneath. We would store foodstuffs down there where it was cooler. There were all kinds of nut trees around and at one time we had two bushels of butternuts, one of walnuts and two of hickory nuts (all shucked) down under the floor. After they were there a couple of years we took them out and burned them in the fireplace. Two bushels of hickory nuts would be worth a fortune now. Halfway up the hill on our property there was a pine tree about three feet through the trunk and very tall. The limbs came straight out of the trunk so you could climb up it just like you were climbing a ladder. About forty feet up I built a platform and used it for my secret hideaway. I could see down to the road and when we were expecting company, I would go up there and watch for them.

We used to do a lot of partridge hunting and there was an older man by the name of Bill Brooks who went along with us, without a gun, just for the joy of walking in the woods. He carried a flask of whiskey and every so often would stop to sit on a tree stump and have another nip. He never bothered our hunting and was nice to have along. He was the father of one of the girls Gordon used to go out with.

We had to cut all our firewood with a two man crosscut saw or a one man crosscut saw about three feet long. Our only problems were when we went over to camp for a weekend, we had to spend the first day cutting wood and the second day hunting. We never got very far ahead with our woodpile. We would cut trees one to two feet in diameter. At the back corner of the cabin there was a gully that went up the hill but it never had any water in it's six foot deep depression. After we cut the trees into chunks we would roll them over to the gully and start them down the hill. They would bound up in the air and sometimes jump out of the gully where trees would halt their flight. They would go about 40 feet and then we would start them out again. At the bottom they would be traveling quite fast so we made a barricade of chunks about the size of a cord of wood, to protect the cabin. It was an easy way to get the wood down the hill and the chunks ended up right by our wood pile for splitting. We would cut the basswood chunks about a foot long as it was a very straight wood, soft and wonderful to split for kindling. I would sit on one chunk of wood and split another with my scout hatchet. It would split almost down to the size of a pencil and I always kept a big pile of it to start fires with. When we were

cutting down trees we would put all the brush into piles so that there would be places for the rabbits to hide. When we were hunting rabbits, we could kick the pile with our foot and scare them out. We had a basswood tree with a nest of honey Bees in a hole about 10 feet up the trunk. One day when it was about zero degrees out, we cut the tree down and when it hit the ground the bees flew up in the air about ten feet before the cold got them and they fell to the ground. We got out all the beeswax comb and took it back to the cabin and made honey.

On top of the hill in back of the cabin there were a lot of open fields and in one we found a big old wagon wheel that we could roll way up to the top and start it down into the open fields. It would roll a long way before it came to the woods. Next time we came up we would bring it with us. Sometimes we would carry our skis with us about two miles up the hill and then ski down criss cross all the way back to the cabin. Once I was sitting on top of a brush lot hunting fox and I heard a noise behind me. I turned around very slowly and there were three deer eating grass about ten feet behind me! One moonlit night at midnight we went up there and sat watching for foxes to cross the open field. With the moon light on the snow you can see for a long ways and it was very quiet. It is amazing how you can do something like that just once in your life and never forget it--the sight, sound and feeling. I can close my eyes right now and see those open fields and trees just as clearly as fifty seven years ago.

We did not have anti-freeze for the car in those days. We put alcohol in the radiator to be safe at about zero degrees. You couldn't put anymore than that because every time the car got warm it would boil over. On very cold nights we would drain the radiator into a large pan and take it into the cabin. One night it went down to 26 degrees below zero and I believe that is still the record for this area. We took the mattress off the other bed and put it over us and a big wooden chair on top of that to keep it from sliding off. Clarence always got up first in the morning and I still hear him crumpling newspapers to start the fire again if it was out. We had a trap line to see to as we were leaving home later in the day. I put on every piece of clothing I could find and was so stiff I could hardly walk. We had to go around the whole line and spring the traps as we would not be back for a week. We then put the anti-freeze on the stove and melted it as we had left it outside all night and it was frozen. We put it back in the radiator and headed home.

Halfway down the road into Berby Hollow was an old dirt road to the right that went along the hill through the woods. It crossed a deep gully with a sharp S turn and crossed an old wooden bridge. Just on the other side was an old abandoned house whose basement windows were covered by iron bars. It was all grown up with brush and vines and we speculated that slaves or prisoners had been kept there in the basement. It was a very interesting spot to a boy. Near the back of this house we found the remains of an old wooden railway track. It went from the top of the bank alongside a deep gulley and down to the creek in Berby Hollow. The ties and rails all made of wood and rails were about 18 inches apart. It was very steep and ended at the top of

a cliff down by the creek. We never did find out what it was used for. It was still recognizable as a track however. It may have been used to get logs down to the creek and a sawmill when the water was high enough.

We had a 22 rifle that was probably purchased in the 1920s by one of my brothers. When he needed money he sold it to another brother for $1 less than he paid for it. Whenever the owner needed money, he would sell it again with the one dollar loss. I finally bought it for $5 and still have it. It is a very good gun and shoots straight. I used it to hunt woodchucks for many years up to the 1960s when I hunted with Harold Kennedy and Brownie. It is the rifle I taught Lynn to shoot with.

My time at Berby was from age 9 to the end of high school in 1935. After that I used to go there with the fellows I played ball with and we would have parties and go hunting. After high school I never spent a night there. When I was in the Air Corps, Clarence and Gordon sold the camp for $1000. If I had been home at that time I think I would have bought it. It would make a beautiful summer camp even today. Goodbye to a lot of good times.

Chapter 3 School Years

School Years

I started school in 1923 and went to the Adelaide Avenue School for grades 1 to 3. I attended the old Union School, where the YMCA is now located, for grades 4 through 8. I attended High School at the Academy on North Main Street. My first two years of high school were uneventful. In my Junior year Ken Montanye and I were on the baseball team and from then on all we could think about was baseball. Ken was so crazy about playing that he would stay for practice after school and then have to walk all the way home to Cheshire.

Being able to run so fast, I might have been very good on the track team or at soccer. All the meets would come on the same day so I had to choose just one and baseball was my choice. One time they needed someone to run the hundred yard dash in the sectional meet at Geneva. as there was no baseball game that day, they showed me how to use the starting block and away we went! I came in third place about three feet behind the winner so there is no telling what I could have done with training and practice.

Clarence bought me a cloth jacket and I wore it all four years of high school. By the time I graduated the cuffs and collar were almost worn off. These were the years following the Depression and there was little money for clothes. I remember getting my first suit for graduation. It was Oxford Grey and cost $26. I bought it myself and made the mistake of getting it too small and it was outgrown in about a year.

The boy next door and I would walk to school together and had one thing we loved to do. We would save firecrackers from the Fourth of July and in the winter time, going up Main Street, we would put a firecracker in a snowball, light it, throw it up in the air over the kids walking on the other side of the street. We were real proud because we were the only ones with firecrackers. We also would build forts of snow in the lot behind our house and then put firecrackers in snowballs and throw them into the front of the enemy's fort, trying to blow it down. We were just lucky that no one ever got hurt during these pranks.

I never had to much homework in school because I could remember everything I read. History dates and Chemistry formulas were easy for me although sometimes I didn't know what they meant. English, math and algebra were almost impossible for me and I barely passed. I got only 52 in Latin and didn't know why anyone would take that subject anyway.

I had a small part in the Senior Play and the night before the performance the male lead came down with acute appendicitis and went to the hospital. They wanted someone else in the play to take his place and they would prompt him from side stage. I knew all his lines by heart and I could have played the part with no prompting at all. But, to my utter dismay, the hero had to kiss the heroine!! She naturally was the prettiest little girl in the whole school. I realized that kissing her would be a whole lot different than playing baseball and I couldn't take the chance. Imagine turning down the chance of the lead in the Senior Play for a stupid reason like that! Three or four years later I began to notice girls and wished that I had taken the lead part.

In 1936 I took a post graduate year just so I could play baseball another year. Ken Montanye was in his senior year so he would be playing too. I hadn't decided what kind of work I was going to do, so thought that I might as well go to school. I took just morning subjects, Physics and Chemistry because I liked the teacher so well. I had gotten 91 in Chemistry my Senior year and took it over again to try to raise my mark. When I took the Regents Exam at the end of the year, they gave you three hours to do the exam. The Chemistry and Physics exams were both the same afternoon. I completed both in 1 1/2 hours before anyone else had finished even one. I got 96 in Chemistry and 99 in Physics. This was about the only good thing I did in high school.

On St. Patrick's Day in 1936 we had a very bad ice storm and the big trees in our front yard were hit hard. Big limbs about one foot in diameter were coming down. They sounded just like cannon shots and kept us awake most of the night. One big limb was laying across the roof and we had to get up there and saw it in pieces and patch the hole in the ridge. Every time I go by the house I can still see the indentation in the ridge of the roof where the tree hit 50 years ago. The winter pear tree in the side yard by the driveway is still there and bears fruit as it did in the 1920s. There was no traffic on the road during that storm as the roads were filled with trees. I started

for school with my lunch bag in hand, and going up Main Street the only place to walk was about six feet wide in the center. I got almost to the Academy when I met kids coming back who were saying there was no school. I started for home and stopped at the bridge over Sucker Brook on Chapen Street. I went down under the bridge and ate my lunch. My father and brother spent the next three days cutting up the trees in our front yard. We kept warm because of the coal furnace but had no electricity for days.

I still believe that we had more snow in those days than we do now. One time we made a tunnel out from the back door about fifteen feet before we got into the open and used it that way until it melted. Another time Jack VanBrooker's car was stuck up on Thad Chapin and the next day we went up to look for it digging holes in the snow until we found the roof. My lunch time during my Senior year was an hour long and I would run all the way from the high school to the west end of Chapin Street, get a sandwich and run back to school. I ran down Main Street and cut through Wilcox Lane, near where the Palmers lived, across the railroad tracks and through the swamp where the Elementary School was eventually built, then over Pearl Street. It was almost two miles each way so if I had been on the track team I would have done well. That swampy area below the tracks had enough water in it in the winter time to make a hockey rink if you didn't mind a few bushes growing up here and there. I was on a hockey team and played there a couple of winters. Sometimes we would also play hockey on the lake by Kershaw Park.

Chapter 4 After School 1936-1940

After High School 1936-1940

During the summer of 1936 I tried working as a grocery clerk on Main Street. The people who traded there were mostly Italians and most spoke very little English, so I couldn't understand them. At that time you had to get each item for the customer and after two days of trying to figure out what they wanted I was so nervous that I had to quit. Then I went to work for my father in the painting business. My first job was painting a wooden railing down to the lake at a cottage on the West Lake Road. I started out at fifty cents per hour. My father used to take all the jobs, arrange the work and do the collection. We had a very good line of customers and in all the years I worked with him, we only had one customer who refused to pay all of his bill.

About 1937 Dorothy was working for a state official as a secretary, in Hornell, New York and she had a 1929 Ford coupe that she wanted to sell. She and Barney had been married and they didn't need two cars. They were living in an upstairs apartment and Barney had started working as a plumber for the man in the lower apartment who ran a plumbing business. My mother bought the car for me for $50.00 and I went to Hornell to get the car. I had just got my drivers license and driving alone for the first time I didn't dare stop the car on the way home. I just slowed down a little at intersections and I remember

making a right turn in Dansville through a red light as I didn't dare stop. I soon got used to the car and admired the rumble seat in the back. Ray Smith and I used this car to go to all our baseball games and take our dates to all the square dances. I named the car "Little Eva".

We went to square dances every Saturday night at Baptist Hill, Cheshire, Bristol Springs, Honeoye or Atlanta. I didn't know a thing about dancing so the first date I took to the dance, I had several drinks and they pushed me out on the floor keeping me there until I learned how. Ray Smith didn't drive and he was always getting me blind dates so he could have a ride. I went with a lot of girls-Althea Treble and Rosemary Schmuck from Honeoye, Barbara Sherman from Gainsville, Julie Jones from Bristol, and Earnestine Fairbrothers (get that name) from Atlanta, New York. For about six months I went with a beautiful girl, Ruth Richardson from Woodville. She was so pretty I guess I was lucky to have gone with her that long. These dances were all in the winter time and we had to ride four in the front seat of the car. We went to a lot of movies too, in Rochester and Geneva.

I played baseball for several years with Ken Montanye, Skip Dewey, Ray Smith and Len Pierce. I played for the Cheshire team and the Canandaigua town team. It was called semi-pro ball and we played teams from all around this area. The only one that got paid was the pitcher. They had a try-out camp for the Red Wings for three days at Red Wing Stadium in Rochester. Ken and I signed up for it and we lasted two days before being eliminated. Some of the pitchers were so fast I could hardly see the ball go by. I wish that I had been six feet tall and weighed more because I really wanted to be a baseball player.

It was during these years that Len Pierce and I became good friends. When we played for the Cheshire ball team we would hang out a lot at the barber shop in Cheshire. They had two pool tables and a coal stove at the back of the shop with chairs around it. We used to get warm in winter while waiting for a haircut or the chance to play pool. The barber was John Johnson, an older man with white hair. We got a haircut for $.25 and I went there for several years.

The gang used to hang out at Chase's Ice Cream Store on South Main Street several evenings a week. We ate a lot of ice cream and sundaes. Sometimes around 1938 I sold "Little Eva" and bought a 1935 Ford coupe that used to belong to a dentist. The finish was so dull from sitting out in the sun behind his office that I polished it for about a month before I got it to shine well. There were about six of us who went to all the square dances together every Saturday night. We would buy a half gallon of wine and at the dance we would set the jug on the hood of the car and keep running out to it for drinks. Nobody ever touched our bottles--probably didn't care for our cheap wine.

One day in 1938 when we came home from work we found my mother standing on the back porch with her head jerking and she was unable to talk. We called the doctor and he said she was having a stroke. We had no idea how long she had been like this, unable to call for help. She

was paralyzed in the right arm completely and partially in the right leg. Her speech was affected a little. In those days there was no kind of rehabilitation so she was unable to do any work. My father had to continue working so we hired a housekeeper to come in days to do the cooking and housekeeping. I can imagine what this did to my mother, having a stranger doing all the things she had done for so many years. I am not sure as to how many months she lived before she had the second stroke, which was fatal. She never did go to the hospital because doctors made house calls in those days. We had a Dr. Stetson and he would walk right in the house without knocking and sit down at the dining room table and visit with everyone before he would see the one who was sick. I suppose with a family of nine children he made enough visits to feel like one of the family.

After having the stroke, my mother slept in a downstairs bedroom and my father would sit by the bed in a rocking chair and hold my mother's hand. He slept in the chair and still worked every day. In my memory this will always be the perfect definition of love. It must have been wonderful for them to have a relationship filled with such love. At this time, my mother, dad and I were the only ones living at home.

My mother's funeral was held at home in the front room which was called the parlor in those days. It was a common practice to hold funeral services in the home at that time. As I was 19 years old, playing baseball, working and in love with the girl next door, the full impact of my mother's death did not hit me until years later. Like I suppose everyone else feels, I now regret not doing more for my mother to have made her life more enjoyable and easier for her.

When I was in high school I went to a Dr. Brockmayer who had an office on Chapin Street almost down to Main St. His office was in his house, in the front room. The charge was either a dollar or two. He had a large roll top desk with a bushel basket beside it. When anyone paid, he would throw the money into the basket. I can still see that basket about half full of $1 bills.

After my mother died, my father and I tried having a housekeeper but that didn't last long and we decided to keep house for ourselves. Dad did the cooking and as near as I can remember we ate pork chops and canned peaches most of the time. I did the washing and ironing and I could do the shirts quite well. My father had a big oak roll top desk he used for all his book-keeping. He saved dimes in a codfish box with a slot in the cover. He nailed the cover on so he wouldn't use them before it was full. He couldn't resist knowing how much he had so every few days he would pull the nails out and count it. I remember one day he was sitting at the desk with one of those little rubber bladed defroster fans that they used to put in the rear window of cars. He was trying to fix it and he plugged it into the outlet. It ran like hell for a few minutes before it burned out the motor. It surprised him so he dropped it like a hot potato.

About 1937, a couple of years after high school, Skip Dewey, Ray Smith and I went to Florida for two weeks. We went in Skip's car which used

a lot of oil so we carried a case of oil in the trunk and would stop a couple of times a day to add more. We rented a small cabin in Ft. Lauderdale and stayed for a week. We didn't do much while there except lay on the beach and watch the girls. At that time there wasn't much else to do as it wasn't developed the way it is now. As I recall it only cost each of us $75 for the two week trip. On the way home I remember one morning on the road through Georgia when we passed an old shack occupied by a black family. The fields were white with frost and a little boy in a white nightgown was running through the field to the outhouse way out in the back.

We stopped late one night in Pennsylvania to put more oil on the car and it would not pour out of the can. We had intended to spend the night in a nearby town with Skip's brother so we just drove the rest of the way. When we arrived we found out that it was 15 degrees below zero and that was why the oil would not pour!

My mother died in 1938 and the following winter my dad and I went to Florida for two weeks. We stayed in a tourist home in Orlando and drove around the state to places of interest. I was in love with the girl next door at the time and couldn't wait to get home. I probably made my father come back sooner than he would have liked for that reason. However, when I got home, she had become engaged to someone else and they eventually married. Oh--such is life! We drove all the way to Florida and back and only made one wrong turn. That was in Dansville, New York and so close to home that it didn't make any difference.

When Gordon returned from Nebraska, he started painting by himself. I never knew why, but he always worked alone and had his own line of customers. When work was hard to get just after the depression in the early 1930's, Leon got a job as a painter at Brigham Hall. He worked all his years there, for low wages, just for job security. He built a house on Chapin Street just across from our house. We dug the foundation with a scoop pulled by Clarence's panel bodied truck and a chain. We also used a wheelbarrow and shovels. He put up a ready-cut house from Sears and Roebuck that cost $4,500. All the pieces came cut and numbered, with instructions to tell you how to put it together. He hired one carpenter and all of us boys to help him. This must have been in the early thirties and the house is still a nice looking one. Last year I noticed that they put on vinyl siding. Leon had to sell it years later for financial reasons and has had to rent since that time as he never made enough money to buy again.

Dad, Clarence and I painted together and my father arranged all the work and did the collecting. Clarence did most of the high work and Dad did the open places as he was a fast painter. I did the windows and became good at it. We worked together well by each doing what he could do best. That saved time and money. When my father was in his 70's he could spread more paint than the rest of us, although he began to miss spots when his eye sight was beginning to go. My uncles Jim and Ed were in the painting business also; Uncle Ed wore a tie and a celluloid collar all his life, even when painting in hot weather. His

wife did all the book keeping for him.

In 1939 my father married my Aunt Constance and I guess he thought she was like my mother. She was just the opposite and I don't think my father enjoyed life as much after that. He worked right up until his death at age 75. He used to get up with the sun and work in the Garden or mow the lawn until it was time to go to work. He was a very good bowler and traveled to cities in the area to bowl for money. I recall one time when he won $100 in Auburn. One time he and Leon went with a team to bowl in the national tournament in Chicago. When he married again I moved out of the house and rented a room on South Main Street, staying there about a year before moving to another place just below Clark Street on Main. I also lived there about a year.

There was a diner next to where I was living--one of those diners made from an old trolley car--and I ate my meals there for two years. I got to know them so well that I would just walk in the diner, tell them I wanted dinner, and they would fix me a plate. I never did know what I would be getting until it was in front of me. On the nights I was going to square dances I would tell them to give me fried foods so the alcohol would not give me too much of a hangover. The food was good and they gave you a lot of it. In the winter I remember the windows being all frosted over and you couldn't see in or out.

I rented a garage just around the corner on Clark Street where I kept my car. One night after going to a Saturday night dance, I put the car in the garage. The next morning when I went to get it I noticed it had a flat tire. The garage floor was dirt and the wheels were down in hollows. The snow had melted off the car and all four wheels were frozen in the ice in the hollows. It was such a narrow garage I had to back the car out to change the tire. It was frozen so solid I had to get the jack out and put it from the bumper to the front of the garage and jack it backwards to get it loose. Not too easy when you have a hangover! Sundays I would get together with a couple of friends and we would ride to Bristol or around the lake and go to a movie in the evening. We were riding around the lake and parked somewhere up the East Lake Road on December 7, 1941 when we heard on the radio that Pearl Harbor had been attacked.

Sometime during 1941 I went to Rochester to find another car and found a 1936 Pontiac that looked almost new for $450. My old car was using a lot of oil and I had it parked in front of the used car lot. When the dealer was checking out my car for trade in value, I was hoping he would not start it up because when you did so the smoke was so thick you'd hardly see the car! I was lucky and made a deal. I had to drive back to Canandaigua for the money and once again to Rochester to close the deal. Just on that one trip I had to add four quarts of oil. Good thing it lasted the trip as the Pontiac was a real nice car.

In the fall of 1941 we had very little work and it was time for me to find work somewhere else. I had been called by Uncle Sam, had my physical and reported to the draft board. I was classified 4-F due to flat feet and a hernia (which I still have and was never bothered by).

I wanted to be in service somewhere and so I went to Rochester and tried to join the Marines or the Navy. I even tried to get into the ambulance corps. With my 4-F status I couldn't get into anything. I borrowed $10 from my father and applied at about ten places in Rochester. This was the only time in my life that I borrowed money except for when I bought a car or house.

During this time some of my friends were entering the service. This was between Pearl Harbor and April of 1942. Pete Lenzi decided to hitch-hike to California and, if he couldn't find work, to join the Marines. He took one suitcase and I gave him a ride as far as Avon, letting him out at the statue in the center of the village. I'll write more about Pete later. Ken Montanye entered the army and we had a big party for him at the camp in Berby Hollow. Len Pierce also joined up about a month before I did.

In December of 1941 I got a reply from my application at Kodak and went in for an interview. I got a job at Kodak Park and was one of the first three hired for a new product. Ray Smith was hired soon after I was. The whole building where we worked was empty except for the three of us and a boss. Kodacolor film was being put on the market and the building was being set up for developing and printing. The first few weeks I spent polishing the reclaiming tanks on the ground floor. After the first month I had fourteen men working under me so it was a good opportunity for me. If I hadn't been drafted then, there is no telling how far I might have gone. When the film started coming in Ray Smith was working on the floor above me and I was in charge of the basement. By March things were really busy, and then, even though I was 4-F, they called me for the draft. I was glad to go, but now realize what a great opportunity I missed.

When I started working at Kodak, Ray Smith and I with another friend, Kippy Oskamp, who also worked in Rochester, rented an apartment on Alexander Street across from the Genesee Hospital. During the week I parked my car in a large old building in the area and they took the cars up an elevator to the top floors. It used to be an old flour mill and every Friday night I would get the car to go home for the weekend. It would be almost totally white from the remains of the flour in the building so I had to wash the car every weekend. We rode the bus to and from Kodak daily. We had to go up a stairway inside the apartment and were to be very quiet. One night some of the boys from home had a party. When they left we carried out a large bag of bottles and cans, the bottom gave out at about the top step and the entire contents clattered down the stairwell at two a.m. Needless to say, we were asked to move soon there after.

Kip Oskamp went into the Air Force (a bombardier, I believe and his plane went down in the Japanese war...he was missing in action) so Ray Smith and I rented a room in a house on a small street in Greece NY which was nearer to Kodak. The owners name was Riley and now they live in the same trailer park in Florida

as Ray. We worked different shifts so when we worked the noon to 8 pm shift we couldn't go downtown after work as the buses didn't run after 10 pm so we couldn't see any movies. We spent a lot of time sleeping. My car was still over by Alexander Street and I only got it on weekends. I remember standing out on the corner during the winter in a blizzard waiting for a bus to go to work. It was snowing so hard you couldn't see the bus until it was 20 feet away. I ate at the cafeteria at work and on the way home I would stop at the White Tower to get a bowl of soup.

The houses on Shady Lane were all the same and one night after midnight Ray Smith came home and went in the side door. The bathroom was just inside and there he was sitting on the john with the door open. You can imagine his embarrassment when the stranger indicated he was in the wrong house. It was a wonder the owner didn't shoot him as a burglar. I guess they changed the lock after finding out that the keys fit both houses.

At this time I was making $26 a week, renting a room, making car payments, and had enough left to run around with on weekends. It was in March or April that I received my draft notice. The day I left Rochester it snowed two feet and I had to shovel snow for hours to get my car out. I drove to Canandaigua and left all of my things with my father. I left the car with a friend who worked at a gas station down by the lake and he stored it in his barn. I owed some on it but they couldn't collect from you while you were in the service. After I was in the army about a year, I wrote to him and told him to let it go back to the finance company. I don't know why I didn't keep it or at least let someone in the family finish the payments. It was a very good Pontiac and I didn't owe more than a couple hundred dollars on it. In the service you soon got the feeling that your chances of living through the war were pretty slim.

Chapter 5 In Training

I entered the service on April 15, 1942. We left early in the morning from the railroad depot in Canandaigua for Rochester where we went through the induction center on State Street. From there we left for Ft. Niagara near Buffalo. It was still cold weather and they drilled us on the parade grounds in heavy army overcoats. One day I had a terrible headache and every step I took marching made it hurt more. They asked for volunteers to take a test for the Air Corps so I volunteered just to got out of marching. I had such a headache that I didn't think I did very well on the test. If I hadn't had that headache my war years would have been entirely different.

The first three or four days I wondered what I had gotten myself into and would have given anything to have been able to have gotten out.

That soon passed and the rest of the time I wouldn't have missed the experience for anything. We were only at Ft. Niagara for about a week before being sent by train to Fort Bragg in North Carolina. This is where we were to take a 13 week training in field artillery. We trained for the 105 gun which was medium size, the shell being about five inches in diameter and about eighteen inches long. We would haul it around on a truck and set it up at a gun emplacement. The first time we shot it there were several officers there and the target was on a hillside about a quarter mile away. We fired the gun and watched for the hit. Nothing happened and we just stood waiting. We never did find out where it went. After the officers left we had a good laugh!

