

By Sgt. ROBERT Mc BRINN
YANK Staff Correspondent

CAIRO, EGYPT—The raid on Ploesti started out like any other raid, but it took 13 months to get back.

After all that time in an Axis prison camp in Bulgaria, freedom tastes good to American airmen shot down on the first bombing of what was then Hitler's main oil source. Most of them are back with their outfits now, thanks to the Red Army. They passed through Cairo on the way, after a train and plane trip out of Bulgaria through Greece and Turkey.

Almost every raid after that first one to Ploesti added a few more men to the prison camp at Shumen near Sofia, the Bulgarian capital. Eventually there were 170 GIs, 170 U. S. officers and 24 other prisoners, including British and Canadian flyers, Yugoslav Partisans, a Dutchman and a Greek paratrooper.

S/Sgt. Stanley H. Horine of Los Angeles, an 18-year-old tail gunner on a B-24 on the first Ploesti raid, was the only man on his crew to come out alive. He bailed out after the pilot and co-pilot were killed. He saw his buddies jumping, too, but their parachutes were on fire.

Horine was picked up by some tough Bulgarian mountain police and marched off to a hospital. Flyers from other crews had been rounded up and a Hitler-type corporal was ordering them through the streets. The Americans were carrying two wounded men, T/Sgt. Lloyd Brisbi of New Orleans and S/Sgt. Ned Howard of Little Rock, Ark. You could see everyone thought these two were great guys. Everybody called them Briz and Uncle Bud.

Horine later found that Uncle Bud had soaked up a bucketful of machine-gun bullets in the leg and had gone 24 hours without medical aid.

As each man was let out of the hospital he was taken to a small prison camp right in the middle of a bunch of ammunition sheds.

"One of our worst experiences," said Horine, "was when the Americans made their first raid



"The night of the break," said Judd, "everything was set except who was going over the fence first. One of the boys pulled four straws out of a mattress and we all drew one. I had first pick and got the shortest straw."

"We made the fence okay and dropped over. We thought we were in a long deep ravine but instead we crawled out of the underbrush onto flat ground almost at the feet of a Bulgarian guard. He started tooting his whistle and in a minute we were surrounded."

"The camp commandant shouted and stamped when he heard that the ungrateful Americans had tried to get away from his 'rest camp.'"

All this time the prisoners were organized just like an Army post. The CO was the ranking officer, Maj. Walter A. Smith, a 28-year-old banker from Savannah, Ga. The major was pilot of a Liberator that ran into a fountain of flak over Sofia. Under him were an executive officer, adjutant, top sergeant, and KP and fatigue details. There was even an S-2 whose job was to bribe the prison guards to smuggle in rumors from the outside world and Bulgarian newspapers.

"Our pipe line was so good," said the major, "we knew about the Allied landing in Normandy two days after it happened."

"You could follow the progress of war on the Eastern Front by the way the guards acted. The closer the Russians got to Bulgaria, the more polite the guards became."

As their treatment eased, the prisoners tried to find ways to amuse themselves. They built an outdoor bowling alley and carved pins out of sticks. The officers teamed up against the GIs, using a round rock for a ball until one of the guards sold them a wooden bowling ball.

Twice a week the prisoners gave their own version of USO shows, as they remembered them. This was always good for a laugh and it was even better after a Red Cross Prisoners of War box arrived from somewhere. In the box were a record player and a collection of records, a couple of guitars and 40 pairs of bowling shoes. Maj. Smith got one of the guitars and joined

Back From Bulgaria

on Sofia. We were locked in cells during the bombing. We begged the guards to let us try to find a safe shelter, but it was no go. One bomb hit in that area and we'd have gone sky high."

In October the prisoners were herded into a cattle car and hauled away by train to Shumen in upper Bulgaria. There 100 men were billeted in a two-room barracks. The food ration was a half-loaf of dark bread a day with some crushed-bean soup. Almost everyone got the GIs and there was only a one-holer for the entire gang.

