

# **Four Months a Prisoner of War in 1945**

**Jack A. Simon**



**Special Report 4**

*Front cover: Jack A. Simon, 1944.*



Released by the authority of the State of Illinois 0.3M - 2007

quadrennial meeting, held in the United States for the first time, brought more than 600 scientists from 25 foreign countries to Champaign-Urbana.

In 1980, the Survey staff under Simon's leadership observed the Survey's 75th Anniversary with a symposium, "Perspectives in Geology." At that time, Simon noted the need for new studies applied to the broad spectrum of problems in waste disposal, new geologic criteria for location of oil and gas in the state, and coal conservation, recovery, and productivity. He also recognized the expanding role of geology in land-use planning because of greater needs for land-use planning, mining, and major energy and industrial plant siting. He realized that groundwater availability would also command increased research, and he foresaw major advances in computerization of many kinds of geologic data and their application in research and service.

In 1981, Simon suffered a severe stroke, and, although he made a rapid and remarkable recovery, he retired that year. He was a familiar figure at almost all Survey functions during his retirement years, and he was always greeted warmly by many staff who had worked for him. He was a kind and generous man, but his profound modesty prevented many from understanding the full measure of his service to his community. Simon's influence was national and international through his work, the mentoring of other geologists, teaching, philanthropy, and friendships.

Citation contributed by Myrna M. Killey.

## **Four Months a Prisoner of War in 1945**

**Jack A. Simon**

Illinois Department of Natural Resources  
ILLINOIS STATE GEOLOGICAL SURVEY  
William W. Shilts, Chief  
615 E. Peabody Drive  
Champaign, Illinois 61820  
217-244-2414

**Jack A. Simon**  
**1919–2005**  
**Fifth Chief; Coal Geology**

A native of Urbana, Illinois, and a son of immigrants from Russia and Turkey, Simon received his B.A. degree in 1941 and his M.S. degree in 1946 in geology from the University of Illinois. Between those two dates, he served as a lieutenant during World War II in the U.S. Army Air Force as a B-17 navigator, flying twenty-seven missions over Germany between 1944 and 1945. When his plane was shot down, he became a prisoner of war until his internment camp was liberated by his fellow Americans. Upon his return to Illinois, he resumed work with the Illinois State Geological Survey that he had begun as a student assistant for his next-door neighbor, Dr. Gilbert Cady, specializing in the study of coal. Simon rose steadily through the professional ranks to become Head of the Survey's Coal Section in 1953 following Cady's retirement. In 1967, he was named Principal Geologist and Head of the Geological Group, and he served as Assistant Chief under John Frye from 1973 to 1974.

Simon was named Chief of the Survey in 1974 upon Frye's retirement. By this time, severe budgetary constraints had begun to affect the Survey's programs and staff. To support the Survey's activities, Simon sought to increase the proportion of non-state funds through contracts. He continued Frye's program on environmental geology, expanding studies on the potential for groundwater contamination from coal wastes and from leachates from solid, hazardous, and low-level radioactive waste facilities; additional studies focused on air pollutants from coal combustion. Simon encouraged studies of coal mineral matter and composition. The Clean Air Act of 1963 and the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency in 1970 resulted, for the Survey, in coal sulfur and coal washing studies. As Panel Chairman for the Technical Committee of the Illinois Energy Commission charged with making recommendations concerning a long-range energy program for Illinois, Simon issued a 1977 report on the status of known coal reserves, new and developing technology on coal utilization, coal development impacts, and constraints on mining and utilization of Illinois coals. He observed that sulfur content was a major concern. He noted the need for further research on sulfur removal from coal during its extraction, preparation, and combustion, along with information about and recommendations for coal utilization through coal liquefaction and coal gasification.

Under Simon's leadership, the ISGS hosted the technical sessions of the Ninth International Congress of Carboniferous Stratigraphy and Geology in 1979. This

clubs a half dozen times or more and finally broke 100 on the University course (93). Not doing quite that well yet at Urbana though —played there twice, the best being 118.

Well, Harold, this is not the forty pages you asked for, but I'm sure is more than too much as it is. Doubtless *[I]* have left out a great deal (think of more and more all the time), but *[this]* does pretty well cover the situation. If there are any further questions ask and I shall answer. We'll hope that it won't be too long though before the three of us can all sit together and match notes. Take good care of yourselves and keep us all posted. *[I]* am leaving for Miami Beach the day after tomorrow, and will drop you each a line at least from there.

This has gone on quite long enough, so will close, having just about exhausted all paper supplies. Our prayers are all with you.

With love from your brother,

Jack *[signed]*

P.S. No favoritism—both of you are getting carbon copies of your own letter.



*Portrait of Jack Simon, by Joel Dexter of the Illinois State Geological Survey.*

## Preface

Jack A. Simon (June 17, 1919 to December 17, 2005) was Chief of the Illinois State Geological Survey from 1975 to 1982. In that position, he led over 100 research geologists, chemists, and engineers and about 50 support technicians and staff. Mr. Simon retired from the Survey for health reasons in 1982. A copy of his memorial may be found on the Web sites of the Illinois State Geological Survey ([www.isgs.uiuc.edu](http://www.isgs.uiuc.edu)) and the Geological Society of America ([www.geosociety.org](http://www.geosociety.org)).

In his remarkable story, Mr. Jack Simon describes the fateful events during his twenty-seventh bombing mission on January 14, 1945, of an underground oil storage site at Derben on the Elba River about 60 miles west of Berlin, Germany. It took many German FW-190 fighters and several anti-aircraft guns to shoot down the B-17 Flying Fortress in which Simon was the navigator. Simon describes his parachuting to safety and his subsequent capture and imprisonment on January 15. His story details his interrogations, the conditions inside prisoner of war camps at two sites, and the situation he endured until his liberation, nearly four months later, on April 29, 1945. Lt. Simon was 25 years of age on that fateful mission, but he heroically survived the camps and the war. He wrote this story about himself on July 25, 1945—three months after his liberation—in the form of a letter to his two brothers, Harold and Bobby Simon. Jack Simon gave Paul DuMontelle a typed copy of his story several years before he passed away, but being the gentleman that he was, he did not share this wartime story with his colleagues, which inspired this printing.

Jack's brother, Robert D. Simon of Nice, France, permitted this printing and provided the wartime photographs. Robert's daughter, Stephanie McWelly of West Medford, Massachusetts, provided other documents. To both we are grateful.

In preparing this document, to retain the historic flavor, the text was left almost entirely as it was originally written. We have, however, added footnotes, a map, a table of bombing missions that Jack had previously prepared, and several photographs to assist readers. Bracketed italicized words are those of the compilers, not Jack Simon.

– Dick Harvey and Paul DuMontelle, compilers  
Senior Geologists, Emeriti  
Illinois State Geological Survey

## Introduction

I first met Jack Simon at a reception shortly after I arrived in Champaign in June 1995. He greeted me warmly as the newest Chief of the Survey and said that he was available as a “shoulder to lean on.” From then until the day he died, Jack made good on that promise and dropped in to chat with me several times a year. Jack was always upbeat and smiled with that twinkle in his eye that made you feel that he was sharing something special with you. After I first read this remarkable letter, which Paul and Dick brought to me to ask if we could publish it, I was able to understand the boundless optimism that marked this man’s life. As a student of history of U.S. Army aviation during the Second World War, I could relate well to the events Jack describes, but I have never appreciated the human element of that adventure until I read his account. Jack describes what must have been a terrifying and very uncomfortable experience in matter-of-fact tones with no bitterness or regret and with the upbeat style that characterized his career. I last saw Jack at my annual “State of the Survey” address about a month before he passed away, and he, though obviously failing, grabbed my hand and shook it with that characteristic smile and twinkle, the expression of a personality that I can’t help but think must have charmed his captors and fellow prisoners, alike.