The land there was red sand and the trees mostly pine. It was very hot and muggy as we were there in June, July and August. We wore one piece coveralls and every time we got back to the barracks we would step in the shower with our clothes on and would dry off in about 10 minutes. We had to got up at 5:30 am and pick up all the cigarette butts and papers on the grounds before breakfast. This was loads of fun when it was raining... We spent most of our time in marching drills, rifle range, obstacle course and 1earning., about the big gun. The drill sergeants were mean, miserable and yelled at us all the time. They yelled at me continually for being out of step while marching. I couldn't figure out why because I was always in step. After 13 weeks, I could have easily killed both of them.

The obstacle course was about a mile long through woods, gullies and across water. I had such a competitive spirit that I would run the whole route and try to finish first. Some guys would walk, take short cuts and really goof off. It didn't seem to make any difference how you did it, but I still ran all the way.

The food was not too good and I especially remember when they served spare ribs. We sat seven to a table and if the bowl started at the other end of the table by the time it got to the last person there would only be bones 1eft. The PX did a big business selling candy bars in the evenings. I remember one time my stepmother sent me a package of goodies. She put in some pickled seckle pears and just wrapped them in wax paper. The entire package was a squashed mess smelling of vinegar.

We were not allowed off the base during this period. When we had Saturday afternoon and Sunday off we wrote 1etters home did laundry and rested. I finally had time to make friends, especially with the men in my barracks. There was one man from Canandaigua and several from Buffalo, Syracuse and western New York. You can make good friends in a short time when you are that far from home. Ray Smith was in the Army too and I kept in touch with him even though we moved around a lot. We used to write gooey love letters to each other saying how much we missed each other. I took pictures and the ones that were so black they were nearly blank I sent to him "with love" It is a good thing no one saw those letters or they surely would have thought we were gay. (It is interesting that I never did run into any of that type in the service) There were all types of men in this outfit and they were from

all over the east coast. Some couldn't read or write and one was straight out of the Kentucky backwoods. It made you wonder how they were taken into the service. There was one, Cliff Boll, who could neither read nor write so he got several of us to write his letters to his girlfriend. He was a real character so we wrote torrid love letters and included all the fantastic things he was doing. When he got a letter from her, we would all gather around and read it to him. I often wonder what happened when he went home on leave. I was accustomed to writing a lot of letters an I wrote to my dad, four sisters and three brothers. I also wrote to Duke and Mabel Montanye and Mabel's letters back were the longest of any I received. She would write about everyone in Cheshire, especially the Bunnell boys, who were always getting into trouble. Their barn burnt down, the house burnt down, the tractor tipped over and they would wreck cars. When I read her letters, all the guys in the barracks would gather round and I would read them aloud. Just like a serial on TV. Mabel wrote long letters in such a delicate hand that it must have taken her forever, but she wrote every month.

Marion Bunnell was in the service and he was home on leave when he ran into a wooden guard rail on the curve south of Cheshire and the rail went through the windshield. He was hit in the head and should have died, but after much surgery he survived. He was left retarded and was given a 100% disability from the government. I can't remember the year, but soon after the war Al Bunnell and another guy held up a bank in Rochester and were chased all the way-back to Canandaigua before the police caught them down on Coach Street. He spent several years in prison.

During training while loading the logs that braced the big guns, I broke a finger on my right hand and consequently had difficulty doing my laundry and writing letters. The medics put a splint of two tongue depressors on it and I still have one knuckle that doesn't bond. Sometimes at night we would have an alert drill and drive all the vehicles from the motor pool into the pine woods. Sometimes I would have to drive one of the big personnel carriers and I would grab blankets or anything big to put behind me so could reach the floor pedals. We drove without lights up steep banks and around curves in that deep sand. It was pitch dark and quite an experience. Then we would stop grab our gas masks and run into the woods as far as we could and lay on the ground. We were supposed to put our gas masks on, but we never did.

One day I was laying in my bunk looking at my gas mask hanging on the wall and decided to get it down and see if it fit. it was filled solid with cockroaches! Guess what would have happened I had put it on out there in the dark in the woods some night! The washroom had a cement floor and when we went in there at night We would turn on the lights and wait for the cockroaches to disappear. The boy from the Kentucky hills spent all his extra time doing laundry for others for a small fee and we all thought he was just too stupid to know any better. At the end of the 13 weeks, however, we were given a three day pass. Nobody had any money except the hillbilly and he went home

for the three days and really lived it up. Sometimes the brains are not where they think they are. I used my three days to visit Ken Montanye who was at Ft. Jackson in South Carolina. We met in a small dusty Southern town halfway in between and stayed in a tourist home. There was nothing to do in the little town so we just visited and walked the streets. I traveled by Greyhound bus and it was so crowded I had to stand up in front next to the driver. When I arrived back at base they were getting ready to ship the men out to their next outfits. I received a letter telling me that I had passed the test for the Air Corp and the company commander told me to stay there and not leave with the rest.

The camp was empty for a week except for the sergeants who were instructors and myself. I did KP duty and cleaned barracks until the next group arrived. The next thirteen weeks I spent working around the base and when they went an maneuvers I drove the supply truck. We would go ahead about ten miles and I would set up the officer's tent, Wood floor and cots. The new group would hike the ten miles and pitch their pup tents. I Just crawled under a truck and slept in the sand. Sometimes during this period I got a pass and went down to Ft. Jackson and stayed a few days with Ken in his barracks. Nobody knew what to do with me so they just gave me jobs and I had my share of washing pots and pans and peeling potatoes.

When this group shipped out, I got an order to see the camp commander, a colonel. I didn't know what to expect but found out that I had been listed as AWOL for the prior three months as they couldn't find me. I was supposed to be at home waiting for them to call me! This is the way everything went for me in the service. I could have been home living on that big $21 a month and not doing all the dirty work. My orders finally came and I went to Nashville, Tenn. by myself, probably by train to the classification center. At the center we had three days of intensive tests of all kinds to find out what we were best qualified for: navigator, bombardier or pilot. Naturally, everyone was hoping for pilot.

The tests were from morning till night and covered everything from physicals, eye, hearing and coordination to reaction time. The test for depth perception was particularly interesting. At the end of a long tunnel about a foot in diameter and dimly lit were two wooden pegs. You had to pull them with strings until they were opposite each other. Another one involved a board in front of you while you sat at a desk and the board had little red lights with switches below them. When a light came on, you had to turn the switch off and you had to move quickly to keep up. Another was a small hole in a board with a wooden peg that would just go in without touching the sides. While you held the peg there, the instructor, Wolfgang Loganowiche (I remember him well and later read somewhere that he was a famous German scientist and inventor) would yell and holler at us. He had a tremendous loud voice and would sometimes sneak up behind you, yell, wave his arms and stomp his feet. Ht would scare the daylights out of you and every time you moved the peg would hit the sides and the loud buzzer would go off.

We also had written tests with a time limit so we had to work fast. I used to skip all the math problems as I was so bad in math. I didn't realize until later that it was a good thing I skipped the math as the men who were good at it probably got sent to bombardier or navigator training. Of course we really wanted to be pilots instead. The notices were posted after three days and we were about worn out from the long days of testing. I was lucky to be chosen for pilot training. This was where I got used to standing in line and waiting. We had to wait in line to get our issue of Air Corps uniforms and I stood in line from 8:00 am until almost 4:OO pm for my clothes. We couldn't get out of line to get any dinner as we would lose our place. I now had all my army clothes as well as my Air Corps cloths and everywhere I went I had to make two trips carrying my barracks bags. When I got to my next base, I either sent my Army clothing home or turned them in. I can't recall which.

We were next sent by troop train to Maxwell Field in Alabama. Somewhere on the trip we had to get off the train and spend the night in the train station in one of those little southern towns. It was cold so we made a mountain of barracks bags in the waiting room and then we climbed up on them and tried to sleep. We arrived at Maxwell in September and trained there through November. The first few weeks were just like college with hazing and all that by the upper classman. We had to sit at attention in the dining room and eat with our eyes straight ahead and our shirt buttons touching the table. You couldn't look at your plate so really didn't get much to eat. It was probably just as well because later we had a Sunday dinner with half a chicken each. The chicken was a green color and when I lifted a wing the feathers were stil1 there. Needless to say, most everyone got up and left.

These three months were about the hardest I experienced. I used to be the first one up in our barracks at 4:30 am and got everyone else up. It was nice to get to wash and shave before the others made it crowded. It was just like going to college and they told us it was the equivalent of two years of college. Besides getting up at 4:30 am we had classes all day and homework until 11:00 pm. We had classes in airplane engines, theory of flight, math, physics, and similar subjects. During the evenings I helped others with physics and they helped me with the math. I was 27 years old at this time and older than most of the others. I was always happy and cheerful in the morning and got everyone off to a good start.

Some of the math problems were very difficult. If you took off from an aircraft carrier at a certain compass heading and flew at another heading to the target, what compass heading would you take to return to the carrier if it had also changed to a different heading? You had to also take into consideration your air speed and the wind direction. Bomber pilots had a navigator to tell them where to go and a bombardier to drop the bombs. A fighter pilot had to learn all of these things as he was up there all alone. We worked like this for three months and it was tough.

I found out that Red Hayes from Bristol Valley was a sergeant mechanic there at Maxwell Field. He used to go to all the Saturday night square dances and was a good friend of mine. He was married to a southern girl and lived off base in a nice brick house. Sometimes on Sunday I would go out to their house for a southern fried chicken dinner with pecan pie. One time another service man and I went to church there. I don't know what denomination it was but the minister would rant and rave and wave his arms for about three minutes then they would take up a collection. After about ten collections we were out of money so got up and left.

Even though we were being trained to be pilots, we still didn't know whether we would be fighter, bomber, transports glider or even a "wash out" (the term for not qualifying). At any time during training you could be sent to something else if they decided you wouldn't make it as a pilot. In most cases you would be sent to navigator or bombardier school. After graduating from Maxwell, I was sent to Primary training at Orangeburg, South Carolina. Every time we made a few friends we would be sent to different places and have to start an once again. At Orangeburg we were a small group and this is where we saw our first airplanes. They were P17's, a biplane. Things began to get a little easier for us here and the food got much better. The only discipline we got here was the GIGS we got for anything wrong that we did, like getting in late at night or not being in the right place on time. For each GIG we had to carry a rifle and march around the square in the center of the base for one hour, usually at night as you were too busy during the day. I had to do this several times myself.

We were allowed off bass on our free time and it was about five miles to the small city of Orangeburg. There was a man who drove his car and would take six or seven guys at a time at $2 a piece, and he would just drive back and forth all day and most of the night. I don't know when he ever slept but he must have made a fortune during the war. When we didn't have the money we would jump on the freight train that went right by the main gate. It was an uphill grade and the train was so slow that we could hang on the ladders and steps if a flat car was not available. Five miles was not too long to hang on the side of a car which went to downtown Orangeburg. Sometimes we would see a movie or go to the service club which was in a large old house. I used to dance there with a little blond girl and when I went to the next base she was there also. I found out later they were called camp followers and would marry as many guys as they could and have the men's army life insurance put in their name. I never did go off the base very much after we started flying as that was the main interest.

When our large group left Maxwell Field, we were divided up and sent to several of the smaller fields to start flying. Some of the friends I made there went all through the rest of the war with me. I can't remember just when, but it was about this time that Lloyd Bruce from Missouri and I became close friends and we were together the whole

way. He was my wingman, we were both shot down on the same mission and were together in prison camp.

I was at Orangeburg from November 1942 until January 1943. We were divided into groups of five students to each instructor. My instructor was Art Brewster and we got along fine. We had classes studying airplanes and motors and would fly for one hour a day. The student rode in the front seat and the instructor behind him. After the first ride he would let us do the takeoff and landing. In the air sometimes he would shut the motor off and it was up to you to figure out which way the wind was blowing and to find an open field in which to land. You needed to learn how to land on that field into the wind. When you were about ten feet off the ground he would start the engine and back up you'd go. You needed to be careful because if the field was level and your approach was right, he would let you land. You never knew which you'd have to do. When he stopped the motor you could usually find the wind direction by checking smoke from the smokestacks or something like that. Our days were easier as we would wait around for our turn to fly.

The plane we were flying had an open cockpit and, as it was cold at the time, it was very cold up there some days. We had the leather sheepskin lined flying suit and it was very warm. On warmer days we would just wear underwear under the suit. After six hours of instruction we were ready to solo. It was quite an experience and after you got up there all you did was worry about getting down! I had a bumpy landing but soon got better at it. Some days for a whole hour we would just take off and land over and over again for practice. After this we flew part of the time alone and part of the time with the instructor. This was the period when the instructors really washed out the ones they figured would never be fighter pilots and they were sent to other air corps Jobs.

I loved doing acrobatics with the loops, spins, rolls and upside down flying. My instructor took me up once and did an outside loop. I had to hang onto the iron bars in the cockpit and the blood all went to the top of your head. You would nearly pass out doing that one. He also showed me how to fly backwards. On a windy day you would slow the airplane down so it would just stay up and the wind would blow you backwards. You could look down and see the fields and buildings all going in the opposite direction.

One night we had to fly a triangle cross country course of about one hours time. We had not done much flying at night and we took off at intervals and started out all alone towards the first check point. I missed the first checkpoint and finally realized I was lost. I didn't know what to do so the first town I saw with enough lights, I flew down the middle of Main Street real low and got the name of the town either off the movie house or the bank and then looked it up on my map. I was way off course and had to figure my heading to the next checkpoint. I made it okay but was about a half hour overdue and they thought I had gone down. I didn't get reprimanded so I figure they thought I had used my head to solve my problem and did the right

thing.

Almost all of our flying here was takeoffs and landings and in the air we practiced spins, slow rolls, snap rolls, and figure eights to get the feel of the airplane and develop our control. It was hard to get the plane out of a tight spin but it was an important thing to learn. The planes that we later flew in California were notorious for not being able to get out of a spin. I had 60 hours of flying time here and in January of 1943 was graduated from primary training school. We had to fly with the commanding officer for our final test. All five students with our instructor passed but a lot of the others didn't make it. Three or four from each group were the average to make it. We really liked our instructor and it was hard to part from him and go on to the next school.

In February and March of 1943 we were at Gunter Field in Alabama for our basic training. The airplane was the BT-13 with one wing and an enclosed cockpit. It was bigger, more powerful and flew like a truck. The controls were much harder to move but it was a safe plane to fly. I don't remember anyone crashing a plane in primary or basic training. At Gunter we started formation flying, night flying and instrument flying. My instructor here was R.E. Umbaugh and I had thirty two hours flying with him and forty two solo. When we were flying solo in formation we were now developing confidence and were starting to do things like flying close to the ground and chasing each other around in the clouds.

We began doing more cross country flights to airports in the area. Sometimes we flew with other students and the one in the rear seat always flew the plane as that is where the instructor always sat. One time I was flying with Bill Bell (the son of the founder of Bell Aircraft Inc. of Buffalo N.Y.) and he was flying the plane, with me in the front seat. When coming in for a landing he was going so slow I thought we were going to stall and crash. I yelled at him and pushed the stick forward and we landed okay. I was really scared and told my instructor I never wanted to fly with Bill again. He must have agreed with me because I never had to again.

During Basic training was our first experience with the Link Trainer. It was a replica of the cockpit of an airplane and was used to learn how to fly by instruments only. It operated about the same as the "mechanical bull" they have in Western nightclubs now. It was completely closed and dark with only the instruments lit up. It was run by a sergeant who would put it into a spin, upside down or any dangerous situation and you had to get back to level flight again. It was frightening and exactly like being in a plane in fog or a cloud. Fifteen hours of Link Training were required in Basic, Advanced, all my flying in California, even in England while flying missions.

At the end of March 1943 I graduated from Basic and went to Advanced Training at Napier Field in Alabama. We were beginning to know a lot of the other students and would stay together with them right on through, except for the ones who washed out. In Advanced we flew the

AT-6 which was a faster plane and easier to fly. We had about the same schedule at this field flying one or two hours a day. There were several small level fields in the area that were used for practice landing and takeoffs. I had an Englishman for an instructor. After the Americans were flying out of England, some of the English pilots who had flown a lot of missions were sent to this country to be instructors as we had a shortage of them. Like school teachers, it took a special kind of man to be able to teach flying in a short period of time. They had to have a lot of nerve also to be able to get out of the situations an inexperienced student could get them into! The one I had wasn't worth much as he would fly to one of those other fields and let me land and then he would get out and stand around smoking cigarettes for half an hour. I was supposed to be getting an hours instruction and I was afraid I would be washed out. I went to the commanding officer and requested a change of instructors and got it. Perhaps others had done the same. I can't remember the name of my new instructor but he was tough and strict, which was okay with me as then I knew I would learn something.

We now started to practice landing on instrument only. The instructor rode in the seat behind you in the AT-6 and when you were in the air there was a black hood that you pulled over the front cockpit. The instructor would then give you compass headings, height and speed and you would follow his directions to approach the field. Following his direction you would line up with the runway and begin coming down. All you could see were the instruments. If you were coming in perfectly, he would let you go ahead and land by yourself. On the other hand, he might take over the controls about 20 feet off the ground and take you up again. It was quite scary as you never know whether you were going to land or not. After we had the okay on these daylight landings, we were allowed to fly the planes alone at night.

The AT-6 was designed with places for machine guns in the wings and we were sent in groups to Elgin Field in Florida for gunnery practice. This was the field where General Jimmy Doolittle trained his crew for the bombing of Japan. They practiced for months at bomber takeoff from a field the same length as the deck of a carrier which had never been done. That was the only way they would be able to reach Japan. We were assigned there for about two weeks practicing by shooting at ground targets on a large restricted area. We didn't do any shooting at targets in the air, Just dove down shooting at the ground. I recall it being very hot and muggy there off the Gulf of Mexico.

After returning to Napier Field we were nearing graduation time. We had now developed a lot of confidence in our flying and fooled around when flying without our instructors. We would fly very close together and tap our wingtips and the wing of the plane flying next to us. Flying close to the ground was fun also and gave you a better idea of how fast you were actually going than you had at high altitudes. In Primary I flew 60 hours, in Basic 72 hours, and in Advanced 97 hours for a total of 220 hours. There were about 250 of us in the class and by that time we had become acquainted with most everyone and close

friends with many. We went all the way through combat with some of those same follows.

After our final flight with the commanding officer we were ready for graduation. We then filled out forms giving our preference for the type of flying we wanted. Just before graduation they put on an airshow for our benefit. Little stunt planes would fly straight up and all types of fighter planes did acrobatics and speed. Naturally we almost all wanted to get into single engine fighters so that is what we had listed on the forms. I don't remember much about graduation except many of the fellows had their parents there. We were now second lieutenants in the Army Air Force which was a wartime addition to the regular U.S. Air Force.

We received $250 in $50 bills to purchase our new officers uniforms, lieutenants gold bars and our silver wings. We bought these clothes on the base and they were of wonderful material. After the war I wore the pants and shirts for years, and after they were too old, I wore the pants for hunting as they were very warm and wore like iron. I still have one of the wool shirts. We graduated at Napier Field on May 28, 1943 and waited nervously to see the notice on the bulletin board telling us where we would go next. When they were finally posted I got fighter plane and was as happy as the others that did. Some pilots went to Twin Engine, Transport, Troop Carrier, Light Bomber, Medium Bomber, Dive Bomber, or Heavy Bomber. The poorest fliers went to Piper Cubs and flew observation over the battle lines to direct the field artillery. I am glad that I didn't go to Bomber planes as they were sent to a field in Alpena, Michigan and flew out over Lake Michigan. We had to report to the commander to receive our active duty orders and my friends and I were hoping we would go to the same place.

I got my orders to report to Hamilton Field in California with a ten day delay enroute. Naturally all the fighter pilots were split up now as we were cut down to squadron size and sent to different bases around the U.S. A lot of my friends, however were assigned to the same place. Al Johnson, a big Swede from St. Paul Minnesota, was going to Hamilton and the last thing I said to him was " I'll meet you in Cheyenne, Wyoming and we'll go the rest of the way together. We were to report to the 380th squadron of the 363rd fighter group. A group consisted of three squadrons and I still know all the fellows in the other squadrons although we didn't fly together.

Now for my first visit home in fifteen months! The parents of B. Bell of Bell Aircraft in Buffalo, had come to his graduation and I rode home with them. He was the one who almost crashed with me as a passenger back in training. He and I took turns driving and they took me all the way to Canandaigua. I was driving on a divided highway somewhere in So. Carolina when I was stopped for doing 35 in a 30 mph zone. I was taken before a judge and fined $10. Those rich Bell's didn't offer to pay it. It really made me mad to get fined for only 5 mph over the speed limit as I hadn't been home in a year and a half.

I can't remember much about my leave at home, but I must have spent it visiting with all the ones who did not go in the service. I had a good visit with the Montanyes and Lennie Pierce's family. When it was time to report, I went by train from Rochester to San Francisco. Bill Barnum and Al Bunnell from Cheshire gave me a ride to Rochester and we spent several hours having a big time in a bar before train time. We all staggered down to the depot and they poured me aboard. I survived and enjoyed the train ride across the country. The trains were always crowded then, but I enjoyed them. The train made an hours stop in Cheyenne, Wyoiming and I got off to have something to eat. The first person I saw when I entered the station was Al Johnson, the big Swede, standing there! That wouldn't happen again in a million years. We made the rest of the trip together and stayed overnight in a San Francisco hotel.

The next morning we took a taxi across the Golden Gate Bridge to Hamilton Field. It was good to be back among all the fellows from flying school. We Just hung around there for a couple of weeks, not yet knowing what we were going to be flying. We had classes everyday on engines, aerodynamics, and air craft identification. They would flash silhouettes of friendly and enemy aircraft on a screen from all different angles and we had to identify them immediately. We also had classes in aerial map reading and continued to have them even when we were in England flying missions.

After all this time it is difficult to remember the correct sequence of events as we were stationed at four different locations in the following weeks. I will attempt to note all the events even though they may not be at the exact field. After a week at Hamilton we went by train to Tonapah, Nevada to start flying. We stopped for a couple of hours in Reno, Nevada and four of us headed for the nearest bar. I ordered four whiskey sours and told the bartender to just keep them coming. After the first hour the crowd had grown bigger and the drinks were still coming. I didn't know who was drinking them, but when I got the bill, I paid for 75 drinks! I had to help the others back to the train as they had a lot of trouble crossing several train tracks on their way back to our train. Tonapah was at the foot of a mountain range and the airfield was out in the valley toward the next range. It was flat country with nothing but sand and brush. The buildings were just wooden shacks and the wind blew the sand everywhere. It was in the food, in our beds, and over us most of the time. We arrived here on June 23, 1943 and were going to be checked out in the P-39 airplane. This plane was the one used in the early part of the war in the Pacific and had become obsolete. They were shipped back to the U.S. to be used for training pilots as all the new planes were going to the war zones.

The P-39 was a lot more airplane than any of us had ever flown before and with only one seat, we would have to fly it alone. The instructor took a group of us out to the plane and let each of us look in the cockpit while he explained how to start it and the different instruments. After about one hour's instruction, he asked for a volunteer to go first. Somebody volunteered and taxied out to the

runway. He went down the runway and started up in the air. About 200 feet up the plane went straight down to crash in a ball of flame. We went over to another plane and the instructor asked Who's next?" We used another runway and I was the third one to go. This was our first experience of losing a pilot and really made us all stop and think. When I took off I flew straight for a long time before I dared to try a turn. You just moved the stick a fraction of an inch and you were upside down. It was extra sensitive after the trainers which had almost needed two hands to move the stick. I didn't do any fancy stuff and was relieved to be on the ground again after making a fairly good landing.

After we were all checked out, we practiced takeoffs and landings and flew cross country in formation. I flew about 20 hours the two weeks we were in Tonapah. After our confidence grew we started doing things like flying real low down the straight section of the highway trying to chase the Greyhound buses off the road. The airplane numbers were on one side of the plane only so we had to keep that side away from the road so we wouldn't be identified. On July 5 we went by train back to Hamilton Field in California.

The rest of July and all of August we flew P-39's from Hamilton Field. From here we made cross country flights to Reno, Nevada, Oroville, California and Sacramento, California. We also started gunnery practice here. The P-39 had a 30mm cannon that fired through the nose of the propeller and the targets were along the shore of San Francisco Bay. We would dive down at the target and shoot the cannon. We also had practice at aerial gunnery. One of the planes was used as a tow ship and towed a cloth target about four feet wide and twenty feet long on a cable behind the plane. The tow ship would fly up and down the coast while the other planes would fly toward the target at 45 degree angles and shoot the 50 caliber machine guns which were mounted in the wings. Each pilot had different colored chalk on the bullets and they would thus leave a colored hole in the target when you hit it. I flew tow several times and you never felt safe as those characters were using real bullets. Just once someone hit a tow ship. Shooting from different angles at the target taught us how far ahead of the target you had to be to aim in order to hit it. We shot 100 rounds each and one time I had 51 hits! The tow ship had to fly low over the field and release the target before landing. We never liked to fly the tow ship as it was so monotonous flying back and forth for hours.

