

The Mad Major Draws His Luger

We pulled out in the morning and made an uneventful trip to Meiningen. The hospital was a few blocks from the station. A couple of P.W.'s carried me there on a stretcher. It was surrounded by a high wire fence and had only a couple of guards patrolling around it. Inside was a walk that ended at a bridge over a small brook. When I got inside, there were beds with metal frames over them to tie casts on. It was the only place, I was to see, that looked like a hospital. It was a house full of great gaping wounds, severed limbs, and boys who had gone over the edge. It was run by mostly British Commonwealth soldiers. English, Scots, Canadians, Australians, and South Africans performed the mundane chores. The patients were mostly the same with some Americans and French.

It was here I received my first pay. Non-Coms received seven and a half marks a month. You couldn't buy anything with it, so we used it for poker chips. When someone would win it all, he would hand it back and we would start again. We left baskets of this money there, thinking it was worthless. When we got back our government was paying ten cents a mark. C'est La Guerre!

It was also here, that the two muscles that had formed on the back of my ankle holding my foot in a down position, relaxed and disappeared, allowing me to walk more like a human being again.

They gave me a British battle jacket and a black fur hat. All decked out, I had on a black fur hat, a British battle jacket and shirt, brown flying pants and black shoes with one lace. I looked like Rollo the clown.

One day I was looking out the window when a P-51 dropped out of the sky guns blazing at the rail station. There were four of them. "51's 51's," I shouted. Everyone staggered and wobbled to the windows. "Tally-ho, go get em lads, good hunting, cream

them." The cries went up in different accents. Some on crutches, some holding on to a buddy, some with no legs still in their beds shouting, "Get me to the window damn-it." An army of has beens had gotten their battle blood up.

They were beautiful. The first one came down with guns blazing and swooped up. The second followed with his guns firing and then he swooped up. The third thundered down and swooped up followed by the fourth. In the meantime, the first had circled over and roared down at a right angle, his guns firing, as the fourth cleared the target. They flew a cloverleaf. Our cheers were dampened when the third plane was hit. It was smoking and its engine was coughing. It disappeared from view. A 20MM nest on the hillside had gotten him.

A German major came running in. His face was red as he shouted at us. He was waving his luger around. He ordered us back to bed. The P-51's came back firing at the 20MM nest. The major opened a window and was firing at them with his luger. It was like throwing snowballs at the moon. He was madder than a wet hen. The P-51's flew away. The major glared at us, put his luger away, and stalked out. When he got outside, we all cheered. We expected him back but he had had enough.

There were many dead and wounded at the station. Some of the healthy P.W.'s volunteered to carry them back to the hospital. When they got there, a bunch of civilians threw belts around their necks and tried to strangle them. With the help of the guards, they managed to get away and beat a hasty retreat back to the hospital. Krieg ist Krieg. War is War.

The next day we talked to a guard. He told us the P-51 fell upside down in the river and the pilot died. He also said his buddies had killed the 20MM gunner. Somehow it didn't help. I was soon to witness the battle of the one legged giants, but that's another story.

AT THE END OF THE STRING

by William B. Post

PART VII

As I slept, on my bed in the darkened ward, my dreams were of my lovely wife, Vicki, our little apartment and a large steak. They could be wiped out by an invasion of the night horrors: the screams and cries of the wounded, a B-17 blowing up, an ME-109 coming at me guns blazing, a big man hitting me on the jaw as I lay wounded on the ground, the briefing room at Podington as they took the cover off the map revealing a long string going deep into Germany. "Oh no!", I would groan. I would awake with a start in a cold sweat. The horrors stayed with me long after the war. Some men couldn't live with these specters of the night and drifted into a happy world of their own, never to return.

