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← Also was at Qorlitz

CZESTAW

August 31, 1985

Dear Mr. & Mrs. Michalowski:

My wife and I were very happy to meet you two fine people at the 106th Division Reunion at Morgantown, West Virginia. It was an added pleasure to help Pan Czeslaw Goca locate another one of the seven Ex-POWs for whom he was searching. On making your acquaintance we can understand why you would stand out in his memory.

We received another letter recently from Czeslaw. We will send you copies of the letters we have received since he started writing to us last year, which will give you much information about him making it unnecessary for him to repeat himself. I do this since he is old and he probably depends on others to convey his thoughts, also he is not in good health.

On meeting you I did not have the slightest concern that you would not make a reasonable effort to get the \$20 to him. I regret it cost you nine dollars to send it, but I am sure he will appreciate what you did and the extra ten dollars you sent to him.

We are retired but ours has been a very busy summer. I have some elderly aunts and uncles we try to visit, as well as, my 68 year old sister in central West Virginia. Also, we spend our winters in Arizona and we must start preparing now to leave the last of October.

We have property in West Virginia and they are reappraising everything there, which has required several meetings. I am on the Governor's (Maryland) Upper Potomac River Commission and we are into a 7½ million dollar project and the Commission has only three (unpaid) members. I was supposed to go to New York City last week, but since I wasn't the chairman or secretary of the Commission I begged successfully to be excused.

Katherine's brother a retired U.S. Army veteran lives in Germany, and he is to visit us in September if he doesn't decide to visit Czechoslovakia instead. We hope to hear from him soon. During WW II he served with the Statue of Liberty 77th Division out of New York. He also served two hitches in Vietnam.

In closing we wish to again thank you for helping us get the \$20 to Czeslaw. Also, we wish you much happiness and good health until we meet again next year.

We all must pray Poland, Czechoslovakia, as well as, all countries under Communist domination will soon be free. Then we can visit without fear and enjoy those beautiful countries and their wonderful people.

P.S. My wife came to America
from Czechoslovakia in 1938.

Best wishes,

John Adams, Jr.

The 106th Infantry Division was formed at Fort Jackson, South Carolina in March 1943. I was transferred from Fort McPherson to Fort Jackson to join the new division assigned to Service Company 422nd Infantry Regiment. After training we went on maneuvers in Tennessee in late winter and early spring 1944.

After maneuvers we went to Camp Atterbury, Indiana. At this time we were well trained. Before going overseas they stripped our Division of most of the young soldiers and used them for replacements overseas.

Our well trained men were replaced by washouts from Paratroopers, Air Corp and other units. The following diary is a product of records kept and the memories of L.B. Bradley, Paul Rhoerick, Harold Axon of Service Company 422nd Infantry Regiment 106th Division.

The Division loaded on trains and departed Camp Atterbury on October 11, 1944 at 12:15 P.M. and arrived at Camp Miles Standish at 9:00 PM on October 12. The only incident on this trip was the failure of someone to warn us about the tunnel going into New York. It was about 4:30 and our coal fired stoves were going full blast. Needless to say when we entered the tunnel every one was smoked like a country ham. A small amount of hell was raised. The Division spent the next eight days preparing to depart the U.S.A. We did not know where we were going but guessed that Europe would be our destination.

The Chaplain invited all of us who wished to write home to do so, and he would send our letters with his own after we had sailed. We were not allowed to write for a few days.

We left Camp Miles Standish on October 20 for New York. We boarded a ferry at Hoboken, New Jersey at 8:30--crossed the river and boarded the British ship "Aquatania" at 9:00. The Red Cross met us with hot coffee and doughnuts. We left the port of New York at 8:30 AM and my compartment was A-8.

We landed at Firth of Clyde, Scotland on October 28th. We saw the "Queen Elizabeth" leaving for the U.S.A. The food on the trip over was "lousy"--boiled eggs for breakfast are not my favorite.

We loaded a smaller ship the "King George V" to go ashore at Greenock, Scotland. At the railroad station we boarded a ~~Lints~~ train about 9:00 PM. We traveled south through Glasgow, Birmingham and saw where they make Lonnie Walker Scotch Whiskey. We arrived at the small town of Adlestrop at 12:15 PM.

