

Yanks to west, Russians to east, evacuate camp

This is the eighth in a series of articles written by R. S. Stewart on his experiences as a prisoner of war in Germany after being captured at Diippo.

ARTICLE VIII
The fall of 1944 and the spring of 1945 saw one air raid after another. Quite often the sky was full of planes. One day we watched one thousand bombers going over. They were protected by fighter planes, who stopped German fighters getting through to the bombers.

Burning planes were to be seen everywhere. The sky was full of parachutes with the crews landing all over the place. One plane with a dead German sitting upright at the controls, came sailing through our camp just above our heads. The guards informed us that most of the downed planes were German.

The trains were being bombed on the tracks. We watched our boys dive-bombing an engine and on the third attempt, a big explosion took place. Unfortunately for us, some of these trains were bringing us food, but we could stand being hungry, because we figured that truly the war would soon be over.

Soon we were suffering from extreme hunger. One day we took a vote to decide when we would have our one meal of the day. Some of the fellows wanted to eat in the morning. Others wished to dine in the evening. The majority voted for 1400 hours (2:00 p.m.), so that was when we had our one daily meal.

In March 1945, we were ordered to evacuate our camp. The Americans were rapidly approaching from the west and the Russians from the east. The Germans decided that we should be marched away from both of these forces. I suppose they were counting on using us for bargaining purposes.

The night before the march was a busy one. We made haversacks from blankets, jackets and trousers. These were filled with canned goods, bread, biscuits, jam, extra socks and cigarettes.

When we had loaded our bags, we endeavored to stand up, with the assistance of a friend. If we couldn't walk, we had to unload some of our valued possessions and try again. Finally, leaving various treasures behind, we were ready for the march.

The next morning, we started down the road with lines of guards on either side. What an odd looking group we were! One chap was pushing a baby

carriage containing his belongings. Another prisoner had found an old wagon on which he loaded his precious possessions. Most of us staggered on with our heavy loads on our backs.

When our arms became purple because of the cords cutting into our shoulders, we threw away a can of food or even some cigarettes. The line of march was littered with items of food and clothing.

In the evening when we were ordered to halt for the night, we were practically exhausted. Sometimes as we stopped at the side of the road, we wrapped up in blankets and lay in the ditch. At other times, we spent the night at some farmyard. This provided an opportunity to obtain a little extra food.

We worked in groups. Some fellows gathered wood and started a fire; others began the cooking, while the rest of us who spoke German secretly endeavored to contact the neighboring farmer to ascertain if he were friendly and if so, to ask for a little assistance. I managed to obtain, at different times, milk, eggs, bread, cookies and jam. The boys who were preparing the meal would be eagerly awaiting our return to see what extras could be thrown into the pot.

Heading My Way?
I had several interesting experiences while on the march. On one occasion when we stopped near a farmhouse, I contacted the farmer's wife to try and scrounge some milk or eggs. She apologized for having nothing to spare since the German army had taken her extra provisions that very day.

Next morning, just as we were preparing to take to the road again, she appeared at the front door and to the amazement of the German guards and the POWs, asked for the



Can You Identify the Writer?

red-headed Canadian because she wished to give him two eggs. A few months earlier, she would have regretted her rashness, but she got away with this open defiance of the guards who realized that, in the near future, the shoe would probably be on the other foot and at this time, they were trying to be on good terms with us.

Another time when we had stopped in a small town, I stepped out and talked to a lovely German mother and her 18-year-old daughter. At that time, there were some dark-skinned French Moroccan troops in the village and the ladies were petrified. They had been informed that these were American negroes and all women would be raped.

I assured them that these troops were not American and even if they were, they would not harm anyone. I told them that when our allies reached their part of Germany, they could rest assured that, in most cases, the residents would be treated with respect. As she handed me a jug of milk, she smiled and said "Just Hitler propaganda".

I had breakfast one morning with a most gracious German family. Having approached the house from the rear, I was smuggled inside. The fam-



The March is Over

ily was enjoying its first meal of the day and I dug in to the porridge, eggs, toast, jam and coffee as quickly as possible. As I was leaving, the lady handed me a large batch of cookies which she had spent much of the night preparing.

Some day I hope to revisit these farms, but just now the route lies on the other side of the iron curtain and I choose to stay on this side. But I look forward to the opportunity of thanking these folks some day. Once we had to cross a railway line and we saw planes up above. Eight of the marchers

carrying white sheets and who had been previously briefed on their duties, rushed to a field and in one minute, there appeared a large sign saying "POW". The dive bombers on the first run came at us one after another.

