

MISSION TO BUCHAREST

OVERDUE ON RETURN

BY

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I'll never forget April 21, 1944, nor will I ever forget the things that happened to me in the four months following. My story is not an original or new one. I'm writing it for the benefit of my family and friends who might be interested in just what did happen to me the day I was shot down out of the Rumanian skies, and what fell to my lot in the prison camp in which I was held.

April 21, 1944, was no different from any other day in the year when I awoke that morning. It was just another flying day in which I was to chalk up my 21st mission over enemy-held Europe. At the time I was attached to a heavy bombardment group of B-24's, whose base was somewhere in that part of Italy located on the Adriatic coast, south of the well-known spur.

One of the operations clerks woke us up for the mission at five in the morning. I took a quick bath in my G. I. helmet, dressed, and was ready for my run on the mess hall to get that always waiting breakfast of powdered eggs and awful tasting coffee. I rushed through breakfast and hurried over to the parachute room in the Squadron with the other members of my crew to pick up our individual parachutes. Little did I realize I would be using that chute later in the day.

From the parachute room we proceeded to the Group Briefing Room where we joined the other crews that would be flying the mission that day. Briefing started at six o'clock on the dot. The Intelligence Officer had his turn, followed by the Operations Officer, Communications Officer and Weather Officer. The weather forecast for the day looked none too good,

and turned out to be poor. After the regular briefing my Bombardier, Lt. Victor Boffa, and I stayed for the special Navigator's and Bombardier's briefing. From there we were taken by trucks to our various squadron locations on the flight line where we were dropped off at our own aircraft. "Vic" and I were dropped off at the hardstand of the "RAMP - ROOSTER", a veteran of more than thirty missions flown over Germany, Austria, Hungary, Rumania, Italy, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. The "RAMP - ROOSTER" had been attacked by fighters on several occasions, and hit by German-manned flak guns on many occasions. One day it crashed on the runway returning from a mission, shot full of holes and with two flat tires. Three members of the crew received the Purple Heart that day. Mine was for superfluous face wounds -- had my head been two inches to the right I would have had a piece of shell go through my face and wouldn't have been here to tell my story. Fortunately, no one was seriously injured.

Take-off time was pre-determined so that we would hit the Bucharest marshalling yards at 1230 hours. This was not my first mission over this city; I had been there less than two weeks before. I knew that flak and fighters were to be met in no small numbers. Take-off was successful as usual. I say as usual because our pilot, Meriwether Jones, was the best in the world. Any plane would take off with him at the controls. Nor was our co-pilot, Vilas Yttri, a Norwegian from Wisconsin, to be sneezed at. We assembled with our squadron over the field, and in turn assembled with the other squadrons to form the group formation which in turn was part of the large wing formation flying the mission. As I remember it now, our group was No. 2 in the wing formation, a good position if I may say so. Our plane was the lead plane in our one squadron and we were in the low flight in our group. All in all, our individual plane was in a very comfortable place,



or so I thought.