October 30--November 29 Time was spent collecting supplies, walking around in the mud (it rained every day). (L.B.B.) spent four days on furlough in Birmingham and met a sweet Scotch gal by the name of Mary McLendon.

November 29 We left Adlestrop by truck at 4:00 AM and arrived at Camp Hursley near South Hampton at 7:00 PM. Again we were met by the Red Cross and their coffee and doughnuts.

November 30 We left Camp Hursley at 5:00 AM and boarded LST 400 at 11:00 AM. We landed at LeHarve, France at daylight and unloaded the boat at 1:00 PM. We arrived at Bivoue area near Rouen, France at 11:00 PM.

This rain has not stopped and it is very cold. We are sleeping in pup tents and this has become a chore. We pulled out of Bivoue area on December 6th at 4:00 AM and headed for the front lines.

December 8 We arrived at St. Vith, Belgium at 9:00 PM. There is more snow here than I have ever seen and it is much too cold for a Georgia boy from Palmetto.

December 10 We left St. Vith and moved up to our position on the front line near Shoenburg. It is getting colder if that is possible. We were told that there would be little or no action until spring so we set up permanent type kitchens and tried to make ourselves comfortable. We had a three story stone house and I slept on the third floor.

December 16 All hell broke loose at daylight. We found out it was for real when our first casualty came in. Rip Woods and medic Hernandez loaded the soldier (I do not remember his name) and started toward the field hospital. Our Company Commander Captain Charles Gibson is called to a meeting. He never returned. We abandon the kitchen and get in the fox-holes and await the assault. During the night we moved out and joined the rest of the Regiment. About 3:00 AM we arrived at the Hill after being shelled several times. Only the mercy of God saved our little band this night. The next two days Remnant Regiment withdraws to the motor pool on the Hill near Shoenburg. There we are joined by Remnants of Field Artillery and some from 423rd Regiment.

Our food is all gone with the exception of 600 lbs of flour and 400 lbs of sugar, 1 case of Carnation milk.

December 20 For lunch we made a pot of simple syrup (boiled water and sugar) and mixed some milk and flour and used table salt to grease a grill. With this mixture we made pancakes and ate until all had filled. Today I helped to take the wounded up the Hill. I was standing beside him when he was shot in the foot. The Germans came across with a white flag after Captain Brown had met with the enemy. He notified all of us that he was surrendering at daylight December 21st. All who wished could go but he warned that we were surrounded and that our Division had withdrawn back to St. Vith. We were without food and supplies and were helpless.

Some Captain from another outfit that had seen service in North Africa announced he was leaving and would take anyone who wanted to go. One person went with him. They only got a few yards when the Burp gun riddled them down. I occupied a fox hole with a tall skinny soldier from Oklahoma whose name was Ivan H. Moss. Our fox hole was so deep I couldn't see out. After destroying all our equipment and pouring gasoline on the sugar, we surrendered to the Germans at daylight December 21st. This has surely been the worst 11 days of my life.

December 21 We walked all day with out food to Prum Germany where we spent the night in a bombed school house.

December 22 We left Prum and walked to Gerolstein and again had no food. After reaching Gerolstein we were given one third loaf of bread and 2 ounces of cheese. We slept in a rail road barn and were bombed during the night by our own planes. It is very cold, I slept with my clothes and shoes on.

December 23 We received one third loaf of bread and 2 ounces of cheese and boarded a box car. We moved out during the night but only went a short distance to Dberbettering.

December 24 We remained locked in the box cars until about 11:00 Am when our train is straffed by our own planes. The guards let us out of the train and we formed the words POW in the snow. The planes saw and left but we lost 10 dead and 47 injured. Sargent Reeves was shot and injured just sitting next to me. We spent the rest of the day and night locked in the box cars. This has been the most miserable of all Christmas Eves--no food and no water and very cold. Paul Rhoerick suffered frozen feet and legs tonight.

December 25 We left the box cars today and started to march. We were given one third loaf of bread each and 3 gallon of syrup to be divided between 160 men. The syrup was very cold and each man received a tablespoon full in his hand. We reached the town of Kilgore and spent the night in a barn.