Winter set in and the prisoners, trying to keep warm around one little monkey stove in each room, made a "three-foot rule." This meant nobody could stand within three feet of the stove. That way more men could share the heat.

A lot of men had no decent shoes and none had any more clothes than the flying suits they were wearing when they were shot down.

The camp commandant was a bird whose house in Sofia was wrecked by Allied bombs and he took out his grudge on the prisoners. When some British flyers were captured, they had to stand up in a public square in Sofia while crowds milled around jeering and threatening them.

When Nazi agents pumped S/Sgt. Charles (Red) Dameron of Goldsboro, N. C., a gunner, all the information he'd give was his name, rank and serial number. They blindfolded and backed him against a wall and called for a firing squad. When he still didn't crack, they called off the grim game.

Naturally there was a lot of planning for an escape, but only one try. It lasted 10 minutes.

Lt. Thomas Judd, a fighter pilot from Washington, D. C., was the ringleader. Judd has a memento from his last dogfight over Sofia—a scar that starts over his right eye and disappears into his close-cropped black hair. Three other lieutenants agreed to try to make the break with him. They were Robert Schultz of Appleton, Wis.; Patrick Maegler of Rochester, N. Y., and Joseph Quigley of Newark, N. J.



Sgt. William R. Harkness of Athens, La., rests at camp in Middle East. Obviously he has had enough of Bulgarian PW camps to last him.



S Sgt. Lloyd Barnes, Little Rock, Ark., and Cpl. Harry Ross, New York City, eat U. S. chow once more and seem to approve of it.

When their guards started to salute them, U. S. flyers in an Axis prison camp knew that the Red Army was on the way.

the show with a black-face act. He also played in the Shumen Symphony Orchestra. Some of the other instruments were a home-made drum and bottles, jugs and pans. Emcee was usually Lt. Julian T. Darlington of Washington, D. C. He ran a quiz show and the man who answered the \$64 question got an egg for a prize.

Before the Red Cross box came, the prisoners had to make decks of cards from the tops of Bulgarian cigarette boxes smuggled in by the guards.

Pretty soon the guards started letting a street peddler come into the camp. He really cleaned up. He got \$1 for a razor blade, 50 cents for a cake of lye soap and \$3.50 for a little bar of chocolate. By this time the GIs were getting paid \$10 a month. For many months before that the officers were getting about \$40 to \$60 a month, but the enlisted men were going broke. Several officers split their money with their crews.

WHEN the guards suddenly started saluting the American officers, Maj. Smith figured the Russians must have had Bulgaria in a tight spot. He asked to see the camp commandant and after a lot of fast talking he was given a plane and a pilot so he could make a trip to talk to some higher officials. The major was a good man. Soon the prisoners were told Maj. Smith had arranged for a train to take them to Turkey.

There was no question as to who was going to have the honor of being the first to walk out of the prison. The whole gang had decided long ago that when that moment arrived, two guys who never let anything get under their skin and who did their damndest to keep the rest of the outfit laughing would lead the exit. There were a lot of moist eyes when the prisoners lined up behind Briz and Uncle Bud to march to the train.

Two hours later Russian GIs took Shumen.

All along the route Bulgarians cheered the train carrying the Allied flyers. Everyone thought they were Russians coming to free Bulgaria.

A high-contrast, black and white photograph of a woman in a dark, short-sleeved dress walking on a runway. She is looking towards the camera. In the background, another person is visible on the left, and a person is seated in a director's chair on the right. The scene is dimly lit, with a spotlight effect on the runway.

A high-contrast, black and white photograph of two men performing on stage. The man on the left wears a fedora and a suit, singing into a vintage microphone. The man on the right wears a suit and tie, also singing. A woman in a patterned dress is partially visible on the far left.

Every week in Los Angeles or New York, the Armed Forces Radio Service gathers together a deluxe assortment of top names in stage, screen and radio and puts them before a microphone. Mostly the stars do request numbers for GIs

Lamour without her sarong, which doesn't carry on the air anyway, rolls a pair of dice

the look on Dinah's kisser. Denny gets as many laughs in the studio as on the air.