We started to fly more formation flights of two or three planes and another plane would try to "attack" us from out of the sun or from the clouds like an enemy would. This taught us to keep our heads turning all the time to keep track of the sky all the way around us. We would take evasive action to try to keep the enemy ship from getting behind us. We also did a lot of formation flying close to the ground which trained you to stay close together in formation. In the tomato and vegetable farms in the Sacramento valley the pickers would be out in the fields with crates stacked about six feet tall and we would fly down so low that we blew the empty crates over. I imagine

we were cussed a lot! A couple of times someone would come back and land with telephone wire or fencing caught on the underside of the plane. I loved to do acrobatics and when I was up alone, I would do rolls and snaprolls and all the fun stuff.

We were on duty two days and had the next one off so we had plenty of free time and spent a lot of it in San Francisco. We found a rent-a-car place and started renting a car by the day. Instead of taking it back we would just pass it on to someone else. Sometimes we would keep it for two weeks and when it went back we would all chip in to pay the bill. One time we had a big Packard Clipper which didn't have any reverse so you had to drive it, park it, and keep it in places that you could get out of without using reverse Sometimes that was real ticklish in the city. I had this big black car when I had the first date with Lettie. I would get her home anytime between 1:00 and 3:00 am then wait outside in the car until she came out in the morning to go to work so I could give her a ride. I got used to staying up all night every third night. The other fellows were all finding dates so I had started looking one day and found her working in the candy section of a department store. I liked San Francisco and servicemen were welcome anywhere so I spent a lot of time in the best hotels and restaurants. We also found many "steak houses" in California and would eat in them frequently. They were small places with a couple of tables and a bar or counter with stools. All the menu consisted of was steak, salad, rolls and coffee but it was always good. I rode the cable cars a lot and helped them turn the cars around at the bottom of the hill. I found that all the head turning and watching while flying really sharpened your driving ability in a car. You saw all the traffic at once and could go through it quickly. We used to drive 60 mph across the Golden Gate Bridge when the fog was so bad all you could see was the white line in the center of the road. 0n my first date with Lettie we doubled with another couple. The fellow, Wes Hottdorf, flew with me and had been a member of the Chicago Mafia. He ended up flying P-38s in a different group in England.

On August 28 we went to another field in Santa Rosa, California and flew about the same type of training as we had been doing. We were still close enough to San Francisco to get up there often. At the time we were also still getting experience with the link Trainer. At this field we had a BT-13 and an AT-6 which we had flown in flying school. We could fly them anytime we wanted to and they were also used if the flight leader wanted to check on our flying skill as they were two seaters. Remember Pete Lenzi who had hitchhiked to California and Joined the Marines? He had been wounded over the Pacific and was recuperating in the Oak Knoll Hospital in California. When he was able to get out of the hospital for a day I had him come up from San Diego and I met him in San Francisco where we spent the day together. In the evening I took him out to the field and took him up in a BT-13. I gave him a wild ride with lots of acrobatics: loops, rolls and spins. I dove down almost to the ground then pulled up so that he disappeared down in the back seat out of sight. He really enjoyed the ride and still remembered it the last time I saw him.

We now started to fly a lot of formation with the planes in a V. It was not until later in the War that a formation of four planes was used. We flew formation at high altitude, low to the ground and cross country. Neil Ullo and Lloyd Bruce were now my closest friends and were in my flight. Neil was sent to a special gunnery school in Arizona for two weeks and when he came back he had to teach what he had 1earned to all the rest of us. Later I will tell how much this extra gunnery training helped him.

By this time we had developed our skill to the point where we got the fighter pilot attitude which was years later described as the 'Right Stuff'. We wore the silk scarf, sunglasses and rakish hat with a leather Jacket. In San Francisco I bought a pair of lumberjack boots that I was still wearing when I was in prison camp. We began to fly more aggressively as we knew the airplane better. The gunnery range was along an uninhabited portion of the California coast and we would fly down close to the rocks along the shore to scare the seals off the rocks. Some of the guys flew under the Golden Gate Bridge, but I never tried that. Out guy flew down into a football stadium during a game and he was reported and grounded for three days. He forgot to keep the side of the plane with the identification numbers away from the spectators. We were now flying two and three hours a day and a little at night. Landing a plane at night is a lot different than in the daytime. Altogether I flew about 155 hours in the P-39 and another 10 hours in the basic trainer while I was in California.

On September 22, 1943 I was granted a leave and prepared to go home. This was the second and last leave that I had during my three and a half years in the service. Four of my friends who lived in the East bought an old car for $75 and they drove it non-stop all the way to Pennsylvania and New Jersey. They sold it for junk and took the train back to California. There wasn't room enough for me to go-with them so another fellow and I took a bus to Sacramento, where there was a bomber base, and tried to hitch a ride east on an Army plane. There was a B-24 Bomber flying to Omaha, Nebraska and we could ride it if we had parachutes. We tried everywhere to borrow a parachute and at the last minute I talked a captain into letting me take his (after a couple of hours of pleading with him). I agreed to return it immediately upon returning to California. We got on the plane and had to stay in the bomb bay section. The door on the side of the plane was about six feet by six feet and was open as the doors were missing. After we took off the cold air was terrible as it was night and the opening was right by us. We found a l2xl2 canvas and tried to fasten it over the opening and it blew right out over the city of Sacramento so somebody got a good canvas. We took all of the clothes we had with us and put them on, laid down in the bomb bay and nearly froze to death on the way to Omaha. If the bomb bay doors had opened it would have been the end of us as we were using the parachutes as pillows! When we got to Omaha, I left the other guys and took a train to Rochester. Somewhere in the past I had met an old sergeant who had given me some good advice about train travel. He said to buy a coach ticket and get on a first class car. By the time they came around to

collect tickets the coach cars were so crowded they couldn't make you move. This always worked for me and I saved a lot of money.

Besides my luggage I had to carry that heavy bulky parachute all the way across the country and all the way back.(When I got back to base I put it on a P-39 and flew it back to the captain in Sacramento.) I arrived in Rochester in the middle of the night and took a taxi to Pittsford where I stood on the corner to thumb a ride. About 1:30 in the morning an old black man and woman in an old Model A Ford gave me a ride. They were so old I think they were scared of me but they were surely nice to give me a ride at that time of night and we had a good visit along the way. They let me out in Canandaigua and I walked home. I made it faster than a train ride even though I used a lot of different means of travel to get home that leave.

After my stay at home I took the train from Rochester to San Francisco and it was a trip that I'll never forgot. There was a girl with three kids under the age of 5 and she was traveling from Boston to San Diego to be with her husband, a sergeant stationed in California. We had a Pullman car and their berth was opposite mine. The kids spent most of the time crying or running in the aisle. There was a sailor sitting with me and we tried to help entertain them as best we could. After three days and nights with all that noise you can bet I was glad to arrive in California!

I took a taxi out to the base at Santa Rosa and the whole camp had. disappeared. The barracks were empty and all my gear was gone. It was real spooky and I didn't know if they'd gone overseas or what. I hunted around and found a caretaker who told me they had moved to Oakland, across the Bay from San Francisco. I called a taxi again and made it to Oakland just before my leave was up. While I had been gone, two of the guys had had to bail out of their P-39s due to engine trouble. Al Johnson was one of them and he landed in a lake. The next time I flew I spent the whole time listening to the engine for fear that it would quit. I kept hearing things that weren't there, but those planes were all old and anything could happen to them.

The lst weeks of our training here at Oakland were formation, gunnery, dive bombing, and simulated aerial attacks. We began to lose some of the pilots now. One took off over the Bay and the plane exploded. We figured there was gasoline in the cockpit and he must have lit a cigarette as he was always doing that (against regulations). When we flew low formation and came to any body of water, I always went up a lot higher than the rest and then dropped down again into formation. I wanted to make sure that I could glide to land if the engine quit. I hated water as I didn't know how to swim. Some of us had cameras and would fly close to each other and take pictures. I took a lot of pictures when I first entered the Army and don't know why I didn't take any all through my flying. I did take a lot while in England. Oakland was just across the bay from San Francisco and I used to take the "A" train across the bridge to see Lettie. This was the "A" train that the song was written about and it

was the best way to get to San Francisco in a hurry.

While flying formation with these planes we would practice crossovers. The middle plane was a leader with a plane on either side and slightly behind. When crossing over the plane on the left would go under and the one on the right would go over when the leader gave the signal. It was Just changing positions. At this time it was early in the war and it was after learning more from combat experience that a flight was changed to four planes. One day I was flying the lead plane and I called for a crossover. The next thing I know the two planes came up right in front of me with pieces flying off in all directions. They had both gone under me and one had come up under the other and stuck right together. They fell together in a spiral and crashed to the ground in an open field. The pilot of the lower plant was probably killed instantly. His name was Cassadont and he was a real handsome dark skinned, dark haired man of Mexican descent I believe.

The pilot in the top plane was Hershberqer and after they crashed I flew down close and saw him crawl out of the wreckage and give himself a shot of morphine from the emergency kit. He had a broken back, but survived to join us by the time we were in England. I gained altitude and wiggled my wings to get the attention of anyone in the area. I saw a car heading for the scene so I gained more altitude and circled the area while calling "Mayday" on the radio. I finally got through to the emergency channel in San Francisco and gave them the location. Then I returned to base. I was lucky because it could have just as well been me in one of those planes.

In November of 1943 four of us went to Nebraska to pick up four P-39s from an abandoned air base in northern Nebraska up near the South Dakota border. Our flight was chosen and our leader was Thomas J. Tilson (called TJ), Lloyd Bruce, Neil Ullo and myself. the four of us were to stay together all through combat. 'TJ' was a nice looking blond from Teaneck, New Jersey and was what we called a " big time operator" in those days. He had girls where ever he went. His ambition was to dance in all the big ballrooms in the U.S and England. I think he eventually made all of them. Bruce was from Kirkville, Missouri and Neil Ullo was from California. Neil had been an electrician in Pearl Harbor when it was bombed and as soon as he was able to get back to the States he joined the service. Bruce and Neil were my closest friends in the days to come and after the war Lettie and I visited the Bruces in Missouri and after Lynn was born, we visited the Ullos in California during one trip to Utah. Lynn stayed with her grandparents in Utah that time.

Now for the trip to Nebraska. We were real characters by now with our leather jackets, rakish hats and our 45's in our shoulder holsters. We had to protect these planes from the enemy even in the middle of the U.S.!! We were to fly by commercial airline to Omaha so we loaded all our gear into a small army truck and said goodbye to all our friends. We made the two and a half hour trip to the San Francisco airport to catch our plane. (It was the only time I ever flew in a

commercial plane.) About four, and a half hours after leaving Oakland, we finally took off. About two minutes into the flight we landed at Oakland, across the Bay, on our first stop. There were all our friends standing there waving at us! We could have gotten on there and saved half a day of travel but that was the Army's way of doing everything. We landed in Omaha, checked into a hotel and set out to look for the nearest nightclub. We had a steak dinner and the meat in the stockyard district was totally different from anything in the East. The steak was about two inches thick and you could cut it with a fork. As soon as we found some girls, we stacked all our guns on the table and danced the evening away.

The next morning we left Omaha by train for Ainsworth, Nebraska. It turned out to be a little place about the size of Cheshire out in the middle of nowhere. The only one there to take care of the place was an old man wearing a beard. The four old planes were parked there and we didn't even know if we could get them started. To make a correction, the fourth pilot was not Bruce, but another fellow who was from Hastings, Neb. which was in the southern part of the state. We planned to fly down there and land at the nearest airport. We got the planes going and the old man wanted us to buzz the field before leaving, as a farewell. We took off, gained altitude, then dove down right at the building and the old man. We pulled up just as we passed over him and Neil Just missed the roof by inches. I found that the plane that I was flying had bad controls and you had to hold the stick way over to the left of the cockpit in order to keep the plane level.

We flew down to Hastings, Nebraska and stayed the night with the other pilot at his parents' house. Nebraska has always been known for its pheasant hunting so the next day we all got shotguns and sat on the fenders of his car and drove around all the back roads looking for birds. I can't remember if we got any or not, but we sure had a lot of fun.

We discovered that the planes did not have any oxygen so we had to find some way to get over the Rocky Mountains. We next flew to Ogden, Utah for fuel and when we landed the brakes failed on one of the planes. While we waited for it to be fixed, we wanted to get into town and had to sneak by the guards at the gate as we were not in uniform. We got through the gate and ran down the road far enough so they couldn't catch us. We caught a ride into Ogden. We were in a big department store when we saw the MP's coming after us so we got down behind the counters and ran all over the store until we lost them. We were never caught and made it back to the base safely.

I intended to ask Lettie to marry me when we got back to California and wanted to get down to see Mr. and Mrs. Clark while I was so close but couldn't get the transportation and didn't have enough time. We decided that as we had no oxygen in the planes, we could not fly over the Rockies and would have to fly down one of the valleys south to Las Vegas then to southern California and up the coast. It would be several days before the brakes could be fixed on the one plane so we

decided that the three of us would fly on to Las Vegas and wait there for the other fellow. We started south with mountains on both sides of us when the clouds came down over the tops of the mountains. We were squeezed into a narrow valley and couldn't see ahead of us. We took a chance, continued on, and finally made it. Remember all this time I had to fly with the stick Jammed to the left and the right rudder pushed half way in to keep the plane level. My arms were very tired by the time we reached Las Vegas.

We stayed in a motel in Las Vegas just outside of town. At that time the city was undeveloped and the buildings were very far apart. The streets were mostly dirt. We headed for the nearest casino and started gambling. It was only a matter of hours and our money was gone so we wired back to Oakland and each got $100 advance on our next paycheck. We went back to the casino and after a couple more hours were broke again. The next day the other pilot caught up with us and we took off for California.

We flew in formation very close to the ground the whole way and whenever we came to a lake or other water, I would go up a couple of hundred feet above the others coming down to Join them when we were over land. We made it back to the base all right and the next day the planes had to be flown across the Bay to Hamilton Field which some of the other pilots did. The one who flew the plane I had flown from Nebraska could only get it a couple of feet in the air. He flew all the way across just above the water. It was just plain luck that got me there all the way from Nebraska.

I called Lettie and she agreed to marry me so I went to San Francisco and we were married the next day, the 23rd of November, 1943. I had to get special permission to 1eave the base to get married because we were now on alert to be shipped overseas. We were married by a judge in the Court House and stayed the night in the St. Frances Hotel. Early the next morning I had to get back to the base. Our orders had come through and I could not leave the base again. We were going to England and I was glad of that because it meant we would not be flying over water all the time. This was the way the Army did things: the ones trained on the West coast went to England and the ones on the East coast probably went to the Pacific.

We were shipped by train across the country to Camp Kilmer in New Jersey. We were crowded in the train and it was a long hard trip due to all the stops we had to make to wait for trains going the other way. Most of the guys played poker in California and on the train. Al Johnson was always borrowing money from me to play poker. He would always pay me back at payday and a week later he would start borrowing again. I didn't play poker so always had money and didn't mind lending it to him as he never failed to pay me back. We arrived in Camp Kilmer the first part of December and it was very cold there with a damp ocean wind blowing. We really noticed the cold having been in California. We all bought coonskin hats to keep our heads warm. We were fortunate in the Air Corps be able to wear almost anything without being out of uniform. I had a chance to get into New

York City with Neil Ullo for a few hours. It was not enough time to get to see much ... just enough time to eat and buy Lettie a watch.

Chapter 6 England and Missions

After a few days at Camp Kilmer we were moved out to board ship in the middle of the night. All I can remember is going up a very wide gangplank into a big black opening about 20 foot square in the side of the ship. The U.S.O. girls were there passing out coffee and doughnuts and I think there was a band playing. The ship was the Queen Elizabeth, owned and operated by the English, and there were thousands of us on this trip. I believe there were about 12,000 troops and a crew of 1,700 on the ship, but am not certain of the figure. We sailed at night and by daylight we were at sea. I will note that we never did set the Statue of Liberty then or when we returned.

The entire ship had been altered to carry troops and the staterooms that originally were for two people now held twelve of us. there were four bunks with just a narrow aisle in the middle and one small shower. We didn't take many showers as it was salt water and left you so sticky. As I recall we had Just a little fresh water to rinse off with. The only open areas were the lounges and the large ballrooms of peace time. In these the almost continuous poker games took place. I spent very little time on dock except for the abandon ship drills. It was December and the weather was not very good. On the few good days we could go up on the stern and shoot skeet. The shells were free and we could shoot all we wanted. We usually found an enlisted man to run the machine to shoot the clay targets. It gave us a little more practice in 1eading a moving target.

I didn't get seasick, but in the morning when I went to the dining room and saw the fish for breakfast I did not feel so well. I took a couple of rolls and bacon for sandwiches and went back to my room to eat them in my bunk. This being an all English crew we got very English food. About half way across the Atlantic the ship began to take a zigzag course and the direction was changed every three minutes. It took longer this way but was the only protection against the German submarines as we were alone with no escort ships. When walking down the corridors we would feel the ship 1ean one way and then the other. We soon got used to that and the thing which bothered us the most was at meal time. The tables had a board along the edge and all the plates would slide from one side to the other. When you wanted salt, pepper, etc. you would grab it when it came to your side of the table. We had to hang onto our plates as we ate, but that didn't seem to hurt our appetites. As it was such a large ship the movement was slow and not violent unlike the small ship I came home in.

The normal four day crossing took us seven days and we landed at Gloucester, Scotland, harbor in the middle of December. As we disembarked we looked back at the ship and that was the first time we saw the Queen in its entirety. It was huge in the brilliant sunlight.

We next had our first experience with an English train. The aisle runs down the side of the car with small compartments on the side. We were packed in so tightly with all our luggage that the aisle was full and prohibited any walking around. We made part of the trip in the daytime so we saw some of the Scottish and English country side.

On December 23 we arrived it Keevil, England in the southwest not far from Bath. This was not an airfield, just a place to stay until we got a base and planes. Keevil was horrible and the worst of places to spend your second Christmas away from home. We lived in board shacks covered with tar paper and the weather was cold and damp. We had little stoves in our shacks but nothing to burn in them. The only tools we had were knives so we used them to cut branches of trees and bushes. It was green wood so we would coat the twigs with shoe polish to make them burn. We had one large building for a mess hall with one stove in the middle of it. Here we were served powered eggs for breakfast every morning and they were terrible... tasteless, smelly and a sickly green color. Instead of the eggs we would get a couple of slices of bread and toast them on a stick in the one stove in the middle of the room.

Neill and I made one trip to Bath where we went through the old Roman baths and walked through the rest of the city. We made one trip to London by train and walked around the city. Trafalger Square remains in my memory. It was a long trip by train from Keevil so we only went once while stationed there. Later we were closer to London and went more often. I remember once getting a cup of coffee while waiting for a train back to base. The English were unfamiliar with coffee making and it was so hot and strong that the train arrived before it was cool enough to drink. One of the interesting things at Keevil was how we would take a bath. The bath house was a long narrow building with openings at either end and had a cement floor. Partitions separated bathtubs set up on higher concrete slabs in each stall. It was winter and there was no heat in the building but the water was always hot. We would hang all our clothes, including our shoes up high, fill the tub with water, jump in and leave the water running the entire time. The tubs would run over and the water would run down the aisle and out the doorways at either and. The building would fill with steam and we would lay in the tubs for one to three hours as it was the only place we could get warm. I have no idea how they heated the water, but it was always hot. I was in the same shack as Ullo and Bruce so we all suffered that place together. While we were overseas we asked Lettie and Ullo's girl friend Dolores, who lived in Oakland to get together and they became friends.

After a couple of weeks we moved to Riverhall, near Colchester. Here we lived in metal nissan huts and conditions were a little better. We still didn't know what kinds of planes we would get, P-51 or P-47s and were very happy when we got the P-51s. it was January, still cold and we had one small stove in the center of the metal building and we were still trying to burn green wood. The mess building used soft coal to cook and it came in big blocks some chunks over a foot square. We would go down there and steal a chunk when the cooks were not looking

and run like hell. We broke it up for burning, and would keep warm for awhile. I had about ten Army blankets on my cot. First I covered the cot with a thick layer of newspapers and then put all the blankets on, tied a rope around to hold everything on and never made my bed the entire time I was there. I crawled in Just like it was a sleeping bag. You had to watch out lest someone from another hut come in and put a hand full of shells from our 45 caliber revolvers into the stove when no one was looking. They made quite a noise, but would Just rattle the stove and not really hurt anyone.

Ullo had an electric razor that ran on 110 volts but of course the English power was all 220 volts. Ullo was an electrician by trade so we went to Colchester to the "sparkmonqer" (hardware) and bought a lot of wire, bulbs, ect. and Ullo put up about ten foot wire over our bunks with a lightbulb connected about every foot. When they were all lit it cut the voltage down so the razor would run. If your beard was tough you could just unscrew another bulb and the razor would run faster. Real handy, it worked fine and we both used it.

I still had a camera and started using it again. I can't remember why I didn't take any pictures during flight training but Bill Haynes, from Chicago, and I took a lot around the base, of the planes, gun emplacements, etc. I had about ten rolls taken and kept them in my locker. Due to security reasons I didn't get them developed, but I should have sent them home undeveloped and taken the chance. When I was shot down they were all in my locker and I never saw it, or them again. After the war I tried to contact Bill Haynes to see if he had any, but was not able to find his correct address. It would be wonderful to see them.

We were Just north of London and were now experiencing air raids by the Germans at night. By this time we had been through enough that we didn't have any fear so we would go outside during the raid to watch the searchlights pick out the German bombers and listen to the anti-aircraft guns. We were out in the country so there were no close targets and we felt safe.

At Rivenhall it was a long way to the mess hall from our barracks so in the morning we would come outside to smell the air to determine if they were serving powdered eggs. If they were, we would just skip breakfast. Real eggs were very scarce in England at the time and once every week or two we were issued two real eggs. We kept them in our lockers and on the mornings when we would smell the powdered eggs at their worst we would carry our hoarded eggs down to the mess hall. We carried them in our jacket pockets and it was difficult to make it there without someone breaking them. If someone thought you were carrying eggs, they would chase you all the way to the mess hall. They got me once and it made a mess in your pocket! Anyway, our aim was to get the eggs to the cook who would fix them any way you wanted while you waited. We were still having classes in aircraft identification and a lot of map study so that we would recognize all the coastline of Europe and England. The boys were still playing poker and Al Johnson was still borrowing money and paying me back every

payday. He owed me money most of the time. We went to London several times and stayed at the Palace Hotel. It was near the center of London and one of the best hotels. It made the English angry as we got the hotel room and would fill the little gas heater up with shillings then would go out to eat while it was running to heat the room up. The heater would run about twenty minutes for a shilling, but the English would never run the heater unless they were in the room as gas was in short supply. We had the money and felt that we needed heat more than they did. One night we were there during an air raid and didn't oven bother to get out of bed to look for a shelter. The hotel shook a lot and it was noisy, but we survived. We ate some of our meals at the Grovesner House which was a huge place. The serving was cafeteria style and 2,000 could be seated at a time. The food was good and there was a bar there too. One night in the blackout and the fog we found a little bar where they served warm beer in big pitchers which we tried to cool by adding ice. It was so dark and foggy outside that you kept bumping into people and all you could see were taxis with little slits of light for headlights. They still drove them in the total darkness. While in London we also visited several art museums and saw one stage show.

The English prostitutes were really a problem to some of us. One night Ullo and I were staying at the Palace Hotel and when we opened the door to leave, there were six or more of them who pushed into the room. We had quite a time getting them to leave, and they followed us all the way out to the main entrance onto the sidewalk. With all the people around it was embarrassing as they were swearing at us. We lost ourselves in the crowd as fast as we could. There were a large number of prostitutes in London and I suppose they made a good living off the Americans. The English soldiers had no money and the Americans were loaded with it. I never did understand the English system of money and when Paying for food or a bus ride would usually Just hold out a handful of change and let them take the right amount. I guess most people were honest because I know enough about it to suspect if they were Cheating.

I enjoyed walking around the little narrow back streets and stopping in the tea shops for tea and biscuits. I remember one little place because when you were ready to leave you had to bend over to turn the doorknob which was only about a foot and a half off the floor. One time several of us went to Colchester for the weekend and stayed at the Red Lion Inn. There were inns of that name all over England. They all had the high beamed ceiling, a the dark woodwork, with a small bar and a place for eating. For breakfast they served eggs and bacon with toast and coffee. We couldn't figure out how they fed us like that when the English people were going without due to shortages. Probably they did it for the money although it seemed a reasonable price to us.

Lenny Pierce was at an airbase in central England about thirty miles from where I was stationed and he was already flying missions. I contacted him and made arrangements to go up to visit I made the trip by ambulance as that was a cheap and good way to get around. They were headed in every direction so I would catch one going one way and when

they stopped at a base I would catch another going in the next direction. At one base I was waiting when they wheeled in a stretcher with the remains of an Englishman who had been trying to defuse a bomb. He was still alive, but not much was left of him. I finally made it to Len's field and spent the night there. He was living in a beautiful brick home that was probably the residence of a British officer before the war. At night he would set his shoes out in the hall and in the morning they would be returned polished. Something different from the conditions in which we found ourselves! We were able to travel around like this when the weather was bad and there was no chance of flying. After we began flying missions we had to be more careful to stay near our base. Len Pierce was also flying P-51s and was with one of the best outfits. He entered the service a couple of months ahead of me and was Just that much further ahead.

We received a base pay each month and a flying pay for each month when we flew at least four hours. During the first two months we received no flying pay as we had no planes. Just before I left the States, I arranged to have $100 a mouth from my pay go to Lettei in California.