December 26 We walked all day--very weak by this time. I got my first sign of compassion today. As we marched through a small village an old woman with tears in her eyes pitched some small pieces of cake to us. The German Guards hollered at her to stop. We reached Mayen and spent the night in a tile factory. (very dirty and dusty)

December 27 We marched all day and reached Koblenz on the Rhine River. The town has been bombed plenty. Seems we are barely alive by now. We spent the night in a big barn and received a small portion of soup tonight.

December 28 Again we started marching early. Koblenz was bombed again as we are just outside the city. It is a fearful thing to be bombed. We are passing up nothing now to eat--frozen turnips in fields, anything. I ate my first frozen raw potato. We arrived at Wheirs and spent the night in an old slate mine near Montebaun. Today Frenchy from "A" Company was shot by a tall mean S.S. Trooper for digging into a hill of sugar beets. I shall never forget his scream. He was loaded on a wagon (not killed).

December 29 We walked a short distance to Kriegs, and received one-half loaf of bread and 3 ounces of molasses and a very small piece of oleo. We spent the rest of the day and night in an old barn at a brick factory. We received a cup of what the Germans call coffee. (burnt acorns)

December 30 We boarded freight cars at 1:00 AM.

December 31 Arrived at Stalag 4B about 6:00 PM. We were deloused and searched and were finally put into barracks with British soldiers at 2:00
January 1. The British gave us a cup of hot tea from their rations. Never has a cup of tea been more appreciated.

January 1-11 Time spent in prison. A small amount of time was allowed to walk around inside of the compound, we were given a meager amount of food--a few potatoes, bread, oleo and something they call cheese. On January we were all deloused again and transferred to Laroe Warehouse.

January 12 We are given rations of one-half loaf bread, 4 ounces of meat and 1 ounce of oleo and loaded on box cars.

January 13 We arrived at Gorlitz, Germany near the Czechoslovakia and Polish Border, unloaded and marched 304 miles to Stalag 8-A. We had our pictures taken with numbers on them and placed in barracks with about 300 men to a building. Many were French, British and Belgium. Some Yugoslovaks sent a boiler of rice to us. It is very cold every day. The temperature is about 15 degrees during the day. There is no hot water and very little coal for the heater. The food consists of large pots of soup (greens of some kind). Sometimes we get a stew with many kinds of meat in it. I saw a wagon being unloaded with all kinds and sizes of carcasses--probably deer, rabbit, dogs, etc.

Sargent Pendleton has been in charge of the barracks and he stays in a small room at the end of the barracks. He is also in charge of dividing the rations. After a few days of swapping extra bowls of soup for cigarets, Sargent Paul McMillam and others removed him from the job and gave the job to me (L.B. Bradley). In order for every one to be satisfied, I divided the food in the middle of the barracks for everyone to see. I spent the night of January 28 with the French in the compound. We had hot chocolate. The coldest weather so far has been 15 below zero. TOO cold for this Georgia boy.

February 1 We were moved to our new barracks today. I saw the sun for the first time in many days. The weather seems to be breaking.

February 14 Valentine Day--The Russian Army forces the Germans to leave Stalag 8-A. We start walking at 8:00 AM and spent the night in a barn near Reichenbach. The towns we passed were Friedensdorf, Gersdorf and Wieselbach.

February 15 We walked all day in the rain and spent the night in Bautzen Army Camp.

February 16 We walked today through Blautschuz and spent the night in a military post in Kamenz.

February 17 We walked all day through Brauna, Neukirch and spent the night in an Army post at Konigsbruch.

February 18 We walked through Laubnitz, Tauschanbau and spent the night in a barn at a brick factory yard at Kaulkreath.

February 19 We walked through Altleis, Dohfkohler, Losslynn, and Ockylla and spent the night in an army camp at Meiben.

February 20 We crossed the Elbe River through Zehren and Piskowitz and spent the night in a barn at a brick factory yard at Lommatbsch.

February 21 We walked in the rain through Meila, Schallhausen and Pommlitz and spent the night in an army post at Dobeln. We saw our first Jewish prisoners here.

February 22 We walked through Zscherplitz, Zschwitz, Fischendorph and spent the night in Leisnig Army Camp. Today I saw a little of what being a Jew in Germany is like. They had 15 Jews hitched to a wagon and the prisoners were wearing stripped convict clothes. Two Germans sat in the wagons using long whips. They were using the Jews as horses.