A homesick marine asked to hear the sound of San Francisco foghorns. Ginny Simms, one of our better foghorns, gives and Frances Langford watches her.



Frank Morgan and Gene Tierney stand by for the signal that will start their section of "Command Performance," recorded for overseas GIs.

MIKE



Lena Horne goes on the air in "Jubilee." The song she sings will go out on recordings to stations that reach U. S. servicemen and women on overseas duty.



The "GI Journal" show imitates a newspaper. It's the only newspaper whose pin-up editors, Linda Darnell and Lili Boon, look as good as its pin-up girls.



Not Much Formality

Dear YANK:

I just got to read your article on Col. Philip Cochran. I just want to add I happened to be a mechanic in the "Screwball Squadron" in Tunisia when Cochran took over. You said that when Cochran took over there were remnants of two squadrons there. There was just one squadron there and later another of the same group showed up.

In those days there wasn't very much formality. Beards were more common than not. During the day we were too damn busy getting a plane that was on the ground back into the air by using parts from another which was in worse shape. What tech supply we had with us was all there was.

Anyway, we weren't bothered with much brass. One day Gen. Doolittle dropped in with some more brass. Jerry wanted to show off that day, so we were strafed twice in the morning, and then in the afternoon they paid us a call with 10 JU-88s. The general's transport took off very shortly after this. Also two news correspondents, Pyle and Liebling (the *New Yorker*), decided it was time they went back to write their articles. They'd been there a couple of weeks.

As I say, things just ran themselves, with everyone sweating out the chow line except pilots going out on a mission. If you wanted to get chewed out but good, just salute someone.

We lived in dugouts that we made ourselves; officers, too, and they cared for their own baggage. Anyone slept where he chose. In our shack there was a second lieutenant, a tech sergeant and two lowly corporals, but everyone had his day of room orderly. Sure we got plenty of hell, but we had fun and figured we dished out more than we took. Maj. Levi Chase was our big gun and went home quite a hero.

I don't think there are many from that "Screwball" gang that would not go to hell and back with Cochran, for we knew he would be right out in front.

China

—Cpl. JOHN HOLLEY

Jeeps on the Farm

Dear YANK:

We read the article "Jeeps on the Farm" in a recent issue of YANK and we don't think much of Miss Dorothy V. Knibb's opinion. In the first place, she is trying to compare the jeep with the passenger car, which it was never meant to be. She says the jeep has no shock absorbers, which is wrong. We have been working on jeeps for 19 months. They have been used in mud, water, dust, hot and cold weather. They have proved themselves to be satisfactory in all conditions.

In several cases we have used the jeep motor as a stationary motor. It will stand up as good if not better than any other motor of its size. Miss Knibb made the statement that a pulley assembly for a jeep wouldn't cost more than \$50. A pulley assembly can be made for a jeep without the cost being over \$5. We're not car salesmen but we don't want people to get the wrong opinion of the jeep by someone who has taken a couple of rides in one.

India

—Sgt. NORMAN SMITH

Also signed by T-4 Frank Romano.

Dear YANK:

The looks of the jeep don't bother the GI who wants one. He will paint it a different color and maybe add to the body. The men that I have talked to about owning a jeep after the war are the boys that now drive and ride in them.

It is true that the jeep doesn't ride like a '42 model car but it has four separate hydraulic shock-absorbers of the type used on the better late-model cars. It doesn't have the riding quality of a car because of the short springs. I find that by adding a cushion to the almost cushionless seat you get a much better ride.

As for the gas consumption, it isn't bad. Many drivers have told me that they made between 27 to 32 miles per gallon when traveling on hard-surfaced roads. The average truck driver in the Army is very hard on the equipment with fast stops and starts. The man owning his own jeep wouldn't rough it as much and could save a little on gas.

