

Capture and Transport

This is part of a letter written by Richard Cooke, (b) bombardier on "Straight Shot", and sent to his mother after release from a German prison camp. The letter describes the crew's capture, transport and treatment by their captors.

Our crew from the 457 Bomb Group was shot down February 25, 1944 near Landau, Germany, approximately 1445 GCT. I was captured immediately after landing by enraged civilians, who prepared to hang me before German soldiers intervened. I was taken by motorcycle to a neighborhood town, where, after having wounds treated, was locked in a cold, damp cell made of cement where the sturdy steel bars cast shadows dark on the boards serving as a bed.

At 1600 GCT, Feb. 26th, I was taken from the cell and marched with approximately 57 other prisoners to a railroad station, where we met Archie Bower (p) for the first time since being shot down. We boarded a train for Frankfurt and rode until detrained and rushed into an abandoned subway during an air raid. We were held there from 2000 until 2400 GCT in a freezing room. The suffering of Archie Bower (p), Joe Snyder (wg), and the other seriously wounded was intense.

We were taken on a midnight train to Frankfurt where the wounded were taken to the local Red Cross and the rest of the 51 packed into a small room 12' x14' - utterly devoid of sleeping facilities or even room to lie down.

The following morning we were marched to the interrogation center at Dulag Luft for questioning. There we were separated from Bower (p) and Joe Snyder (wg). We were marched into an abandoned building and given our meal of 2 slices of black bread and coffee (ersatz). Then spent another sleepless night.

The next morning we were taken to the main prison section of the Dulag Luft (a POW camp for airmen) and that night of Feb. 28 had our first meal in three days. It was here that the Red Cross provided me with the first card which I wrote home, telling of my capture. We stayed there until Mar. 2nd when we were loaded onto 40 & 8 s (train freight cars) -- 22 men to a half car, the other half being occupied by German guards. Then after a very trying ride of 4 days and 4 nights, we finally arrived at Stalag Luft I.

Written in 1945 by Richard Cooke, bombardier of "Straight Shot".