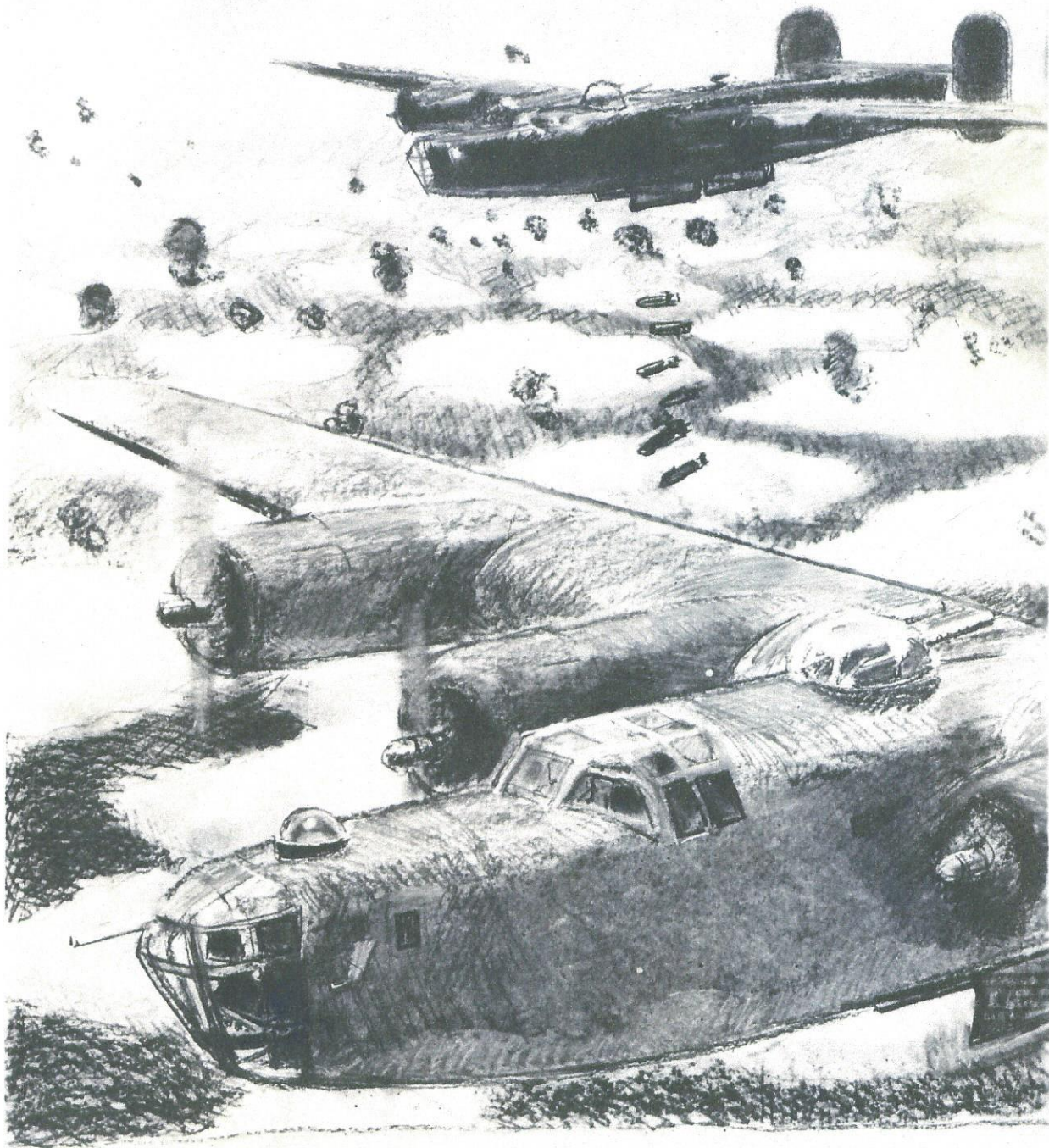
After all groups assembled, we headed on course for Bucharest and excitement. As we crossed the eastern Italian coast we could see the colorful sails of the small Italian fishing boats as they played around in the blue Adriatic waters. It made me very angry when I remembered that in one of those innocent looking boats was a German paid Italian giving our position and direction by radio to Berlin. It was done on several occasions.

As we approached the Yugoslavian coast, we could see the high ranges and mountains of that country clearly outlined on the horizon. It was a beautiful sight, and one could hardly believe that amid all that beauty there were Germans lurking with anti-aircraft batteries ready to shoot us down as soon as we came within range of their deadly gun batteries.

Just before reaching the coast of Yugoslavia, it was the custom of the crews in every plane to test-fire their guns and make certain the guns and turrets were all in good working order, because any moment after the coastline is reached you could expect to be challenged by the Luftwaffe. "Woody", our tail gunner, test-fired first, followed by the two waist gunners, the ball turret gunner, the engineer who operated the top turret, and, finally, the nose turret, operated by the radio operator. This turret was just in front of my navigation compartment in the nose of the ship, and, as you will see, was to be my salvation that day.

We had gained enough altitude by the time we reached the coast to clear the mountains by several thousand feet, and were still climbing to obtain our correct bombing altitude. The further inland we went the worse the weather ahead looked. Finally we hit the clouds and storms. Our formation had to spread in order to penetrate the cloud formations with a certain degree of flying safety. If we flew too close a formation, going through those clouds was dangerous, for we were almost certain to collide.