February 23 We walked through Brosen, Skaplda, Colditz, Ballendorf and spent the night in a barn at Bad Lausick. We rested here all day on the 24th. A farmer fed us potatoes. It was really appreciated.

February 25 We walked through Flossberg and spent the night in a barn at Borna.

February 26 We walked through Gornitz, Deutzen, Heuersdorf, Ramsdorf, Wintersdorf, Meuselwitz, Prehlitz, Penkwitz, Spora, and spent the night in a barn in Wurchwitz.

February 27 We walked through Bockwitz and spent the night in the Zeitz Army Camp.

February 28 We walked through Grobosida, Raba, Haynsburg, Grossra, Hartmannsdorf, Rauda and Kursdorf and spent the night in a brick factory at Eisenberg. Total kilometers we have walked is 298.

March 1 We marched 19 kilometers through Saasa, Hainspitz, Trotz, Rauschwitz, Wetzdorf and spent the night in a barn in Steudwitz.

March 3 We walked 30 kilometers today through Dorndorf, Nevengonna, Nerkewitz, Lehesten, Altengonna, Krippendorf, Jesserstest, Hohlstedt, Krankendorf, Umpferstedt and Mellingen and spent the night in a barn at Taubach. It has snowed all day.

March 4 We were given a British Red Cross Parcel today. We had one parcel for every 5 men. We were also given 7 cigarettes. We walked only 2 kilometers and spent the next 4 days at Mellinden in a barn. We ate sugar beets and have really been sick with dysentery for 2 days. I thank God that we are resting here instead of walking.

March 8 Again we have ice and snow. We walked 28 kilometers through Taubak, Weimar, Passendorf, Oberg, Runstedt, Nohra, Monchenholz, Hausen, and spent the night in a barn at Bussleben near Erfurt.

March 9 We had hot soup today and stayed in the barn all day.

March 10 We marched 23 kilometers through Erfurt, Schmira, Gamstadt, Tuttleben and spent the night in Gotha. We were bombed during the night.

March 11 We walked through Warza, West Hausen, Langensalza and spent the night in a barn in Schonstedt.

March 12 We walked through Grossengottern, Seebach, Hongeda, Muhlhausen, Ammern, Horsmar, Zella, Helmsdorf, and spent the night in a barn in Silberhausen. The total kilometers to here is 455. We remained at Silberhausen all day on the 13th. I am just now recovering from dysentery.

March 14 We walked through Dingelstadt, Kallmerode, Leinefelde, Breitenbach, Worbis, and spent the night in a barn at Winlzinberode. Paul Rhoerick who speaks German talked a lady out of a glass of beer in a small town as we passed through. We spent the next six days here.

The war is going badly for the Germans here. We have no way of knowing how bad except to see expressions on the guards face. We are very skinny but of good cheer. I cooked some grass, danderlions with potatoes three times. It was very good, I also added a few snails that we found under some boards.

March 20 We walked through Ferna, and spent the night in a brick factory at Duderstadt. The total kilometers to here is 486. Our group is led to a third story in this factory. They also have Russians, French and British prisoners here.

March 21 The sun is shining and we are taken to a small creek to bathe. Today, in order to better feed and care for the prisoners the guards asked for volunteers to go to another town. All but 26 of my group volunteered. Seven of Service Company remained at Duderstadt. They are L.B. Bradley, Ivan H. Moss, Frank J. Fullett, Eula E. Harris, Jr., Warren E. Mattes, Raymond Christenson, George Pendleton. Up to now this has been a joint diary of L.B. Bradley and Paul Rhoerick with the help of Harold Axon on events before our capture. The following 30 days are L.B. Bradley's and the small group that remained at Duderstadt. A separate diary follows at the end of this kept by Paul Rhoerick.

March 21-April 2 The time has been spent laying around and picking body lice that we have accumulated sleeping in so many barns without taking a bath. Some of our people have had their shoes and other items stolen by the Russians. Three British soldiers, (W.T. Fletcher, Stanley Well, John Reverly) agreed to watch our things while we go out for exercise and in turn we will watch theirs. It has proven a good system for protection. We are getting extra tea here and more cheese and oleo. The guards are getting more friendly and we think our freedom is not far away. The fact that tomorrow we hit the road does not bother us.