So read Jack’s letter not only as a snippet of history, but as a window that reveals the essence of the impact that this remarkable man had on the lives of all who encountered him in his long life. It was an honor to know him.

–Bill Shilts, Chief  
Illinois State Geological Survey

He ended up as “permanent” party at the camp where I had the Christmas dinner, and got out so soon by escaping when they started to move the camp in the latter part of March. Also, I heard from Gene Senseny, our bombardier who had not flown with us the day we went down. He had completed his missions, had come home and was discharged soon after reassignment. I had hoped to see him while I was home, but haven’t gotten to yet. As for the other boys, three of the families received notice of killed in action, but Vevle the co-pilot wasn’t reported. I’ve held out hope for a miracle here, but time is an enemy in that regard. I am convinced that Floyd Vevle and Alvin Morman [*pilot*] gave their lives in an attempt to assure the safety of the remainder of the crew. Because of a failure of the alarm system and the interphone, I think Floyd may have attempted to warn the boys in the rear part of the ship while Alvin remained at the control. Both had their chutes on before I knew we were going down. Yet, the toggelier reported no one in the hatchway when he went out. On this assumption, I’m making an effort to get them some recognition for their act. They were wonderful boys, and so selfless, that I know they could not have done any differently.

Well, as for the leave itself, there is not a great deal to tell that you do not already know from previous correspondence (principally Mother’s). [*I*] did go up to Chicago two or three times for short visits, but have principally loafed and done little visiting. Have seen a number of familiar faces, most of whom you probably don’t know, but will recount those that I recall. Hap Macintire (Lt. fresh out of West Point), D.G. Dearing (recuperating from Purple Heart), Ted McClurg (same), Jim Strong (friend of Bob’s on leave from Annapolis training), Laurie Gougler (Lt. stationed near Washington), Clinton Cobb (Lt. JG, home from Pearl Harbor), Bob Smith (of model “T” fame – Captain home well decorated from the South Pacific), Bob Ingalls (Lt. Colonel home from Europe, “en route”), Jimmy Campbell (ex POW), Darryl Reno (ex POW), Scott Cleave (Lt. JG home from Europe), Perry Huie (Maj. stationed at Chanute) and probably a world of others that I don’t at the moment recall. Bobby may also be interested to know that Capt. David Sharp visited Urbana recently, though I don’t know him and didn’t see him. Oh yes, Col. Louis McCabe<sup>28</sup> is home right now. He said he had written you Bobby to let you know that he had tried to have you transferred, but because his outfit was being greatly reduced in size, they were accepting no transfers.

The only other thing that I think of in the way of unfinished business is to apologize to Harold for not having told him I received that nice shirt, and have put it to good use. Bobby may also be interested to know that I have played golf with his

---

<sup>28</sup>Col. Lewis McCabe had earlier been a geologist at the Illinois State Geological Survey.



paper shower from neighboring skyscrapers. After disembarking, the ever present Red Cross was there with sandwiches, milk, and doughnuts. We immediately loaded up on a ferry, crossed the river, and boarded a train that was to bear us to Camp Shanks, N.Y. We arrived at Camp Shanks at around 2230 hours, and there saw how the army can operate when it wants to. By three o'clock in the morning we had had a welcome and orientation speech in the theatre (complete with jazz band), various processing and form filling, received our pay and a steak dinner complete with ice cream, and were quartered. We got a little sleep then, and by noon of that day, boarded a train that was to carry us to Chicago. Here again, being near the front of the returnees was helpful, for we had ample space in troop sleepers, which while not as fancy as Pullmans were even more comfortable. We arrived at Fort Sheridan around four o'clock and apologies were made for their not being able to process that afternoon. The following morning, however, and before noon, orders had been cut, and we were on our way to enjoy a sixty day leave. Wotta life!

On my way home, I stopped off to see Thelma and Elliott, and had a very nice though very short visit, for that evening I headed for home. Not sure, but the folks did seem glad to see me, and it was great to get home. Pretty quick trip too—hit New York late on the 29<sup>th</sup> of May, and home on June 1.

Before any of the details of the leave, there was a little more information came to light after I got home. Mother had heard from Mrs. Stieg, that Jimmy<sup>27</sup> was in England on April 3. That was the first I knew him to be alive, and believe me it was wonderful news. He happens to be a particularly fine fellow. He had a pretty interesting tale to tell, so I'm going to repeat part of it from his letter.

“Taking up from where you left off, the plane went into a sharp left bank and started down, soon after the third wave of fighters. It leveled off at about 13,000 feet. My turret having been riddled with machine gun and cannon shells, I left for the waist. After another pass at the two waist guns I crawled back to get the waist door off. The waist door was still on although it was pulled at several times. I tried to pull it but the pins were frozen and then I crawled halfway up the waist and I couldn't go any further. By then the flames were leeping [*sic*] through the side of the fuselage. I rolled up in a little ball, and seconds later it exploded. I was knocked unconscious for a few seconds, but came to in time to pull my cord at about 1500 feet. The jerries were waiting for me on the ground, and they took me to a hospital in Berlin where I remained till Feb 26—.”

<sup>27</sup>Jimmy Stieg was a fellow crew member.



*Jack A. Simon (front row, third from left) and his fellow crew members.*

*[Jack Simon wrote:]*

July 25, 1945

Dear Harold and Bobby,

This is to be less like a letter and more like a long if not somewhat dull story. Harold asked for it when I first got home, so you're going to get it now whether you want it or not. Since there was a great deal that one couldn't write before, the story will begin in Lincoln, Nebraska where we were given a brand new airplane<sup>1</sup> and loaded up for the crossing<sup>2</sup>.

From Lincoln, we flew non-stop to Granier Field, New Hampshire where we had a four-day vacation because of a hurricane coming up the coast. With the “all clear” we hopped up to Goose Bay, Labrador which is one of the two main jumping off

<sup>1</sup>A B-17, Flying Fortress, made by Boeing Corp., shown on page 6.

<sup>2</sup>The north Atlantic to England.

points (incidentally, it is 400 miles to the nearest town). After a brief stay, which included excellent food and a good night's sleep, we were given a final briefing and dispatched for Nutt's Corner, Ireland. Two of the three routes used involve stop offs, but we took the direct route straight across. It was a particularly smooth trip, and aside from the fact that the box lunch made a few of us a little ill, the trip was uneventful. A few hours after daybreak, the under cast cleared away and a short time later we saw Ireland below us. Having a little gas left, Nutt's Corner told us to go on, and we finally landed at Valley, Wales; twelve hours and ten minutes after leaving Labrador. Here we found the nice new airplane we brought wasn't ours, for we left it behind as we boarded a train to Stone, England, from where we would be assigned. (Arrived Sept. 19 [1944]).