Finally our new planes arrived and this was the first time we were sure we were really getting P-51s. A lot of the other squadrons were getting P-47s and P-38s so we considered ourselves lucky to be getting the planes we wanted most. It was near the end of February and everyone was anxious to begin flying after two months. These were the best fighter planes in the war and thousands of them had been built. Until this time there had been no fighters with long enough range to escort the bombers deep into Germany and our effort was taking a real beating from the German fighters. On February third I flew the P-51 for the first time and it was a thrill. It had so much more power than anything we had flown before and was a pleasure to fly. In it you truly felt part of the plane. That was what they called a "Pilot's Plane". For several days we just took the planes up to get their feel. On clear days you could see France and Belgium across the Channel but in general we flew near the base. Some pilots wore crazy and one even slipped across the Channel and shot all his ammunition at a train. This aggressive type of pilot usually proved to be the best in combat, so he was only reprimanded and grounded for three days. Due to the English weather, we were probably al1 grounded anyway.

We had a softball diamond for use when we were not flying. You had to watch it all the time because some one would fly across the field just above the ground when they could. They were so low that you would be forced down into the dirt. All fighter pilots were a little crazy, but mostly the nicest guys you'd ever meet. Several times I went up to 33,000 feet which was the highest the plane would go before the controls got sluggish due to the thin air. When you started the plane you could not take too much time getting into the air the air. You needed to taxi out and take off as soon as possible as it was a liquid cooled engine and the liquid would overheat and boil out al1 over the plane. That would make your maintenance crew real unhappy as they would have to clean the sticky material off the whole plane. This happened to me just once as I was getting ready to take off and it was

the only mission when my flight had to go without me. The P-51 landed at about 90 mph and took off at 100 to 110 mph.

One day Bruce, Tilson and I were flying together and landed at another field where they had P-47s and we had the opportunity to look them over closely. We didn't think much of them as they were big and clumsy next to our sleek planes. The fog started to close in and we headed home in a hurry. By the time we got back to the field we were on instruments only as we couldn't see a thing. The base put us at different altitudes 500 feet apart and brought us down one at a time by radar. It was a good thing we had all the instrument training and by following the radio instructions we were brought right to the end of the runway before we even saw the ground.

We were in the Ninth Air Force, the 363 Fighter Group, and the 380 th squadron. Each field had three squadrons at different locations around the field. We had the 380th 381 and 382 squadrons. Our squadrons consisted of 25 pilots and a lot of the guys I flew with in the States were in the other squadrons, but we didn't get together much. We were all second Lieutenants except for one first lieutenant, Martin DoLong from Dansville, N.Y. and our commanding officer, Captain McCall. Our commander was a very poor leader and was scared to death to fly a mission. Most of the other groups in England were led by majors or colonels and sometimes even by a general. Good leaders made all the difference, and the squadrons had much better combat records than we did because of this. Those squadrons with good records were sent to the areas where most of the fighting was taking place. Most of our missions were led by the first Lieutenant Martin DeLong. Years after the War I heard that he was a colleqe professor down in Dansville But never got down there to see him.

When we flew missions, our squadron flew four flights of four planes in each flight and the other two squadrons the same. On occasions we were down a few planes due to damage. Our flight was usually Tilsen leading with his wingman and I with my wingman. 0n one mission I led our flight. Most often Bruce flew as my wingman. When you were flying, your wingman was supposed to protect you from an attack from behind. It was good to have a friend there.

We had our own doctor at the field and he was a nice fellow a Michael DeMaio MD. He was always checking us as he certified us for flying duty and could ground anyone for sickness or flying fatigue. We also had a dentist, Dr. Axelrod, to whom I went a couple of times. The office was a tent with a dirt floor and the drill was run by a foot pedal. He had an enlisted man who sat in front of you and pumped the pedal when the doctor told him. The faster he pumped, the faster the drill went. I did not notice the equipment was from Ritter in Rochester, so I felt right at home. Dr. Axelrod was big man, 6 foot tall and over 200 pounds.

Mr. Woods was a baldheaded man of at least 60 years who taught us map reading and aircraft identification. We now had to be able to recognize all the English, American and enemy planes which made a

large number to identify quickly. In one class this gentle man was showing us the location of different cities in Germany and we asked him where Blutengluten was. We sat there giggling for 15 minutes while he tried to find it. We had Just made up the name and after a while he caught on.

Mr. Fagan was also an older man who gave us the weather conditions and other information. I think it was remarkable how those older men were serving their country doing whatever they were qualified for. They were necessary for each outfit and at their time of life it must have been even harder for them to be away from home and living under such hard conditions. At age twenty six I was older than most of the other pilots myself.

After six hours of flying in England to get used to the planes and practice landings, we were about ready to fly missions. Now we were to get our own planes. I understood that each plane cost about $45,000 which seemed like a lot then, but is nothing compared to the price of a plane today. We had our own crew which consisted of a crew chief armorer and mechanics. They were proud of their plane and kept it in excellent condition. They would wash the plane with gasoline and then wax and polish it so there would be less air resistance and it could go a couple of miles an hour faster. My crew chief was Alvin Wolfe from Buffalo New York. Each squadron had their own identification number and mine was A9-R which was on the side of the plane in large letters. This was the only way we could identify the squadrons that we might get mixed up with over Germany.

I should mention here that Ullo was always playing cribbage, and he and Snyder would often be playing on the wing of a plane right up to takeoff time. Neill Ullo and I had been to London and decided to take piano lessons. What a time and situation to start something like that! We walked all around the little back streets of London until we found an old man who gave lessons. We made a down payment and set a date for our first lesson, but due to what was to happen to us, we never made it back again.

Our first mission was on February 25, 1944. After breakfast (if you were not too nervous to eat) we would report to the Ready Room which was similar to a school classroom with chairs, a platform up front, and a large map showing England and Germany was covered with a drape and we would sit there buzzing with talk and nervous about where we might be going. When they pulled back the drape there was a red ribbon from our base to the target and back. If it was a short ribbon everyone would cheer and a long ribbon would fill the room with groans. Our first mission was across the Channel to France to see if any German planes would come up. We ran into no opposition and it was an easy time. It is not too clear after all these years, but I remember that first mission we were short of equipment and I flew without either a parachute or a life raft. I believe it was a parachute I was missing because that usually fit into the bucket seat to raise you up and I filled mine with a jacket and rags. It was on my mind the whole mission that if anything happened I would have to land

the plane and not bail out. We were ordered to fly ... and we had to go, but that never happened again.

I will not be able to describe the missions in order, so I will simply describe experiences as I recall them. We had a nice concrete runway at this base but Captain McCall only flew a couple of missions as our squadron leader. lieutenant DeLong led most of the early missions and McCalls record was so bad he was soon replaced. We got a West Point grad who wasn't much better, but he was big on discipline. This was completely lost on a bunch of fighter pilots. When you go through long missions and lose a lot of your best friends, you are not about to spend time worrying about West Point rules and regulations. He even tried to give bed and equipment inspection and had us line up for full uniform inspection on the runway. I can't remember what finally happened to him, but on one mission were led by a Colonel who came from another base and was an experienced combat pilot. I think he was sent to check out what kind of an outfit we were.

Of the 23 missions I flew, most were bomber escorts and a few were bombing runs to targets in France and not too deep into Germany. The P-51 had two tanks that hung one from each wing and they hold 150 gallons of gasoline each. On bombing runs these two racks held a 500 pound bomb each. If we were called back from a mission due to a change in the weather, we would drop them in the Channel as it was too dangerous to land with them still attached as they might Jar loose on the runway. We thought about all the gas Rationing at home while we were dumping all that fuel. These tanks and the 50 gallon tank that was located right behind the pilot plus the tanks in the wings were the reason the P-51 could stay in the air about six hours and was able to escort the bombers all the way to Berlin and back. The English Spitfires could only go as far as Belgium and France with the bombers and the bombers suffered heavy losses until we were there to intercept them. We would also be there to guard the bombers coming home slowly after being damaged and losing engines. The Spitfire planes would escort them as far as Belgium where we would pick them up, then the Spitfires would meet them there again coming home. The other American fighters like the P-47 and the P-38 could go a ways into Germany, but not all the way to Berlin until their range was increased later in the war. During flight the wing tanks had to be used first as they were dropped at the first sighting of enemy aircraft. They created drag and affected the maneuverability of the plane. You had to remember, even in combat, to keep switching the tanks to keep the plane's weight distributed equally and also to keep the tank From running dry, causing the engine to quit. You could start it again by switching tanks and putting the nose down, but you couldn't afford to have that happen in combat.

You can see why our training was so extensive as the fighter pilot was his own, pilot, gunner, bombardier, and navigator. He had to be trained in all areas. on our second mission, which was the first one for Ullo, he failed to return. Even though no one actually saw what happened, we figured he had gone down. Remember that he was the one who had gone to Texas to advanced gunnery school and came back to

California to teach us all he had learned He went down on his first mission and probably never got to fire his guns. His bad luck spelled the end of our piano lessons in London. His story is interesting and you will Learn of it 1ater, After we got together again.

We had another pilot, James Barlow from Klamath Falls, Oregon, who during training was always on the radio singing on the radio "here I sit, fat, dumb and happy". He was shot down on one of our early missions and we heard him call on his radio "So long guys here goes fat, dumb, and happy bailing out. We were beginning to lose pilots now and were getting replacements from the States. I'm glad I never had to Join a group like that, not knowing anyone. We had been together so long by then that we knew each other and were good friends. We did not dwell much on the friends we had begun losing. Each of us had accepted the probability that it could happen to us any day, so had conditioned ourselves to the situation. Some of the missions made us nervous but I wouldn't say that we were inordinately bothered by fear. We were so occupied and it was a thrilling experience to actually be a part of combat over enemy territory. However we did look forward to the days that the weather was bad and no missions were flown. We would sit around the "Ready Room" playing cards and discussing past missions. I should mention that my Flight Leader T.J. Tilson or Bruce had given me the nickname of "Buck" Benson when we were in training in California and that is what I was called from then on. I don't remember anyone ever calling me Bunny.

One of our missions was a dive bombing run on some factories in France. We flew in formation to the target and peeled off one at a time diving down at a large building and releasing our bombs. I saw some of them go right into a large door at one end of the building. We were down to about 500 feet and when we pulled up I saw the plane in front of me blow up and I flew right through the pieces. I don't remember the pilots name, but recall seeing something yellow go by me and thinking it was the yellow "Mae West" life vast we all wore. Anti-aircraft fire must have hit his tanks. I was flying with Bruce and when we got back to the field he found several bullet holes in his plane. Several times when we flew together he got bullet holes, but I never did get hit. When going on a mission we would start our planes and taxi out onto the runway. You taxied by zigzagging because the nose of the plane was up while on the ground and you couldn't see directly in front of you. We took off by twos with the second plane at the side and slightly behind the other. The second plane watched the lead plane only and kept the same distance from him. You didn't look at the instruments on the runway, just the other plane. Sounds hard now, but it was easy once you got used to it. We would then climb by twos until reaching a specific altitude, circle until everyone was in formation, then we would head for Europe. Sometimes when it was cloudy you were forced to climb on instruments only until getting above the clouds, anywhere up to 30,000 feet. The sun would be shining there and the clouds as white as new snow. It gave one the feeling that you were just above the earth and could step out and walk on top of the clouds. The other planes would pop up out of the clouds. It was quite a sight.

One time we had a Lieutenant Colonel leading our squadron and when he got up on the runway the pilot who was taking off with him either misjudged or didn't use his brakes and he ran into the back of the Colonels plane, chewing off the entire tail section. The pilot probably wished he could have died right there, but nobody was hurt. Another time a boy by the name of Snyder came back from a mission with a damaged plane and he ran off the end of the runway and crashed. The emergency trucks went out and covered the plane with foam to prevent a fire and he got out okay. He was not injured but during the next few weeks his hair turned completely white. I wouldn't have believed that could happen if I hadn't seen it myself.

The weather at this time of year was not very good in England, with fog and a lot of cloudy days. If the weather was good over the target we would usually fly anyway. Coming back from missions we were usually at about 15OOO feet and when we got to where we thought the field was, we would dive down and pull out just above the ground. We could get up to 550 mph in those dives and the the wings would start to vibrate and the plane would shake, but that didn't stop us from doing it. At times we would come down through a thick overcast sky and wouldn't see the ground until we came out from beneath the clouds... sometimes pretty close to the ground.

After we took off and headed for Europe across the Channel there would usually be someone who would abort the mission. This was the term for dropping out and going back to the field. Usually this was due to engine trouble or knowing that something didn't feel Just right with the plane, but we had a few pilots who were "chicken" and just made up an excuse, particularly if the mission was to be a long one. They didn't stand very high on the popularity list with the other pilots. I had my ground crew to thank for keeping my plane in excellent condition so I never had to "abort".

There are a few facts about the P-51 which I will mention here. There was a lever that controlled openings that kept the coolant from boiling over while waiting to take off and it closed as soon as you were in the air. The wheels were pulled up as soon as you left the ground so you had to remember to put them down again before landing. The four bladed propeller was a variable pitch and had to be set so it would bite more air, getting you into the air faster, climbing steep, then set back to the right angle. A small tube at the and of the wing ran the wind indicator so you know how fast you're going. The plane had a cockpit heater that didn't always work too well and that was a primary complaint of the pilots. At 30,000 feet the temperature could be anywhere from zero to minus 60 degrees so you needed all the heat you could get. The guns were fired by pressing a button on the top of the stick and we would test them on the way across the Channel to be sure they were working. There was a camera mounted on the wing which worked from the same button and it took pictures every time the gun fired. This verified the enemy planes the pilots claimed to have destroyed.

One pilot in our squadron had the cutest little puppy. It was a little brown fat thing with fur soft as cotton. It would sleep on' the back of his neck and he took it everywhere but on the missions. Another incident I remember took place when I was walking in London. There were so many Americans around, I started looking for someone I might have known in the States. I finally saw someone who looked familiar standing across the street, so I dashed over and asked his name. You can imagine my embarrassment when he said: "Yes, sir, I am the armorer on your plane."

On the days that we were to fly escort for the bombers we would get up about 6:00 am as we heard the bombers taking off. We went to breakfast and then the Ready Room for briefing. When the curtain was pulled back and the ribbon went all the way to Berlin you knew you would have a tough mission. The weather man would give us the weather over the target and what to expect when we returned to England. All of our compass headings depended on the weather, our point of rendezvous with the bombers, heading to the target, and the compass heading home. The map man would describe the coast of Europe at the entry point and additional points of identification along the way so we would be certain of our location. He explained where we would be likely to encounter flak (the big German guns) and where we could anticipate the most enemy fighters. We wrote down all of this information on a pad fastened just above our knee so we could refer to it in a hurry.

All this time you could hear the steady roar of the bombers taking off. When there were about a 1,000 four engine bombers taking off you could hear it all over southeastern England. It took a good hour for all the bombers in a squadron to get into the air and another half hour for them to get to the right altitude where they would circle until in formation and ready to head for the target in Europe. They used a lot of gasoline and time just getting ready to go. After our briefing we would all make our trip to the bathroom and then to the equipment room to get our parachutes and other equipment. We didn't have to leave the field until about two hours after the bombers because we were so much faster. We would catch up with them soon after they crossed the coastline of Europe and it was a very pretty sight to see the formations of B-17s in the sky for miles ahead, especially on a sunny day. Some days there would be big white clouds and the B-17s would create their own clouds from vapor trails. The bomber vapor trails would be straight and the fighter trails would be above them back and forth across the blue sky.

When escorting the bombers we had to fly as slowly as we could and weave back and forth so as to not outdistance them. The closer to the target the heavier the flak and we would see the black bursts all around the bombers and once in a while one would go down. The bombers had to fly straight and level with no chance of taking evasive action and we would think how brave they were all the time never considering changing places with them. We were above them and when we saw the flak bursts could go up or down 500 feet, flying safely there for several minutes until the German guns could correct for our altitude.

We never worried about the flak much because we could normally avoid it. Once in awhile we lost a fighter plane to flak, but usually it was to enemy fighters. After the bombers had dropped their loads they could take some evasive action.

On one of the Berlin raids it was a clear day and we watched the bombers drop their load and could see the bombs fall and the big explosions go up right down the middle of a wide main street in Berlin. After the bombs were dropped we would fly with the B-17s until they reached the Channel. I went on several Berlin raids and on other occasions we would be diverted to closer targets as the weather had turned bad before we got to Berlin. The P-51 could stay in the air about six hours which was the amount of time it took to go to Berlin and back. Our missions took anywhere from one to six hours. After being tightly strapped in and unable to move around in that small cockpit for six hours, it was difficult to even stand up when getting out of the plane. Some guys would step out of the cockpit onto the wing and fall off onto the ground. We used to tease one fellow because he opened his parachute when he fell off the wing. Being so tired (and the strain of combat really was exhausting) the shot of whiskey we got at the debriefing after a mission was welcome.

On each mission we had one pilot who flew up and down the coast of England at 30,000 feet. This was the "relay plane" used to relay any massages to the planes over Germany. Due to the curvature of the earth and communication equipment at that time, radio messages could not be sent directly. If the wind direction changed while the planes were over Germany it would affect the compass heading we were given to return to England and if it was overcast we could have blown off course, missed England entirely and gone out to sea. If your home field was fogged in you were directed to another field. I flew the relay plane just once and it was very monotonous sitting up there for hours. You could throttle the engine down so it would Just keep you from stalling out and save gas that way. One pilot stayed up seven hours and we thought he'd gone down as six hours was the limit. He had just seen how long he could possibly stay aloft by using the technique and came happily back to base long after the mission was over.

They were very strict about talking on the radio from the time you took off until you were over Germany and even then it was used only for necessary messages and warning each other when in combat. Any unnecessary talk might have given away information to the Germans (even though they had probably picked us up on their radar). The English bombers always bombed the enemy at night and they continued to do this throughout the War. They thought that the Americans were crazy to bomb in broad daylight. The B-17 bombers, however, were heavily armed and could defend themselves fairly well. The English bombers, on the other hand, had few guns. When the B-17s first began flying, the Germans had so many fighter planes that the losses were terrible. With ten men in each bomber, sometimes five or six hundred men would be lost in a single mission. The situation reversed itself when the fighter planes had range enough to escort the bombers all

the way to the target. At the time I was flying, the American fighters were beginning to outnumber the enemy. Their losses were so heavy that on some of, our missions we did not see a single enemy plane.

One time, before we started flying missions we had the opportunity to visit an English radar station in southern England. It was a large curved glass about six feet across at table top level with a map of England and Europe on the glass. The room in which it was placed was dark and there was a light under the glass. The planes returning from a mission were little blips on the glass. A couple of the blips were over the ocean way south of England and they were trying to contact them by radio to reorient them. they were far off course and expected to run out of fuel over the Atlantic. I imagine there were more than a few who ended up missing England due to wind changes or bad weather during the war.

When we did use our radio we had a code for each mission and the four flights of each squadron were: red, blue, green, etc. We used these codes when talking to each other so we knew who we were talking to without using any given names. We looked forward to short missions to France or Belgium and these were called "milk runs". The long missions with flak and enemy fighters were the ones we dreaded. I should mention that we had a certain amount of fear on these missions. It has been said that anyone who doesn't experience fear in combat is lying. It affected some more than others, however, and we were constantly being observed by our doctor for any signs of battle fatigue. The strain would begin to tell after you had flown a lot of missions.

When we began to lose friends, I guess one just developed an attitude that it wasn't going to happen to you. If you were shot down there was still a good chance of surviving if you bailed out safely. The only instruction we ever had about parachutes took about five minutes. "You put the chute on this way and this is what you pull", and that was about it. One time I visited a building on the base where they were packing parachutes and I learned how they folded them, but I would never have had the nerve to do my own. When talking to some of the bomber crews that were in prison camp with us, we learned-much about their experiences having to bail out. They did not wear their parachutes and had to put them on before Jumping. They told about some airmen who were wounded or unconscious and they would put parachutes on them and push them out. Even the unconscious ones turned up In prison camp so it seems a fact that oven the unconscious mind reacts, telling the body what to do. They must have pulled their own rip cords to open their chutes.

One of the missions most memorable to me was to a target in northern Germany where we were providing escort for bombers. When we got over Denmark the weather turned very bad and we couldn't avoid the overcast so were forced to fly on instruments. We never did find the bombers. If it had been clear weather we could have seen Norway and Sweden as we were close enough. The relay plane broadcast the message

to return to England and by this time we were all separated and lost in the storm. I headed for home alone and decided to try to get under the clouds as I couldn't get above them. When I came down out of the clouds I was about twenty feet above the waves of the North Sea. The waves appeared to be about fifty feet high and I was flying Just above them. Suddenly a big bomber went across in front of me in the mist and clouds. I don't know if it was enemy or friendly but I couldn't have found it again anyway. I was having enough trouble just flying my own plane. I was tense, my heart was in my throat and really pounding I flew across water all the way to England so it didn't much matter that I wasn't crossing the Channel at the narrowest point (my usual effort). I gained altitude when I thought England was near, went back on instruments in the overcast and called the base for a heading. The base would give you a heading to fly for couple of minutes then change to another heading so they could pick you out of the other planes on the radar screen. They could then determine your position and give you a heading home. When you are headed properly you pick up a steady beep on your radio. You try to keep the beep increasing in loudness as it gets fainter if you are turning to either side. You could fly a straight line to the base and when you approached you would be given an altitude to fly in at. They even gave instructions as to when to let the wheals down. The radio truck was parked at the end of the runway and when I came down out of the overcast I was about ten feet above the truck lined up with the runway And able to make a perfect landing. I was tired and relieved to be on the ground. The guys on the radar truck did a great Job!

The rest of the squadron gradually returned until we were all down and each pilot could go through debriefing, where he told what had happened on the mission. We found out then that from the three squadrons from our field there were eight pilots missing. Our squadron lost no one on that mission. Usually when a pilot goes down he calls an his radio or there is a lot of chatter if they engage enemy fighters. This time there was only silence on the radio. With forty eight planes in our three squadrons, if someone went down they should have been seen by one of us. We suspected the missing pilots might have flown to Norway or Sweden (neutral countries) for some reason. Some of those missing were friends of mine, but not as close as the fellows in our own squadron. High Command in England thought the Germans might have come up with a new weapon as no flak or enemy fighters were seen. All flights from England were grounded for three days while an investigation took place. None of those pilots ever turned up in prison camps and I don't think anyone ever knew what really happened to them. On another mission we escorted the bombers to Regansburg in southeast Germany, which was about as far as to Berlin, to bomb the ball bearing factories in that area. It was a tough mission because the flak was so heavy and the other defenses were greater because the factories were important. There were about 1500 planes from England and another 1100 came up from Africa. Someone erred in the planning of this mission as we crossed at right angles at the same altitude and we had trouble keeping from flying into each other. I never saw so many planes in the air at one time and guess the Germans hadn't either as they didn't send up any fighters! it was

reaching the point where we had more planes than they did and so they only came up when they had a chance of success. We observed something unusual on that mission. Some white smoky objects came up from the ground in a spiral track to about 15,000 feet before they disappeared. They couldn't reach our altitude and seemed to move slowly. We reported them upon our return, but no one knew what they were. On other missions where the Germans didn't send up fighters, our fellows would be allowed to go down to ground level and shoot anything they could see.

On this raid our squadron went down and we dove shooting at some large boats on the Danube River. Every tenth bullet was a tracer that made a white trail in the sky allowing you to track them. It seemed strange to set your bullets going down and those from the ships coming up. I watched my bullets hitting the decks. We flew all the way back to England Just above the tree tops but never saw a train or airfield to shoot at. There were flak towers, but they were too dangerous and we all flew around them. They were concrete towers with many guns that could shoot in all directions. It did no good to shoot at them.

By now I had flown ten missions and was entitled to receive the Air Medal. At a ceremony at the base, we were presented with the medal by General Whelan. For each additional five missions we got an Oak Leaf cluster which we fastened to our theatre ribbon. I received two of these before being shot down.

On occasion we had the job of censoring outgoing mail from the enlisted personnel. No one liked doing this as it was a tedious Job. We had to read all their letters and cross out any military info that the enemy might pick up. Our mail was censored by the squadron commander then sealed and sent out. After reading letters for a couple of hours, I don't believe we bothered to cross out much.

Some of the English women living near the air base were selling chances on a fruit cake for a shilling a ticket. I had the winning ticket and when they delivered the fruit cake we could hardly believe it. It was in a washtub three feet across and over a foot high. We Put it on the table in our Ready Room where we spent our time relaxing. We had to cut it with one of our Jungle knives, a machete (another one of the Army's questionable issues: a Jungle kit for each of us in England). The bottom six inches of the fruit cake was solid fruit so you know it was rich. We cut off two sections for the other two squadrons and some for the enlisted men and still had enough to last a week. I don't know how they baked anything that big, but it tasted very good.

One other of our missions somewhere over Germany we lost several more of our pilots. We ran into a lot of German fighter planes and were soon scattered all over the sky. I was so busy trying to keep from being shot down that I didn't get an opportunity to shoot an enemy plane. When things calmed down I found myself alone so headed back to England. When I gained enough altitude I heard the relay plane

calling a new compass heading as the wind had changed to about 50 mph from the north. I corrected to the new heading but there was no way of knowing if everyone had picked up the message. It was uncanny, the sense of direction I had. I believe I could have crossed at the narrowest part of the Channel even without a compass heading! It must have been a sense of direction I was born with because it made no difference what my location was over Germany, I knew exactly where England was all the time.

As it turned out, I was the only one from our squadron of 16 planes that made it back to our airfield. Most of the others were low an gas by the time they got over land and were scattered all over England upon landing. One of our flights of four planes was unaware of the wind changes, were blown off course and were way south of England. They were still over land, luckily, when they ran out of gas and had to bail out. Al Johnson the big Swede was one of them and it was the only time in the year that he didn't owe me any money! They were along the coast of France and were captured by the Germans. He was not in our prison camp so I did not see him until we were in Atlantic City for discharge. He told me that all four had landed safely and that when he came down in his parachute, he went through an old barn roof and landed in a pile of manure.