BOMBS AWAY



About half an hour later, we came through the broken clouds to find our group and one other to be the only two groups up there in the Rumanian sky. From that moment on I began to sweat, because I knew the Luftwaffe and Rumanian Air Force would not miss this opportunity to tangle with this limited number of heavy bombers, whose only defense was the armament on their planes.

By twelve o'clock we had advanced on our course well into Rumania, and still hadn't encountered the enemy. I was still sweating; I could sense the fight that would ensue.

At 1225 hours the flak started coming up as we began our bomb run. The flak was about moderate and fairly accurate that day. Several ships were hit I later found out. At 1229 hours the bombardier came over the interphone with "Bombs Away". Those two words always made me feel a lot better. They meant our load was lightened and we could now pick up a little speed.

Just as we pulled off the target the inevitable happened. Out of the sky above us poured enemy fighters. The main body of their group attacked the first group, while only a few picked on our group. After about five minutes of watching the other group get it in the neck, about fifty German planes attacked us.

"Woody" got in the first shots at several ME-109's that made a pass at our flight. Before long however, there were plenty of targets for everyone, and all gunners were firing. In one of the early passes, the number seven plane in our flight was badly hit and went down smoking. Ten parachutes were seen to open, so we believed all members of the crew to be safe. Shortly afterward our left wing man went down with several engines out, leaving our left side exposed. It wasn't but a minute later that several ME-109's made a head-on attack on us that really opened us up.

I can well remember the time we were hit — 1939 exactly. I was making an entry in my navigators log at the time. 20 mms. were bursting in the nose of the ship. All of a sudden I found myself on the floor and I was terribly nauseated. A large fire was burning furiously in the flight deck section, pouring smoke through the ship. I was almost overcome by the fumes when I found my way to the emergency door. I pulled the release handle and -- nothing happened. Working my legs around I kicked open the door and smoke poured out. As the air cleared inside the plane I could see the inferno on the flight deck and it was hot as a furnace inside.

For the first time I noticed my legs were bleeding badly, the blood wetting both legs of my flying suit. I helped the nose gunner out of his turret and had a chance to get a look at the damage done in the nose of the plane. The turret was just barely hanging to the plane and all the glass was smashed. The bomb sight had taken a direct hit and had disintegrated. There were at least ten good sized holes in the fuselage within my reach. To this day I don't know how I escaped being killed.

While the nose gunner bandaged his wounded legs I tried to use one of the fire extinguishers to put out the fire, but my attempts were futile. The gas lines had been hit and gasoline was pouring out too fast to be put out by a few fire extinguishers.

We rode with the burning ship for about ten minutes before I decided we would have to jump. Three engines had been knocked out and we were losing altitude at the rate of about 1500 feet per minute. A heavy bomber doesn't fly well on one engine.

I tried the interphone system but it had been shot to pieces and I had no way of getting in contact with the remaining members of the crew. When the plane was down to 2000 feet, I decided to "bail out". I knew we could never make it back to Italy. I told the gunner of my inten-



tions and told him to follow me out. I was nearest the door and had to jump first to give him passageway. I took a look at him and jumped out over an open field that I had been waiting for.

That was my first, and I hope my last jump. It's an awful feeling to be thrown about by the slip stream and then to feel that quick drop down. As soon as I felt myself dropping I pulled the ripcord and two seconds later the 'chute opened. The opening gave me quite a jolt, loosening several of my teeth and caused me to bite off a good piece of my tongue, but I was the happiest man in the world. I spent approximately twenty seconds in the air and then hit the ground, feet first, and rolled over three or four times and came to a screeching halt in the middle of the Danube Valley. I had quite a rough time tumbling my 'chute as I was unable to walk on my shot-up legs. Finally I spilled it by crawling up on it, and made myself comfortable.

My first-aid kit had been shot off my shoulder during the flight, and there I was, bleeding like hell, and no first-aid material available. I ripped up my 'chute and made a tourniquet out of it. Then I noticed that my right knee had quite a hole in it.