After a few quiet days we were put on orders assignment, several crews to the 390th (square "J") group and upon our arrival at Framlingham (about 20 miles north of Ipswich—70 miles north of London) our crew was assigned to the 568th Sqn. For about a week, we went to school to become familiar with new equipment and new procedures and then came about a week of flying practice missions over England. Finally on October 7, we were called out at that wee hour in the morning, [which] means a combat mission. We went to Bohlen [see table of missions], which is just a little bit below Leipzig which was a fairly rough mission, though it didn't particularly disturb us at the time. We took it fairly easy in October but in November and December went at a pretty good clip, missing only three missions



A B-17 Flying Fortress, the type of bomber in which Jack served 27 missions as a navigator (photograph from the U.S. Air Force online library of photographs at af.mil).

I could have gotten a pass to go up to see him, but thought he was still fighting the battle of Ft. Sill. We went by truck again to the port at Le Havre, and although there were not as many Frenchmen on the roads throwing flowers at the truck as there had been when we came in, there were still some. It was quite inspiring to see all the tri-colors, union jacks, and stars and stripes flying side by side all along the route. Somewhat like Moosburg after we were liberated. Where all the flags had come from, I don't know, but flags of all the United Nations blossomed out all over the camp that morning. As we drove into the dock area, I saw ruins of an allied city for the first time from the ground (in London, for the most part, you only view spots where ruins were) with not a great deal of work having yet been accomplished other than to clear the streets. Over a very large area only the ruins of what had been very substantial buildings [were] visible.

The docks themselves had apparently been torn up pretty badly and we had to take a small boat out to a boating floating dock in order to board our ship. It was the SS John Ericson, formerly called the Kungsholm of the Swedish-American line (sister ship of the Gripsholm). Six of us were placed in a stateroom on "A" deck and although there was nothing fancy, it was quite comfortable and we had a private bath. The ship had plenty of books, games, movies and was carrying considerably less than capacity, so we did pretty well. The officers had a beautiful dining room to compare with any in the finest hotel. With reserved seats at tables for six, it was quite a nice arrangement. Each table had its own waiter, and with the ship's linen and silver, it was really quite fancy even down to daily printed menus. What was even more important was the fact that the meals were without question the finest that I ever hope to eat in the army. In case anyone didn't get filled up, though, they sold candy without limit in the ship's commissary. In general, the trip was fairly uneventful and the water was quite smooth most of the trip. One lone event that was somewhat dramatic occurred on our next to the last night out, shortly after the usual blackout announcement, the "announcer" reported that the showing of lights and smoking on the outer decks were permitted. As of an hour and a few minutes after blackout time, the Atlantic Ocean had been declared no longer a zone of combat.

On May 29 [1945], 10 days after we had put out to sea, we pulled into New York harbor. We were greeted by a Wac<sup>25</sup> Band on a river boat with accompanying boat whistles from neighboring boats. Of course Miss Liberty was out to greet us, which was the finest welcome of all. We arrived at the POE<sup>26</sup> pier, which is all painted up fancily, and there was a colored band to greet us there. We even got a

<sup>25</sup>Women's Army Corps.

<sup>26</sup>Point of entry.



received was the first that they had heard that I was OK. Nicely enough, it arrived the day before Mother's Day.

At long last, they started to move the boys out, and on May 9, [1945] at about seven o'clock in the morning, we loaded up what few things we wanted to take along and formed in the street. Marching a short way out of the gate, beautiful GI trucks were waiting to transport us to an airport about sixty miles away. We pulled onto the airfield around ten-thirty, and it looked a little bad, because there wasn't a single transport [plane] visible, only a few scattered [German] planes, and there were probably three thousand in our bunch. Well, to make the long story short, before we hardly had time to get down from the trucks, C-47's<sup>22</sup> began to arrive, and they kept coming. Within an hour after we hit the field, the planes unloaded cargoes of gasoline, and we were on our way. We made one gas stop at Metz, and landed at Le Havre [France] around five o'clock that evening. It was May 9, the day after VE<sup>23</sup> day, and there were a lot of Frenchmen lining the edge of the field, and their warm friendly waves sure gave one a thrill. The ever present Red Cross had coffee and doughnut trucks, but we had to hurry to get them, because trucks were ready to load up to take us to the processing Camp Lucky Strike, about 30 miles away. They rushed us in, bedded us down, fed us and told us a little about the processing. What food! The ration was 10% over hospital rations. It was wonderfully efficient and we really began to feel liberated. First thing in the morning, we were deloused and given new underwear, sox and fatigue suit. At last, I was able to shed the pinks and green shirt that I had been living in almost day and night for four months. Boy, were they dirty. What a relief. Other items of processing included a free issue of PX<sup>24</sup> supplies, a compete issue of GI clothing (some of the early birds got complete officer's uniforms), partial pay, and general record processing including a physical examination.

Though we were in the last large group to leave Moosburg, we were ahead of a great many of the boys, because we went right into the processing and were on our way out in six days. Boys that [came] in only two or three days after us had to wait two and three weeks to get out. For one thing, we had come directly to Le Havre while a great many had come via Reims. Had I known that Bobby was at Reims,

<sup>22</sup>The Douglas C-47, a military transport aircraft used extensively for moving cargo, troops, and the wounded; a version of the commercial DC-3.

<sup>23</sup>VE Day, or Victory in Europe Day, was May 8, 1945, a day when the World War II Allies formally celebrated the defeat of Nazi Germany.

<sup>24</sup>PX, Military post exchange, a multipurpose store, or complex of stores, for military personnel and their dependents.

## A. J. Mormon Crew, 568th Squadron, 390th Bombardment Group Missions, October 7, 1944, To January 14, 1945<sup>1</sup>

DATE	MISSION	TOWN	TARGET	LEAD PILOT	BOMBERS LOST
<b>1944</b>					
10/07	202*	Bohlen-Biel-feld	Oil & Marshal-ling Yard Aircraft Factory	Col. L. W. Dolan	
10/12	203*	Bremen	Aircraft Factory	Maj. Pennebaker	
10/18	206*	Kassel	Motor Works	Capt. Engebrecht	
10/19	207*	Mannheim	Oil Storage	Col. Von Arb	
10/26	210	Hannover	Military Depot	Col. J.A. Moller	
10/28	211*	Hamm	Marshalling Yard	Capt. R. D. Brown	
11/02	213*	Merseburg	Synthetic Oil	Maj. R. W. Waltz	
11/06	215	Neuumunster	Airfield	Maj. Pennybaker	
11/09	216	Saarbrücken	Marshalling Yard	Capt. Englebrecht	1
11/10	217	Weisbaden	Chemical Plant	Col. Von Arb	
11/21	219	Giessen	Marshalling Yard	Capt. L. Lackey	1
11/29	221*	Hamm	Marshalling Yard	Col. Armstrong	
11/30	222*	Merseburg	Synthetic Oil	Col. L. W. Dolan	9
12/02	223	Koblenz	Marshalling Yard	Capt. J. J. Howe	
12/04	224*	Friedberg	Marshalling Yard	Capt. R. Brannen	1
12/10	225	Koblenz	Marshalling Yard	Col. M. Huglin	
12/11	226	Koblenz	Marshalling Yard	Maj. R. D. Brown	
12/12	227	Darmstadt	Marshalling Yard	Maj. R. W. Waltz	
12/18	228*	Mainz	Marshalling Yard	Col. Von Arb	
12/24	229*	Zellhausen	Marshalling Yard	Col. W. J. Jones	3
12/25	230*	Morscheid Bridge	Railroad Bridge	Maj. R McHenry	1
12/27	231	Fulda	Marshalling Yard	Col. Von Arb	
12/29	233*	Frankfort	Marshalling Yard	Maj. Pennybaker	
12/31	235	Hamburg	Oil Refinery	Maj. R. W. Waltz	2
<b>1945</b>					
1/7	240	Rodenkirchen	Railroad Bridge	Col. Armstrong	
1/13	242	Mainz-Euskirchen	Marshalling Yard	Maj. R. W. Waltz	
1/14	243	Derben	Underground Oil Storage	Maj. R. Henry	9

