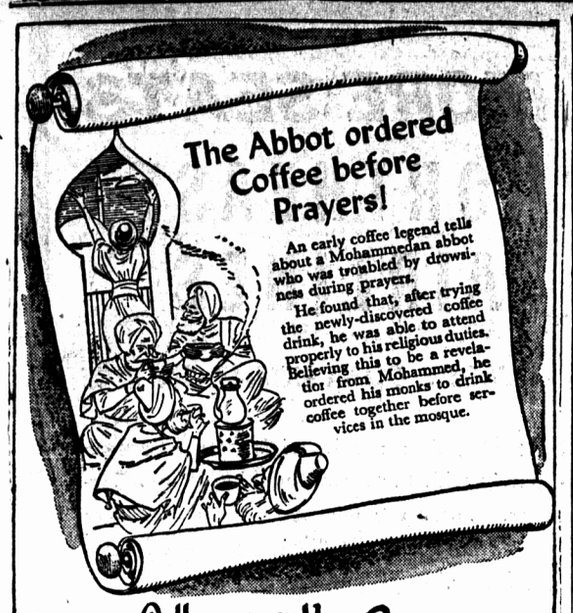

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MH-46

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Describes Experience To Island Companion In Nazi Prison Camp

A graphic description of life in a Nazi prisoner-of-war internment camp during the week before the Liberation is given in the following notes written by Warrant Officer Frank McGregor, of the New Zealand Air Force, and forwarded to Corp. William T. Cullen of Hope River, P.E.I. Corp. Cullen, son of Mr. and Mrs. John Cullen, Hope River, was a fellow prisoner with W-O McGregor, he having been captured at Falise, Normandy, after being twice wounded, and retained in prison for over eight months in Central Germany at Treis Mullberg and Falkenberg Stalag 4B and 413. Corp. Cullen was with the Algonquin Regiment when he was captured.

In a letter received recently by Corp. Cullen from his New Zealand friend, W-O McGregor, the latter recalls memories of Stalag 4B, which contained nearly 300 men in each hut instead of the regulation 200, and which was "freezing cold" during the winter months. A photographer by profession, he states that he found a 16 m.m. sound film of the Invasion Day, taken by German Army photographers, in an attic of a deserted German Army barracks, which he was able to bring home to New Zealand. Following are the notes of W-O McGregor's, whose statements are indorsed by Corp. Cullen, from this prison camp:

First Warning

"On the Friday evening we had our first warning of the approaching battlefront when the biggest ack-ack barrage we had heard to date from 1VB was put up from the Aerodrome just north of us. A few aircraft were cruising overhead. They looked like medium bombers and from the heavy explosions and resultant large volumes of smoke, the Aerodrome and flak defences seemed to be the target. Everyone was quite cheered by the sight of these aircraft as they were obviously front-line support aircraft and not long-range heavy bombers. We had seen the latter on many previous occasions generally Fortresses and sometimes some Lightnings when they came to bomb targets such as Leipzig, Berlin, Chemnitz, Halle, etc., they invariably flew over our camp.

"On the Sunday afternoon we lined up against the wire to watch three fighters circling over and strafing barges on the Elbe. The flashes from their guns were easily discernable followed a few seconds later by a rat-tat-tat. That evening the aircraft and front were the main topics of conversation.

"Monday, and I think Tuesday, were overcast with low stratus cloud and little air activity.

"The next day dawned clear with no haze to speak of. As we stood on roll-call, the throb of engines warned us of approaching aircraft and in a few minutes, to our disappointment about a dozen M.E. 109's passed low overhead flying as though like some furtive wrens skimming from cover to cover to avoid the eye of the hawk. Shortly afterwards, three Thunderbolts passed overhead at about 5,000 feet and almost without ceasing the drone of American fighters was heard for the rest of the day. The Thunderbolts usually came in batches up to about a dozen and the twin-engined Lightnings came in threes.

At about 10 o'clock, as I was going down the road to the cookhouse, three Lightnings circled low over the camp and it was a very heartening sight to me who had seen black crosses for so long to recognize the marks of the U.S.A. on the tailbooms. A train had stopped on the line opposite the camp near Neuf Burxdorf and despite the feverish efforts of the engine crew to dampen the smoke, the Lightning pilots spotted it. The leading aircraft dipped its nose and the steady drone arose to a high-pitched whine.

