

May 20, 1987

Dear John,

Your latest communique prompts me to fill in a few details and answer a few questions.

At Luckenwalde (Stalag IIIA) Lt. Col. Herte was the SAO, Oakes was his executive officer. They shared a cubicle up near the front door with correspondent Ed Beattie, whose book "Diary of Kriegy" gives the best picture of such a camp I've ever found. He gives a picture of the daily life, food, internal organization, liberation, the whole squalid camp, plus the funny episodes, complete with pictures. General Ruge (Norweign) was the senior allied officer in the camp.

I was in the third group to leave the march from Schubin and be squeezed into a box car. We had a little (very little) food at first, nothing at all the last day on the train. We reached the Luckenwalde during the night of the 10th of February, and went on a tour of the town. We marched to the wrong camp, then turned around and marched to the other end of town, to Stalag IIIA.

Rations at Luckenwalde were the worst we had in Germany, and the whole camp was sinking until, miracle of miracles, the blessed Red Cross got parcels through to us (March 7th, #10)! The goons couldn't find enough food to feed us but they did manage to send Max Schmeling to visit us. I've often wondered what quirk of teutonic logic was responsible for this visit.

When the parcels finally came through the irrespressible entrepreneur from Fort Worth went back into the parcel delivery business, as at Schubin. After the Russians overran the area Amon went down town and got a couple of willing Ruskies to blow open the post office safe - he took a suitcase full of German stamps home with him and set up a mail order business selling them. Reportedly, he wanted Stud Beasley to help him, but Stud was preoccupied trying to find a P-38 pistol. A very few days after the stamps were liberated an American jeep appeared at the camp gate and the officer in it had orders to get Amon and Bob Henry. Some American newspaper editors were visiting General Simpson's IX Army Headquarters, among them Amon Sr.

When the Germans pulled out of the camp on April 21st they were astonished and upset to see an allied guard detail, complete with arm bands, moving out to set up guard posts around the camp. Such was the internal organization that had been developed under their noses. The Russians blew in the next day.

After the Russians relieved the goons as our jailors at Luckenwalde, the P.O.W.'s began filtering back to the American lines. Finally the Ruskies found the camp population dwindling to the point that they went out and recaptured us and herded us back to the camp so they could make a big show of turning us over to the American forces on May 21st.

X

In answer to the question as to who was repatriated with Col. Drake - it was Frank Maxwell - I appeared before the same repatriation board. As you may remember my hands had been a mess since Rotenberg, but perversely, they proceeded to improve greatly by the time the board arrived. However, as a result of the infection, I did get several trips to the doctors in Posen, a stay in the POW hospital in Wollstein (this was a gasser), several Wassermans, and a German Military Court Martial. Before you ask, the Wassermans were all negative, and we were all acquitted.

George Durgin, Seymour Bolton, Pat Teel and I were tried on the charge of willfully disobeying the lawfully given orders of a German guard, etc., etc. On a trip to Posen to see the doctors we got off the train and started off to the hospital, the guard marching in the gutter and we four marching smartly on the sidewalk behind him. This resulted in much arm waving and conferring and we thought we had him convinced that we were permitted to walk on the sidewalk. However, once back at the camp the stupid Kraut reported the incident and we got a ride to Gnessen for the full military court martial, Deutch style. With the skillful help of Captain Ferguson and Captain Wilcox, we achieved the rare distinction of being acquitted.

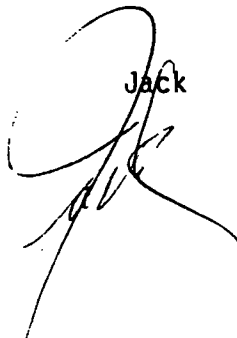
Later some goon bastard decided the powers that be had better get a supply of hostages, so they sentenced Jimmy Schmitt and Lt. Col. Schaefer to death (I think Jimmy shook his finger at a Feldwebel), and then orders came down that we four were to be retried (what double jeopardy?). Fortunately, Ivan blew in with the snow from the east, we marched out of Oflag 64, and were scattered all over Germany. So neither Teel, Durgin, Bolton or Rathbone were tried again; Col. Sage to the contrary notwithstanding, Pat (Teel) was not sentenced to death - Lt. Schmitt and Lt. Col. Schaefer were not executed.

Some time get me started on the month as Russian prisoners at Luckenwalde.

I enjoyed the tape you sent very much, but didn't you tell me that you sang in it?

John, you're doing a great job. We appreciate it more than I can tell you.

Maybe I'll get to Washington.

Jack


Love to Mary - J.