<sup>1</sup>List compiled by J. A. Simon in 1987. Asterisk indicates John E. Mitchell crew reported in his book, 1989.

that the group flew in *[during]* that time. Among the places that we went to were Karlsruhe, Fulda, Giessen, Frankfurt/Mainz (twice), Bonn, Merseburg (twice), Hamburg, and a few other places including direct support of the front lines. Most of the twenty-seven missions we flew on were pretty much “milk-runs.” Several times we caught a few flak hits, but with the exception of #27, were never attacked by fighters in force, and witnessed single plane attacks on two occasions by jets. The mission which we particularly sweat out were the two to Merseburg where we were in intense flak for 29 minutes the first time, and nineteen minutes the second time—brothers, that’s a helluva long time for the way the Germans shot. On that second raid, about three-fourths of all the bombers participating suffered some damage with forty planes going down to flak alone. Our group lost seven of them. The other raid that gave us an exciting few minutes was over Hamburg, when due to a series of circumstances, we found ourselves all by our lonesome with a few German 88’s<sup>3</sup> right on us. We got hits right and left, up and down, and forward and behind. We sure thought we’d had it. To top it off, there were a large number of German fighters in the area that hit the group ahead of us and the group behind us, and alone as we were, we sure should have been sitting ducks, but they did not choose to catch us. We got home with close to two hundred holes in the plane. About midway through our tour, we had been assigned our own ship known as “Little Butch III,” a name which we didn’t choose to change. It is interesting to me that we never had a hard mission in our own ship. Some few of those that we flew in other ships, though, were a little rougher. (Mannheim, Darmstadt, and Weisbaden are three more targets that I recall.)

January 14 *[1945]* was the red-letter day. Of interest, is the fact that the night before I dreamt that I had bailed out over Germany, but *[that]* was the sole premonition and everything in general was routine. If all went well, it was to be a fairly interesting and uneventful flight for though it was deep *[into Germany]*, there was supposed to be no flak at the target. On that day we were flying a brand new ship on its big No. 1 mission. Over the North Sea, one of the dinghys<sup>4</sup> blew out and hung up momentarily on the tail, but “unfortunately” blew off so that we could proceed on our way.

The lead ship, in our squadron, was having a little trouble keeping up with the rest of the group, but thought that he could catch up so he stayed in the lead. We entered Germany just west of the Danish peninsula and by then were quite a ways below and behind the rest of the group. Because of a report of fighters in the area, apparently, he was afraid by then to relinquish the lead—in any case, he didn’t. We

<sup>3</sup>German 88’s were 88-mm anti-aircraft guns.

<sup>4</sup>A lifeboat.

outside. When I joined the throng, I saw pointing fingers and peering eyes in the direction of the town, which was little more than a mile away. There, big as life, and clear as day, on the tallest building in view was the Stars and Stripes. What a wonderful thrilling spectacle it was. About fifteen minutes later on our front gate, they raised that same wonderful design. The greatest joy to me was to watch some of the boys that had been guests of the Hun for three, four, and five years. My anticipation had been for an *[anticlimactic]* liberation and as it turned out, it could not have been more dramatic.

Shortly after the flag-raising on the front gate, a jeep bearing assorted colonels, a tank, and a recon<sup>18</sup> car drove down main street, and what a reception they got<sup>19</sup>. Of interest, maybe, the *[German]* guards (a skeleton crew) at the sign of the flag in town, stacked their rifles and marched off in formation to surrender.

Everyone thought that we would be immediately whisked off, so spirits were quite high for a couple of days. We had old “Blood and Guts” *[General]* Patton in all his glory visit us the second day, and the Congressional Committee investigating concentration camps came over when they heard that there were almost 27,000 votes over here. They looked and acted like jokers for the most part, though, I must reluctantly admit that our own esteemed junior senator outshone the rest<sup>20</sup>. The Red Cross didn’t waste much time in coming in, with doughnuts with their fair dispensers, and gum, candy, etc., etc. The original schedule called for everyone to be out in four or five days, so when a week had gone by and only five hundred had gone, there were quite a lot of short tempers and not too much show of patience. Orders were to remain in the camp, but a good many of the boys went out on looting expeditions for souvenirs, but Robbie and I stayed put. A whole me and good health were all that I brought back with me. Incidentally, one interesting visitor that I forgot to mention was a Captain Jack Gambs who came through the second day after we were liberated with his outfit. Knowing there were lots of Americans in the camp, he dropped in and a mutual friend spotted him. We were in the Tank Destroyer School together back at Camp Hood. He performed what turned out to a very great service in that he offered to drop a line to the folks since there were as yet no mail facilities for us. The AP<sup>21</sup> was supposed to have done the notifying, but something went wrong with that apparently, because this letter that the folks

<sup>18</sup>Reconnaissance.

<sup>19</sup>An advance unit of the 20th Armored Division is thought to have been the unit that liberated the men at Moosburg. The main unit of the 20th had fought and captured the German stronghold at München earlier that very day.

<sup>20</sup>This would have been Sen. C. Wayland Brooks (R) of Illinois.

<sup>21</sup>Associated Press.

the countryside, roaming for miles at will and trading the natives for eggs, bread, vegetables, flour, etc., for cigarettes and soap. Two or three eggs for a cigarette was the current uninflated price, though they soon went up, of course. There were unlimited supplies of potatoes and wood at each of the farms where we stayed, and that wonderful Red Cross didn't forget us, for every three or four days, at the most, we were met by trucks of the "great white fleet" and supplied with parcels. After the first day, the weather was perfect, and believe me that a barn is a darn good place to sleep especially to rest the corrugations developed by the nine bed slats. We actually had a pretty good time. Some of the boys went into German homes to get newscasts, and although rumors were far ahead of the news, we did keep pretty well posted. As a matter of fact, within a few hours of F.D.R.'s death<sup>17</sup>, we knew about it. Almost as soon as the folks at home did. They cut down the length of each day's hike, and we usually had a day or so between hikes, so it wasn't bad at all. If our loads had been a little lighter, there would have been nothing at all to it. Good enough as a matter of fact that we were reluctant the last day to walk on in to Moosburg and behind barbed wire again. In we went though. The camp had much better buildings than they had at Nurnberg, but many of the men were sleeping in tents and on the ground. We had barracks and bunks, but lice and bed bugs were so bad, that I was finally forced to the floor. The . . . ration here was considerably poorer than it had been at Nürnberg, but they were on full parcels, and with the extra potatoes and slight surplus that we came in with, we did pretty well. Also we could buy potatoes, rice, sugar, etc., from the Russians for cigarettes. They worked on the outside and acquired quite a bit one way or another. We knew that friends were not very far off, because between the news, the sound of guns, and the daily visits of fighters buzzing the camp, we knew it wouldn't be long. We were told of an agreement by the German government to no longer move POW's, so we only had to sweat 'em out.