Miss Knibb states that running the engine at reduced speed will harm it. If she was speaking of aircraft engines, she would be correct. The engine in a jeep is designed to run at any speed, preferably low speeds. The slower you run the engine the longer it will last. Any car driver knows that. Another advantage of the jeep is its tires. They are the same size as the standard '37 to '42 model cars. Its engine is built to stand punishment. It has a heavy-duty generator, oil-bath air cleaner, oil filter, gasoline filter and very good hydraulic brakes.

Carlstrom Field, Fla.

—A. C. ANTON J. BOZICH

Dear YANK:

The farmer of today is not the mute brute depicted by "The Man With the Hoe." Farmers well know that for the past three years most farmers in the U.S. have been running their trucks, tractors and cars on makeshift parts. Farmers have been their own mechanics, doing a swell job of keeping the machinery of agriculture going with next to no help from others.

After the war, farmers are going to need new tractors, trucks and cars to replace the already over-worked ones. These new machines cannot be built, transported and marketed overnight. There will be a period between the end of the war and the time these new machines become available during which a substitute would be a godsend. Reconditioned jeeps fresh out of the Army motor pools would be such a substitute if made available to the American farmer.

AAF, Westhampton Beach, N. Y.

—Cpl. F. E. MARTIN

Fair Play

Dear YANK:

Isn't it about time some of these post newspaper editors stopped re-serving the propaganda cooked up by antilabor newspapers? Don't they know that three-fourths of our guns are turned out by union men and women? Official Government figures show less than 1 percent of production is lost because of cessation of work from strikes. In that respect labor is even purer than Ivory soap.

One out of every four GIs is or was a union man. We still hear from the fellows and gals who are working and we see the results in victories of their work. On the whole, they've done a good job. Why don't these service-paper editors read a few of those letters and scan a few union papers and maybe print some extracts from them?

Aleutians

—T-4 BILL REUBENS

Added Burden

Dear YANK:

The question of a bonus should be approached from a number of sides, but the economic is one of the most important. A bonus would entail billions of dollars at a time when heavy taxes are already breaking the back of the middle class. It is from this class that America will come back on the wide highway of peace and prosperity.

A bonus added to the already neat present granted by the GI Bill of Rights would be nothing more or less than economic suicide. The men and women in service want a chance to make their own living. That fact would be made more difficult by an overcrowding of the money market and a sharp rise in prices that would affect all people.

It is granted that in some cases a money grant beyond that offered by the GI Bill of Rights might be necessary. In cases of this kind, set up some Government agency to meet the emergency. After careful investigation make the loan and permit the veteran a long period of time to repay.

Let us feel that the job we have done was one that needs no present from our Government. It was a job that needed doing, if America was to survive as a great nation. All we ask of our Government is continued peace, for as Americans we can take care of ourselves.

France

—JAMES J. FLYNN CBM.

Dear YANK:

A bonus for post-war veterans? Wouldn't that be robbing Peter to pay Paul? The people of the U.S. are the Government, and when one group as huge as the veterans of this war receive direct hand-outs, the bill will be footed to a large extent by us. But, more important, there has been, and will be more intensified, a tendency for us to feel that the Government owes us something. It does, and it will pay us in future security and the best medical care, as well as the several points of the GI Bill of Rights. France fell in 1940 because, over a period of years, all organized groups were out for themselves rather than for France as a whole.

I do think we should consider the good of the entire country before we make huge demands on the Government.

England

—Pfc. E. H. HILLIARD

Finger Bowls

Dear YANK:

I fear that my brother Elmer Lambiotte (who complained about leaky raincoats in a recent *Mail Call*) doesn't know too much about GI raincoats. It was never intended that they should shed rain. They are made in such a way that the rain filters through the cloth, slowly runs down the length of the body and thus bathes and cools same all in one operation. The fact that the pockets fill up with water is a blessing. Anyone who has served in the field during rainy seasons knows that it is a delightful sensation, after eating in the rain, to dip one's hands into the water-filled pockets and wash said hands free of food particles. Garrison soldiers are not so furnished with finger bowls.