I found myself sitting on the end of the string deep inside Germany at Meiningen. When I was flying missions, I used to tune in Axis Sally. She had a sexy voice and played good music. Of course, you had to put up with the propaganda: Americans, you are coming to your deaths. We know where you are and we are waiting for you. I would yell into my oxygen mask, "You're always waiting for us. Get on with the music." I didn't expect propaganda in a P.W. camp. The Germans had two newspapers for us: one for the English and one for the Americans. The American one would have items like; (Why do you Americans have to shed your blood to save the English again in a war they started?). The English one would read; (While you brave soldiers are risking your lives, the Americans are having a good time with your wives and sweethearts.) We would exchange papers and laugh. I guess it was practice for the propoganda ministry. They struck out.

The Battle Of The One Legged Giants

One day a large verbal argument ensued. It was between a

Canadian and an English soldier. They both had recently lost a leg. They had not yet learned to use crutches. They were holding on to the metal frames of their beds with one hand and swinging with the other. They would miss and grab one, to keep from falling. They couldn't hurt each other but, they could hurt themselves if they fell. I started to laugh at their anger and frustration. I was becoming callous. There was no room for romantics in "La-La-Land". Two P.W.'s broke them up and placed them in their beds still shouting at each other. They were short in stature but, giants in the fact, that the trauma of losing a leg had not dimmed their fighting spirits. They'd make it okay.

Training The Clunkers

I was looking out the window. A German drill sergeant was trying to teach boys, dressed as soldiers, how to street fight. They had bands on their helmets with twigs and leaves stuck in them. They were on the run. Two boys bumped into each other. One boy dropped his rifle. One tripped and fell down a flight of stairs. The drill sergeant was going bonkers yelling at the couple of them had gotten into a shed and knocked a hole in the roof. They stuck a machine gun through the hole. The owner of the shed was yelling for them to get out and waving a pitchfork around. One boy took his helmet off and stood up scratching his head. The segeant, who was screaming at the man with the pitchfork, turned his wrath on the boy with the itchy head. The boy dropped to the ground and put his helmet on. The sergeant gave up and moved his troops on, with the man with the pitchfork still yelling and pointing to the hole. The sergeant gave him an international gesture. It could have been any army!

Thems Good Maggots

One day, the doctor and an aide cut the cast off the arm of an

American soldier. The arm was crawling with white maggots. My stomach did flip-flops. "Oh God! Oh God! They're eating me up," cried the soldier. The doctor shouted, "That's great," as though he had found gold. The soldier was on the razor's edge. "Are you mad? The bugs are eating my arm," he shouted. The doctor tried to calm him. "They are maggots and they eat only bad stuff. They don't touch any good stuff. In fact, in WWI doctors used them on wounds on purpose." The soldier was unconvinced, "Get them damn worms off me." They cleaned him up and put on another cast.

I made a friend of Jim Bell, a Scotsman, captured at Dunkirk in 1940. He kept writing home for a kilt and his folks kept sending him one but, the Germans would confiscate them. The Germans feared the ladies from hell, as they called them.

I also met Basil Cresswell from South Africa. He was captured in the desert by Rommel's troops. He said he traded his wrist watch for a glass of water. Before the war he had a five pack a day habit. In Germany, you traded one pack of cigarettes for a bar of candy. Basil never had candy as a P.W.

The Family Jewels

The doctor was examining certain patients, when an American soldier whispered for him to come over. He pointed to his groin area and asked, "How is it?" The doctor examined him and said, "It's coming along fine. The bullet went clear through." The soldier's voice rose as he pointed again and asked, "I mean, how is it?" The doctor, thinking he didn't hear said, "The wound is fine." The soldier literally shouted, "The family jewels! The family jewels! Can I have children?" All heads turned to the

doctor. The doctor tried to hide a smile. "You can have many children. All you need is a woman." The soldier was very much relieved. His prime fear was gone.

That Last Drop

To survive and keep your sanity in a P.W. hospital you must have, honor, your self respect, the respect of your friends and the grudging respect of the enemy. You must become callous, hardened and be able to laugh at anything. You must get rid of your feelings; although you can never get rid of that last drop. Just before I left Meiningen, I was to be a witness to a scene that would drain that last drop from P.W.'s that had been there for five years.