The morning of April 29 [1945] blossomed bright and clear and the sound of guns had drawn quite near. The weather was great for flying and we had a real show put on by the fighters, some of them buzzed us then went on to strafe targets beyond. Around 1030 hrs the boys, most of whom were outside, heard the unmistakable ping of small arms fire and everyone hit for cover. A couple boys got hit, but not seriously. After a while, they began to venture outside again, and at exactly 1215 hrs (won't forget the time), there was some excited shouting and running about

<sup>17</sup>President Franklin Delano Roosevelt died April 12, 1945, just a few weeks before the end of the war in Europe.



*Jack Simon (center) with his pals, his pilot and co-pilot.*

weren't particularly disturbed for on many occasions we were warned of fighters in the area, but had not seen them, usually because they had struck elsewhere in the column or had been driven off by the escort. It wasn't long before we knew this time was to be different. Directly on the course of the bombers was a large swarm of fighter planes going round and round—both sides were represented, you see. There was another off to our right that I didn't happen to notice but which some of the other boys saw. We learned later that there was in the neighborhood of 400 German fighters on the scene. The planes were FW-190's and were coming in about 10 to 15 abreast<sup>5</sup>. Shortly after passing over the "swarm," we heard the tail gunner say that they were coming in at six o'clock (i.e., from the tail) and that he was starting to fire. That was the last heard on the interphone for it went dead

<sup>5</sup>The preceding sentence was originally a footnote of Jack Simon's. The plane is known today as FW-190, for Focke Wulf.



*Jack Simon and three crew members dressed and ready for high-altitude cold.*



on the first pass. Although some of the bursting 20 mm shells [were] visible from the nose, none of the fighters came within view—two of the planes off our right wing were burning and were headed down. Correction, the interphone wasn't yet dead, because I did hear someone say "salvo, salvo" at which the toggelier (bombardier to you, only an enlisted instead of an officer) salvoed the bombs. Nothing was visibly wrong from the nose, but found out later that the right wing was on fire. After the third pass, I noticed the engineer salvoing the nose escape hatch, so I gathered that we were going down. Verifying this assumption by signs, I alerted the toggelier who was still on his turret, donned my chute and went into the hatchway. Seeing the co-pilot standing there with his chute on, I again verified that we were going down and being convinced that we really were, without further ado or delay, rolled out the open hatch. It was my momentary decision to delay my

raid at night. The first American raid was in perfect weather and what an awe-inspiring spectacle it was. You will know what I mean by box seats when you know that we were but three kilometers from the marshalling yard. We sweat out wild bombing, but fortunately, there was none.

One last thing about the camp, before we leave it, and that is regarding your possible question as to what we did with our time. The old camp that most of the men had come from had fine libraries, classes of instruction, musical instruments, theatrical equipment and athletic equipment, but there were none of those things at Nürenberg. Much time was consumed in making plates, cups and cooking utensils out of tin cans. For the most part, when we had food to prepare, I did everything as fancy as I could and took up a great deal of times that way. There were a few decks of cards, and lots of the boys had "lists" that they spent much time on—foods, places to go, things to do, restaurants, etc. Visiting was also an outlet. Beside the boys that had gone down with us (my enlisted men were there also and I could talk to them through a fence). I bumped into quite a number of boys that had been with the bunch at Dyersburg where I had trained the first time.

Well, as the Americans began to draw close, we were placed on a half hour alert to move out, which really set everyone on edge (most of the boys had had a rather grueling march out of Sagen—which they never let us new kriegies forget, incidentally). As a result there was much buzzing about and food "bashing." Despite the hubba hubba<sup>16</sup>, a week later we were still there and most of the boys were pretty well convinced that "they couldn't move us—they haven't got the guards, and besides, where would they take us? On April 4, [1945] though we learned the answer when we were told to be prepared to move out at 1000 in the morning. Fortunately, it was spring so it did not promise to be too bad. The march was to be 156 kilometers long, and we were to average slightly under 25 kilos [kilometers] a day. The first day was the only bad one of the bunch. The itinerary called for 28 kilos and when we got in the area of our destination around midnight, we were caught in a rainstorm, no arrangement for us had been made so we just spent the night roaming up and down wondering who in the h\_\_l knew what was going on. One of our English speaking guards had the commentary that "even a twelve year old girl could have conducted the march better." You see, he also was tired and wet. With morning though, we were quartered in barns in villages along the way, and spent a couple of days resting up. The boys began to take over

<sup>16</sup>A slang interjection expressing approval, pleasure, or excitement. Here used in the sense of hubbub.

and anytime. Another “super” was the mince meat pie made from chopped spam, corned beef, raisins, prunes, cracker crumbs and spices (if anyone in the crowd had a parcel from home). This was usually topped by a flavored “whipped cream” made from [*German*] margarine and powdered milk (very good). With considerably more to work with, there were also ingenious variations of the bread cake until they were really quite good.

This could go on indefinitely, but I’ll not mention anymore other than the term “spam delight” which was my name for my own super version of an old kriegie dish. You see, by this time, after a little switching around, Virgil Carneal (our fifth man) was the pastry cook in our combine and I was the chief cook assisted by “Lutz” Lutzer, another navigator shot down the same day from our squadron. Just as a matter of interest, Lutz, Robbie, and Don were on their next to the last mission when they went down. From then on, parcels arrived with more or less regularity and for the last couple of weeks we were receiving a parcel per man per week. The German ration was cut considerably when we began to get Red Cross food, but no one minded too much, though at first we did miss the bulk. The potato ration for five was little more than it had been for one originally, but we did pretty well with the parcels.

As mentioned, the camp was really poor by normal standards in that there were no heating facilities, not enough beds, poor and insufficient blankets, poor sanitary facilities, vermin infested barracks, etc., etc., etc. For quite a long time, four of us pooled our blankets, (two threadworn per each) and slept on two tables pushed close together. The fact that you had to sleep on one side all night, and couldn’t turn made this a little unsatisfactory, so we finally split up into twos. As time went on, we even acquired beds which consisted of nine bed slats. Not very comfortable or warm (no pads), but at least you could turn around. In spite of all this, though most of the boys stayed in pretty good health. In spite of the fact that my feet were always cold to the point of numbness, there was only one slight cold. (As a matter of fact, on the feet business, I have only now just about gotten full feeling back in my big toes.) All in all though, it was quite tolerable especially because we could see that the end was not too far distant. Most of the time, we received the daily German communiqué, and toward the last of our days at Nürnberg even had a radio speaker from which some of our German speaking colleagues got the news every day.

The most impressive feature of our stay at Nürnberg (as the [*Germans*] spell it) was the box seats we held for three large-scale bombings of the city. Two daylight by the Americans with around 1200 bombers or more, and one large scale British

jump for forty-five seconds (we were at 27,000 ft originally)<sup>6</sup>, and after counting to thirty, for some reason I stopped, and after becoming aware of the fact that I had stopped, waited a few seconds, and pulled the cord. Thanks to a good packing job, it opened without difficulty. All during the fall, was perfectly aware of what was going on—no sensation of falling. On the way down, saw a German fighter coming down toward me. Having heard accounts of firing at parachutists, he was sweated out a little, but he came down to about fifty yards from me then went back upstairs. Within a very few minutes then, I saw the ground begin to come up very rapidly and then hit with a considerable jolt. Since I landed in a frozen ploughed field, the book would probably say I should come out with a broken neck or something but ended up in one piece.