After lying in the middle of this field for about half an hour I saw several figures appear on the horizon. They increased in number until there were nearly fifty men, women and children approaching me. All of a sudden I felt weak again because I didn't know how I would be treated by them.

These people were a shabby lot, I can assure you; strikly from the peasant class. There were a few men in uniform, shouldering World War I type rifles. At first sight I thought I was among a guerrilla band of Rumanians and I could just visualize myself back in allied hands in a short while.

The peasants were dressed in the type of gypsy costumes that one sees worn by the band of gypsies which roam our land. The men wore high fur hats, had a sort of a tunic for a shirt, and their pants were similar to riding breeches laced tight around the leg from the knee down. Their shoes were sandals with curling toes made of animal hides. The few women that made an appearance were dressed in the most colorful dresses I have ever seen. They had a shawl for a head cover, their skirts billowed to the ground, and blouses. Those that had shoes had the same as the men, although several were barefooted. Every top piece of clothing these people wore was of a different color.

The few soldiers seemed to be in charge. They searched me thoroughly to be certain I had no weapons even though upon their approach I had indicated I hadn't, and then made a litter for me out of my parachute. They made no attempt to abuse me, and their every move was one of kindness.

A very amusing incident happened while they were making the litter on which to carry me. Several of the youngsters spotted my emergency ration kit and looked mighty hungry for the piece of candy they knew was in it. I opened the kit and gave a couple of the kids some of the candy. They were just about to eat it when one of the older men stopped them. Evidently he told them to let me eat a piece first, just to be sure I wasn't trying to poison them. I did as he asked and everyone was happy. From then on these people treated me like a king.

After much palaver, they finally started to carry me off on the litter. I was pretty weak then, and the pain in my legs was getting worse. The juggling of the litter caused more pain and I passed out several times during that ride.



While they were carrying me to a small village, we came upon the body of my nose gunner. It seems his chute did not completely open and he had plummeted to the earth from 2000 feet above. His body was a mess, and I do mean a mess. The peasants picked him up and placed both of us in an ox cart that met us here, and we continued to the village, which I could now see in the distance.

Upon arriving there I was given a hearty welcome and taken to a combination police station and hospital. Here I met my engineer, Bud Segman, who was badly burned, but alive. He told me that our pilot had been killed when the plane crashed, but didn't know what had happened to the others. He had already been given first aid by the peasants and I was here only a short while before three of the prettiest peasant girls I ever saw came in with a first-aid kit and began to do a good job of bandaging my legs with clean bandages. I looked at the hole in the back of my right knee and noticed that a fragment of 20 mm. had entered and gone halfway through. It stayed in my leg and was removed about four months later in an American hospital in Italy where I was sent after being repatriated.

I had been in the town only about an hour when a group of six German soldiers came and tried to take charge. They were quickly brushed off by the Rumanians however. It was now certain that I was a P. O. W. and was not with a band of pro-American people. I later found out that the soldats (soldiers) who were there to pick me up within such a short time after I parachuted down were members of the Rumanian home guard.

Until now I didn't know where I stood with these people, not being able to understand a word of their language. However, one of the villagers spoke French, and with my limited knowledge of French learned that my engineer and I were to be sent to Giurgiu, a town on the Danube for hospital



treatment.

Those first twenty-four hours in Rumania were hell, and there is much I cannot remember about them. I've even forgotten the name of the little town where I spent my first night, but I believe it was called Brajani. I do remember the kindness shown to Bud and me by those simple peasants who had no reason to show us any favors at all. During our stay the whole town was allowed to come in and see us and stay a few minutes. Everyone who came in brought us food, cigarettes, beer, etc. and by night I was as fat as a stuffed pig. I was sick from the loss of blood and everything, but I ate a little of all they brought to show them I appreciated their kindness.

The three young girls who had bandaged my legs earlier in the day were in regular peasant costumes, but after the townspeople left, they returned dressed just like American girls. Their ages ranged from 17 to 19. They stayed with us all night and did a darned good job of nursing. There was a peasant guard there at all times to be sure we did not escape. That was a laugh on them as neither of us could walk ten feet.