They brought in an English soldier. He was only seventeen. He had an angelic face and his hair was askew. He had been in the army for two weeks. It was to be a lifetime for that boy. Lifetimes are short in war. They had to take off both his legs. You could see where the sheet dropped off. He didn't know. He was still out, peacefully sleeping. We all gritted our teeth. We knew what was coming, but knowing didn't help. He awoke groggily with a smile on his angelic face. He looked down at the sheet. His screams pierced our hearts. Another specter for our nightmares. I can still hear his screams.

I was soon to go to a place we called Ober Mansfeld. I find no such place on the map. It did exist. It was an old opera house. The place where I met one-eyed Jack, weeping Willie and a place I nearly lost my tail feathers to a group of B-17's but, that's another story.

SECRETARY'S COLUMN

This has been a hectic three months caused by the incorrect reunion dates that were printed across the bottom of the front page of the June issue. I almost gave Ray Griffith and Kemp McLaughlin a heart attack. Apparently the correction took me off the hook as I only received four letter queries and about 12 phone calls. By the time you receive this newsletter, the Reunion will either be in progress or over depending on what part of the country you reside and the whims of the postal service. Unfortunately all our bulk mail goes by truck and takes as long as three to four weeks to reach the coasts. The June issue was receipted for at the Post Office in St. Louis on July 2 and I received my copy in my mail on 10 July. I live 25 miles from the Main Post Office, so is it any wonder that you who live in California receive the mail a month later.

Ray Griffith just returned from a trip to Podington and reported upon his return that he had over 300 reservations for the Reunion. I advised him to brace for the last minute push as there were many not on his list who indicated they were planning to attend. This will undoubtedly be the largest get together thus far.

The lengthy change of address list in this issue indicates the Secretary is not being notified on change of address. No wonder I get so many letters complaining of non receipt of Group News as a comparison of addresses on the complaining letter is different than that on file. Most of the returns by the Post Office are stamped "No forwarding address or Forwarding time elapsed". At any rate, the large amount of changes hastens the obsolescence of the 86 Roster.

Information in the Roster is taken directly off the membership form submitted with dues. Several have written to correct Zip codes and mixing up the computer 0 with an eight (8). This is a natural mistake for those of you out there who are speed readers.

I received a flyer advertising 92nd Caps forwarded by Art Belkowski. The firm Chesapeake Classics, Box 2291, Wheaton, MD 20902 apparently obtained a roster from the 8AFHS as the Secretary did not receive a Chesapeake flyer nor did several

others of our members whom I queried. We have no knowledge of the style, quality, etc. of the merchandise and do not offer any endorsement of the product. If any of you out there bought the product let us know if you are satisfied. The Secretary had queried several sources for Caps, one in particular with superior product, but the minimum order for stock required simply was not a prudent expenditure of funds. I would prefer that members order from the manufacturer to avoid shipping and inventory problems on my part. The Chesapeake appears to meet this requirement, however, without seeing the product we can offer no advice.

Now that the Roster is in the Members' hands, please do not pass it out to commercial enterprises looking for mailing lists. Your secretary goes to great lengths to insure info copies that are sent to Historians and other interested people not members are stripped of the Roster.

I am sorry to report that Raphael and Mae Kernan advise that they will be unable to attend the Reunion. This will be the first they have missed. We will miss their smiling faces. Both are ardent supporters of the organization and have travelled many long miles to reach our Reunion sites.

"IN MEMORIAM" ROSTER CORRECTION

Under "In Memoriam" Cletus T. Lancour (IL) should read Ferdinand A. Lancour (325) (MI).

IN MEMORIAM

We regret to announce the death of the following 92nd comrades. Our sympathy is extended to the family and friends of each. Widows or family members are invited to continue membership as Associate Members.

Daniel Huffstutter 326UNK Reported by Payne
Walter H. Martin (FL) 326UNK Reported by Philip Cox
Neil Hatleli (CA) 3279/24/85 Reported by Wife
Robert S. Wilkins (FL) 3258/06/86 Reported by Gene Ponte