At about this time we made another move to a field near Maidstone, a small town southeast of London. We were closer to the Channel here and the field was entirely different. Some one else flew my plane down here and I went by train with the rest of the group. It is interesting to note that we went through the village of Sittingbourne where my mother was born. The train didn't stop so I had no chance to visit there. Our living conditions at Maidstone were different: in a tent with a dirt floor in the middle of an apple orchard. There were four of us in each tent sleeping on army cots with a stove in the middle for heat. On warm days we could role up the sides of the tent for ventilation. Another tent was the mess hall and we ate sitting on the ground under the apple trees. We ate with our army mess kits and rinsed them out in a barrel of hot water.

This was much different from the beautiful place where Len Pierce was stationed. The runway at Maidstone was a grass field surrounded by trees. They put heavy wire mesh in the ground to keep us from sinking in when the field was muddy. It was a bumpy field to begin with! The field was not very long and you had to get down before running into the trees at the and of the runway. One time I came back from a mission and the wind was blowing across the runway. (Planes always landed into the wind and took off the same way) I was not lined up correctly with the runway and was drifting to the right. It was too late to pull up and go around again as I was down to landing speed. This decision had to be made quickly and I decided to land. When my wheels touched the ground I began to bounce to the right and by using brakes and all the other controls I kept from crashing, managing to stop Just before hitting the trees at the end of the runway. It was the worst landing I over made, but I was relieved not to have damaged my plane. I was very embarrassed when I got out in front of my crew.

By now some of us had flown enough missions that our papers were sent in for review for promotion to First Lieutenant. We only had one First Lieutenant in our squadron and it was about time we had some promotions. I didn't get notification that they had been approved until I was back home after the war. The year I was in prison camp they paid me the lower wage so after the war I wrote to Washington and received all the difference in pay that was due me. We were also looking forward to the end of our tour of duty at this time. After flying a total of twenty five missions you were supposed to be sent back to the States. We were getting closer all the time and then they changed the total to 40 missions. You can imagine what this did to our morale. We gave up thoughts of going home and Just concentrated on surviving as many missions as we could.

We were about to get some new planes with the bubble canopy and were looking forward to that as they made it easier to see all around you without all the metal braces in the canopy. One day I was told my plane was coming that day and was looking forward to checking it out. We would take it up high over England to check the performance at high altitude, the guns and controls... just to get the feel of it. In the afternoon we had to escort some A-20 bombers to France on a bombing run and when I got back my new plane was gone. One of our new replacement pilots had been sent up to check it out and at 30,000 feet he said something felt wrong and he bailed out. My new plane crashed somewhere in England and I never even got to see it! He was just a young kid and I never did believe that anything was really wrong with the plane. I was angry with him for a long time as I never did get one of the new planes and flew all the remaining missions with the old one.

Another time when our flight was returning on instruments as the overcast was so thick, we came down to 1000 feet and broke out to find ourselves over London with the barrage balloons all around us. They were balloons that had a steel cable hanging down from them to prevent enemy planes from flying low over the city. We pulled up fast and were lucky to get out of there in a hurry without being hit by one of them.

One other mission when I was coming back alone I got over an area where the flak was heavy--bursting all around me so that the sky was blackened with shells. I realized than that I was directly over the Ruhr Valley which was the industrial center of Germany. It was heavily defended and normally all missions were routed around this area. I flew all the way across the area and had to use a lot of evasive action, including changing of altitude When flak bursts in the air it makes a black puff or cloud-and there were thousands of them shot up at me. It did make me feel good to think of all the shells they wasted and what it cost just to shoot at me!

When you are starting the plane there is a knob that you push out and pull in called the primer pump and it gives extra gas to the engine for starting. On one mission Paul Maxwell was in our flight and his

engine quit on the way back. He found that the only way he could keep it running well enough to stay in the air was to work the primer pump. We all slowed down enough to stay with him and prayed that he could make It across the Channel. On the east coast of England at the point closest to Europe there was a landing strip on top of the white cliffs. It was called the Masden emergency field and all the planes that were damaged or having problems would head for there. A lot of the bombers would land there if they couldn't make it back to base. The runway was wide and straight in from the Channel so they didn't have to make any turns. Paul Maxwell landed there and his fingers were covered with blood from his having to work, the primer pump constantly.

During the last couple of weeks that I was in England we began to hear the V-2 rockets that the Germans began to use. Most of them were directed at London but we could hear the sound they made as they went over us. The gun emplacements that fired them were all along the coast of Europe and it wasn't long before they were sending them over at night. It was interesting to fly over England at this time as everything was being readied for the eventual invasion. Every field in southern England was covered with big pile of boxes and equipment. I didn't realize until after the war the tremendous amount of supplies, food, gas, ammunition and hundreds of other things that were needed to supply an invasion of that magnitude. No wonder there were shortages back in the U.S.! So much of this was to be lost in the Channel when ships were sunk on invasion day.

One night Bruce and I were hungry so we decided to break into the supply tent and find something to eat. We got up the side of the tent and reached under the roof where we found a gallon can, of fruit cocktail. Wt ran back to the tent where we began to eat it. We were soon full, but had no where to hide the remainder so were forced to eat the rest. It is no easy task to eat that much fruit cocktail and we decided not to try that again. At the other bases there was no form of entertainment and we had to go to the nearest city for alcohol and movies. Finally at this base they put up two metal nissan huts: one a bar, the other a theatre. I didn't use either one for very long due to the following events.

On May 10, 1944 they opened the bar at 6 pm and Bruce and I ordered a glass of Scotch and a beer each. After a couple of them we were feeling good and decided to go to the movies in the other hut. Bruce and I got to laughing so hard at the comedy that they threw us out of the hut. We realized then that the movie hadn't started yet! We staggered back to the tent and in the darkness Bruce tripped over something and fell against the hot stove receiving a burn to the side of his hand. I will mention here the value of the "Purple Heart" medal because Bruce received one later for getting drunk and falling on a hot stove and I received nothing for being burned when I bailed out.

The next day, May 11, 1944, we were not scheduled for a mission...a good thing because Bruce and I were in poor shape. Some of the other

pilots had been shipping their foot lockers home with all their extra belongings. They would go to Fort Levenworth, Kansas and be kept there until our return. I filled mine up with a complete sheepskin leather flying suit including the boots, a pair of English flying goggles which were very different from ours, a pair of warm English silk flying gloves that came up nearly to the elbow my Jungle kit with the machete knife, all my extra clothing and the undeveloped rolls of film I had taken in England were also included. I had so many good items in there and was looking forward to having them after the war. About 4 pm we carted them off to the base Post Office to fill out the papers and pay for the shipping.

Chapter 7 Shot Down

At seven O'clock on the evening of May 11 we were called for a short mission to France. This was my twenty third mission my army records show that I flew thirty seven missions. I don't know what caused the difference in the records. As far as I knew, it was my twenty third mission and I was glad it was to be a short one. Bruce and I had recuperated from the night before and he was flying as my wingman. We got over France and were attacked by a large group of enemy fighters. We were soon scattered all over the sky engaged in combat and Bruce, who was to be off my left wing guarding my rear, wasn't there. All I saw was an ME-109 directly behind me. He must have come from above so quickly that I missed him. I immediately started a right turn, but it was too late. The next thing I saw was two rows of bullet holes chewing up each side of my instrument panel. The armor plate behind the seat was only a foot wide and the bullets were hitting the instruments about twenty inches apart. I'll never know how my arms kept from being hit.

The cockpit filled with flames and I knew the gas, tank behind the seat had been hit and was burning. I just had time to pull the canopy release and struggled to kick myself out as fast as I could. My oxygen mask and earphones were still fastened to the plane and these together with the force of the wind made it difficult to get out. I was lucky not to be hit by the tail section of the plane. Both of my ears were burned and the silk scarf around my neck was nearly half burned, but the wind extinguished that. I was 23,000 feet up which about four mi1es and did what I was not supposed to do I pulled the ripcord to open my chute. Due to the panic from the fire I suppose I wasn't thinking too clearly. The farther you fall before you open the parachute, the less chance the enemy has of seeing you and the better your chance for escape. Also some of our pilots had been shot by enemy planes while coming down in their chutes. I was headed down when my chute opened and Jerked me around into a sitting position which later caused all my back problems. My heart went to my throat when I looked up and saw three panels of the parachute were missing. I realized now that they are made that way to release some of the air underneath to make them more stable. It was really quite an experience to look down and see nothing beneath you except your shoes. The first impression I had was of the absolute quiet around me. I checked my watch and noted

that it took exactly twelve minutes for me to come down. I threw away all the info I had that might help the enemy and ate the candy bar I had in my packet rather than let it be taken away. It was a good thing I did so as it was quite awhile before I was to eat again.

I saw my plane go down, crash and burn several miles away. I found out later that I was in Luxemburg near the city of Metz. As I neared the ground I could see that I was going to land in a plowed field near a small village. I was not facing in the right direction and tried to turn and steer myself by pulling on the chute lines. I almost died of fright when the chute folded half under and so I let go in a hurry. The chute opened again correctly and I landed in the soft dirt of the field without even falling down.

The landing was very easy and I immediately got out of the chute harness and began to run for the woods that were on either side of the field. I had gone only about ten feet when I heard a rifle shot and the bullets whizzing past me so I stopped and held up my hands. The German was coming across the field toward me from one direction and a group of twenty people from the village were coming from the other. The group from the village reached me first and one of them took out a package of Lucky Strike cigarettes, gave me one and lit it for me. They were French and all smiles. they could have hidden me if the Germans were not right there. the German was a young boy, but I gave up any thoughts of escape as he was the one with the gun. He took me back to the road where he had a bicycle. It seems the Germans patrolled the roads on bicycles during air raids and captured the Americans when they saw the parachutes coming down. If I had not opened my parachute so soon he might not have seen me and I could have reached the woods safely or the townspeople could have hidden me. It was almost dark now as it was 8:00 pm. I walked along the dark road with him behind me on the bicycle carrying the gun. After about an hours walk we came to a city where I was taken into a building where there were several German soldiers. They made me empty my pockets and took my watch. They were interested in my 'May West' life vest so I showed them how it worked and they all jumped when I pulled the pin and it inflated. I was then put in a dark room, face down on a cot with my ankles drawn up behind me and tied to my wrists. They left me this way through the night and returned for me in the morning. Than I was taken into the city of Metz where I was joined by some other prisoners. Bruce was with them and I was very glad to see him and know he was safe. We had been shot down at the same time. There were several fellows from a bomber crew and we were a group of about ten. They took us down one of the busy streets and we were a little nervous as to the reaction of the civilians who we had been bombing, but they just looked at us. None of us spoke French and they were probably afraid of the German soldiers with us.

As one of the boys in the bomber crew had been hit in the knee by flak, he had it all wrapped up in bloody cloths. He had received no medical attention and could not walk on it so we all took turns, one on each side of him. He was in a lot of pain but never complained. I recall traveling part of the way in a streetcar, but can't remember

how we got from Metz to the interrogation center in southern Germany, which was our destination. When you are in a foreign country in this situation it certainly seemed good to have your fellows to talk to! By this time we were beginning to get hungry, but were all, so nervous about what was going to happen to us that we didn't concentrate much on food.

When we arrived at the interrogation center we were separated and I was put into a small room about ten feet square with a high ceiling. There was a little window about fifteen feet off the floor which gave a little light in the daytime. The only furnishings in the room was a wooden bed with a burlap mattress filled with straw. I could just faintly hear the prisoner in the next room and later learned that some of the prisoners tried to communicate with one another by tapping on the wall in Morse code (which we had learned in training). We were fed three times a day by the guard stationed in the hall outside. In the morning there was one slice of bread and a cup of tea, at noon a cup of barley soup, and at night the bread and tea again. It was just enough to keep you from starving. I got so hungry that when eating the bread I would put my jacket over my lap, eat over it then lick the bread crumbs off the back of the jacket. I tried to keep track of the days by taking a stick of straw out of the mattress and putting a one inch piece on the board at the head of the bed each morning. With nothing to do all day you would soon begin to wonder if you had counted the day or not. I would sometimes spend several hours worrying: did I or didn't I do it? The bathroom was down the hall so when you needed to go you banged on the door until the guard came. There was no paper and no water so we couldn't keep clean.

I spent eleven days living like this with no one to talk to. All you could do was think and look at the pieces of straw on the board. I would walk back and forth for exercise then sit and think. About the third day a guard took me into a room where a German officer sat behind a desk. He asked me questions about the mission I was on, the others in our outfit, all about the planes and our base in England. We had been told to give nothing but our name, rank and serial number and that is all I did. After about an hour I was taken back to my room. A few days later I was returned to the officer and he began telling me all the information he already had about me. He knew my hometown (even about the lake), when I graduated from flying school and all my training bases, and who I was flying with the day I was shot down. They even knew about my home base back it England.

1 was amazed at how widespread their spy system must have been and assumed they must have had informants at every base in England and the U.S. All he asked was that I sign the papers to the effect that all the information was true which I refused to do. He even had the number of my plane and knew the position of it in the flights.

Just recently I read the book The Interrogator by Haus Scharff and realized that he was the one who interrogated me. He moved to the United States after the war and lived in California. The third and last time I was taken in for interrogation Bruce was in the room when

I was brought in. We just looked at each other and tried to show no sign of recognition. He didn't say anything and shortly another door opened and in came "Here I sit, fat, dumb and happy" Barlow who had been shot down a month previously. We still tried to show no sign of recognition and finally the interrogator said: go ahead and say hello to each other for we know already you were flying together. We shook hands and smiled at each other. After eleven days of solitary confinement we would have liked to talk, but didn't. After those eleven days we were desperate to talk to someone besides the interrogator! He asked no more questions and we were taken back to our rooms. Barlow was not in the same prison camp that I was and I believe that was the last time I saw him. I learned later that after he returned to the States he stayed in the service and rose to the rank of Major before I lost track of him.

After eleven days, according to the straws on my shelf, we were all taken to a large room. There were about fifty of us and it was a sight you should have seen. We all had beards an inch or longer and the talking and hollering was deafening. Even the situation in which we found ourselves did not dampen the laughter and Joy of being with friends again. Bruce was the only man I knew but these bomber crews were immediately as close as long lost buddies. We all had a shower and then a shave. They gave us a little pair of scissors like you have in kindergarten and I cut Bruce's whiskers and he cut mine. We had to cut them off enough so the razor could do the rest. We only had one razor blade which everyone used (and it was dull) but we managed to get fairly clean without too much bleeding.

I assume the reason we were not interrogated further was due to the greater number of Americans being brought into the place. I also suspect that they weren't getting much information from second Lieutenants and were more interested in higher ranking officers who knew a lot more about the war effort in England. They were probably trying to find out more about invasion preparations. One thing of interest was a ceremony in England presenting a medal to one of the leading war aces of the time. He was shot down the next day and when he arrived at the interrogation center the Germans had a large picture of him receiving the award. It was hanging on the wall of the room when they brought him in for interrogation. You can understand how fast their extensive SPY system worked!

The next thing I remember we were all standing out in an open field waiting for a train. We were each given a cardboard suitcase from the Red Cross. Wt opened them and mine contained a sweater, pajamas, toothbrush and paste and several other small items which I forget, mainly because the sweater took all my attention. It was bright orange and when I put it on it came down to my knees and the sleeves were about six inches too long. It was Just straight knitting like a scarf and was probably done by some Volunteer who knew nothing about knitting but wanted to help the war effort as best they could. It was the best present I ever received. It was worth a million dollars to me under those conditions and I probably had tears in my eyes. I know everyone said that if the Red Cross were collecting money there that

they could have had everything we owned.

As we were standing there talking, I heard someone mention the name Len Pierce, so I called out "Who knows Len Pierce?" I met the pilot who was flying with Len and he told me all about how Len was killed. Len was lost on May 10 the day before I went down and it was strange to learn about it under these circumstances. I probably knew about it over there in the middle of a field in Germany even before his folks were notified. The pilot who had been flying with Len explained that Len's plane was damaged and he was trying to make it back to England. His plane quit over the Channel and he had to parachute out. He landed in the water and the chute came down on top of him. He was tangled in it and drowned even though he was a good swimmer. He was flying with a good outfit and had shot down two enemy planes.

The German guards were standing around us with huge black dogs that I believe were Dobermans. They started marching us to a train in single file and the guards and dogs kept us in line. The dogs were staining at their 1eashes with teeth barred and saliva foaming from their mouths. They were really fierce and we were petrified with fear. They were only about six feet on each side us and you can bet we stayed in a perfect line! We boarded the train and started out with the hope that American fighters would not come down and strafe the train. We didn't know where we were going but figured it was to a prison camp.

Somewhere along the way the train stopped and down a bank below us was another train with all the people from it standing on the grass. They were about 200 feet from us and Americans also. We saw pilots we had gone through training with and a few we knew from other squadrons in England. We waved and hollered but our train started up again. It was on that train I learned my first German word "abort" meaning bathroom. I forget how long we were on the train or if they fed us, but we were so apprehensive about our future we were less concerned about our a appetites.

Chapter 8 A POW

We arrived at Stalag Luft III (which means camp air) toward the end of May, 1944. It was located about 100 miles Southeast of Berlin near the town of Saigon. it consisted of several compounds of several acres each and had been cut out of a heavily forested region. The trees were all pine, planted In rows and it seemed so dark underneath them that it must have been the 'Black Forest' of Germany. Each compound held about 2,500 prisoners and when it was filled, they would clear another separate area and build another using Russian prisoners for labor. The compound I was in was opened April 27, 1944 so there were already some prisoners there when I arrived. I was assigned to barracks number 167, Room 12 and Bruce and I, who were still sticking, together like two peas in a pod, were in the same room. There was no one else in the camp from our squadron in England, so we were glad to be together.

The camp was rectangular in shape with the buildings occupying about

two thirds of the space and the remainder was Just the rows of stumps left when they cut down the trees. A high barbed wire fence surrounded the area with guard towers at each corner and two on each side. There was always a guard with a gun in each tower. About thirty feet inside the fence was a low wooden rail. Between it and the fence was white sand. If anyone was caught in this area, they were shot. We had a large white sweatshirt with a large red cross on it and when we had to enter this area to retrieve a ball or something else, some one would put on the shirt, get the attention of a guard who would then give you permission to go get the object. You still had to trust the guard in the farthest tower not to shoot, so you would proceed cautiously with your hands in the air.

Each barracks had a center hall with a door at each end and rooms along each side. There was also a washroom, a small kitchen and an outdoor john. There was also a large outside John about a twenty holer, in a separate building for daytime use. We slept triple bunks and I was in the middle one. The mattress was made of wood shavings in a burlap cover and was really just a pile of lumps. There were 12 men to a room and at the and of the building there was a small room for one or two where the ranking officers of that barracks lived. We had a major in our barracks and the highest ranking officer in the camp was a colonel. I had the same bunk for the eight months we were in this camp and had the map that I made fastened to the wall in my bunk.

The compound next to ours was where 'The Great Escape' took place, the one about which they later made a movie. Their tunnel came under our compound and the ground had a dip in it where we used to walk around the edge by the warning fence. We were told that they filled the tunnel in with human manure so that it would never be used again and the ground had settled over it. We were lucky in that these camps contained only American and British airmen and the camp was run by the German Luftwaffe. They had respect for any air force personnel and we were treated much better than the army prisoners. I understand that their camps were terrible and they were forced to work outside the camps. After being at this camp awhile we gave up any hope of escape as the security was very good.

Our camp was not full yet and every week another group of prisoners was brought in. We would all run down to the main gate when they came to see if there was anyone we knew. We had only been there a couple of days when some new prisoners arrived, among them Neil Ullo. We found a place for him in the room next to ours as our room was full. He had quite a story to tell about his experiences. His plane was hit by large shells, and either when he was hit or when he bailed out and his chute opened, he broke his back. The pain was terrible and hence he didn't really know how it happened. In that condition he was worried about what it would do to his back when he hit the ground. He landed in the woods and his parachute caught in the trees leaving him swinging from the harness. He was only a few feet from the ground and the branches bent to set him down on the ground light as a feather. I don't remember how he was captured, but they took him to a Catholic hospital in Berlin where he was kept for five months. He said he

received excellent care and treatment under adverse conditions. At this time the Americans were bombing Berlin days and the British bombing at night. Every time there was an air raid they strapped him on a plank and carried him down to the air raid shelter. He was doing okay when he arrived in camp, but his back was stiff and he bent forward a little.

We were locked in our barracks each evening at 10:00 and the lights went out at midnight. One guard patrolled the area at night with two huge German Police dogs. We had one large window in our room and opened it for ventilation in warm weather. It was about six foot off the ground and sometimes at night one of the dogs would put his front paws on the sill and look in, which gives you an idea of how big they were. Needless to say, no one thought of going out at night! Every morning we had to line up outside our barracks for 'appel' (roll call) when we were counted by the German camp commander and guards. About once a week during roll call they would put guards around a barracks and not let anyone return until they made a thorough search. They would crawl around underneath the floor looking for tunnel digging and count all the silverware and dishes to see if any were missing.

They also counted all our bed sheets to make certain that we were not using them for some form of escape. This usually took about an hour and we would hang around outside and harass the guards. The guards were usually older men or those unable to be in the army. They always checked our knives and forks to see if we were making weapons from them.

Alfred Jocque was in the bunk next to me and he was the bombadier on a B-17 that was shot down. One day he took his shirt off and his longjohns were pink and red. He told us that the pilot and co-pilot who were directly above him in the bomber had been shot and their blood ran down over him and stained all his clothing before he bailed out. All the enlisted men from the bombers went to different camps so there were only officers with us. We all got along well with the men in our room and there were no difficulties. Most of the guys were a happy bunch, no doubt due to simply having survived. It was June and the weather was warm so we spent a lot of time outside mainly walking the perimeter, which was about 3/4 of a mile.

The Red Cross provided us with almost everything we got while in prison camp aside from the food from the Germans. (when it was available). Red Cross deliveries were made by truck from Switzerland and were not dependable due to air raids, strafing attacks and poor road conditions. The Swiss volunteers who drove the trucks certainly deserved a medal for bravery. The food parcels were about one foot square and six inches high. We received one each and it was to last a week. Mostly the parcels were American and some Canadian. The American ones contained KLIM (powdered milk), a D-bar (chocolate), prunes or raisins, Spam liver pate, one cake of soap, peanut butter, margarine, army crackers, sugar, cheese, coffee or tea and two packs of cigarettes. Most items were in cans and sometimes hard to open. There was always someone yelling for a "church key" (the metal key on the

bottom of a can) to borrow. The Canadian parcels had different contents and were not as well liked. Their tins of margarine were always rancid and later on I will tell you what they were used for.

Each room did its own cooking and we put a clothes locker on its side beneath the window to store food in and as a work surface. We also had a table with a couple of chairs and picnic benches. It wasn't long before we decided to divide our room in half to make it simpler for the one doing the cooking. Eventually I took over the food preparation for our side and did it for about three months with the help of Bruce. You were responsible for the food, how to ration it as well as preparation and cleanup. Due to the shortage of German food, the cookhouse was only used to dispense hot water for beverages and another pot for washing dishes. Before each meal I would run to the cookhouse before they ran out of hot water, and run back before it got cold. They also gave out potatoes, kohlrabi, bread and blood sausage at times.

The one kitchen for the whole barracks was a room with a stove and a daily ration of coal to be used at mealtime. A time for that use was assigned to each room. We also had a small stove in the corner of our room to use for heat when we could got something to burn in it. We would cook on this when we could, but actually most of the food was eaten cold. When we got potatoes we would draw straws to see who would peel them as the Germans used human fertilizer and the smell was terrible. This was the only time I smoked cigarettes. You put one in your mouth and turned your head as far as possible while peeling. After we had been there several months and became more desperate for food, we just washed them well and ate the skins also.

They must have had a lot of beehives in this area of Germany because when we got honey, we got three gallons at a time. We carried it back to the barracks in a wash basin. This amount was for just the twelve of us! Once a week we got a ration of German black bread which I believe was one loaf per man a week. It was very dark with a sour taste and was baked on a layer of sawdust about 1/4 inch deep an the bottom of the loaf. We tried at first to scrape it off but it was so hard we gave up, left it on and ate it. As it was so heavy, each loaf weighing about five pounds, when we went to the cook house to got it we took along a door off one of the lockers. It took two men to carry the twelve loaves back on the door. We had one sharp butcher knife for slicing and I got so I could get 60 slices out of each loaf. The bread was so hard, you could slice it paper thin and could almost see through it. We sliced it this way so we could have enough for breakfast, dinner and supper, as well as a snack before bedtime. When we had honey there usually was so much of it that we would have a paper thin slice of bread with at least 1/2 inch of honey on it.

We tried all combinations of whatever food we had and most were better at it than I was. The prunes could be cooked and whipped with powdered milk to make a topping for our attempts at desserts. We tried Peanut butter pie which was made with a cracker crust with the prune whip mixed with the peanut butter for the filling It tasted good then but I

tried it once after I got home and couldn't eat it. The Canadian crackers were large round ones and we would soak them in water until they swelled to three or four times their dry size, then fry them on a hot stove. This way they were more filling. The kohlrabi were grown extensively in Germany and tasted alright but were very woody in texture.

The blood sausage was another story and it was a long while before I could eat it. You might say I needed to be starving first. It came like salami, in a tube, and was nothing but congealed blood from animals. If you could stand the smell of it cooking, you fried it in a pan until it was black and as hard as grape nuts. You could eat it by washing it down with a hot drink. The powdered milk was in a can with the word KLIM written on the side. After we had been there about six months one of the guys was laying on the top bunk with his head upside down. He looked across the room at the KLIM can and suddenly jumped up yelling "KLIM" is milk spelled backwards". It was amazing that we had gone this long without anyone noticing this.