The village where we stayed was a small one of only two or three hundred people, a rural village located far out in the country and remote from all good roads and railroads.

At four the next morning we were carried out of the station and placed in an ox cart filled with hay and started on our way to the railroad station in a nearby town where we were to entrain to Giurgiu. One peasant drove the little cart, a two-wheeled affair, and we had one Rumanian guard.

Before we left I ripped off a piece of my parachute which they were sending along with me and gave the silk to one of the young girls who had tended us that night. She was so happy that she wanted to go with me to the hospital and take care of me until we were well. Of course she was

not allowed to go. She wasn't the only person who was sorry; I would have liked to have had her along too.

Every where along the journey people would come out in little groups and stand about the cart jabbering in their native tongue. As we neared the larger towns the attitude of the people we met changed considerably from that of the friendly peasants we had been with just a short time ago.

The little cart bounced all over the countryside as we went through ploughed fields, small brooks, muddy roads, and everything else. About eight o'clock we arrived at the town of Draconesti where we were to get the train to Giurgiu, which was not due until nine-thirty, so until it did arrive we were on display in the station. I was uneasy because we had only one guard and several of the crowd were very antagonistic. We were spit at more than once, and although no one hit me their attitude was definitely hostile. One man gave us some cigarettes, but no sooner had he done so than another Rumanian jumped on him for giving them to us.

I was very much relieved when the train came, but oh brother, what a train that was! It reminded me of the Teonerville Trolley in the comics back home. Several of the more gracious civilians helped me on board and Bud limped on as best he could with his burned legs. We had a small compartment for the three of us. Evidently they were taking no chances of our getting too close to too many civilians at one time.

After an hours ride we arrived in Giurgiu, a town about the size of Orlando, and were transferred from the train to a horse-drawn taxi. After much palaver the officer guard we had transferred us to the military authorities in Giurgiu. They took us to the local police station there after which we were taken to a small Army headquarters building and left for several hours. It was past noon by that time and I had not eaten a thing since the day before and I was terribly hungry. Finally a Rumanian buck private



brought me half a loaf of sour, dark bread that turned my stomach, but which I ate nevertheless to the last crumb. Lucky for me I did for that was to be my only meal of the day.

Late in the afternoon a police wagon of sorts pulled up alongside the building and Bud and three other flyers whom I met for the first time, and I were loaded on it and taken to the hospital. I didn't know it at the time, but I was to spend five weeks there.

As soon as we arrived there the five of us were taken to a wash-room or shower room in the basement and given the opportunity for a well needed bath. Since I was unable to stand on my legs, three young junior nurses took it upon themselves to give me a bath. Without the slightest hesitation they picked me up, placed me on a table and proceeded to strip off my clothes and put me in a tub so quickly I didn't have a chance to say "no". I shall always remember that bath. Those girls scrubbed me from head to foot, not missing a thing in the process. When they finished giving me the best bath I ever had they picked me up out of the tub and began to dry me, not letting me do any of it, and again not missing a thing!

From the shower room I was carried to the first floor where I was placed in a room with the four other boys that were with me. When we entered the room we found five other American flyers who had been brought there for treatment several weeks before.

We had been in the hospital only a short time when the Head of the hospital came to see us. He was a stout fellow and very kind. He could speak broken English, so we were able to talk to him about our wounds. My condition evidently was the most serious because he had me sent to the operating room to be treated immediately.

In the operating room he did nothing more than re-bandage my legs after he had examined them closely. He made no attempt to operate as I was



too weak, so he said. Evidently I had lost more blood than I had thought. He said my left leg would be O.K., but my right knee looked pretty bad and he would make no prediction as to what might happen.

I was returned to my room, and the others were treated in turn. Our wounds ranged from wounds in the head to the tips of the toes. The fellows who were there before us gave us the set-up of conditions there, and it didn't look too bad considering the fact that we were miles inside enemy territory.

We had arrived there late in the afternoon and at dark the guards came around putting covers over the windows. The English or R. A. F. had made several trips to that section already; there were severe blackout regulations in that town.