Brazil

—T/Sgt. J. A. LAMBIOTTE

Rate of Exchange

Dear YANK:

About a month ago I was reassigned from ETO to the Central Pacific. Upon my arrival in the States I had in my possession a 500-franc note, which I attempted to change into American currency. At that time I was told to try my next station. They told me that any finance officer would be only too glad to change the bill for me. Since then I've tried a dozen finance officers here and in the States and always they have the same answer: "We know what it's worth, but we haven't any rate of exchange." Do you honestly think I'll ever get that money exchanged? If so, when? The latest I heard was that a radiogram was sent to Washington for authorization last week.

Somewhere Overseas

—T-5 NORMAN COLTUN

That Film-Strip Girl

Dear YANK:

Some time ago you had in *Mail Call* an explanation of the gal and the numbers found on movie film before the movie begins. The explanation was fine as far as it went, but the part that is most important to those operating projectors was left out.

When a projector is loaded properly, the film is threaded through the machine in such a way that the leader comes off the sound drum and onto the take-up reel. When the machine is started you can see the numbers flash off the drum—10, 9, 8, etc., to 4, 3. If the projection lamp is turned on just as the 3 flashes by, the picture starts at the point that it was intended



Safe and Sound

Dear YANK:

Here is a telegram written by an ex-member of our organization requesting an extension of his furlough. The answer was thought up by our first sergeant, Herbert L. Turner, who, by the way, once graced the pages of YANK as the youngest master sergeant in the ETO. He was redesignated to first sergeant and is now the youngest first sergeant in our division. The telegram said:

"URGENT MATRIMONIAL PROBLEM STOP AM IN TROUBLE STOP REQUEST (3) THREE DAYS EXTENSION ON FURLOUGH STOP DESPERATELY NEEDED STOP AM STRIVING TO REMAIN SINGLE.

The answer was:

"RETURN IMMEDIATELY YOU WILL BE PERFECTLY SAFE HERE."

Fort Bragg, N. C.

—Pfc. HENRY COOPERMAN

to start. If the switch is thrown before the 3 shows up, numbers and codes will flash on the screen before the picture starts. This is important to remember if you want a smooth showing.

Not only is it important at the start of a show but, if two projectors are being used for a show with more than one reel, it is imperative that the second reel start at the right place and time. This is done by watching the numbers as before and starting the second projector in time to turn on that lamp and turn off the lamp on the first machine at the same time—just after the cue mark on the first reel and the 3 on the second flash by.

I hope you can understand this explanation the way I've written it. If not, then ask some good projectionist to clarify it for you.

Ceylon

—Lt. JAMES E. HENRY

■ Thank you, lieutenant, but there isn't a question in our minds.

Back Home

Dear YANK:

My wife is a Wac. I love her as other fighting men love their wives. But right now I wonder what the hell kind of freedom I'm fighting for when, if I stay alive long enough to return to Shangri-La, I find that my wife has been sent overseas. Women overseas? What hairbrained idea is this?

On my way over to this theater, I stopped at many bases in various countries, and at every one there were many GIs lying on their backs and complaining about how tough it was. So what do we need Wacs over here for? Get any economy expert to weed out these useless GIs and put them to work. Keep our women at home where they are doing a grand job working and waiting.

India

—S/Sgt. GEORGE R. KUNTZ

Permanent Grades

Dear YANK:

I believe enlisted men who plan on staying in after the war and now hold a noncommissioned grade should be given an opportunity to make their grades permanent if they could pass a required examination.

Camp Lee, Va.

—T Sgt. CHARLES ALMEDA

Army of Occupation

Dear YANK:

There seems to be a lot of concern about who is to serve in the Army of Occupation after Germany is defeated. Here is a suggestion. There must be at least 3 million soldiers in the Army, some of whom have been in the Army two years or more, who at present are in service units and have not served overseas. I am sure that from this group the Army could get at least a million volunteers to serve a specified time with the Army of Occupation in Germany. . . . A lot of us in the service, I am sure, would welcome this opportunity. . . .

Selman Field, La.

—S/Sgt. JOHN A. TYLER