The first impulse was to get away so I gathered up my chute, and high-tailed it for a woods that was only about a hundred yards away. For three hours my course was generally north and west (toward the Baltic coast or toward Denmark). My shoes remained in the airplane and walking was a bit difficult in the flying boots. Due to poor judgment, my escape kit was lost on descent. (Did still have maps and compass, though.) After the three hour hike, I was pretty tired, and my nerves were just beginning to catch up with me, the whole thing being pretty much of a matter of fact affair up until that time. My flying clothes were quite warm while walking, but [*they*] didn’t keep me too warm when halted. Probably I’ll never know whether anyone was looking for me in that woods, but I thought there were unmistakable signs and sounds of humans behind me, so I kept pretty much on the move. Coming to the edge of the woods, it seemed advisable to lay low until dark, which was by then less than an hour away.

A couple of men walked down a small road through the woods about twenty yards from me, but I don’t know whether or not they were looking. They may well have been, because two men that had seen me at some distance before I had seen them, went to the edge the field, boarded their bikes and headed to town. With the sun just about out of sight and the light . . . beginning to vanish, I got up and headed for a main road that I had seen. By then, because of the extended halt, I was pretty cold and sore, both from the landing and from the forced marching in the flying boots. The next couple of hours were spent on this highway, but the trip was rather uneventful though I did pass three people, one of whom was a soldier on a bicycle. It was pretty dark by then, and we exchanged no “heils” and each went his own way.

---

<sup>6</sup>It was too cold to hang up that high for one must free fall to lower altitudes; furthermore, he was too close to the propellers to pull the rip cord immediately.





A map of Germany. The star indicates the target of Jack Simon's fateful mission, to Derben near Burg, 60 miles west of Berlin. Also shown are the sites of the two prisoner of war camps (P).

better. Besides the bread, margarine and cheese, about the same as before we also got about four potatoes apiece. By now, four of us had sort of teamed up on our eating, pending arrival of Red Cross food. In the meantime, we were eating in pairs. Robbie (the fellow who had given me the boots in Berlin) and I mashed our potatoes together, threw in our margarine and let them heat them up in community kitchens that they had. These kitchens were used by the boys that had come from Sagen, most of them having arrived pretty well stocked with food, so that we had the additional problem of watching them eat some pretty appetizing dishes which was about as hard as not eating too well. After about two weeks, though, a delayed contingent of sick and wounded arrived from Sagen and had some parcels with them. They had a distribution which came out to five men to one parcel. We acquired a fifth man among the "sick and wounded" to our eating combine, so the five of us got one parcel. Having learned real food economy in the preceding weeks, and not having any idea when we might see parcels again, we stretched a parcel (intended for one man for one week) for the five of us for three weeks. As an example, we made the main meal for three days by making a gravy out of bread crumbs and a four ounce can of liver paste for eating on our potatoes. The five of us also got four meals out of one can of spam<sup>15</sup>, and when I say four meals that means four days for we tried to have one fair meal [a] day. With the parcel, we also had coffee which we usually drank with sugar or milk (we couldn't afford both) and it stretched because our fifth member had brought some with him. It was during this period that we had our first "kriegie" cake. ("Kriegie"—short for *kriegesgefangener* meaning prisoner of war). Our old kriegie whipped it up, and we new kriegies couldn't get over it. It was made of bread crumbs (we grated off the wood like crusts from the bread) with prunes, sugar, and margarine in it and frosted with a paste—made of powdered milk, sugar and flavored with a square of chocolate from a "D" bar, all these ingredients being found in the parcel. What a boost those cakes were. They sure made the old world seem brighter. Within a week after we had completely exhausted our supplies, the Red Cross apparently discovered us, for three large white (White) American trucks put in their appearance bearing parcels and the promise that trucks would regularly appear. There certainly was a notable improvement in dispositions from then on and eating was considerably improved. We had many delicious and ingenious meals with material that came in parcels and they're [too] numerous to recount, however, I will just mention a few. The greatest delicacy which we called Klim pies consisted of a chocolate or jam flavored filling of powdered milk and sugar with a crust made from K-2 cracker crumbs. I can tell you this item would be delicious anywhere

<sup>15</sup>SPAM Luncheon Meat, Hormel Foods Corporation.

Our train was a regular P.O.W. train . . . which wasn't as good as we had before, but still quite an improvement over an ordinary box car. The first night was interesting because we were sitting in a railroad station and the RAF<sup>13</sup> was bombing towns within view on three sides of us. Our town fortunately was not one of the chosen few, though our old box car was thoroughly rattled several times. The following day, we were sitting in a marshalling yard in Frankfort about target time, so we sweated that out a little when the bombers came by, but fortunately they had other targets for the day. The only other incident of interest on the trip was that we ate a great deal. Some of the boys being actually ill from overeating because they were trying to eat up the parcel. You can imagine how I felt sitting there safe and sound, full to the gills, knowing that just about then the folks would be hearing that I was missing in action (by odd coincidence, that was Feb. 3, [1945] the very day the folks were notified. On second thought, it was the 2<sup>nd</sup>, but that was close). We walked a couple of kilometers from the train to the camp and the first impression wasn't so good. The impression wasn't so good because it wasn't so hot. It was an old established camp all right, quite old and somewhat rundown. Until a few weeks previously, there had been no American or British imprisoned here, and the place was quite dirty. There [were] no air force personnel—only about 300 enlisted men who had been taken in the bulge<sup>14</sup> in December. The daily ration consisted of a sixth of a loaf of bread, about a level teaspoon full of margarine, a spoonful of jam and a usually watery soup that occasionally had a few potatoes and dried peas in it. There was also the [German] coffee or tea in the morning, and a small weekly ration of cheese.

It was during this period that we had reason to silently curse those fellow P.O.W.'s at transient camp that had told us to eat all our parcels for those that had a little food left when we got here were permitted to keep it. We got pretty hungry in those days, but were ever so much better off than the enlisted men who had to put in a full day's work on that ration including a five mile walk to and from town. After about a week and a half, though, about six thousand airmen from a camp that was evacuated in northeastern Germany in advance of the Russian arrival moved in bringing Luftwaffe administration along with them. After the beds were pretty well taken, we were moved over with them, and two threadworn [German] blankets were not very adequate. We slept by pairs on the floor since there were no slats on our beds, and that helped some. The important thing was that here, the food was a little better. We got soup twice a day—only a small portion, but much

---

<sup>13</sup>British Royal Air Force.

<sup>14</sup>The German Ardennes Offensive, occurring in the Ardennes Forest, on the German-Belgian border, December 16, 1944, to January 25, 1945, known on the Allied side as the "Battle of the Bulge."