The room in which we were confined had three windows and one door. It was not over-crowded with beds and the over-all atmosphere was rather cheerful. There were three Rumanian guards on duty at all times and they kept a fairly close check on us. When one of the boys wanted to go to the latrine a guard had to go with him to be certain that he did not escape.

It was a monotonous life there. We had only a few English books to read, and most of us were bedridden for at least a week. It was two weeks before I could get around a bit on my left leg, which had not been as badly injured as my right.

Our meals in the hospital for most of our stay there and for my stay in the prison camp were as follows:

Breakfast - one cup of tea and two or three slices of sour bread.  
Dinner - one bowl of some type of soup and a few slices of sour bread.  
Supper - same kind of soup as we had had for dinner and some more sour bread.

On occasions we had a spoonful of something which tasted like Cream of Wheat, which they called grits.

We had practically no medical attention. The doctor told me that most of the anaesthetics and sulpha drugs were used on the front lines. We were given clean bandages every two or three days and quite often our wounds were washed out with peroxide to help prevent infections. My legs did not seem to improve. One wound was infected for over three months. Many mornings I could get a large amount of pus out of the wounds by just squeezing them very lightly. I don't mind telling you I was scared and just waiting for a serious infection to set in. However, I kept them as clean as possible and eventually they healed up.

I stayed at this hospital for five weeks. Every day was the same. We ate, slept, joked with the guards (most of us could now speak a little Rumanian), sweated out our wounds, and did a bit of reading. I had to learn to walk again and that helped pass away some of the time.

The people on the hospital staff were very kind to us, and brought us cigarettes, candy, and other little bits of food. Even our guards gave us food, etc., when they got packages from home. There were several nurses aids there whose way of "entertaining" us was to tease us by showing us one of their breasts, knowing that we were unable to chase them. One girl in particular used to do this act every day, and was nearly caught several times by our fastest man named "Bugs" Ralston, who, by this time, was really getting excited by her actions.

Finally all this good luck came to an end and we were all transferred to the military hospital in Bucharest. None of us cared to leave Giurgiu because we had heard about the air raids in Bucharest, but we left for the "big City" anyway.

We were transported in an old truck that creaked and groaned with every turn of the wheels. Before we boarded the truck at Giurgiu we were told by the Rumanian officer in charge that should we attempt to escape, we



would be shot.

It was an enjoyable ride to Bucharest. The day was sunny and quite warm. It was the first time I had been able to be out in the sun for more than a hour for five weeks and I was looking rather "pasty" by that time.

It took us all morning to get to the capital city of Rumania. We arrived exactly at noon. We were immediately taken to the military hospital and admitted after we were given a bath. We were then taken to a ward and found there twenty other officers and enlisted men of the Air Corp who were also injured. We also had several Russian P. O. W.'s there for treatment.

This hospital was the worst place I have ever had to stay in. Besides being overcrowded, we were forced to use the same latrine as did the inmates of the Rumanian V. D. ward just a door away. It had no windows and no light and smelled to high heaven. It's a wonder none of us contracted some disease from that place.

Here we got only one bath every two or three weeks if we were lucky. The food was terrible. Usually it was some kind of soup, but we did get stews, macaroni, cheese, etc., on some days. The worse meal of the day was breakfast which was usually given us around ten o'clock in the morning. It consisted of half a cup of tea or coffee and one slice of bread with sometimes a bit of jelly or jam. One day when I went to get some soup out of the bucket, I saw a whole lamb's head with it's brains hanging out and mixed all through the soup. The next two days it was fish heads.

Medical care here was practically nil. Amputations got clean bandages every two or three days, but I have gone a week on the same ones. That place really smelled as soon as the bandages had absorbed all the pus they could hold and it started seeping through. Then the flies gathered.

The amputations performed in that hospital could have been done better by an inexperienced butcher, and the broken limbs would have been done



better had a tree surgeon been handy. Only one nurse was available from nine in the morning until four in the afternoon. The rest of the time we all took care of each other. Many thanks should go to the Russian boys who were there with us. They helped tend our sick as if they were their own emptied bed pans, and everything else possible.