Cheered R.A.F. Bombers

About two or three ack-ack guns on a flak wagon opened up at it but the bursts seemed to overshoot the aircraft. The nose of the Lightning began spitting orange flame as it opened fire with its cannon, and after a time lag of a few seconds we heard them. As she passed over the target the leading ship nosed up in a steep climb and as she banked over the camp with a flash of silver wings and polished booms, everyone gave a spontaneous cheer (except of course the Jerries). The two other aircraft followed suit and having satisfied themselves that she was well and truly out of commission, left to seek other victims.

In the afternoon, Thunderbolts strafed a train further down the line. The locomotive went up with quite a bang and smoke was pouring away three hours after the attack. Later on Thunderbolts were again seen strafing, about three miles south of the camp and heavy explosions were heard and big smoke clouds seen.

It was obvious that our aircraft had absolute control of the skies. They flew in very loose formation and just cruised around tilting their wings in order to obtain a good view of the earth below. To see those aircraft meant much to us; it almost seemed like a link joining us to our own nation. We knew that in those aircraft were men the same as ourselves, men who thought the same, were doing a similar job to that which we had done, men who spoke the same language, men who were free and in a few hours may be on leave to come and go as they wished, and lastly, men who in an hour or two would be eating a decent meal both in quantity and quality.

We all discussed what they would be eating, bacon and eggs? Fresh meat? "K" rations? This latter observation will give you an idea of the state of the camp, a camp where men were hungry, where a man's main meal consisted of about six small potatoes and a slice or two of black bread. Officially, we were getting 1,800 calories per day (I think it was less).

Guards "Jittery"

"To continue: Bert who was out on a wood fatigue, said that the guards were very jittery and that when they were about 200 yards from the train, which had stopped on the main-line, the Thunderbolts came peeling down. The party and Jerry guards went down on their faces and watched the Thunderbolts dart in to attack like angry wasps around a large spider. They came steadily in to point-blank range despite the flak bursting around them. Hits registered on the trucks and, the most important objective, the locomotive — the large black bulk of the latter was soon hidden from the sight in a maze of escaping smoke and steam. Not content with one successful shoot-up, the fighters dived again concentrating their fire on the flak hut and silencing it. They then flew off leaving the train a mass of flames and pouring smoke. The fatigue party did not continue further but picking up whatever wood they could find, retraced their steps to camp.

"After a clear, crisp night the next day dawned cloudless and warm and the dawn was heralded by a flight of F.W. 190's racing very low over the huts heading north. Shortly afterwards, two Mustangs came over circling lazily like vultures watching for any movement on the ground below which would betray a victim. The Germans by now dared not move transport of any sort outside the camp by day, although at nights we could hear the rumblings of vehicles. Thunderbolts and Lightnings were very soon above and thus began a ceaseless patrol of the skies for the day.

About mid-morning, when I was in the centre of the French Compound doing a sketch of the Chapel, I noticed two Mustangs rather low circling the camp. I continued with my sketch until I was surprised to hear the rising crescendo of aircraft engines in a dive; too close to be comfortable. On looking up, I was horrified to see the leading Mustang heading straight for the Compound while the second one a little behind headed in the direction of the western outside fence. As it was too late to start running for the nearest slit-trench, I crouched low and watched.

Everything happened much quicker than can be told. As with a screaming whine coupled with the crackling of guns, with spurts of orange flame and dazzling flash of a polished nose and fuselage, the aircraft was across the camp climbing steeply. I saw the tracer flash past me about 80 yards away, the first shots hitting the deck in front of the Polish and French huts and ricocheting high in the air above. Above the high pitched engine note and the scream of wind over air foils, the guns gave a distinct crackling sound, like the fanning of flames over dry wood. As it was so different from the sound of machine guns or cannon I tried to analyse why this was so, and have since come to the conclusion that the sound of the firing guns was mingled with the sound of bullets smashing through the wooden huts.

The second aircraft opened up along the fence at a wood fatigue party returning and I could see earth and dust shoot high as bullets hit the earth track. As the aircraft began climbing I made my way to the nearest trench in case of a second attack. Thank goodness! the pilots decided they had done enough damage and headed westwards to their lines. Some of the wood fatigue party were hit and a couple of men in Hut 14A (adjoining my hut).