April 3 We pull out at 8:00 AM in a hard rain. It is also very cold. We march 20 kilometers and spend the night in a barn at Bartofeldte. A farmer gave us some barley to eat. He let us cook it in his kitchen in a large pot.

April 4 It is very cold and bad. We march 22 kilometers through the rain and hail and spent the night in a barn at Werna. This is pretty farm country. I saw my first horse butchered today. It was in a small village. A man held the bridle very tight and another took a long knife and cut his throat from underneath. The total kilometers to here is 528.

April 5 The weather is very rough. We marched with only one loaf of bread for each 10 men. We walked 24 kilometers to Hasselfelde. Every one is so weak by this time we spent 2 days of rest.

April 8 We marched 25 kilometers to Westerhausen. We saw the city of Halberstadt bombed today. Although the sun is shining and sky is blue, by midafternoon, the skies are dark from the smoke of the burning city. The total kilometers to here has been 577.

April 9-10 We rested here both days. We were given Red Cross parcels to be divided between eight persons. One of our gang died this AM (9th). We buried him at once. They called us out at 12:30 PM to move out but called it off. We feel that something is up.

April 11 We are by now nothing but skin and bones. We walked only 10 kilometers to Ditfurt, and spent the night in a barn. The total kilometers has been 587.

April 12. Some one woke early and knocked on the barn door. (The guards require you to knock when you must relieve yourself) They only allow three out at a time. No one answers and we break the door down and find a GI Jeep outside. What a great day! All praise to God whom I have had the honor and pleasure to lean upon these past few months! They left us some K rations and some chocolate bars. We had to stay in Ditfurt from Thursday until Monday for the trucks to come for us. We roamed the town and ate what we could find. My good friend, Ivan Moss, ate some molasses and got very sick. They moved him to a hospital and I have not seen or heard from him since. (Thirty-five years later I find him in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma).

April 16 We are moved by truck to Hildesheim.

April 17 We are given a bath and deloused today. I am assigned to a group of 22 men (Group 22) to fly to France tomorrow.

April 18 We boarded a C47 named "Queenie" at 1:30 PM and reached LeHarve France at 6:15 and was met by a band and the Red Cross with coffee and doughnuts. We are loaded on a truck to go to Camp Lucky Strike about 40 miles up the coast. Here we received a bath, soup and a Bed.

April 19 We are up at 7:00 AM to a GI Breakfast. I was given a check-up and clothing, etc.

April 19-28 This time is spent getting processed for the boat and eating.

April 28 We are examined today and they tell us we will leave at 3:00 AM tomorrow.

April 29 We are up at 1:00 AM, eat at 1:30 AM and load on the truck at 3:00 AM. We arrive at LeHarve at 6:30 AM and board the USS Troopship "General Squires"

April 30 We arrived at Southampton about 7:00 AM.

May 1 We moved out and joined a convoy for home. After three weeks of sailing, we come in sight of the Boston Harbor. We are to land on Friday but plans were changed because of a big storm. We toss all night and finally land on Saturday afternoon with a load of sick people.

After a sixty day furlough and vacation in Miami, I was sent to Camp Blanding and was discharged October 8, 1945 as Staff Sargent L.B. Bradley.

The following is the diary of Paul Rhoerick after he and the others left Duderstadt on March 21.

March 21 We walked through Mingerode, Obernfeld, Bilshausen and saw a bomber shot down. We spent the night in a barn at Wulften.

March 22 We walked through Schiegershausen, Osterode, Lasfelde, Badenhause, Gittelde and spent the night in a barn at Stauffenburg.

March 23 We walked through Munchenof, Herrhausen, Seesen and Neuekrug and spent the night in a barn at Lutterabbge.

March 24. We rested today and they gave us hot soup, tea, bread and jam.

March 25 We walked through Saltzgitter, Beinum, Lobmactersen, Barum and spent the night in a barn in Immerndorf.

March 26 We walked through Thiede, Runingen and spent the night in Stammlager at Braunschweig.