To top it all off, the hospital was located within a short distance of the Bucharest marshalling yards and we sweated out many a bombing by our own attacking planes who were ignorant of our existence in the target area.

I could give you the story of each flyer in the hospital and what happened to him there, but they would fill a volume of books, so I'm only relating my little part of the adventure.

At first we were told that we would be allowed to write a letter once a month and one post card a week. While in the Bucharest hospital I wrote exactly one card home, so that gives you an idea of how a Rumanian keeps a promise. Their excuse for not giving us a card a week was that they did not have any left -- a damned lie as I later found out and also suspected at the time. I was back in the States six months and my Mother was still receiving the letters I had written from the camp, so you can see the speed (?) with which the letters must have been censored and mailed to the United States. During my stay there I never received a letter from home.

After a hectic three weeks in this hospital I asked to be transferred to the prison camp before I went "nuts", and since there were more boys coming in every day my request was granted and I left the "butcher shop".

From there I was transferred to a garrison in the industrial section of the town. One guard escorted me across the city. I had to walk even though my legs were not completely healed and it took us all afternoon

to traverse the two mile trip. The last leg of the trip we rode in a street-car because I refused to walk any more. The guard had to pay the fare out of his own pocket because my money had been taken from me previously.

We finally arrived at the garrison that served as an interrogation center. Here I was quartered in a small room with forty others also waiting interrogation. I stayed in this hole for over a week awaiting my turn. In this room there were only half enough cots and mattresses for the number of men and what mats we did have were filled with bedbugs and lice that now started a minor invasion of our bodies.

I am not going to say much about the interrogation I received at this camp. I was interrogated by both the Germans and Rumanians and neither impressed me as being too sharp. The Rumanian interrogator, a Captain Christie and incidently a resident of Detroit for twenty-five years, threatened to hold up the report of my capture from my Government unless I filled out the entire interrogation form that he had handed me. I did not fill it out and told him there would be a settling day for him when the Allies came. He quickly changed his tune and told me that he had just been kidding about not sending my name back to the States as a P. O. W.

I was kept there for several weeks after the interrogation until more room was available at the main prison camp. While at the garrison, we had several strikes in regards to the food situation, etc., and succeeded in getting some better living conditions. We were now up to the living standards of a pig.

On July 4th I was transferred to the main prison camp in Bucharest. There were only a few enlisted men there. The rest had been sent to a camp on the other side of the city. The few that were there in the officers camp did the cooking, this by the way, was voluntary work.



The building in which we were confined was originally an old school house from which the Rumanians had removed all the furnishings and turned the classrooms into sleeping quarters. There were approximately twenty of us in one of these rooms, but still we weren't too crowded. They could possibly have squeezed one more cot in each room.

Bed bugs were plentiful in the straw mattresses we had on the cots, and they took keen delight in annoying us all night every night. During the day body lice went to work on us and succeeded in making themselves more annoying than the bed bugs had been. We made futile attempts to exterminate these bugs and after each purge were usually relieved for a few days.

We were allowed two showers a week in the shower room located in the cellar. We also had hot water, provided you got there early which I invariably did.

At this camp I had the best food I had received since I had come to Rumania. We gradually got away from having soup twice a day, and now and then we even got such delicacies as cake, candy, etc. The food situation became even better as the day of our liberation approached. Our mess hall was located in the cellar. It had formerly been the cafeteria for the school students. One thing I can say, I never had enough to eat--I was always hungry. Even so, during the time I was in the camp I lost exactly seventeen pounds. That wasn't too bad.

We were allowed to be outside in a small court yard twice a day for periods of one hour at a time. Sometimes only fifty or sixty men were allowed out at one time. There was a small court where the fellows could play basketball and we scheduled games every day. Every room in the building had it's own team. All the American boys got quite a kick out of the RAF flyers. They joined in the basketball games, but were awfully awkward in handling the ball.

We couldn't help laughing at them, but they were good sports about the whole thing.

We even had a small library composed of books that had been contributed by various people in Bucharest. There were so many fellows in the camp waiting to read those few that it was a long time between books. I read only three books in the two months I was in Lagarul de Priseneri No. 13.