Having previously gone through all my pockets to make sure that nothing of intelligence remained on my person it was on this jaunt that I decided they shouldn't even know that I was a U of I man so my ring was deposited in a pasture. Coming to a small cluster of farm houses it seemed just as well to walk right on through as to try to skirt it since it was quite dark. Frankly, by then capture eventually seemed quite certain under the circumstances, and I was feeling badly enough not to be too adverse to it. Having sweated out being picked up by hostile civilians until then, however, there was a determination that they would have to get me, because there was going to be no regrets about having "given up to the wrong people." Was going to trust to luck. As I walked through the "village" a dog came out to bark at me and a man appeared to call him off. After the dog retired, he walked up beside me and said, quote "Americaner?" Being somewhat taken aback, I did return with an unmistakable kraut "Vas?". He explained that he was a Pole and directed that I should follow him. Knowing that help from Poles so deep in Germany was unlikely, it was possible, and if not help it would likely be an uneventful capture. He took me into the house and from the language and appearance of the potbellies on a couple of the men, it was not difficult to ascertain that I was now a P.O.W. There were a couple of women, two Polish boys and assorted krauts that wove in and out of the kitchen as I sat there. Much later, it was appreciated that lady-fortune was with me as you will see. Some of the boys' had much less hospitable receptions than I did. Asking for a drink of water, they insisted on bringing both coffee and water and though there wasn't much difference except for the temperature and color, it was pretty good at the time. A short while later, one of the women brought something that had the general appearance of sausage. Under the circumstances, though, it tasted quite good. We conversed a bit via signs and scattered words. While the krauts were out of the room, I did manage to pawn off my watch to one of the Poles, refusing a fairly sizable wad of bills from him, knowing that neither would be of much use to me. Finally two old ducks from the local home guard armed with antiquated rifles put in their appearance and after a quick search for a pistol we started to walk to the little town of Friesack about 4 kilometers away to the nearest jail. Once again, I was made to feel welcome by one of my captors who gave me some homemade cookies to eat with the warning that they must all be eaten before we got to jail, because the police wouldn't like it—naturally, I obliged. They were also good enough to point out a mosquito<sup>8</sup> raid on Berlin (about 50 miles away), which was in progress at the time. Arriving at the jail, I was searched by a flatfoot, that one might have guessed to be an admiral by the appearance of his uniform, and stripped of all my flying clothes except for the

---

<sup>7</sup>Jack Simon's fellow crew members.

<sup>8</sup>British light bomber; very fast and made of wood.

heated suit jacket (in which there is no warmth except when current was available) and the felt liners to my flying boots. Then, was conducted to a cell about five feet by eight feet. It was pitch black, but found its occupants to be four other boys that had been shot down from our group. In the next cell were four or five others including my own engineer (one Mario Manfredini by name). As yet, we knew nothing about any of the rest. By lying on one's side, there was room enough for all on the bed, and the body warmth was appreciated because our allowance seemed to be only two blankets. One of the boys in our cell that had been blown out of his ship and had come down with only one side of his chute fastened, injured his back and as a result, we all spent a pretty rough night, but morning came at last. In the morning, they let us out for nature's inevitable call, and as those arrogant b\_\_\_\_\_ds stood over that crippled bunch with sub-machine guns, it was the first and only time that I had a gun pointed at me, though some of the boys, including Mannie, were met at the ground with a rifle at their heads and some had drawn fire from nervous home guards. By evening, our ranks had been swelled somewhat by additional men so that by evening there was a total of fifteen, all from our group. Several of the boys had been wounded and though some had received first aid, were in rather painful shape well over 24 hours having passed without medical care. Seeing some of the boys suffer hurt those of us who were fortunate enough to have only minor aches. As night came on we did not relish spending another night in these small cells—eight next door with seven in ours and about half of them wounded. There was only room enough for about half that number to lie down and two blankets didn't go far. We had no food (that's where my luck really paid off) and until late that day had no water. Around midnight, however, we were taken downstairs, searched again and the more fortunate ones received most of their clothing back although mine was all gone by the time I got there. It was some relief to be in the hands of the army, but though I had received no roughing up by nature of my religious origins, one of the boys whose name and face were not very inconspicuous, had been pushed around a bit and spat on, but what the military would do remained to be seen. Most of the way through, we were so much more fortunate than a great many of the boys that I've talked to, that I almost hesitate to recount it, but it is simply explainable I think, in that it all depends who gets their hands on you.

We were taken by charcoal burning truck to an airfield at Neuruppin. We were taken to our cells which seemed quite luxurious by comparison in that we each had a straw tick and a blanket, and the building was heated. An English speaking German announced to us that we were now prisoners of the Luftwaffe and would be handled under the terms of the Geneva Convention, that we would be fed and

Dearest folks, It has been a couple of weeks since I last wrote, and we are now becoming somewhat accustomed to the life of a "Kriegsgefangener". I'm in good health and am getting along O.K. I hope you didn't have to wait too long to find out I was a P.O.W. We are all ambitious for the war to end so that we can get home but are getting along pretty well in the meantime. God bless the International Red Cross for what they are doing and for what they have done. We are settled in a camp now and are able to settle down to some kind of daily routine. I know several other boys here and occasionally bump into one that I knew from the States. Feb. 17, 1944

We'll hope the war is over perhaps by the time this reaches you, but if by chance it isn't, send a food parcel with Nestles Hot Chocolate, Soluble coffee, concentrated chocolate (Hershey dime store variety) and ready mix preparations. Love to all and fondest regards to the Cady's. Jack

Received 1/30/46

*A letter home on POW supplied paper. In this letter, Jack Simon refers to the family of Dr. Gilbert H. Cady who was at the time the Head of the Illinois State Geological Survey's Coal Section and who lived next door to the Simon family on Oregon Street in Urbana.*

told that we were to go to Barth (on the Baltic Coast). but just before we left, were told we were going to Nuremberg instead. Since it was an old established camp, we were assured that the conditions would be pretty good. We were given a Red Cross parcel for each two men with the warning to eat it all before our arrival as the Germans would take all that remained. We subsequently had occasion to be T'd off for these two bits of information.

<sup>12</sup>Slang: ticked off; angry.



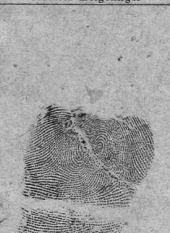


first in seventeen days). Shortly after one of these unexplainable things occurred. Laying in my cell, feeling pretty good, I was about ready to go to sleep when the guard came and got me again. I thought to myself, oh-oh, here begins the happy h. s. When I got to his office, he said that he thought I might be interested to know what happened to the rest of the crew and he then related that the bodies of Alvin Mormon, pilot, Floyd Vevle, co-pilot, Robert Hehr, radio, and Leon Cousineau were found in the plane; the four of us, of course were P.O.W., and he did not know what had become of the lower ball turret gunner, Jimmy Stieg. Frankly, if the boys in the waist didn't get out, we didn't give much chance to Jimmy, but after getting home we learned that he was alive, and had a very interesting story to tell which I will relate later. That was all he wanted, and the next day, I joined a group that was shipped *[to]* another Dulag Luft at Wetzler which was known as a transient camp. Initially, we were showered and deloused. Except for incidental processing, the camp was practically completely run by American and British prisoners. They had large quantities of Red Cross food, clothing and supplies. Any one badly in need of clothing was supplied with his minimum needs. My great need was for shoes, and I can tell you I was one happy boy when they handed me a brand new pair of GI shoes of the size I asked for. There is no shoe in the world like them! We also received underwear, sox, towels, soap, cigarettes, gum, tooth powder, and razor with blades all with courtesy of the AMRC<sup>10</sup>. But the food is what was really something. Because of the large number in the camp at that time, they *[only]* had to feed just twice a day, but they *[we]* ate pretty well with Red Cross food supplements by the "goon" rations (knowing why they call them krauts, it is not difficult to understand why they are also called "goons"<sup>11</sup>). The latter was definitely a "supplement" too. My stay there was for only one day, but it couldn't have been chosen more wisely. The Red Cross Christmas parcel arrived just five weeks late and was consumed on that one happy day that I happened to be there. We had turkey, plum pudding, dates, nuts, candy and most everything else that one would expect for a good Christmas dinner. There were also gifts of washcloths, cards, cigarettes or pipes with tobacco, and miniature game (checkers, chess, etc.) for each man. This was not the first occasion we had for saying God Bless the Red Cross and we had many occasions for an enthusiastic offering as you may well imagine. That night we were given four fluffy GI blankets and boy what a night's sleep we had. Felt like a million the next day. Was reunited with Mannie, Sam, and Bob and even met some boys from our group that had gone down a couple of weeks before. The enlisted men had quite a stay there, but the officers were moved out in from one to three days (one in my case). We were originally