The total casualties were 5 killed and 11 wounded which, considering the crowded conditions of the camp, was remarkably light. As a result the camp was distinctly nervy and whenever an aircraft flew a little lower than usual, or began tilting its wings, when directly above, we would be seen edging to the trenches, or the fireplace or bottom beds, if in the hut.

Feared British Planes

"The next day found patches of low stratus tending to impair visibility and make for worsened flying conditions. However, the Thunderbolts were over again flying much lower, so that when they blanked one could see quite clearly the white stars on their wings. I was asked by our own officer, if I would line out the letters "P.O.W." in chalk on a couple of hut roofs and a fatigue party would fill them in with white-wash. I said I would gladly do it and with Ross Terry as an assistant we went to the huts in the south-west corner and got busy on the roofs; up higher a very good view was obtained of the camp and the surrounding country. I had just begun spacing out the letters when about nine Thunderbolts circled very low over the camp. By now the Germans were really afraid of our aircraft and they came out of the high sentry boxes along the outside wire and around the stored rows of potatoes. I saw guards crouched in fear against the low straw stacks and gazing in quick apprehensive glances upward.

However, we were not strafed again. By mid-day the skies had cleared and fighters could be seen ranging far and wide for more targets for their guns. Early in the afternoon, I went with a guard and a French Doctor to the Lazarette in order to chalk out letters on some of the roofs. On the way there, we had to dive into a shelter as two aircraft began circling overhead. The Jerries there were certainly very much afraid. Most of them were old and unfit soldiers and had probably experienced bombing and strafing from the air before.

From the roof tops at the Lazarette a splendid view of the small town of Mullaberg and the Elbe could be obtained. The low hills on the western bank were softened by a very slight haze, throwing the factory chimneys, spires and rooftops of Mulhberg into relief.

Shortly after I began working, six Thunderbolts circled over the town and river, then the leading aircraft dived down the river and climbing steadily, joined its companions. Around they circled again and then began diving in quick succession. The first aircraft opened up just short of the town and great clouds of dust spurted up from the ground as the guns raked the east bank. The following aircraft were striking at a target, or targets, on the river itself. They really got down on the deck, lower than the roof-tops of Mulberg, behind which they disappeared to reappear a few seconds later well clear of the town and zooming upwards. All the aircraft made at least three runs down the river. A few explosions in quick succession and dense clouds of smoke billowed up to be caught and spread out by the wind like a carpet unrolling.

That was the result visible to me from the roof-top and I wondered how many smoke clouds were spreading out over Germany at that instant from the same result, like a funeral pall slowly spreading across the dying struggles of the Third Reich, blotting out her skies and sun and forecasting a dark future. As I gazed westwards I pictured the American Armies smashing their way across the country and through the towns overwhelming all opposition in an irresistable flood of tanks, guns and men, while their aircraft, like angry bees swarmed across the skies. A country being pulverised into submission by shells and bombs, the German soil was now being crunched and torn by the ceaseless tread of the heavy tanks of the invader. I was wakened from my reveries by the shouting and waving of arms from a little Jerry guard, and gathered that he wanted me to come down as he considered I was in danger from a shoot-up by the aircraft. So I had to hop down and sat at the entrance to an air-raid shelter until the 'planes had "buzzed off."

Ceaseless Drone

"The following day, the almost ceaseless drone of our aircraft filled the skies, and although we saw no attack near the camp until late afternoon, we heard many explosions and saw much smoke from all points of the compass. From this we implied that Jerry was starting his demolitions. About 5 o'clock, six Thunderbolts came low over the camp and cruised around dipping their wings, obviously searching the ground for a target; it almost looked as though their searching would prove fruitless until one keen-eyed pilot spotted a small line of railway trucks just near Neuf-Burxsdorf station and peeled off to attack. He came roaring down to a nice target and with no flak to worry him. A ripple of flame along his leading edge showed he had pressed his triggers and a second later we heard the noise of his guns above the motor and propellor.

The other five kites came crowding in behind in succession and eagerly opened up as the trucks came into their sights. "Boy, oh boy" did those wagons really get hit? ! They were certainly well pasted and as the last fighter climbed away, flames were bursting out from the two end trucks. Round once again came the kites and once again they came roaring down the railway track with their guns spewing forth death and destruction. By now the end truck was enveloped in a mass of flames which were fanned by a strong wind blowing. Tongues of flames were also licking hungrily around a couple of other trucks and heavy explosions, which shook our huts and rattled our windows, began to take place. The trucks were full of ammunition!

