

memorable events that made life in a POW camp quite interesting, to say the least.

The camp was probably an Army post at one time. It contained many good sized buildings, permanent, made of brick, and reminded me of any typical old Army post in the U.S., Presidio of Monterey, Fort Ord, etc. However, we were housed in barracks made of wood, temporary structures which were like the war housing in the U.S. ... they were long, low, one story. There were bunks, 3 high, in rows, one row along each side, then an aisle, then another row, (always 3 high) then the main aisle, and then same thing; another row of bunks, an aisle and the last row of bunks of the opposite wall. So ... there were 4 rows of bunks, 3 high, extending the full length of the barracks. There was a pot bellied stove in the center which didn't do much good ... so we stayed in our sacks to keep warm. The bunks were wood, with 1 x 6 wood boards for "springs". Each man was given a long gunny sack which we stuffed with straw. This was our mattress. It would eventually mat down and then you felt the boards, so you would dump it out and re-stuff it; and then you were all set for another week. The latrine was located in a separate building about 50 yards from the main barracks. We had 2 barracks. Between the 2 barracks was an old shower room, with broken down basins and showers, etc. If you really were fastidious, you could manage to find a faucet somewhere and take a freezing cold wash towel bath. For the most part, the majority of us would wait for our monthly shower. The daily routine consisted of nothing really. We usually just stayed in our bunks, trying to keep warm, talking about food. Food and warmth. It was still winter, and snow and ice were everywhere. We had 2 meals a day. Not much! The first was thin soup and a piece of bread. Later on in the day, we had more soup, bread and, if we were lucky, 2 or 3 potatoes about the size of gold balls. I lost about 35 pounds during my stay. We were always hungry, and talked incessantly about food. That is about all we did talk about, that and what we were going to do and eat when we got home. One fellow, a little more perceptive than most of us, made the remark after we had spouted off about the fantastic

and enormous meals we were going to eat, saying, "You guys are nuts, hell, it won't be two days after you're home ... with your guts full ... and you won't want anything more". He just about got killed. Here we are starving to death ... we thought ... didn't think we would ever have a full gut again, and he's telling us the truth. Anyway, at the time, it didn't go over very well, and he was not a very popular person for awhile. For some strange reason, we never talked about sex, or thought about it. I never thought I would not have an interest in that, as that's one thing I've thought about since I was four years old and found out what my "dickie" was for; anyway, none of us thought about it there in prison camp for we were just too darned hungry. I know no one was thinking about it because no one said anything about it. You get two or more men together for 5 minutes, and if a sexual innuendo or statement doesn't crop up, you know you're either in church or the minister's in the crowd.

So this was our daily routine, lying around in the sack, trying to keep warm and talking about food. Braving the cold air to walk from the barracks across 50 yards of more of snow covered ground, always "holding it in" and waiting until the last minute so you wouldn't have to make too many trips to the latrine. You see, most of us were just "poor old city boys" and weren't used to the "outhouse" that so many rural folks used, and course the POWs from the rural areas couldn't understand our attitude.

The weather finally broke and one day we found it was actually spring!! Being from California, I was not familiar with seasons. So it was quite a revelation, and a distinct change. The day broke sunny and became quite warm by afternoon. Everyone was affected by it. Windows were opened, a few cold showers braved. Clothes and bedding hung out, people began to stir; walk around, exercise; it was the beginning of a new life. Of course, we had a few more dismal days of bad weather, but "Spring had sprung" and from now on the weather would be beautiful!

This was about the time an announcement had been made that all those in need of clothes sign up and state what you would like or need. It would

appear they had received a shipment of clothes, all kinds, probably from dead soldiers, dead civilians, etc. Anyway, they were clean and more important, we needed them. As luck, or fate, would have it, there was a most surprising and happy occurrence. I was lying on my bunk, after signing up, and not long after, I heard someone calling "Ross, Ross.. hey! Where's Ross?" I, of course, sat up and acknowledged my presence. It turned out that the fellow shouting my name was Carl Groshell ... from my hometown, Richmond, California. Just by chance, he had been about 3 back in line and when he signed up he saw my name. We had also written our home towns down ... for what reason, I can't remember ... so when he saw "Richmond", he came looking.

Needless to say, it was a warm and grand feeling to meet someone from home, and we began to jabber. The interesting part was that we both had grown up in Richmond, went through the same schools (High School), had numerous mutual friends; our parents both worked for the Santa Fe Railroad, etc. ... but we had never met as Carl was a little younger, and was a class or two behind me in school. We talked for an hour or so, reminiscing, and comparing notes, and then decided to stay together. As I have mentioned earlier, in the previous camp we POWs had made friends and chosen who to buddy up with, so now there were the three of us ... Frank Powers, from Los Angeles, Carl Groshell, and myself from Richmond, California. We would remain together until liberated by the Russians, at which time Frank and I would take off on our own.

About this time, Red Cross Food parcels began to arrive. Ah! ... Yes! I'll never forget! It was to change our whole way of living. Keerist! I can't remember for sure whether it was once a week, or once started, we received them regularly. They were in cardboard containers, approximately 1 foot square, and about 8 inches deep. They contained meat, cheese, powdered milk, coffee, sugar, chocolate, cigarettes, a few other minor items; the above mentioned were the important ones because they were not only the "goodies" but became our "money", or means for barter.

