



The Shumen POW Camp #1 September 3, 1944. 342 POW's were held here at the time that I was released.

After interrogation, another prisoner, Laurens Woolhouse and I were moved to a small room with two cots, a small cabinet and one window. There was a guard outside at all times but they let us out to go to the outside toilet and sometimes to just sit in the sun. We tried to talk with the guards to find out what they would do with us. They shook their heads forward and back like our yes, but meaning no when we asked if we were going to be shot.

A Bulgarian officer who could speak English, and his wife, visited us there after a few days. He resented that the Germans were taking all of the Bulgarian young men and food for the German Army.

There was a shortage of lead so the guards would use tightly rolled paper slugs in their reloaded cartridges. They would shoot at rats behind the building. They were very impressed when I killed a rat with a slingshot I had improvised with the suspenders from my electrically heated trousers.

We were outside when an elderly man came by carrying a board. He got excited when he saw us, started jumping up and down, and I think he would have hit me with the board if the guard hadn't stopped him. I deducted that the board was all that was left of his bed after the bombing raid. The guard gave me some notebook paper and pencil so I spent some time drawing pictures of our lodging.

After we were there about a week, we were moved to another building overlooking the Danube River, where we joined the other members of our crew and one other B-24 crew. There were two rooms with a hallway in between them. Each crew had a room with two barred windows, a board platform for sleeping and a stool. We took turns sleeping on the cement floor as the platform would ac-

commodate only half of us. There were no blankets or mattresses and quite often air raid sirens would sound. We could also hear planes going overhead, so some nights we didn't sleep very well. During one air raid we were moved to trenches near the building where we could see some planes spiraling down after being hit and hear the bombs coming down. Communications with the guards improved and those needing medical attention for burns and shrapnel wounds were treated.

After being here for about ten days, we were loaded on an open freight car and moved by train to Shumen, Bulgaria. Before the train left town, some German flyers came to look us over causing us some concern when they started spitting on us, but the guards were quick to separate them from us. During an air raid as we left Rusa, the train parked under a row of trees outside of town until it was over.

At Shumen we were housed in an army barracks, where we had beds with straw mattresses to sleep on. There were bed bugs and fleas in the mattresses but they didn't bother me as much as they did some of the others. One of the fellows who had part of his heel shot off slept on a wooden bench to avoid them. It was, I believe, during the week we were there that we were able to write home. My letter was received at home one year later.

From town we were taken by truck up a winding mountain road to the Shumen #1 Prisoner of War Camp. There were 342 POWs there. It was mid summer, the weather was nice and we spent a lot of time in the sun getting a good tan. The food was a crude soup with moldy black bread. Our guards ate the same fare so we couldn't complain. We still had the straw mattresses so also had the fleas and bud bugs. After a bout with dysentery, we were al-