Again the aircraft climbed away and began circling but instead of doing 180 degrees they began diving when they had done 90 degrees, thus, attacking at right angles to the former attacks, and across the railway lines. Try and picture the scene! A camp of over 20,000 men with almost every face eagerly watching the destruction of irreplaceable military stores of the enemy.

The line of reddish-brown railway waggons against the background of dark green pines while a few trees which partly obscured a few trucks at the end of Neuf Burxsdorf were shriveling and blackening under the heat from the now huge mass of orange and red flames. Great clouds of the dirty brown smoke carried on the wind, smudged across the sky blocking out the eastern horizon as though trying to accelerate the dusk of the approaching night. Then watch the fighters as they come across your line of vision only two or three hundred yards away.

First silhouetted, little black flies against the western glow, then they flash past due north from you with guns blazing and orange tracer pouring out, spurting up the earth around the line and smashing into the wooden trucks. With their silver fuselages and wings reflecting the rosy hue of the west, they climb into the north-eastern sky and making a wide arc set course for their lines. Each evening now we would see the false sunsets on various points on the horizon caused by great fires raging in ammunition dumps, factories, etc., which resulted from the demolition charges set off by the Jerries. By now too we were used to the sound and reverberations from gunfire and bombing.

Guards Decamped

"Much escapes my memory but on Monday the 23rd., we awoke in the morning to find that the German guards had gone. I went across to the Chapel about ten-to-six and saw the deserted sentry boxes and the total absence of anyone wearing the hated grey-green uniform of the Wehrmacht. I noticed odd Russian prisoners breaking through the wire and making out across the fields. After Mass when I went back to the barrack I found the men starting to form up for roll-call as usual and our barrack chef announced that although the Germans had gone, we would have a count for the purpose of giving the cook-house our ration strength. We were also asked to stay in camp

(Continued on Page 12)

Watch for Paramount's latest LITTLE LULU cartoon in Technicolour at your favourite theatre

Victory GARDEN

(Continued from Page 10)

vides for a blood test for syphilis. The Alberta and Saskatchewan Acts were proclaimed last year, while the B. C. law, enacted in 1938, is still awaiting proclamation.

The Prince Edward Island legislation—a separate Act in itself—comes into effect July 1, while the Manitoba Act, in the form of an amendment to the Marriage Act, will be proclaimed at a date to be decided later.

The Act approved by the P. E. I. legislature provides that all persons intending marriage shall, within a specified period, submit to such a premarital examination and shall supply the name of the other marriage partner.

If either partner is found to be affected by syphilis in a probably communicable stage or condition the other is to be notified. Further, no issuer shall issue a marriage licence or shall any clergyman publish the banns of a marriage unless both parties produce proof they complied with provisions of the law in this respect.

As for non-residents intending marriage within the province, the Chief Health Officer may accept a certification signed by a physician qualified to practise in any province or area outside P. E. I., provided that he is satisfied of the sufficiency of the blood test and clinical examination supporting such certification.

The amendment to the Manitoba Marriage Act provides for a blood test in each premarital medical examination, with reports on the test to be supplied the person concerned, through his or her physician, and to the Provincial Director of Preventive Medical Services. No person shall solemnize a marriage unless each of the parties concerned has delivered to him the required health certificate, which certificate, with the marriage license attached, must be forwarded to the Provincial Health Department.

Linked with the Prince Edward Island legislation is the "Venereal Disease Prevention Act" — recently proclaimed — which provides for compulsory submission to treatment for persons with venereal disease. Also, the Chief Health Officer of the province may enter any premises for the purpose of making inquiry and examination with respect to the state of health of any person on the premises. Appropriate action may be taken if any person on the premises is found to be suffering from a venereal disease.

MANCHESTER, England —(CP) —The manufacture of cotton material which is completely waterproof was developed in Britain during the war. The new material made its first appearance at a fashion display here recently and aroused admiration amongst experts from all nations.

TORONTO — (CP) —The Royal Ontario Museum announces that now is the time for the farmer to watch for Indian relics in his fields. Fall plowing often stirs up arrowheads, beads, gouges and bones, which become noticeable in the spring after the rains wash off the mud and the fields are still bare.

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The outdoor man, whether he be farmer, truck driver, or railway operator, is often subject to backache. This may be the result of exposure to cold and dampness or the result of strain from the jolting and bumping of the vehicle he rides.

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