

TRICK OR TREAT WITH GERMAN INTELLIGENCE

by William B. Post

PART III The Spider Checks In

After becoming a P.W. the doctor bandaged my wounds, put my arm in a sling and gave me some pain pills. They put me in a vehicle full of blood and flies; they called an ambulance. I was on a long trip to a place I called "The Rat Motel."

We pulled into the courtyard of a large brick building that looked like a prison. It was surrounded by a high fence with barbed wire on top. There were many guards with rifles slung on their shoulders. We were met by an officer with a guard on each side of him. I found I could stand on my right leg but a weird thing had happened to my left foot. It was locked in a down position. (I was later told that this was nature's way of protecting the ligament that was nearly sheared through.) By sliding my left foot along and hopping on my right leg, I was able to move. One guard held my arm to steady me and we slithered in. The other guard laughed and said I walked like a spider. The officer gave him a stern look and he shut up.

When we got inside, I was looking down a long hall with many doors. They were about six feet apart and they all had a red flag like the ones on rural mailboxes. They ushered me into the one door that was open. The room was about six feet by eight feet. It had an army cot, a radiator and a window that was boarded up.

The officer spoke. "You will remain quietly up here. If you need the guard, turn the flag handle. If you use the handle too often, the guard will not come." They walked out and slammed the door. The light went out. I was to find that in complete darkness, time stands still. A little later the room started to get warm, then hot as an oven. I was sweating a pool of water. I took off my pants and drawers, the only clothes I had, but sweat continued to pour off me in a stream. The bastards were going to boil me alive! Panic started to set in. I turned the handle. It wouldn't pay to let them know I was worried. I tried to play it cool. The light came on and a guard came in. "Ja? Ja?" he asked. He spoke no English. As nonchalant as I could, I said, "It's a little warm in here." He put his arms out palms up and spoke a bunch of German which I took to mean he didn't understand. I wiped my forehead, threw the sweat on the floor and pointed to the radiator. "It's warm," I said not wanting to use the word hot. "Oh ja, varm," he said as he walked out and closed the door. The light went out. Did the dumb bastard understand me or was he just agreeing with me? Shortly, the room cooled off fast. Was it planned? Why send a guard who couldn't speak English? They had me going. Why did they stop? It was a mystery.

I hung my clothes on the radiator to dry. I lay down on the wet cot to try to sleep. I woke up to see a shaft of light coming through a crack between the boards. I guessed it was morning. I'd slept a long time. I was really hurting now, as the pain killer had worn off. The lights went on and an officer came in. He gave me a paper cup of water and some pills. "For the pain," he said. He went out and the door was shut. The light stayed on. Thank heavens for small favors! I was in a world where little things became important and big things didn't exist.

A little later I turned the handle. A guard opened the door. He was the one who said I walked like a spider. He made no attempt to help me. I held on to the wall and managed to get to the bathroom. He followed me in and watched me drop my pants. "You have two assholes," he laughed. A piece of flack had entered my cheek and it was all pink and puffed up in a circle. He was one "nice fellow!"

When he returned me to my cell, I found a man in a uniform waiting for me. He said he was from the Red Cross. To prove it, he showed me a pad which had printed on it "American Red Cross." The words were in a semi-circle with a Red Cross under



(L to R) Capt. E.E. Hendrickson, unknown.

them. He told me in a very pleasant manner that the Red Cross needed some information; so they could notify my loved ones that I was still alive. I said, "OK". He asked name, rank and serial number; which I gave him. Then he asked what kind of plane was I flying in. "The Red Cross doesn't have to know that", I said. "Look," he said, showing me the pad again. "I don't care. The Red Cross doesn't have to know that," I said as calmly as I could. "Your loved ones will never know you are alive," he said in a miffed voice. "They'll just have to sweat it out," I answered in a sad voice. He stalked out and the light went out again. I had learned one thing. They didn't know where I'd come from.

After about an hour of thinking of a million different things, the light went on. Two guys in white aprons and chef hats pushed in a huge pot on a table with wheels. Their whites were very dirty. I looked in the pot. It had many rings around the inside. Evidently, they never cleaned it. It looked like hot water with cabbage leaves and other foreign objects floating in it. They ladled some in a bowl, left it on the floor and went out. The light stayed on. My stomach did flips but I knew I had to eat. It was as bad as it looked. They returned, collected the bowl and left. The light went out.

I tried to sleep the time away, but my wounds were hurting again. A knock came on my wall. An English-accented voice said, "Don't tell them anything. A guy who talked has been here forty days". I didn't answer. It could be a trick. The voice never spoke again. Another mystery.

After a terrible night, the man with the pills came again. I was glad for that. Shortly after him, the light went on and the guard who had helped me the first day stood in the doorway. "Come", he said and he helped me down the corridor and into an office.

Meeting Mr. Nice Guy

An officer was sitting on a desk. His leg was swinging back and forth. He was all smiles as he said, "Sit down and have a cigarette". He offered me one from an American cigarette pack. I was glad to get it. He snapped open a lighter and lit me