March 22 We were issued one loaf of bread for 4 men and they gave us some soup. (Jerry soup)

March 28 We got up at 5:45 AM had roll call at 6:30...Made some soup myself (Jerry soup) at 5:30 P.M. There was an air raid at 8:00 PM and we went to bed at 9:30. We heard bombing nearby at 11:30 PM

March 29 We got up at 5:45. There was an air raid at 11:00 AM and we went on Skilly detail at 3:30 PM. We came back at 5:30 PM and had noodle soup which was very good and finally to bed at 7:30 PM.

March 30 We got up at 6:45. Roll call was at 7:30 and we were bombed again at 10:00. Bombs fell 100 yards from my hut. I was praying and sweating at the same time and I know the Good Lord answers prayers.

March 31 We got up at 6:45. Same routine as yesterday.

April 1 Easter Sunday. We got up at 7:00 and roll call was at 8:00. I went to church at 11:00 came back and made some soup myself for dinner. I went for Jerry soup at 5:00 PM. The women at the kitchen gave me some buttered noodles for supper. We went to bed at 10:00 PM.

April 2 We had some good news today. They tell us that we will be free in 4-5 days. I am very happy that our tanks are eighty miles from here. We are all praying that they come today with food and medicine.

All we had to eat today was Jerry soup. I went to bed at 9:00 PM. The planes flew over for about an hour.

April 3 I am very hungry this morning. We heard that Hanover is being shelled. The bugs are eating us alive but I am praying to God for better days to come. I know He will see me through because of my talk with my Lord and Savior before I went to sleep.

April 4 We are out for roll call at 8:20. We came in the hut and had some bread and coffee. The Jerry's had inspection and are worried that our troops will find us this way. We are given Red Cross parcels--one to every three men. So the Lord has answered my prayers again.

April 5 The Red Cross has made me feel better. I have been sick for two days. Sargent McMillan has been taking good care of me. We said the Lord's Prayer together--news is good.

April 6 I feel much better today. I went to A.G.M.P. to get rid of my bugs. We walked two miles but didn't do any good. There was an air raid at 5:00. There are bombers overhead. A lot of Jerry planes are up there but it didn't take long for them to come back down.

April 8 We received more Red Cross boxes last night--927 in all. We will have two boxes to every three men. Everybody is very happy so we had some Jerry soup at 5:30. The soup was good for a change. At 9:00 PM orders came to move out in half hour. One more Red Cross parcel for 15 men and some clothing to take with us. It is 11:00 PM and I am still up. We are having a prayer meeting while we wait.

April 9 It is 2:00 AM and we are still waiting to move. So we will have another prayer meeting. I am going to lead in prayer this time. We are told that we will not move tonight.

April 10 7:30 AM is roll call. We had a breakfast of coffee, bread, butter and meat. I feel very good now. The news is very good. Our tanks are only twelve miles away. I don't know if we will move or not. They don't know where to take us. I am hoping and praying that we will be free in the next 48 hours.

"A NOTE BY ROCKY" April 9, 1945

The feeling now in our hearts can only be appreciated and understood by those of us who are unfortunate enough to under-go-each and every fearful hour. Behind a barbwire enclosure thousands of miles from those we love, we wait with anxious eyes with a feeling of fear that our own planes will at any minute end our sacred dreams and hopes of being home. We wait not knowing what the next move of the hand on the clock will bring, but deep down inside the walls of our hearts where it is said is found inscribed in box-car letters the true man, you will see volume upon volume of sincere prayers that we shall be free soon. "Keep saying the prayers Rhoerick, you say each night and we can't miss."

April 10 It is 11:00 AM and we are going to move out now. They are

going to give us one-half loaf of bread, meat and honey. We finally move out at 1:00 PM as our tanks are shelling the town. Where we are going now no one knows. We walked through Cremlingen, Abbenrode, Bornum and Konicslutter and slept in a barn in Nev-Schoderstedt.

April 11 We are up at 7:00 and had some coffee and walked through Bienrode, Uhryrhode, Phpenrode and slept in a barn.

April 12 We are up at 7:15 and walked through Rickensdorf, Dohren, Wefferlingen, Eschenrode, Horsingen and stayed in a barn.

April 13 We are up at 8:00 AM. Our tanks are very near. We all are praying that they will get here today. Finally at 1:35 our tanks are here and most of us are crying for joy.