We hit the ground instantly but when the bombing was over, none of the boys had been hurt. It wasn't till after the third attack that we realized the Yanks had hit the train which they had been after. Then they gave us the victory twist and roared off into the distance with the smiles of their faces indelibly engraved on our minds.

The weirdest thing happened when we stopped in a large town. American tanks had been seen at the outskirts and the authorities panicked. They built a big bonfire in the village square in order to get rid of incriminating evidence. I happened to notice another prisoner carrying two loaves

of bread. But I was too late. The place had literally been cleaned out in about five minutes. However, all was not in vain. A German guard agreed to trade me a loaf of bread for five cigarettes.

I seized the loaf but the cigarettes fell into the mud. He was extremely angry and levelled his rifle at me, but I just laughed at his predicament. Fortunately for me, he spent his time retrieving his lost goods instead of giving me a blast.

When we had marched for about three weeks, we decamped at a large walled farmhouse. As we were preparing to get something to eat, the German officer in charge ordered us to march again. When our SBO refused to do so, the Germans declared they would protect us no longer and headed off into the night, leaving us on our own.

We immediately made preparations to defend ourselves against enemy groups who might wish to dispose of us. Very soon the German guards who had been with us on the march kept coming back one by one, turning in their weapons and asking for our protection. We soon had a large number of prisoners but better still, we had some real arms and ammunition.

I had an interesting task to perform at this time. Standing all by myself in a field, I signalled to planes flying overhead. Using flags, I let them know that we were allied prisoners of war and we were delighted when they returned the recognition signs.

A few days later on Friday, April 13, at 13 minutes after 12 noon, the first Americans reached our position. Those Americans were great guys. As the trucks and tanks roared by, jackets, chocolate bars, cigarettes, cameras etc., were thrown at us in a steady stream. Very soon, a detachment broke off from the long line to look after us. Prison camp was now a thing of the past.

Richmond school bell stolen from rooftop

The Richmond schoolbell which weighs between 175 and 250 lbs., has been stolen right from the roof of the school.

The unused schoolhouse is a part of the Halton County museum complex in Kelso conservation area, located right at the far western border of the park. Since classes are no longer held there, it is being maintained in its present state by the museum board until there are funds available for its restoration.

TUESDAY'S DAILY check of the property disclosed the bell was missing. There were truck

marks beside the school, and despite the weight, the roof was not even scored. The roof could be mounted from a low shed. The wheel that turned the bell was broken.

Police were notified and Corp. Larry Kneale is investigating. Museum curator Maj. H. J. Newman provided police with a drawing of the old school bell. The school will eventually be used for lectures and meetings after it is restored, he explained.

Still writing

Now manager of a feed business in Erin, former Free Press linotype operator Art Hawes will continue to write his column for the sports page.

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Hire 26 new teachers for Esquering schools

Twenty-six teachers have been hired to teach in Esquering this fall, with two being principals. James Kennedy leaving the North York school system will be principal at Limehouse, replacing Eric Balkind who is now co-ordinating principal of all Esquering schools, while Mrs. Eleanor Hillon of Milton will be principal at Norval school replacing Jack Reed who has moved to the new Stewarttown Senior School.

At Glen Williams the five new teachers are Mrs. Katherine Newman of Georgetown, Mrs. Margaret Felce of Georgetown, Mrs. Winifred Jackson of Port Dover, Mark Garner and James Barrett, both coming from Hamilton.

AT LIMEHOUSE, in addition to the new principal are Miss Carol Lawrence of Esquering, and Thomas G. Travis of Toronto.

Speside school will have three new teachers, Miss Katherine Bowman of Thornton, Miss Vanessa Hosain of Toronto, and the 1967 Dairy Princess, Carol Swackhamer of Acton.

PINEVIEW WILL see four new teachers, Mrs. Judith Bassett from Windsor, Miss Judith Rayworth of Burlington, Miss Elizabeth Belton of London and Miss Beth Buderick of Toronto.

The largest number of teachers new to Esquering will be at Stewarttown Senior School including Miss Jackie Lince of Georgetown, Mrs. M. James, John Lenz, Bob Pinkerton and Barry Brown, all from Georgetown teaching system. Mrs. Marjorie Elliott from MacTier, Miss Joanne Mackie from Bowmanville, Mrs. Judith Posthumus from Brampton and David Lawrence from Etobicoke. At last week's meeting the Board was still short two teachers for the fall.

WITH THE introduction of the new system of kindergarten in Esquering, with the children going to school all day, but on alternate days, the Board are considering hiring teachers' helpers for the long noon hour break.

Two portable classrooms are being erected at Pineview school, to accommodate the fall influx.

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