It may sound like we were getting a lot of food, but it was just enough to keep us going and most of the time we were hungry but not starving. It was interesting that talk did not include girls wives or girl friends. The main topic of conversation was food. We talked food, thought food, and dreamed food all of the time. We were surprised to learn that food preferences were so different in the areas of the U. S. represented by the prisoners. One guy in our room was from Kentucky and he had never heard of goulash (but couldn't wait to try it when he got home.) We were always discussing recipes and ingredients of different dishes. The girls were not talked about, although they were on our minds all the time. Several times there were work groups of Russian prisoners that passed by outside the fence and among them were women. They didn't appeal to us as they were all short and heavy and wore old brown overcoats that reached the ground. It was wintertime and they were just plodding along in a line.

The indoor toilet in our barracks was very interesting. It was used from 10PM till 6AM. There was a trough down one side and seats at the far end. When sitting there you would have a line of guys standing right in front of you. One had to get used to them all standing there yelling at you to hurry. Between ten and midnight the lights were on and some characters had the nerve to sit there reading a book while ignoring all the others standing in line swearing. After midnight it was totally dark and you had to feel your way around to keep from bumping into someone. Neil Ullo had gotten himself a pair of wooden slippers and one time in the middle of the night we heard him clomping down the hall on his way to the bathroom. The next thing we heard was a lot of yelling and swearing and the clomp, clomp, clomp of the slippers going at a high rate of speed down the hall. The next day Neil secretly told us that he had gone down there in the dark in such a hurry and thinking it was the trough, got on the back of a fellow standing there! At night in Germany it was total blackness and you could see absolutely nothing. Most people have no

idea of the many good things that the Red Cross does. Without them we would really have had a terrible time. Besides the food which we couldn't have done without, we were supplied with sports equipment musical instruments and books. You could even order things through them and it was not long before they would be delivered. Some of the boys were in the middle of their education when they were drafted and they ordered books to help them continue their college education. I remember one who was studying to become a mortician and he got several very expensive books on the subject. We also received playing cards. Although I didn't play, several in my room played bridge day after day. One I'll never forget was Robert Ripstein from New York City who whistled "Holiday for Strings" through his teeth a11 the time he was playing cards. He nearly drove us all nuts! Even today I can't bear to hear that music! He was the only one in camp that irritated the fellows in our room and to me all of them were just great guys to be around.

I was always telling jokes, playing practical jokes and seemed to have a happy outlook on life ... maybe just because I still had it. I knew a lot of jokes from the days with the old gang back at home and every night just after the lights went out and we were all in our bunks, I would tell a joke. I told a different one every night of the eight months we were in this camp. It got to be like a bedtime story and they expected it.

Murphy was another boy in our room and sometimes he would get a package from home with cigars in it. He would be so happy he'd put two cigars in his mouth with a cigarette between them and smoke all three at once. When he got letters from his girl back home, who was receiving all his allotment checks, he would hear of all the things she was buying with his money to furnish their home when they got married. I remember there was a piano bought along with all the other furniture. When we were back in Atlantic City waiting for discharge, I met him standing on a street corner looking very dejected. His girl had married someone else and used his money to furnish their home.

I can't remember receiving much mail but I must have gotten some. About once a month we were allowed to send a letter home through the Red Cross, but I didn't know whether they went through or not. My father sent me two cartons of cigarettes every week but I never received a single one of them. I imagine that they were taken by the Germans as they opened our parcels before they came into camp. There was so much dehydrated food that seasoning was one of the things we missed the most. One time the two higher ranking officers in our barracks had received a parcel with some dried onion flakes in it. When they cooked with them about a 100 guys would go stand in the hall outside the room to enjoy the smell. It was almost as good as eating them!

It was too bad that there was no way to tell the people back home about the things that we would really like instead of cigarettes, soap and other non-essentials. The parcels had to travel so far with so much handling that very few ever reached the camp. By this time the

German people were so short of everything, including food, that they must have made off with a lot of it.

The washroom in our barracks contained a row of sinks where we washed and shaved. The water was from underground springs and was a hundred times colder than ice water. it made your hands and face numb so we got as little as possible on us and did it quickly! When we got so bad that we just had to bathe (not very often) we did it when there was still some heat in the stove in the communal kitchen. We would heat up a tin can of water on the stove, go into the washroom and splash on Just enough ice water to make suds then have a friend pour the can of warm water over you and hope it was enough to get the soap off. Even in the summer time the water was just as cold so one or two baths a month was enough. There was a building in camp for doing laundry, but there was no hot water so nobody ever used it much.

We washed our clothes in an old pail with a plunger we made from a three foot piece of tree root that was fairly straight and nailed to a powdered milk can at the end. The can made good suction and by pulling it up and down we could get our clothes fairly clean. Our pants would get so stiff with grease and dirt that we could stand them up in a corner. The last four or five months it was winter and we didn't wash any clothes, at least not after we left this camp.

A monetary system was set up with each item in the food parcels having a value of a given number of points. Food could be exchanged for D-bars or cigarettes used to pay debts. The army hard chocolate D-bar was the most prized and valuable item besides being our only candy and was nutritious. It was considered to be worth five dollars and some fellows sold all they could get for IOU notes and planned on collecting the money when they got home. I knew these guys were honest and no doubt some made several hundred dollars this way. This system worked very well and points were given to every article in camp. even clothing was sometimes traded for D-bars.

The enterprising guys were keeping busy with different projects like the one from Pennsylvania who wrote the book about the prison camp. Ht had a rough draft and went all through the camp taking advanced orders for it. He had it printed after the war and contacted everyone. He made three dollars a book. Someone else drew a poster of a pilots head in uniform with the left side all gears, wheels and levers depicting the makeup of a pilots head. It was an exceptional picture poster.

At one of the camps we were in one of the guys bribed a guard to get a camera and film. He took several rolls of pictures and also took orders for $5 and I signed up for them. I received these without any problem after the war. Another fellow had a real business going. He melted the solder off the bottom of the cans which held the "church key'. He made a smal1 ball of this solder and took a three inch piece off your dog tags chain and soldered it to your pilots wings, then soldering it to the ball. This signified your inability to fly with the old ball and chain symbol. He would do this for a certain number of D-bars in payment. This way he had more to eat or to sell for IOU's

to collect later.

The making of the athletic field was a major accomplishment which we undertook in the early summer. This large area at one end of the compound was Just the way they had left it after clearing away the forest. Hundreds of stumps of pine trees in neat rows covered the entire area. The Germans gave us one ax, a telephone pole and one guard with a rifle. About two thousand of us each took an empty powdered milk can and we looked like a colony of ants digging the dirt away from the stumps and roots. It was sandy soi1 and dug quite easily. Wt took turns using the ax and cut all the roots from each stump as fast as we could. Then, with the guard watching us, we put the telephone pole under each stump and all the guys that could get onto the pole would Jump on and pry the stump out of the ground. I don't remember what happened to the stumps, but we had no tools to cut them up for firewood so the Germans must have hauled them out of camp.

Each man then took a bed slat from his bunk, a board about four inches wide and three feet long and we used this to level the soft dirt as there were no rocks. It is amazing that it only took us two days and there was room enough for a football field and two softball diamonds. The football field was seldom used but there was always someone playing softball. The Red Cross furnished the balls, gloves and bats.

Naturally I played baseball and as a shortstop most of the time. We had some good games as the talent in camp was exceptional. One of the pitchers had been the national softball champion of the U.S. and he threw the ball so fast that you could hardly see it. I just took a chance and started swinging the bat when he started his windings. I didn't get many hits as they were too good for me! There was one pitcher by the name of Brown who acted nervous all the time and wou1d fidget on the mound, shake his arms and keep leaning down to pick up pebbles while getting ready to pitch. There were usually several hundred of us standing watching the game and just as he would get ready to pitch someone in the crowd would yell "What's the color of a horse?" and everyone would yell 'Brown!' We did this several times each game and it really got him rattled!

That summer was hot and the summer clothes were a sight to see. Paul Duncan from my room pitched on a softball team and all he were was a small piece of cloth in front tied around the waist with a shoestring. We used to play catch a lot for exercise And to keep busy. Sometimes we played a different game of softball which was probably thought up by someone in camp as I had never heard of it before. When you got a hit you could run either way, to first or third base, but you had to continue in that direction all the way around. Sometimes there would be six men on base and it made for a lot of activity when there was a hit!

One day I leaned across the table to lift a pitcher of water and that was the first time my back went out. The pain was so severe and I didn't know what had happened. I didn't go outside to the hospital but saw the two pilots who had had two years of chiropractor

schooling before being drafted. They were our medical team. There were no supplies, other than aspirin and band aids. They did help me with massage and they decided it was caused by the jolt when my parachute had opened. When this happened, several times while in prison camp, I would lay on my stomach on a bench with my arms around under the bench and sweat. After a couple of hours this way I could get up and move around some. A couple of times I could not get out for morning roll call count and a guard was sent in to check on me. This is the only medical problem I had in camp, except for hunger and, later, dysentery.

We fixed a place between the barracks to play volleyball and played occasionally. We also made a boxing ring and got the padded gloves from the Red Cross. We didn't allow any fighting in camp so when there was an argument, those involved were scheduled for three one minute rounds in the ring. We would gather around for these events and usually no one got hurt, but this was the way to settle arguments. Neil Ullo was a very serious type and did a lot of studying. Being in another room he made friends with a different group and spent less time with Bruce and I. We did everything together and I did learn a little from Ullo about the stars. We would go outside after dark and he would point out the primary stars. I remember learning about Orion a formation of Seven stars and I still look for it in the night sky today. I always think of Ullo and that time in our lives when I see it.

We had one Black pilot in camp and one day we were at the main gate watching another group of now prisoners being brought into camp and he saw another Black pilot he had flown with. They were only about 100 feet away so we could talk to them as they went by. The fellow was so excited to see his friend he yelled "What did you do with my clothes?" and the new man replied "I sold them!" To this day I can still hear them saying that in their deep southern drawl.

The best Joke of all was the one that I played on Bruce. Every time that my back hurt or I didn't feel well I would ask Bruce to do my work for me like getting meals, washing dishes, peeling potatoes or carrying the hot water. I was very generous in paying him back with packs of cigarettes, which I had because I didn't smoke. I even got so I would try to convince him I was sick when there was a dirty job to do and he would do it. The important thing (to me at least) was that I was paying him with packs of cigarettes I was taking out of his locker. This went on for about five months and all the guys in the room knew it and were really enjoying it. One day he noticed everyone laughing and you could see the wheels turning in his head as he finally figured it out. He started for me and I went out the window with him right behind. He chased me around the camp for hours before he finally gave up and forgave me.

Bruce's bunk was just inside the door and he was in the middle bunk with his head next to the door. I used to get up first in the morning, go across the hall and hold my hand under that cold ice water till it was numb. I would throw open the door and stick my cold

hand down his back and wake him up. My hand was so cold he would lay stiff as a board and couldn't even move, which was better than jumping up and hitting his head on the bunk above. It was a wonder that we remained such good buddies.

There was a Catholic priest in camp and I believe he came by way of the Red Cross from Switzerland. We had church services every Sunday outside the cookhouse. We had one tenor with a beautiful voice and he would sing "Danny Boy" after church. That is the song I remember him best for. Some of the guys tried to have a small garden, but the soil was just sand and pine needles and wouldn't grow anything. It was possible to get seeds and some other items by bribing the guards with cigarettes. The guards were usually older men, to old to fight, and they were glad to get food or cigarettes.

The guards lived in a building just outside the main gate and they raised chickens. Sometimes the birds would wander into the area we could see but not go into. One of the guys got a few kernels of corn and tied them at the end of a long string. He would throw it out near the chickens and slowly pull it back trying to got a chicken to follow. He did this for hours and finally caught one. We heard all the commotion and ran down to see what was going on. He had the chicken tucked under his arm, it was squawking like crazy and he was running in one end of each barracks and out the other with a German guard chasing him. After going through five or six barracks, the chicken was silent and the guard lost them. The guard searched awhile then gave up. Somewhere along the way the chicken had been hidden and some POWs had a chicken dinner that night.

Many of us tried to catch birds, mostly sparrows, which we intended to eat if we could catch them. We put out a cardboard box with one end propped up with a stick and attached was a string that led in the window. We put bread crumbs under the box and took, turns watching from the window. The birds were so fast that they always got away before the box fell. We never got any but we never gave up trying. Another way we passed the time was by laying on our bunks and watching flies light on the ceiling. How do they get their feet on the ceiling? Do they do a loop the loop, half roll or flip? We spent hours arguing about this but we never solved the puzzle.

Another interesting story was about Paul Duncan, a guy in our room who was from Kentucky, where he had been studying to become a physical education teacher. He had been shot down over the Mediterranean Sea and had floated for several days in his life raft near the coast of Italy. When he got to camp with us he was very skinny and shriveled up from being so long in the salt water. He and another boy from the next room got some cement from the guards and a metal pole and built weight lifting equipment. The weights on the ends were tin cans filled with cement. They would exercise for hours each day and it was amazing how he built up his body. He could squat down with his hands an his hips and hop like a frog. The two of them were a sight, hopping around the perimeter of the camp this way. By late summer they could go 3/4 of a mile around the compound in that

position. He would do 100 pushups at a time and would lay on a bench with his ankles tied to the end of the bench raised up then touch his elbows to his knees. At one time he did several hundred of those before we made him stop. He was the one who wore just the loin cloth all summer and he would shave all the hair off his legs and body so he could tan all over. He was not in the cooking group that I was, but when I was sick and couldn't eat my share I would give it to him as he was exercising and needed the extra food.

Supplies were brought into camp by a big old wood burning truck. It didn't go very fast and after unloading the two Germans would try to get it going again. Several hundred of us would watch them and give advice. The boiler was on one side of the truck and they had to keep throwing wood in it to get a good fire going. When they finally got it started we would all cheer add clap our hands as the truck slowly chugged its way out of camp.

We had many styles of haircuts and some shaved their heads or wore a Mohawk. A lot of the men grew mustaches and we even had a contest for the longest one measured tip to tip, with a prize for the winner. When the mustache got long enough they would melt the wax off waxed paper from the Red Cross parcel and make the hair pointed or curled. A man named Irons won the contest with a mustache nearly a foot wide.

There was an in ground cement swimming pool in the center of camp but we couldn't swim in it as it was to save water in case of a fire. Several guys built boats out of the metal cans using only a knife and fork for tools. We were told that someone in the English camp had built a grandfather's clock that way and it really worked. These boats were as much as a foot long and waterproofed. A boiler was made out of a tin can with a metal tube to throw the steam against a paddlewheel. The can was filled with water and the rancid butter that came in the Canadian parcels burned in a tray under the can of water to make steam. Everything we received was used for something. If the butter burned well the boat would go about 30 feet across the pool. Some of these boats were masterpieces with a rudder for steering and a cabin on the deck. I remember having a big race an the Fourth of July with betting on the boat of your choice. If you were wealthy, you could bet a D-bar. It took a lot of patience to build anything this good with the material and tools we had, but it kept us occupied.

One of the barracks down by the main gate had two young cats that had wandered into the compound and been kept as pets. They talked about eating them if they got hungry enough. Later in the summer one of the cats died and they decided to have a military funeral for it. It took several days to make preparations for this big event. The grave was dug and a small wooden casket was built. In the English compound next to us was a British, naval officer who happened to be in Europe when the Germans first started war activities it 1939. He was the first one captured and had been in prison camps for six years. During all that time he had received many packages from home and had a complete

English Naval uniform with al1 the ribbons and insignia on a white uniform. He wore it every Sunday while walking around his compound. The German guards allowed him to bring a delegation to the funeral and he led the procession in full uniform. It was a half day event with the Catholic priest giving the eulogy. There were even pall bearers. Several days later some of the men killed the remaining cat and ate it. Probably it was not from hunger, but just to say they had eaten a cat in prison camp.

We had a room in the theatre building for a news room where we had maps of Germany and two German newspapers were posted which gave some information (even if you didn't understand German). I remember seeing a copy of the paper on the day the Allied invasion began. It said 'Die invasion is begun'. If I could have gotten a copy I would have liked to bring it home. The maps in the news room had to have the front marked according to the German news we got the correct version from the BBC.

The British in the next compound had a radio which they took apart And different men carried the parts. They put it back together Just for the broadcasts. The news was written down and passed to the other compounds by way of the hospital building. Usually someone had to make a trip there each day and It was read to us in the newsroom after making certain that there were no guards in or around the barracks. The one who read the news was Abe (I forget his last name) who was Jewish and always afraid of what the Germans might do to him. Ht would break out in a sweat while reading, but refused to give up the job to anyone else. He never lost the fear that the guards would find out what he was reading and how he got it. This news was the way I kept the map by my bunk up to date. We had a camp newsletter each week that was posted in the newsroom and contained news from home which came from prisoner's letters from home. We also had a wonderful cartoonist in camp and he had a comic strip posted every week. The heroine's name was "Needa Leigh" so you can guess what the cartoon was about. The newsroom posted this cartoon each Sunday and It was the highlight of the day. Guys would come by the hundreds to see the new episode. The age group represented was of college men and there was no end of talent.

The theatre had been built with a stage and a large auditorium. There were no seats so we built two hundred seats out of the wooden boxes the Red Cross parcels came in. They were like orange crates and by cutting part of it out it made a seat with a back. As the theatre only held two hundred, each program had to play several times. Some guys had theatrical experience and several plays were done. The German camp officers and some guards came to the shows and sat in the front row. Some of the entertainers made jokes about them, but they laughed right along with the rest of us. We soon received musical instruments through Switzerland and an orchestra was formed. Again, the exceptional talent of so many gave us good musicals. The Germans always came to the musical performances. I remember one fellow had a baseball uniform and a bat and he would recite "Casey at the Bat" with all the appropriate motions. It was great entertainment.

Fall weather arrived and we were not looking forward to the cold weather as we only got enough coal to use while cooking. All the sports ended and we had to find things to do indoors. Some of the musicians formed small groups of four or five with banjos or guitars and provided entertainment to the rooms. You would ask them to come to the room in the evening and they would play sing and tell Jokes. After an hour and a half we would pay them by feeding them our late evening snack. We would try to have some special dessert for them. It gave us entertainment and them food.

Two or three guys had been out to the hospital and were suspected of having TB. They were taken out of camp and we had no idea what became of them. We were told that there was no TB in Germany and they were anxious to get rid of them. We also had a few guy's who couldn't stand the captivity and began to act very strange. As we said in the service: they went "round the bend". I know of a couple like this and they disappeared. They were perhaps sent home through the Red Cross in Switzerland.

One day the Germans told us they were going to give us a horse to eat and we were all looking forward to having some meat. We saw the wagon coming and all rushed down to the cookhouse to climb up and look in the wagon. It was a horse alright, the head, four feet and the tail. Wt all went back to our barracks and forgot about meat and German promises.

The German pilots knew our location and would fly over our camp often and very low. One day we saw a large bomber go over with a smaller plane sitting on top of it. They were probably testing something new as none of us had ever seen anything like that. Another day a plane flew very low over us at very high speed and it mystified us. After the war we learned that the Germans were testing Jet planes and these were the early ones undergoing testing. One day one flew very low over us and just after it disappeared over the treetops there was a loud explosion, a ball of fire and smoke going up. We knew it had crashed and we yelled and clapped... just trying to let the German guards know how we still felt about it.

It was getting to be colder weather and the Red Cross sent us warmer clothing. I got a GI overcoat which was very heavy and came down to my ankles. I also got two blankets, one a beautiful British Royal Air Force blanket. It was dark blue and very thick, With the air force insignia in the center. There was snow and that part of Germany had weather about the same as upstate New York. We were cold most of the time. I put my flannel pajamas on under my clothes and didn't take them off for several months. It was too cold to bathe very often and our clothes were getting quite dirty. I was still wearing the logging boots I had bought in California and my feet were always cold. I was again wearing the orange sweater that came down to my knees so I must have been a sight. I took some cloth, perhaps from one of my shirts, and made a pair of booties the size of my feet and another larger pair. I cut a German newspaper in narrow strips and packed it about three inches thick between the cloth booties and

sowed them up. They were big and bulky, but I wore them in the barracks and they kept my feet warm. The Red Cross sent us some hockey sticks and skates so we decided to build a hockey rink. In an open space where the ground was level we smoothed a large area with the bed slats and piled up dirt about four inches high around the sides. We carried cold water in our water pitchers and poured it on the rink. Each night it would freeze and we'd put more on the next day. After a few days and thousands of trips with the water, we had a real nice rink. We made a puck out of a piece of tree root and teams were formed. The Canadians in the next compound had a very good team and we challenged them to a game. The big day arrived and our team was ready. The goalie was a tall red headed guy from our room and he slept in the bunk above me. The day before the game we all gave him some of our food so that he could build up his strength enough to play the entire game. I think the Canadians won but we had a lot of fun watching the game. The guards in the towers also watched the game of course. After a couple of months of hockey playing the sticks were broken off at the end and we had to play with them that way.

Soon it was Christmas and my third away from home. Under such bad conditions it was very hard to be cheerful. We did the best we could with decorations. Even though we were in a forest of pine trees, we couldn't get any inside the compound. We mixed the gritty powder that the Germans gave us for toothpaste with water and pasted it in the corner of the windows like snow. We also saved up a little extra food so we could have one good meal. The Germans had promised us each a bottle of beer for Christmas and we were eagerly looking forward to that. We each got a bottle, to our surprise, but when we got back to the barracks and opened it we found it was only a bottle of charged water, not beer. The only thing we could do was dump it out and save the bottle. Our spirits were low and this didn't help any. We spent the rest of the day thanking of our loved ones at home and wishing we were with them.

In January 1945 we began to hear the big guns from the east and we knew the Russians were advancing from that direction. On January 23 we were notified by the camp commander that the Germans had told him to prepare to leave this camp before the Russians came. They didn't want any of the highly trained airman to be liberated and have the chance to fight against them again. We were instructed to walk 10 laps around the perimeter each day for a total of 7 and 1/2 miles. This was not easy due to the weather and our weakened conditions, but we knew it was necessary to build up our bodies for long marches. We discussed different ways in which to carry our belongings and food. We had large safety pins and a shirt could be pinned up at the bottom with the arms tied around the neck, thus forming a sack. Another carrying device was to pin up the bottom of our heavy army coat and put everything inside. This was the method which I chose.

Our biggest problem was to eat more food and try to build up our strength for what lay ahead, while saving some food to take with us. On the evening of January 28 we were told to get ready to leave. We put on all the clothes we had and I put on the flannel pajamas over

my underwear, not knowing that it would be two Months before I took them off again. We divided our remaining food as equally as possible and sat around waiting for the order to march At the last minute they gave each of us a full Red Cross parcel and we were sorry we had not eaten more during the last few days. Just after midnight, at approximately 12:30 am on January 29 we were ordered to leave. I put on my overcoat carried the heavy Royal Air Force blanket and suddenly realized what a heavy load I was carrying, the miserable conditions, and that it had only begun.