There were many guards at the camp, and it was quite difficult to make an easy escape, although many of the boys did manage to escape for a short while. All windows in the two story enclosure had barbed wire on the outside. There was a strong network of wire around the exterior of the grounds, that was reinforced in some sections with two rows of barbed wire. There were guards inside as well as outside the building. The guards on the outside had stations built up on platforms affording them an unobstructed view of most of the escape routes. Most of these guards were of the peasant class, and comprised the home guards. They were usually elderly men, not too sharp as to what was going on most of the time. Some of the boys escaped under their very noses only to be caught days later wandering around the Danube Valley.

The Rumanian Lieutenant-Colonel in charge of the camp was a "stinker" and caused us no end of trouble. He was a huge fat man, as wide as he was high. He was always beating the Russian laborers there in the camp, as well as his own men of lower grade. Our boys all called him the "Pig" because every time he opened his mouth he sounded like a pig squealing. When our boys were recaptured after escaping from the camp he imposed on some solitary confinement for ten days on bread and water. I believe one fellow was sent to a concentration camp near Galatia. Several of our enlisted men in the other camp were beaten and also kicked in places not to be mentioned in this script. This L.C. did not always do the beatings, he had a couple of hench-



men to do that for him. On the whole, however, most of the boys did not experience any tortures or beatings.

The worse factor about the whole camp was the fact that it was located in Bucharest, a bombing target of our own comrades. According to the Geneva Convention, we were not supposed to be interned in areas close to military objectives. When we approached the Rumanian officers on this subject, we were told bluntly that they did not go by the Geneva Convention. Seems as though they had been a puppet state under Germany too long already and were getting too much like Germany.

We had many narrow escapes from our own bombers due to our proximity to the targets, and I sweated out many raids in that camp. We were not allowed to go to any adapoets (air raid shelters) during those bombings. We just had to stay in that two story building and pray.

On the whole, life in this prison camp wasn't too bad, but just the same it wasn't like being home and I didn't enjoy my stay there one bit. I could go on and on relating stories about what happened to me and my fellow prisoners in that camp, but they would be repetitious in some instances, and others not fit to be printed.

On August 23, 1944, at approximately 2300 hours, we heard a great commotion outside the prison gates. Shortly afterwards it was announced that Rumania had severed relations with the Germans and were now fighting on the side of the Allies. We were free! I was so surprised I could not believe it. In fact it took me a few hours to get used to the idea.

As you've probably guessed, there was a catch to our freedom. There were German troops throughout Rumania, and with all the Rumanian troops on the front lines and not there to protect us, just where did we stand? The Germans in Bucharest didn't lose any time starting trouble, and fighting

broke out as soon as they heard of their standing with the Rumanians. All the American boys in the camp started sweating again for we did not know if the German force there was strong enough to capture us and take us to Germany. For three days we stayed low, avoiding as much trouble as possible, although some of the boys did have short engagements with the Germans. We all had to duck when the Germans bombed the city continuously for the three days. The Germans in Bucharest were completely disorganized, and at the end of four days the Rumanians had the situation well in hand in the city.

You've all heard about the operational reunion. On the last day of August, bombers of the 15th Air Force flew in to pick us up and return us to Allied control in Italy. I flew in the first bomber. I thought I was happy when I saw the blue Adriatic once again, but it was nothing compared to the happiness I felt when we landed in Italy. I never thought that place would look good to me but it certainly did that day.

After we landed, I was taken to an American hospital where a sizeable piece of 20 mm. was removed from my right knee, and I still carry three pieces in my left leg. These do not bother me very much except on rainy days.

After I was released from the hospital, we boarded ship and on October 22, 1944, I found myself once again back in the good old U. S. A.

I've already told you my pilot and radio operator were killed on that last flight. The remaining eight of us were O.K. except for our slight wounds and considered ourselves very lucky indeed to be out of that whole mess.

I hope this short narrative of mine has cleared up some of the questions in your minds as to what happened to our crew and the "RAMP-ROOSTER". It's all fact, and can be authenticated by a score of persons if need be.

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MISSION COMPLETED