our comrades given medical treatment. The wounded were taken to the station hospital, and the remainder of us were taken to the mess hall where we had a German variation of hash and coffee. (Their enlisted men's breakfast menu.) After a pretty fair night's sleep, they routed us out, fed us bread, honey butter (ersatz something or other) and black coffee (which is made incidentally from roasted acorns). We walked to the train station from where we began a train ride that I believe was unique. We made about three changes to get to Berlin, and then to Spandau, a suburb of Berlin. (Of interest is that on one of the trains, civilians were cleared from one half of one of the coaches, many of them having to stand so that we could sit in the other half.) We walked to an airfield at Spandau and there had a happy reunion with about 20 other boys from our group who were shot down at the same time. Our tail gunner Sam Barton and the toggelier Bob Springborn were there. By a check of personnel, it was ascertained that all ten ships from our squadron had been shot down, so there were a good many boys still missing. Though the food was a bit unusual, we were fed amply while we were here. After eating kraut soup, and kraut and potatoes, and kraut, I began to understand why they call those cabbage heads "krauts." We were supposed to leave the next day, but on the next day, were informed that "trains are not running on Wednesday" and though there was no explanation, we knew why. Among the bunch that we encountered there were Don Lash and Matthew Robinson who really saved my old hide with clothing donations. Robbie had shoes under his flying boots, so he gave me the latter and Don had all his clothes so he gave me his heated suit which wasn't very warm, but was just twice as much as I had to wear until then. The following day, we were loaded up with bread, sausage and margarine, piled into another wood burning truck and were hauled off to Berlin. It was very early morning, and the light wasn't good, but one could see that the city had been broken up a bit. One area we went through consisted of block after block of hollow broken buildings. On arrival at the station we encountered the phenomena that made me say our train trip was somewhat unique. In the station was a troop train made up mostly of second class cars with two first class cars at the front. Wishing to place us right behind the engine meant that we had first class coaches with heat and comfort. We had been cautioned to be careful not to make loud remarks, laugh or anything else in Berlin (which caution was adhered to) and received little apparent notice from the civilians. Our route carried us through Ludwigsfelde, Halle, Gother and Fulde, to Gelnhausen where we had to change trains. Riding through Fulde was quite interesting, because we had bombed the marshalling yard there just two weeks before. It was quite a beautiful sight, because not a single rail in the yard was intact, and the only restoration effected was the relaying of the main line through the yard. From Gelnhausen, we went to Frankfurt/Maine in less style

<sup>10</sup>American Red Cross

<sup>11</sup>Goon: (1) a stupid person; (2) one hired to terrorize or eliminate opponents.

Dulag-Luft. Kriegsgefangenenkartei.		Gefangenen- Erkennungsmarke	Dulag-Luft Eingeliefert
		Nr. <b>9403</b>	am: <b>31.1.45 L.</b>
NAME: <b>S I M O N</b>		Vorname des Vaters:	
Vornamen: <b>Jack A.</b>		Familienname der Mutter:	
Dienstgrad: <b>1/Lt. Funktion: N.</b>		Verheiratet mit:	
Matrikel-No.: <b>0-466 826</b>		Anzahl der Kinder:	
Geburtsort: <b>Ill.</b>		<b>Heimatanschrift:</b>	
Geburtsort: <b>Ill.</b>		<b>Mr. A. Simon</b>	
Religion: <b>jüdisch</b>		<b>502 W. Oregon Str.</b>	
Zivilberuf: <b>Student</b>		<b>Urbana Ill.</b>	
Staatsangehörigkeit: <b>USA</b>			
Abschluß am: <b>14.1.45</b> bei: <b>Berlin</b> Flugzeugtyp: <b>B 17</b>			
Gefangenahme am: " bei: " <b>901/72</b>			
<b>5046 Nähere Personalbeschreibung H.E. NOWIS</b>			
Figur: <b>mittel</b>		Augen: <b>braun</b>	
Größe: <b>1,65</b>		Nase: <b>gebogen</b>	
Schädelform: <b>oval</b>		Bart: <b>gut</b>	
Haare: <b>a-braun</b>		Gebiß: <b>gut</b>	
Gewicht: <b>kg 72</b>		Besondere Kennzeichen:	
Gesichtsform: <b>längl.</b>		<b>Narbe auf der Nase</b>	
Gesichtsfarbe: <b>gesund</b>			
			
<b>0-466826</b>		<b>Rechter Zeigefinger</b> 	

Jack Simon's identity papers as a prisoner of war.

than before. (At that, it was still a far cry from the overcrowded sealed boxcars that many of the boys experienced.) At Frankfurt, we had to wait most of the night for our train so they kept us in a filthy hole in the basement of the station—now fondly referred to as the “black hole of Frankfurt.” In the wee hours we boarded an old

train which apparently had been shot up on occasion and after seesawing back and forth and switching several times managed to reach the little town about fifteen miles north of Frankfurt at which the German Dulag Luft or air force interrogation center was located. Here, we were separated, fingerprinted, photographed, and questioned casually before being locked up alone in a cell. These cells were quite an improvement over the jail in that they were about the same size, but housed only one, and although the heat was turned off better than half of the time, at least there was some part of the time. There was only one German blanket, so you really appreciated the heat. In general, the only diversions were counting the nails in the walls and eating, but these hardly kept the days from getting a little monotonous. Of course, I reviewed my entire life about sixteen times over, but that was monotonous the first time. Our daily food consisted of two slices of black bread with a thin ersatz jam and coffee (?) for breakfast, a bowl of soup for lunch, and two slices of bread with margarine and coffee (?) or tea (????) for supper. Not very filling, but the restricted diet sure made their bread taste good.

My first interrogation was by an enlisted man who explained the need of the Red Cross for information and the necessity for my proving that I wasn't a spy and all the other stock in trade questions that they have but he got only name, rank, etc. My next interrogation, was by a full colonel whose general technique seemed to be to impress me with how much he already knew, but I was more impressed with his misinformation than his information. His powers of persuasion were not very good and unable to get response to questions like. . . are my parents living, etc, he gave up for the day. According to the book I should have been out of there in three or four days at the most if I didn't talk, but I spent a total of twelve days there, and until the last day had not said boo other than the reply “I can't say, sir.” (I learned the proper reply is that you can't say rather than you don't know on a matter with which they know you know such as what is your squadron.) On about the sixth day, after I had discovered every last obscure nail on the wall, they moved a flight lieutenant from the RCAF<sup>9</sup> (Al Milner by name) into the next room and although the guards made an effort to keep us shushed up, we were able to talk a bit through the wall, and that helped a bit. In all, I was interrogated seven times, and it boiled down to where he said if I would give him the names of the crew, I could go. I subsequently learned that they knew the names of most of the crews, where trained, etc., but for some reason, they didn't know us. Finally, on day number twelve, I gave him that dope recognizing that might merely be a stall and that he would proceed to pump me for more. After he had that, though, he told me I could leave the next day and gave me a note entitling me to a shower and a shave (the

<sup>9</sup>Royal Canadian Air Force.