Chapter 9 First March

There were about lO,OOO British and American POW's who gradually left the compound. We formed a line down the road to the southwest through the pine forest, in the cold, as the snow fell gently. We looked back, Bruce and I, at our home for the past eight months. There was a red glow in the sky above our compound as someone, in a last act of defiance, had set fire to his barracks before leaving. This march was to last for six days and we were to walk sixty two miles. There was about four inches of snow on the ground. and during the first mile we began to realize that we were too weak to carry everything. I took the heaviest cans of food out of my coat and threw them in the snow. I kept the powdered milk as it was the lightest and most nourishing food. Soon the road was littered with food and extra clothing. We knew that we would need the food later, but it was a choice between that or falling behind and possibly losing our friends. About a mile down the road we could hear the Russian guns getting much louder (they were thirty miles away). Suddenly there were some rifle shots and we all scattered off the road, diving head first into the snowy brush. It turned out to be a false alarm so we stopped praying and got back onto the road. At daylight the wind began to blow and for the next two days we marched in a blizzard. We stopped at intervals for ten minute rest periods, dropped into the snow and just dreaded getting up again. We marched this way until noon the following day when we reached Freiwaldu, a distance of eighteen miles in eleven hours. We stopped at a farm house and the barn was full so Bruce and I laid down in the snow against the back of the barn out of the wind. During the afternoon we took turns going to the farmhouse to get warm. Bruce and I got into the kitchen and the farmer and his wife were there just looking bewildered. The German soldiers were noted for taking everything from the people in the countryside in the places they occupied and the Americans were just the opposite. After our time was up and we were warm, Bruce and I took some cans of food out of our packs and gave them to the woman. It was our way of saying thanks to them for allowing us to get warm and we received a smile from her as thanks. Then we returned to the blizzard. Later on during the march we did pick up some things around the farms and it must have been hard for the farm people. Having thousands of Americans crowding into every space must have been traumatic for them. The British prisoners were soon mixed in with us, as all became scattered in line. They were the most amazing people I have ever known. They were always happy and singing,

innovative in finding ways to carry their packs. After a few stops at farms they would come down the road with baby buggies, carts and makeshift hand carts created from old wheels they found. I recall one group with packs piled high in a buggy. They also found sleds which worked until the snow melted. Under the miserable conditions no one gave thought to trying to escape. The American colonel who was in charge of us recommended that we stick together for reasons of safety. We had few guards with us and they were mostly old men. The old man with our group rode a bicycle and carried a rifle. It wasn't long before he was walking too and when we had rest stops we immediately fell to working on the blisters we had developed on our feet. We even patched up the guard's feet and it wasn't long before we took turns carrying his rifle and pack. This was the only way that he could keep up and we felt sorry for him. We began again at 6 PM and marched all night in the blizzard. The next day we arrived at a little village named Muskau. Thus far all we had to eat was cold food that we were carrying and some bread the Germans had given us. We were so cold and hungry as we looked for a place to get inside. Bruce and I found a place inside a small stone church in the center of town. We were crowded in so tightly that the only spot Bruce and I could find to sleep was next to the altar. On each side of the altar was a section filled with dirt, with many small white crosses stuck in the dirt. We removed enough crosses to make a place to lie down and when we left we smoothed the ground and replaced the crosses. This was Monday and the first sleep we had since the Friday before. We were very weak and desperately needed it. It was also a relief to get inside away from the cold and snow. We were sti11 eating cold food and more bread from the Germans. With so many men on the move, they had no way to feed us and by this time in the war they barely had enough for themselves anyway. I know our guards had even less than we did. When we started marching again we were really in bad shape. We were so weak with aching muscles and blistered feet that we began to worry about whether or not we could keep going. The boys from our barracks were still together and wanted to keep it that way. The only good thing was that the blizzard had stopped and it was beginning to thaw a little. Many of the guys were falling out now and laying along side the road. Bruce and I were having trouble and soon our knees began to buckle and we would fall down. Our legs were so weak that they wouldn't hold us up any longer. We would help each other up and go a little further. After several falls we crawled to the side of the road to rest awhile. We were worried about being separated from our group so struggled on as long as we could. Finally, so far behind our group, we gave up. After many falls we decided to lay there on the ground with the others who had dropped out. Then we began to worry about what the, Germans might do to us and concluded that we might be shot. That thought was enough to make us get up and keep going no matter what. We made it to Sremburg where we were going to spend the night. When we later arrived at Nuremburg we discovered that those guys who had fallen out along the road had been picked up by trucks at the end of the line and sent by train to the camps to which we eventually marched. They got there a week ahead of us. Ironic things like this seemed to happen to me all through these years. I stayed that night in a very large building 1ike a gym

or a warehouse and we were packed in so tightly that there was barely room to lay down. There was only one small light bulb hanging about forty feet up on the ceiling. You couldn't see anything once it got dark. In the night when someone had to go to the bathroom there was no light to see by or room to keep from stepping on someone. We just ran as fast as we could, with our shoes off, over the top of everyone. There was only one small door at the far end of the building and everyone that was stepped on would yell, swear and wake up the rest of us. At least it was dark so they didn't know who did it to them. When we got up the next morning they were passing out watery barley soup from a big drum outside the building. This was the first hot food we had had in four days and we were very hungry. I got a cup full and took a big drink of it. The broth was so hot I burned my tongue and mouth so I couldn't taste the rest of it. I downed it all and was warmed inside. I was lucky not to have any back problems on this march as the weight of all my belongings in the bottom of the coat really pulled on my shoulders. When we left this place we walked a few miles to the railroad yards where we were to make the two day trip by train to Nuremburg and Camp X-111D. By this time we were all getting diarrhea from drinking the water we got along the march. It was not the same as the spring water we had in Sagan. With all the cloths we were wearing it was not easy to suffer from diarrhea. At this time we thought the worst of the march was over as at last we were getting a ride, but it was nearly a disaster. We were put into box cars, fifty men to a car with out guard. We were packed in so tightly we could not sit down and there was very little air. In order to sleep, we sat down all wound around each other and tried to Keep our heads out at best. A couple of the guys fastened their blankets across the corners on nails and made a hammock in order to make more room. It didn't help much because they were always getting in and out due to the diarrhea. There was always someone at the door in a bit of a rush waiting for the guard to unlock and open the door. Two guys would hold the victim by the arms while he let his rear hang out the door. When the train made stops we were all outside immediately with the same problem. One time the train stopped at a station in the middle of a city and we all jumped out onto the platform between the trains with the same problem. We all went right there on the platform with the German civilians walking around us. We didn't have time to be embarrassed as we couldn't wait any longer. We were so miserable we didn't care any more and everyone was in the same condition. After two days of this we arrived at Nuremburg. It was approximately February 4. We were farther south now and the weather was a little warmer. We were relieved to have made the trip without being strafed or bombed by our own comrades as we knew the Allies were aiming at all the trains they could find. It just gave us out more thing to worry about. We walked three miles to the new camp outside Nuremburg. The conditions at this camp were much worse than those at Sagan. The camp had been used by Italian officers who were prisoners and it was filthy, dirty and muddy. Bruce and I managed to stay together and get into the same barracks but we had lost Ullo and the others from the barracks at Sagan. The barracks were in sections with bunks for twelve men on one side of each section. A cooking area with a table was on the opposite side with an aisle down the middle. Each

man did his own cooking on a stove which we turned on its side to make more of a cooking surface. When we found something to burn, we cooked on the stove. The remainder of the time we ate cold food. It was becoming more difficult for the Red Cross to deliver food parcels to us and some weeks we got half a parcel, other weeks none. We were hungry all the time and gradually getting weaker. The water, however, must have been good here as we were finally getting over the diarrhea. I should mention one of the observations I made about men at this time and know I'll always remember. The prison experience really separated the men from the boys, as the saying goes. I suppose it was because of their background that some of the biggest and strongest men were the ones that could not take this situation. They couldn't carry packs, cook, even light a fire and needed the most help during the toughest parts. The men you least expected to would become a tower of strength. It made me realize that I was a better man than many of the men I would normally have looked up to. There was a dirt road through the center of camp and we used this for walking for exercise. We didn't get enough food to exercise much and there was no room for sports. One of the guard towers was close to our barracks and it had a searchlight which rotated back and forth at night to keep us in our buildings after dark. They threatened to shoot anyone outside after dark as there was no wide open space between our barrack and the barbed wire fence with the pine woods beyond. They also didn't have the large guard dogs loose in this camp. We didn't have any hot water here so we did not take any baths or wash our clothes for two months. Our mattresses were burlap filled with shredded paper and so filthy that every day that the sun shone we would take them outdoors to air with our blankets. We soon discovered we were infested with bedbugs lice and fleas. Don't ask me why but they never bothered me at all. I would lay on my bunk and they were so thick that I could see them jump from the guy on my right to me then on to Bruce on the next bunk. Some guys were scarred all over their bodies from the bites, but I can't remember having a single bite. A boy named Lindstom was in the bottom corner bunk and he was so sick he didn't move the last three weeks we were there. His skin was Just raw from the fleas. One of his buddies was feeding him and I wondered what happened to him when we moved out of this camp as he couldn't walk. When I was in Atlantic City for discharge I met him on a street corner and had a visit with him so I knew he made it. About a week before we left this camp, the Red Cross sent in some insecticide and we put it all over ourselves and our clothes and blankets. By the time we moved out a week later we had rid ourselves of most of the insects. Next to our barracks was a large one room building used for a wash house. It contained only some old sinks and two cold water faucets so we seldom used it. The old boards ran up and down on the sides and we were gradually taking them off the building to use for fire wood for cooking. The Germans forbade it so we had to sneak around when they were not looking. The nails would make a terrible noise when you pulled the boards off so we would loosen them very carefully during the daytime when the guards were not looking and at night we would time the sweep of the searchlight to dash out and rip one off, then run for the barracks before they turned the searchlight back and shot us. The noise of the nails was

awfully loud in the night and would alert the guards. By the time we left this camp, all that was left of the wash house was the roof. We had outside toilet buildings for daytime use but no inside toilets for nights although we weren't allowed out at night. At the and of the barracks was a small room with a twenty gallon garbage can for use at night. It had to be carried out by two men in the morning and emptied into the outdoor toilet. It was almost always full and running over when you carried it. We drew cards every morning and the two low cards got that dirty Job. Bruce had terrible luck and got the low card about twice a week whereas I only did it once or twice. We didn't have any toilet paper, but. found that a cigarette pack contained four sheets of thin paper if you separated it carefully. I cut the tail off one of my shirts and used that then washed it out in the wash house. One day there was a rumor going around that a shipment of toilet paper was coming in and we all lined us to get it. By the time it was divided up each man received three sheets. Big deal! We finally got a chance to take a shower at the other end of the camp, about a mile down the road that ran through the camp. Every so far in that wash building there was a one inch pipe hanging from the ceiling. They only turned the hot water on for a few minutes for each group so you had to work very fast. About five guys would get under a pipe and we would Jostle to all get wet as it was only a small stream of water coming out. We soaped ourselves then crowded under again to wash the soap off before the water was turned off. In our group were four or five white men and one black man. We must have made a beautiful sight all trying to get under the water at once. As I look back on it this is what was meant by true integration! On the walk back to our barracks some of the guys were too weak to make the trip and fell down. We didn't realize that in our weakened Condition the hot water was too much for our systems. The stronger men carried the weaker ones between them back to the barracks. This was the only good bath I had during the final two months as a prisoner. Each morning we had to line up outside for roll call which was the way they kept track of the number in each barracks to determine that no one had escaped. We had a bugle player who played revile when the German Camp Commander and his group came in every morning. As soon as they arrived Inside the wire he would start playing a swinging revile. He really played some hot music and we would clap and cheer which made the Germans angry. We stood there while they counted us and once in awhile someone too weak to stand would fall and lay there on the ground. After roll call we would carry them back to the barracks. Most of the weakness was caused by inactivity and having only barely enough food to survive. Once a day they gave each of us a cup of soup which was all that they prepared in the cookhouse at this camp. One soup was barley and water (mostly water) and a dirty gray color. The other was a green soup made with dehydrated vegetables. This soup had black bugs, about the size of ladybugs, floating on top of it. Some of the guys could never eat this soup but I was so hungry that I did. At first I took my spoon and skimmed all the bugs off the top and ate the rest. I wondered why it was so crunchy until I discovered that there was a beetle inside all the dehydrated peas in the soup. After that I just stirred the soup up and ate it as fast as I could. These two months were very nerve wracking due to the

continual bombing of Nuremburg which was only three miles away. The Americans bombed it almost every day and the British at night. Nuremburg had a large railroad terminal and was a favorite target. When the bombs fell, the ground and barracks would shake and everything fell off the shelves as the windows broke. During one raid the bombs were so close that one wall of our barracks moved Six inches. At night we crawled under the lower bunk together for safety as we couldn't leave the building. In the daytime we look two bed slats with the blanket folded on top and held it over our heads to go outside and watch the bombing. This was to protect our heads from all the shrapnel that was falling on the camp. The camp was right in the middle of the ring of big German anti aircraft guns that circled Nuremburg. One of these guns was in the woods just over the fence from our barracks and the noise was terrific. We watched the smoke rising from the city of Nuremburg those days and nights. When the British bombed at night they dropped flares which lit up the entire area and the searchlights that were probing the sky. We watched from our windows and worried that a bomb meant for the railroad yards so near us would fall on our camp. We had begun to dig trenches, but they were only a couple of feel deep so we never used them. We were more interested in just standing around and watching the planes go over. We began to see more of our fighter planes flying down low and one day a P-51 flew very slow1y over the middle of our camp, only a hundred feet up. We could see the pilot and we all ran around waving our arms and yelling at him to get out of here before he was shot down. We began to hear rumors and sounds of battle again and were told we would be moved. We didn't know where, but after the poor food monotony and misery we had had for two months, we were glad to be leaving this place. We didn't need to prepare for this march because we had nothing but the clothes on our backs and blankets so were ready to go any time.

Chapter 10 Second March

On April 4 we began marching to the southeast away from the advancing Americans. It would have been nice to wait there for liberation, but the Germans had different ideas. At least now we knew it would not be long before we would be free. The Germans did not guard us much this time and we were nearly on our own as we marched. Our ranking officers made the decisions to march mostly at night to avoid mistaken attack by American fighters. We also had ten minute rest breaks every hour and the Germans gave us enough bread and soup to keep us alive. We went through the railroad yards at Nuremburg and saw the bomb damage. We were glad to get out of there before another raid came. Our line was soon spread over seven miles and we made the decision to stay with the group instead of trying to escape into the woods and head for the American front. Probably some of the crazier ones did try it.

We spent the first night in barns and any building we could find. The weather was much warmer and we enjoyed the nice spring days. I pinned a sock to my pant leg, found a pop bottle in a trash pile. and

carried it full of drinking water. When we went by houses the Germans stood along the road watching us and very often they would fill my bottle with fresh water. The Germans in the areas that had not been bombed were friendly, but those in the cities were more hostile. The American fighter planes were flying over us every day and we could see the smoke from the bombed cities all around us.

The second day I was on a blacktop road and just coming out of a wooded stretch where I could see the line up the straight open road ahead. Some P-51s came over and started shooting at the line of men about a quarter mile ahead of me. The men dove to the side of the road and spread out a POW sign we had made from strips of white cloth to be used on just such an occasion. The planes stopped shooting, but not before two were killed and several wounded. I was lucky to have been still in the woods where we could dive for cover in the trees. After that we marched at night when we could but that too presented problems. It was so dark at night that we suffered from vertigo and had trouble walking. We finally pinned small pieces of white cloth on the back of the one in front of us in order to have something to follow. Sometimes we walked with a hand on the shoulder of the one in front too for orientation.

When we came to the village of Neumarket, the first thing we saw was a long section of railroad track balanced on the roof peak of a two story house as the result of a bombing. The next two days of rainy weather left everything in mud and we were miserable. We were caught along the open road with no buildings so we spent the night in the open in the cold rain. 1 just stepped off the road and lay down under a pine tree, covered up with my overcoat and tried to sleep. In the morning my overcoat and blankets were soaked and weighed a ton, but I had to wear them because I would need them again. I never even got a cold and was thankful for all the shots we got in the service, thinking they must have helped.

One sunny day after a night's march we stopped at a farm house to spend the day and rest. Bruce and I were in an apple orchard just behind the barns. Within minutes there were little fires going everywhere and we could smell strange odors of food. Eggs and chicken, and whatever else could be found around the barns, were cooking. Bruce got some eggs and potatoes while I got a little fire started. We cooked in rusty old tin cans we found in junk piles as we had no other utensils. We must have cleaned out some of these farms but it was either that or starve. Sometimes along the march the Red Cross trucks would catch up with us with some parcels that we divided among us. We also discovered that the mounds of dirt in fields near the road covered stacks of potatoes or rutabagas to keep them from freezing. We would dig out the rutabagas and eat them raw.

When we stopped in the small villages we took over all the empty churches and buildings for sleeping and guys would immediately start out to trade cigarettes and anything else we had for food. I was never any good at this so Bruce used to scrounge for us. In friendly places we did quite well at this as the people were desperate for

American cigarettes. This type of marching and spreading out in farms and villages kept us mixed up with different guys all the time. We were all in the same situation so it didn't matter, but Bruce and I were still together. I don't know where Ullo was by this time.

One day we crossed the Danube River and there was a large unexploded bomb sticking up out of the pavement in the center of the bridge. We walked a little faster until we were by it. Towards the end of this march I remember being in a large open area near some buildings when a heavy rainstorm started and we all ran for cover inside them. One lone figure was laying out there under his coat in the rain and nobody helped him inside. He must have been separated from the friends who had been helping him. I found out later that he was John Bradey from Victor, N.Y. and when I got back to Camp Kilmer in New Jersey he was there and still sick. We became acquainted and he borrowed a clean shirt from me to wear home. He promised to return the shirt and about four weeks after getting home his wife sent it to me. There was enclosed a letter telling me that he was it the Buffalo VA hospital very ill from having a ruptured appendix. It had happened when we left the first prison camp, so he had suffered with that through two marches, two camps and all the way home. The will to survive was so great that it had kept him going all that way.

All the pilots in England must have been briefed on our location because during the remainder of the last march and at the last camp we were never again bombed or strafed while cities all around us were bombed. Our fighter Planes were flying over in increasing numbers as the time went on. We were fortunate to have been shot at only the one time when marching in open country. After ten days and marching 91 miles we arrived at the last camp in fairly good condition due to the frequent rest stops and warmer weather.

Chapter 11 Stallag VII-A at Moosburg

Stallag VII-A at Moosburg was a very large camp as prisoners were moved here from al1 the other prison camps to keep them from being liberated. We found some of the men here who had dropped out from that first march from Sagan. All the barracks were full, and large tents were put up between the buildings and that is where Bruce and I found ourselves a place. They were large tents and we slept in rows down each side on the ground. We were on an incline and when it rained the water ran right through the tent sometimes in a real river when the rain was heavy. We finally gathered rocks and piled them up about three inches high and slept on top of them. One night I woke up during a downpour and found that my shoes were floating away down the small trench we had dug around our beds. I decided that between that and the water coming through the bullet holes in the tent I had better find a dry place for the rest of the night. I felt my way around in the darkness until I found a barracks building, then crawled around on my hands and knees in the pitch black among the bodies on the floor. I found a place and squeezed in between two bodies and fell asleep. When woke up I was back to back with someone

and we both sat up at the same time. He was a big guy from India with all the robes and turban on his head, a big black beard on his face. He smiled (half his teeth were missing), I smiled, said "good morning" and got out as fast as I could.

There were prisoners of all nationalities here: Scots, Turks and Indians as well as English and American. There were about 27,000 of us so it was a large camp. Some of the Scots had their kilts and bagpipes and they would march around the open area we had for a softball diamond, playing the bagpipes. We played softball again here and I got a baseball uniform which I carried all the way home with me for a souvenir. I played third base because it was next to the latrine, which I needed again as I was once again suffering from diarrhea and dysentery. When I wasn't batting or playing third, I sat in the latrine and came out only when they needed me. My problems were probably caused by the bad water gotten on the last march and it was so bad that I had to run for the latrine every time I started to eat. During the worst times I gave my food away to Bruce or someone else who needed it.

I can't remember who was still with Bruce and I from our squadron in England or the camp at Sagan. It is possible that Ullo and Barlow were there with us, but it is only Bruce that I remember clearly. At the corner of the camp by our location the guard was a red headed German from Brooklyn who spoke with the Brooklyn accent. He was brought up in Brooklyn and had been drafted into the German army while visiting Germany. There was only one fence around this camp so we could go over and talk to him, sometimes giving him one of our chocolate bars as he had little to eat. One of the guys traded with him for a camera and film which he used to take pictures. I signed up for copies and received them several months after returning home. Those pictures are included in this chapter.

Moosburg had been a center for Red Cross parcel distribution and therefore food parcels were issued again one per week to each of us, thus providing adequate food again. We had no provisions for cooking so the art of making stoves from tin cans began In earnest. Some were simple and others very elaborate with wheels that turned by a handle to force air through the fire to increase the heat and help when burning green or wet wood. Bruce and made a simple one with two tin cans with the fire in the bottom one. It was a good enough setup for the little we cooked. The open areas between the barracks were filled with those little stoves at mealtimes. We were getting German ersatz coffee which was bitter and resembled coffee only by its color. We drank it because we needed something hot. There were also all kinds of cigarettes in camp when American cigarettes were not available. I tried some of the Turkish cigarettes and they were so strong it would knock your socks off. British and Italian cigarettes were also quite plentiful so I had plenty as I didn't smoke much.

We were only thirty miles from the concentration camp at Dachau, but we knew nothing about it at this time. After we had been here two weeks we began to hear the big guns to the west of us and knew that

the American front was-getting closer and that we would soon be free. The rumors began again that we might be moved again to the east, but the Germans must have realized that there were too many of us to move and that the war would soon be over anyway. To the west of us was a hill with trees on the top and open fields on the slopes facing us. We began watching those fields waiting for the American troops to come. On Sunday morning April 29 the guns were a lot closer and we were very excited. The German guards had about all disappeared so we knew it wouldn't be long.

We were watching the top of the hill and saw the little L4 spotter planes flying low and directing the artillery fire. Bullets from rifle fire began hitting the camp and next to my bunk one guy was sitting against the center tent pole writing a letter when a bullet hit the tent pole and dropped into his lap. He put the bullet in his pocket and we headed for the trenches which were about six feet deep and ran throughout the camp. We looked up at the hill and the tanks were just coming out of the woods toward us. In my trench there were several British prisoners and of all things, at a time like this they had their 1ittle stove and were making their morning tea. Nothing could stop them from doing that.

Someone came running across the open space and jumped in the trench yelling 'Mail Call". I had a letter and when I opened it, there in the trench, I found it was from Eastman Kodak Company telling me that a Job was waiting for me although not the job I had 1eft. They sent greetings and hoped I would soon return. I can't imagine how they knew where I was and what an odd time to receive that letter, with the bullets flying all around.

Chapter 12 Liberated

The rifle fire soon ceased and we were all running around the camp excited and yelling. It was just eight days less than a year that I had been held prisoner and, as happy as I was, you can imagine the feelings of the men who had been held for two or three years. We saw a tank coming down the road into camp, ran to the main gate, broke it down and rushed out to meet them. So many of us climbed all over the tank that you couldn't even see the metal. The soldiers in the tank threw out whatever food and cigarettes they had to us. The second tank rolled into camp and General George Patton, with his two pearl handled revolvers, was riding on the top of it. He was one general who was right at the front with his men. Our cheers of celebration were just deafening as hundreds of us poured out of camp and ran around the countryside, thrilled to be free. Before long guys returned to camp with horses and wagons, buggies and anything else they could find.

I understood that some men packed up their belongings and started west toward France as they couldn't wait any longer. They traveled west by catching rides on the supply line vehicles. Most of us, however, stayed in camp as we had been told we would be transported

out in a couple of days. When the day came to depart I left the heavy overcoat and took only what I needed. I took the baseball suit and the Royal Air Force blanket along with me, but somewhere near this time I must have discarded the long orange sweater that had served me so well during the cold of winter. We marched out of camp a couple of miles to a large flat grassy field where DC-6 planes were going to fly us to France. It was a nice warm spring day and we had to wait a couple of hours for the planes so we spread out our blankets on the grass and sat down to chat. It was a special time because we were just beginning to realize that all the friends we had made would soon be separated from us, never to be seen again.

The planes finally came and when it was time for me to board I had to make a big decision. I stood there looking at that nice blue air force blanket laying on the ground. It was so heavy and I didn't know whether or not I could carry it all the way home or not. At the last minute I decided to leave it there on the grass. I have always regretted leaving it and bringing the baseball suit instead. Bruce and I got onto the same plane and flew to a place along the French coast. Along the way we flew over Paris and I at least had a chance to see it from the air. We were put in an area with barracks known as Stage 1 and were told to stay in that area only. Bruce and I found beds together, left our gear and walked down to the mess hall. We each got one of the cheese sandwiches they were passing out and they were really something. They were two slices of white bread each two Inches thick with a one inch inch thick slice of cheese in between.

The bread tasted like angel food cake to us after all that hard black German bread; it was unbelievable how much flavor there was in white bread. We were to eat in this area only for the first day, as, due to our weakened condition, our diet and amount was to be limited. The second day, in Stage 2, we went to a different, mess hall and on the third day to Stage 3. Each day we received more food. As there were no fences between these areas some guys would go to all three mess halls for the same meal. The man named Irons (who had won the mustache contest back in Sagan and still wore the mustache here in France) was in the bunk next to me and at night we heard him moving around at all hours. We later discovered that he had a helmet full of food and was eating all night. Some of the guys got sick from eating too much and there was a rumor of one man dying from eating too many candy bars.

It was almost Mother's Day and each man was allowed to send a Mother's Day greeting telegram home. I sent one to my stepmother so everyone at home would know that I was okay and heading home. After three days here we were taken by truck through the city of LeHarve, France through narrow streets with the French people waving along the way. When we arrived at the harbor a liberty ship was waiting for us. After coming over on such a huge ship, this one looked like a rowboat and we weren't too excited about crossing the Atlantic on anything so small. We got on board and were surprised that there were so few of us, about 200, and that we were not at all crowded. the bunks were hammocks put up below decks and I was in the bow. We sailed across

the English Channel on water as smooth as could be and enjoyed this part of the trip. When I was out on deck I stayed in the middle as the ship was so narrow you could stand in the middle and see over both sides. We sailed to Southampton, England where we joined a large convoy heading home.

Being an American ship, the food was wonderful and I had no seasickness to spoil my appetite. The meal just alternated between steak, chicken and turkey. After each meal we took oranges, apples, or bananas up on deck and ate them while laying in the sunshine. Although there were only about 200 of us, one meal we ate 75 jars of peanut butter. The seas were quite calm the first few days out, so we spent most of the time on deck to avoid the dark and unpleasant below decks area. There were ships all around us and I could count twenty plus destroyers for escort as there were still German subs operating.

At about the middle of the Atlantic we ran into very stormy weather with high seas. When you were an deck it sometimes looked as though our ship was alone and the other ships would come up from behind the swells only to disappear again. While laying in the hammocks trying to sleep at night we would hang on to keep from falling out. The bow, where I was, would come way up out of the water, shudder quite violently, then fall to hit the water hard. The force was so hard that it gradually broke all the light bulbs in the ceiling. This weather was probably normal for the Navy, but airmen were not used to it and worried about what might happen. After a few days like this the weather improved for the remainder of the trip home.

When we emerged from the storm there were only about one third of the ships left in the convoy and we wondered what had happened to all the rest. We later learned that they had turned off for other ports. The guys from the South were heading for southern ports and those of us from the Northeast were going to New Jersey ports. As we neared the U.S. the seas were much calmer and for a couple of days we enjoyed sitting on deck and watching the porpoises swim around the ship. We landed in New Jersey and were taken to Camp Dix from which we had departed a year and a half before. It was late May and we were looking forward to being home by Memorial Day.

Chapter 13 Home Again

When we arrived at Camp Dix the first thing we did was go single file through a room for a medical checkup. A doctor was standing there and asked "how do you feel?" I said 'Okay' and he said "Next". That was the extent of the medical checkup we got and of course no one complained about anything because all they wanted to do was to get home again. We were afraid that if we told of any problems they would put us in the hospital and keep us for weeks. We didn't want that to happen.....even John Brady with the ruptured appendix went through the line quickly.

The next step was to go into a room where a sergeant made out our

income tax and gave us some of our back pay so we had money to get home. They took out 188.00 to pay the income tax on my salary for the year I was in prison camp. I don't know how they had the nerve to do that after what we had been through. They talk about how badly the Vietnam veterans were treated when they came back, but I think what happened to us was just as bad. We didn't have any crowds to meet our ship or parades to welcome us back either. We later discovered that we should have insisted on more medical help and reported our health problems so they would have been in our medical records. A few years later when I needed treatment for my back, there was no way to prove that it was service connected. When I did try a few years later to get some compensation at Buffalo and Rochester VA centers for stomach and back problems all I got was a runaround.

I sent a telegram to my wife and told her I would let her know when to come to Rochester, then I sent a message to my father to tell him of my return to the country. I went to the PX one day and drank a half glass of beer. I discovered I wasn't in very good shape yet and had to go back to my bunk to lie down for several hours to recuperate from the drink. After all I had been through I weighed 124 lbs. only two pounds less than when I entered the service, however. I had at least a half dozen Army blankets and I mailed two of them home and later wished I had mailed a lot more as they were nice blankets and I sti11 have one.

When it came time to find out where we were going next we lined up in front, of the desk of an officer who was giving out papers to report to a large recreation club in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia. It was one of those fancy places with tennis, golf, swimming and horseback riding for two weeks of rest and relaxation. The line got shorter and the man ahead of me got his papers. It was my turn at last. The officer stood up, announced that the resort was filled up and the rest of us were to go home for two weeks then report to Atlantic City for reassignment or discharge. I was so disappointed as this would have been such a nice honeymoon for Lettie and I. Another example of how things worked for me in the service.

We made preparations to go home and soon it was time to say good-by to Bruce. It was a very hard thing to do after the two years we had spent together and all that we had been through. We agreed to write often and get together when we could.

I met another man, Jim Smith, the nephew of Ray Smith who worked in the Canandaigua post office and we decided to come home together. He lived in Newark and I decided to take the train there with him. We were none too neat traveling on the train as we were still wearing our old dirty uniforms from prison camp. At Newark I took a bus to Canandaigua as I had not notified anyone that I was coming. I wanted to make it a surprise so I got off the bus at Main Street and didn't even take a taxi home. I had all, my belongings in a bag which I threw over my shoulder as I walked home up Chapin Street. I didn't even see anyone I knew along way home. When my father got home from work I was in the bathroom shaving and I walked out and said 'hello'.

Two days later Lettie arrived in Rochester and I borrowed my father's car to go pick her up. We stayed with my father several days and then decided we would leave as it was difficult to get along with my stepmother. We rented a room at Lowes Tavern on South Main Street which was a combination tourist home with room and board. We spent the next two months at different places like Niagara Falls, Hill Cumorah and around the lake. We were entertained at dinner parties by all the friends I had before entering the service. I bought a used Chevrolet coupe with the back pay that I received so we had transportation.

During these first few weeks at home I began to realize what three and a half years in service had cost me in terms of my position in life. Here I was at 29 with no job, a little money and a car. All the friends who had escaped being drafted, some legally and some not, had really prospered. Most had made a lot of money working in defense jobs, had new cars and homes of their own. After giving up three and a half years of your life for your country, the reasons others didn't go and their prosperity was always on one's mind. I wouldn't have done it any other way, however, as the good times had in the service far outweighed the bad and those memories will always be with me. I was lucky to have had the chance to fly those airplanes and make so many wonderful friends not to mention the exciting experiences.

In August 1945 we drove to Atlantic City where we stayed in a large hotel taken over by the Air Force. It was right on the boardwalk and included the Atlantic City Convention Hall. I'd never seen a room so large, approximately the size of a football field, on the first floor of the hotel. The beauty pageant was held there the first week we were at the hotel. We watched the parades on the boardwalk in front of the hotel and saw all the contestants. They asked all of the ex-prisoners who were there for fifty volunteers for one evening and, as we had always known that you never volunteer for anything in the army they had quite a time coming up with fifty guys. As it turned out, they were the lucky ones who each escorted a beauty contestant to a large banquet one evening and the rest of the men were envious.

We attended meetings all week to help decide whether to stay in the service or get a discharge. I had already made up my mind to get out so gradually got all the necessary papers signed and got ready to 1eave for home. The parking there was limited and our car was in so tight we couldn't get it out to use while there. My car was in the back row with two rows in front of me. The cars were so close together that they touched and I had to get the license plate numbers of those in front and around me and hunt them up to move the cars. The cars were so close together that the paint was scraped off both sides of the car when we finally got it out. When we returned to Canandaigua, we rented an apartment on North Main Street and became friends with Len and Marcia Bobbins in the next apartment. They built and lived in the house that I now own. I had to find a job, so went back to Eastman Kodak, but the pay they could offer was about half of what I could earn working with my father and Clarence so I decided to

paint.

I painted with my father and Clarence as Gordon had his own business and Leon was working at Brigham Hall. There was not much work that first winter, but I did get a chance to help Leon for a couple of months at Brigham Hall. The next spring we had the chance to rent the house on Mason Street where Sands and Millie Mullins had been living. I went to Rochester and had a good talk with the landlord whom I convinced to rent it to us. At that time the rent was only $25 a month and as soon as the Mullins moved out, we moved in. While living there our daughter Lynn was born on April 22, 1947.

During the summer of i946 we took a trip to Kirksville, Missouri to visit Bruce and his wife Marie. Paul Maxwell, one of the pilots I had flown with in England, lived in Tarre Haute, Indiana and I had his address so we stopped to see him. His wife was home and told me where he worked so I looked him up. It was some kind of a factory or office building and I was walking down a corridor when I saw him ahead of me so I caught up, tapped him on the shoulder and said 'hi'. He was very surprised and we spent the evening with dinner at their home. We stayed in a motel and drove to Missouri the next day. Bruce was just getting settled in and lived in a small older house off the main road. We stayed several days with them, talking, fishing and going on picnics. We arrived there on a Saturday and stayed up half the night talking and drinking. The next morning we awoke with terrific hangovers and Just barely made it through church services. In the afternoon Marie made a container of soup to take to Bruce's grandfather who was 90 years old and had just returned from the hospital after having a leg amputated. He was gone when we got there and we found him down at a pool hall telling all his buddies about the operation. They are tough old birds in that part of the country.

Bruce was a woodworking teacher at the high school and later he moved to Santa Rosa, California to teach there. On weekends he taught woodworking to prisoners at Alcatraz. We had a good time with Bruce and Marie and although we never got together again, we corresponded for years. The big Swede, Al Johnson, owned and operated a motel 'Shady Rest' on a lake in Minnesota and he wrote several times and invited us up for a free vacation, but we never got there.

Back home we looked forward to Lynn's birth and then her childhood years. When Lynn was about two years old we were visiting with our neighbors Ted and Gertrude Smith and several of their friends one evening. Lynn was sitting of the floor and everyone was sitting around her talking. Suddenly Lynn spoke up saying "Daddy looks different than Mommy in the bathtub". The room. was immediately enveloped in a deadly silence and my heart stopped beating. Then Lynn finished saying "Daddy has wrinkles on his belly" and everyone doubled over with laughter. That came close to being my most embarrassing moment.

From 1946 to 1950 the painting business was not very good and we had to save our summer wages to carry us through the winter when work was

scarce. I remember one December when I only worked Two days and made $17. In 1953 we bought our first house, on Telyea St. next door to my sister Dorothy, at a cost of $731.10 it was financed on a GI loan through the local bank. We moved there December 3 and it was a warm sunny day at 63 degrees, a perfect day for the three of us and our cat "Betty" to move. In 1948 the three of us, known as R.G.Benson and Sons started working part-time during the winter doing all the painting at F.F. Thompson Hospital which made it easier to buy a house. I had had a garden on Mason Street and made quite a large one in the lot on Telyea Street. I have managed to have a garden every year since then although some of them were small. I also inherited a love for flowers from my mother and have always had flower gardens and plants.

During the late 1940's when Lynn was small we took a trip to Utah in the month of December and we only got as far as Lancaster, south, of Buffalo, when we ran into a terrible blizzard and the roads were closed. We got into the parking lot of a closed summer motel with a number of other travelers. They opened up the motel so we would have a place to spend the night in the lobby and some of the rooms. There was no heat and we were awake shivering all night. Lynn was in the bed between us and it was so cold her cheeks were frostbitten by morning. Early in the morning I put the chains on the car and we were able to get started. We decided to take the southern route and we had snow piled up on the car until we got to Oklahoma, where everyone wondered where we had come from.

We made another trip to Utah a few years later and went via the northern route. I am unable to remember exactly which events occurred on which trip so will relate them as I recall them, without much regard to the year.

The first trip during the winter was the year they had the hay lift for the farm animals due to the severe winter weather. One morning the temperature was 45 degrees below zero with so much frost in the air that you couldn't see the mountains to the east. One week it only got up to 14 below, but the cold was more bearable as the air is so dry. Mrs. Clark used to go out and hang up the washing in a short sleeved dress when it was down to 10 degrees above zero. The farmer who was a friend of Jimmy Clark's was a sheepherder and he was stuck with a flock of sheep way out an the prairie with no feed for the animals. We took a load of hay in Jimmy's truck and his friend had a big bulldozer which he used to make a trail through the snow from the road ending to where the herder was. He had a little clearing in the deep snow and about half of the sheep were laying around it frozen to death.

The little sheepherder's wagon was very interesting and as it was 10 degrees below zero we were glad to get inside. There was Just room for the four of us and the stove made it very warm. He insisted we stay for dinner and grabbed an axe, went outside and cut some chunks of meat off one of the dead sheep. He cooked it in the little stove and between the heat and the smell of that mutton cooking we would

have been driven out if it hadn't been so cold. As it was, we lost our appetites. We did squeeze into the narrow aisle with a board an our laps for a table and had mutton with hot biscuits and honey. To this day I can't stand the smell of lamb cooking.

On one of the trips to Utah we left Lynn with her grandparent and went on to California by train to spend several days with Neil Ullo and his wife in Walnut Creek, California. He had started an electrical business and was selling and installing appliances in that area. I went with him one day and helped him install a washing machine. Neil remembered all his hungry days in prison camp and was very strict with his children at mealtime, making them eat everything on there plates. It was almost an obsession with him. We had a good visit and several years later they made a trip east and stayed with us when we lived an Telyea Street. We took the train back from California and were lucky to travel in one of the first Vista dome cars. The country was especially beautiful through the Snake River canyon.

Sometime during the 1950s we needed a new car and the Clarks in Utah could get a better deal. We had them purchase a new Chevrolet for us and Mrs. Clark and Jeanie drove it to New York for us. They got stuck in a big snowstorm in Ohio and I left by Greyhound to meet them. The bus got stuck in Erie, Pa. and we had to walk the last quarter mile to a train station. After a long wait I was able to get a train to Cincinnati, Ohio. They were about fifty miles to the west of there in a motel. I stayed in a hotel for two days and we talked back and forth by telephone. The parking lot outside my hotel room was full of cars with nothing showing but the aerials. Finally traffic started to move again and they were able to come ahead and pick me up. We got stuck again in Fredonia, N.Y. by a two foot snowfall and had to spend the night in a tourist home as all the roads were closed. The next morning we struggled for hours to got the car out of the parking lot and were able to get the rest of the way home. In those days there was very 1ittle snow removal equipment and these were hard trips to make.

In 1954 we were painting a house on North Main St. when my father complained about chest pain, but for more than an hour he kept going up and down the ladder holding his chest. Finally he said he couldn't work anymore and was going to drive to the drugstore for something to cure indigestion. After about fifteen minutes we heard the ambulance and feared it might be for him. The phone rang in the house and the lady came out to tell us my father had been taken to the hospital with a heart attack. He lived about a week and we all took turns sitting in the waiting room, but were never allowed to see him for more than a minute at a time. The doctor told us he had suffered a massive heart attack and knew he wouldn't live. I never forgave the doctor because if he knew he wasn't going to live I think we should have been allowed to spend more time with him.

This occurred in October when Dad was 74 years old. He was only a couple of weeks away from his 75th birthday in November and had

planned on retiring and taking a trip to Florida. I made up my mind to retire before my health would prohibit me from enjoying a few years of retirement. I have always considered myself lucky to have had the chance to work with my father for so many years and get to know him. He once told me that it gave him great satisfaction to have raised nine children nobody getting into serious trouble even though none were a great success.

I continued working with Clarence until 1959 when I was offered a job as a painter in the maintenance department at the hospital. It took me almost a year to make up my mind because I didn't want to leave Clarence working alone. It was one of the hardest decisions to make, but I know the advantages of steady work even though I had to start with a cut in wages. The first few years I tried to help Clarence with some of his work on weekends when I could. I have never regretted the move because I would have ended up working alone when Clarence retired. I had only worked at the hospital a few months when I had my first serious illness. I entered the hospital acutely ill and the doctors decided to operate for appendicitis. They found an adhesion from the appendix to the intestine on the other side and I was suffering a bowel stoppage. I was back to work in two weeks, but had to take it easy awhile.

The only outside activities my father participated in were pitching horseshoes and bowling and he was good at both of them. He was especially good when bowling for money. He and four other bowlers would travel around the area to bowl in pot games and he always made a little money. He also bowled in one nationals tournament in Chicago. After his death I bowled for about ten years on a team with Leon, Clarence and, sometimes, Ken Montanye.

In 1966 I was divorced and Lynn was attending college at Hillsdale, Michigan so I lived alone for three years on Telyea Street. I was working at the hospital and took the same dinner with me everyday: a sandwich of lettuce, mustard and baloney. I ate my dinner at the hospital cafeteria after work each night and had TV dinners or ate out on the weekends. Several weeks after my divorce Pat Wager introduced me to her neighbor who was a widow and I started dating Kate. After the divorce I had the house, a car, some bonds and $18 in cash so I was starting out again financially. I tried to help Lynn with her college education by taking on more work at the hospital. I worked in maintenance four and a half days a week and Monday afternoons I was the purchasing agent for the hospital. I did all the Ordering and delivery of supplies to all the departments in the hospital. In the evenings and Saturdays I took care of the lawns and mowed the grass. I did this for two years and kept very busy.

On October 17, 1969 1 married Kathryn Coons and moved into her home an Perry Place. The following year I sold the house on Telyea Street for $14000 to a girl I knew at the hospital. Lynn was now living in Rochester and attending Nazareth College after marrying Dan Avery on February 17, 1968. My grandsons Bejamin and Timothy were born in Rochester on November 14, 1971 and February 25, 1974.

My sister Helen died of cancer in 1974 and my brother Gordon of cancer in 1979. In 1980 Kate and I sold the big house on Perry Place and moved to a smaller, newer home on Chapel Street. This house was just right for retirement with a dry basement, nice garage and workshop.

In 1970 the new hospital was finished and it was quite a big job moving into it. For several days I was the only department member at the new hospital directing all the truckloads of equipment to their new locations while Harold and Brownie were directing the move from the old hospital. Some days it took me over two hours to eat my lunch usually on the run and answering phone calls. The first few years there I did little painting as everything was new so I kept very busy doing maintenance work and book and record keeping for the department. I soon became a "jack of all trades" which made the work interesting as there was something different to do all the time.

1979 when I was 62 years old I gave a lot of thought to retiring early, but my birthday passed and I was still going to work. The work was so interesting in the hospital and I was in good health so I decided to stay until 65. The fear of financial problems makes it hard to decide when to retire, but I now find that I have more money than when I was working. A small hospital pension and Social Security have eliminated all financial worries at least for the present. My 65th birthday was July 23, 1982 and it was a perfect time for retirement. My last day of work I painted a room and worked right up to the last hour, not leaving until the regular time. I requested that there be no retirement party as the boys in maintenance gave me a gift certificate for $80 from Grossmans lumber and I used it to buy lumber and materials to make bird houses. After twenty three years of working with Dad and Clarence, then twenty three years of working at the hospital I figured it was time for retirement. I really enjoyed the hospital work and the chance to be around so many nice people. I was offered the chance to work part time at the hospital after retirement, but I knew that I had had enough and never Thought of it again.

On the first day of retirement it was a warm sunny day and my birthday, so I decided to put the hammock up in the backyard and lay in it. I discovered I had stepped in a pile of dog pooh and had it on my socks, shoes and hammock. I washed out the socks, shoes and took down the hammock to put it away. So went the first moments of retirement. The first couple of years I enjoyed working with wood and built many birdhouses, selling quite a few. I only charged enough to have money to buy materials for more.

For two summers I painted my sister Dorothy’s house for her. I only worked a few hours each day and didn’t charge her anything for labor as I was doing it Just to keep busy. It is a big house and I realized it would be the last time I would be able to do anything of that size. Working with high ladders was getting difficult.

In the early spring of 1985 1 decided to try oil painting. I sent away for an artists outfit and bought some materials at an art shop. I had never tried anything like this before so I made a painting studio in the basement and started out with pictures from an instruction booklet. Even the early ones I painted were okay so I decided to continue as long as I could see improvement. I have done more than 150 paintings over the past two years and am still improving. I have sold some pictures and given away the rest. I also build and finish the frames for them. It makes a good hobby for the cold winter months.

This coming July 23, 1987 will be my seventieth birthday and I have enjoyed five years of retirement, keeping active with gardening, reading, lawn care, oil painting, helping my brothers and writing this autobiography.

Or /etext02, 01, 00, 99, 98, 97, 96, 95, 94, 93, 92, 92, 91 or 90

Just search by the first five letters of the filename you want,
as it appears in our Newsletters.

Information about Project Gutenberg (one page)

We produce about two million dollars for each hour we work. The time it takes us, a rather conservative estimate, is fifty hours to get any eBook selected, entered, proofread, edited, copyright searched and analyzed, the copyright letters written, etc. Our projected audience is one hundred million readers. If the value per text is nominally estimated at one dollar then we produce $2 million dollars per hour in 2001 as we release over 50 new eBook files per month, or 500 more eBooks in 2000 for a total of 4000+ If they reach just 1-2% of the world's population then the total should reach over 300 billion eBooks given away by year's end.

The Goal of Project Gutenberg is to Give Away One Trillion eBook Files by December 31, 2001. [10,000 x 100,000,000 = 1 Trillion] This is ten thousand titles each to one hundred million readers, which is only about 4% of the present number of computer users.

At our revised rates of production, we will reach only one-third of that goal by the end of 2001, or about 4,000 eBooks. We need funding, as well as continued efforts by volunteers, to maintain or increase our production and reach our goals.

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation has been created to secure a future for Project Gutenberg into the next millennium.

As of February, 2002, contributions are being solicited from people and organizations in: Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

We have filed in all 50 states now, but these are the only ones that have responded.

As the requirements for other states are met, additions to this list will be made and fund raising will begin in the additional states. Please feel free to ask to check the status of your state.

In answer to various questions we have received on this:

We are constantly working on finishing the paperwork to legally

request donations in all 50 states. If your state is not listed and you would like to know if we have added it since the list you have, just ask.

While we cannot solicit donations from people in states where we are not yet registered, we know of no prohibition against accepting donations from donors in these states who approach us with an offer to donate.

International donations are accepted, but we don't know ANYTHING about how to make them tax-deductible, or even if they CAN be made deductible, and don't have the staff to handle it even if there are ways.

Donations by check or money order may be sent to:

Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation
PMB 113
1739 University Ave.
Oxford, MS 38655-4109

Contact us if you want to arrange for a wire transfer or payment method other than by check or money order.

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation has been approved by the US Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)(3) organization with EIN [Employee Identification Number] 64-622154. Donations are tax-deductible to the maximum extent permitted by law. As fund-raising requirements for other states are met, additions to this list will be made and fund-raising will begin in the additional states.

We need your donations more than ever!

You can get up to date donation information online at:

http://www.gutenberg.net/donation.html

***

If you can't reach Project Gutenberg,
you can always email directly to:

Michael S. Hart <hart@pobox.com>

Prof. Hart will answer or forward your message.

We would prefer to send you information by email.

Information prepared by the Project Gutenberg legal advisor
(Three Pages)

***START** SMALL PRINT! for COPYRIGHT PROTECTED EBOOKS ***

program that displays the eBook (as is the case, for instance, with most word processors); OR

(3) You provide or agree to provide on request at no additional cost, fee or expense, a copy of the eBook in plain ASCII.

LIMITED WARRANTY; DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES
This eBook may contain a "Defect" in the form of incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other infringement, a defective or damaged disk, computer virus, or codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment. But for the "Right of Replacement or Refund" described below, the Project (and any other party you may receive this eBook from as a PROJECT GUTENBERG-tm eBook) disclaims all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees, and YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE OR UNDER STRICT LIABILITY, OR FOR BREACH OF WARRANTY OR CONTRACT, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES, EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGES.

If you discover a Defect in this eBook within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending an explanatory note within that time to the person you received it from. If you received it on a physical medium, you must return it with your note, and such person may choose to alternatively give you a replacement copy. If you received it electronically, such person may choose to alternatively give you a second opportunity to receive it electronically.

THIS EBOOK IS OTHERWISE PROVIDED TO YOU "AS-IS". NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, ARE MADE TO YOU AS TO THE EBOOK OR ANY MEDIUM IT MAY BE ON, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE. Some states do not allow disclaimers of implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of consequential damages, so the above disclaimers and exclusions may not apply to you, and you may have other legal rights.

INDEMNITY
You will indemnify and hold Michael Hart and the Foundation, and its trustees and agents, and any volunteers associated with the production and distribution of Project Gutenberg-tm texts harmless, from all liability, cost and expense, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following that you do or cause: [1] distribution of this eBook, [2] alteration, modification, or addition to the eBook, or [3] any Defect.

WHAT IF YOU *WANT* TO SEND MONEY EVEN IF YOU DON’T HAVE TO?
Project Gutenberg is dedicated to increasing the number of

Biography of a Rabbit, by Roy Benson, Jr.

Project’s eBooks, it is copyright protected, and since the materials and methods you use will effect the Project’s reputation, your right to copy and distribute it is limited by the copyright laws and by the conditions of this "Small Print!" statement.

[A] ALL COPIES: You may distribute copies of this eBook electronically or on any machine readable medium now known or hereafter discovered so long as you:

(1) Honor the refund and replacement provisions of this "Small Print!" statement; and

(2) Pay a royalty to the Foundation of 20% of the gross profits you derive calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. If you don’t derive profits, no royalty is due. Royalties are payable to "Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation" within the 60 days following each date you prepare (or were legally required to prepare) your annual (or equivalent periodic) tax return.

[B] EXACT AND MODIFIED COPIES: The copies you distribute must either be exact copies of this eBook, including this Small Print statement, or can be in binary, compressed, mark-up, or proprietary form (including any form resulting from word processing or hypertext software), so long as *EITHER*:

(1) The eBook, when displayed, is clearly readable, and does *not* contain characters other than those intended by the author of the work, although tilde (~), asterisk (*) and underline (_) characters may be used to convey punctuation intended by the author, and additional characters may be used to indicate hypertext links; OR

(2) The eBook is readily convertible by the reader at no expense into plain ASCII, EBCDIC or equivalent form by the program that displays the eBook (as is the case, for instance, with most word processors); OR

(3) You provide or agree to provide on request at no additional cost, fee or expense, a copy of the eBook in plain ASCII.

LIMITED WARRANTY; DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES

This eBook may contain a "Defect" in the form of incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other infringement, a defective or damaged disk, computer virus, or codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment. But for the "Right of Replacement or Refund" described below, the Project (and any other party you may receive this eBook from as a PROJECT GUTENBERG-tm eBook) disclaims all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees, and YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE OR UNDER STRICT LIABILITY, OR FOR BREACH OF

WARRANTY OR CONTRACT, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO INDIRECT,

CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES, EVEN IF YOU

GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGES.

If you discover a Defect in this eBook within 90 days of

receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any)

you paid for it by sending an explanatory note within that

time to the person you received it from. If you received it

on a physical medium, you must return it with your note, and

such person may choose to alternatively give you a replacement

copy. If you received it electronically, such person may

choose to alternatively give you a second opportunity to

receive it electronically.

THIS EBOOK IS OTHERWISE PROVIDED TO YOU "AS-IS". NO OTHER

WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, ARE MADE TO YOU AS

TO THE EBOOK OR ANY MEDIUM IT MAY BE ON, INCLUDING BUT NOT

LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR A

PARTICULAR PURPOSE. Some states do not allow disclaimers of

implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of

consequential damages, so the above disclaimers and exclusions

may not apply to you, and you may have other legal rights.

INDEMNITY

You will indemnify and hold Michael Hart and the Foundation,

and its trustees and agents, and any volunteers associated

with the production and distribution of Project Gutenberg-tm

texts harmless, from all liability, cost and expense, including

legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the

following that you do or cause: [1] distribution of this eBook,

[2] alteration, modification, or addition to the eBook,

or [3] any Defect.

WHAT IF YOU *WANT* TO SEND MONEY EVEN IF YOU DON’T HAVE TO?

Project Gutenberg is dedicated to increasing the number of

public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed

in machine readable form.

The Project gratefully accepts contributions of money, time,

public domain materials, or royalty free copyright licenses.

Money should be paid to the: