

LTC Doyle Raford Yardley

1913 - 1946

INTRODUCTION

Source materials for this biography of Colonel Doyle R. Yardley were found in a US Army footlocker containing “*military clothing, patches and souvenirs*” with his name clearly printed on the outside. Located in a small storage closet on the front porch of his parents’ farm, it became a source of wonder for his young nephew, Charles Turbo, as his grandmother let him wear his beige-colored hat and play soldier with the contents. Later, when Charles was an adult, he also discovered the following items:

Looking through the footlocker, I found something I had missed before, a cache of small student notebooks filled with penciled entries, each neatly dated, detailing his military experiences during WW II.

These diaries cover from 1942 – 1945, three of his five years in military service. Doyle kept daily records with details of his assignments, his contacts with fellow soldiers, and his combat and POW [for 17 months] experiences.

After reading the five diaries, Charles was encouraged by family members and others to publish them in book form under the title his uncle chose, *Home Was Never Like This*. The note below adds another interesting element to this story.

The diary was buried when I left Oflag 64, and it was secured from the ‘hide’ by Lou Otterbein, who carried it until I met up with him in Rembertow, Poland, February 1945, after being with the Russians, who kindly allowed me to keep it. (p. 3)

EARLY YEARS

Doyle R. Yardley was a native Texan, born on April 21, 1913, on a small farm near Lingleville. Alvin and Emma Yardley were parents to a family of four children: Doyle, Peggy, Nita, and Herschel. His public schooling, including high school, took place in Dublin, Texas. After attending Tarleton College in Stephenville, he moved on to Texas A & M where he was a good student and active in ROTC. His graduation date was June 5, 1937. Doyle then relocated to the Rio Grande Valley and using the memories and work ethics learned working on his parents’ farm, he purchased a small farm and paired this with his college training to become a vocational agriculture teacher in

Raymondville. On August 29, 1940, Doyle married Eva Mae Brownfield shortly before he became a U.S. Army Reserve Officer in November 1940.

DIARY ONE

Late May 1942

The 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, received orders to “go over”. Yardley, the executive officer of Lt. Col. Edson D. Raff, was sent to the New York Port of Embarkation to “*fully supply and equip the battalion*”, and on 31 May 1942, the battalion, with 15,000 others (including 80 very welcomed nurses and 8th Air Force personnel), boarded the *H.M.S. Queen Elizabeth*. The ship was armed with anti-aircraft guns and because the 509th was the only unit on board who knew how to fire the weapons, they were moved to the top deck, accompanied by snow and ice. One early morning, a Bofors 44mm gun fired several “wake-up rounds” which greatly alarmed the ship’s Captain and passengers. Another kind of “firing” caused a stir below decks in the kitchen: most personnel on board were eating unappetizing meals like mutton when an American Sergeant discovered that the South African administrative head of the ship plus the ship’s crew were “*bashing on American ice cream, fresh vegetables and Hereford steaks.*” Thus, ensued a physical bashing and the improvement of meals.

June 4, 1942

As the ship rounded the Irish Channel to anchor near Glasgow, Scotland, they were piped in by the Scotch Highlander’s bagpipes, marched to the train and routed to Chilton Foliat, their new home from June to November.

During these six months, the battalion learned British English, British History, and in some cases, British Culture. Because their military presence was covert, orders were posted to remove the parachute patches from their caps. This caused some rumblings, but when told that they could still stuff pant legs into their boots, their unit pride was restored. Overall, the exchanges between the dashing GIs and the British lassies produced a memorable number of courtships, marriages and broken hearts.

In nearby Hungerford, the paratroopers heard their first air raid warning. The area was among the most beautiful in England, and when their exercises were coupled with the British Airborne Division on the Salisbury Plains, Yardley wrote that this was *the only part of England that might resemble the Plains of Texas.*’

July 7

At the mess hall today, Capt. Creiton made this statement: “When war broke out, England had a Regular Army of 80,000 men and a total of three ack-ack guns! Last year at this time, the thirty-five

men comprising the Chilton Home Guard were armed with two shotguns and two hay forks.” (p. 21)

[According to Wikipedia, the English Home Guard was an armed citizen militia supporting the British Army during the Second World War. Operational from 1940 to 1944, the Home Guard had 1.5 million local volunteers otherwise ineligible for military service, such as those who were too young or too old to join the regular armed services (regular military service was restricted to those aged 18 to 41) or those in reserved occupations.]

There seems to be a growing resentment between the British troops against the upper class. Some say there will be some changes after the war. They do not hesitate to gripe to the Americans about it. (pp. 21, 22)

Between the two world wars, and certainly after WWII, attitudes were shifting in many quadrants of the British Isles. Grand Manor Houses were pulled down, estates with large properties sold off for death taxes, and underpaid, often unappreciated servants of the upper classes pursued higher wages in new jobs, positions or career fields. Young women who had replaced the men who ‘went off to war’ began seeing their roles differently—no longer content to be ‘the little woman at home’, they wanted full citizen rights and pursued them with alacrity.

July 31

To bring rigorous training to a conclusion, everyone in the battalion went through the famous British Assault Course (or Weapons School for Confidence) at Woolacombe. The course, with its barbed wire, exploding mines, machine gun fire, steep cliffs, etc. was supposed to be the closest thing to the ‘real thing’: combat. This bath of fire scared everyone. But it was the type of training we really needed. There were a few burned faces, one broken leg and a lot of bruises. (Doc Alden got into trouble when he took some pictures of the course. The British said it was a ‘secret.’) (p. 29)

Course completed, the ‘boys’ were treated to a successful dance, and the only bruises received were caused by excessive jitterbugging!

August 21

For the first time in England, we staged parachute drops all around Hungerford. The local gentry and all their servants were out to see the parachute show. (p. 33)

Sunday, September 27

One day Col. Little Caesar, Edson Raff, our battalion commander, assembled all the officers and men for an ‘important’ session. He told us that the Invasion was about to come off and that

paratroopers would participate in the initial assault. He told us that we were the best soldiers in the U.S. Army and that a lot of things were expected of us. If they did a good job, everyone in the battalion would get 'gold parachute wings,' even if he had to buy them. This we doubted very much, but that didn't matter anyway as long as we were to be in the show. The British paratroops were to participate in the Invasion, but in a different sector. Maps and models of the Invasion were delivered to study. All identification as to the location and country was eradicated.

Everybody speculated, but few guessed it right. (pp. 40, 41)

Yardley's commentary focused on maneuvers, drops, sightseeing, invitations to dinners, teas, weekends (as only the British can entertain) and rumors.

October 26

In the very early hours in the black of the night, while all the local people were asleep, the battalion marched to Hungerford station and moved out for Great Torrington. From this place, where would we go? Only two persons in the battalion knew. Excitement and speculation were high. On the 30th, [Lt. Col.] Raff and Casey, the pup, joined the battalion. (p. 44)

November 4

The battalion moved to the great St. Eval Airdrome, Lands' End, England. This had to be the jump-off place for it was the south end of England. Where would the Invasion be, was the big question on the minds of the GIs as they sat around in little groups playing cards, poker, singing and trying to seem happy. Some joked, some cursed, but some prayed. Catholic masses and Protestant services were held.

All money was collected and receipts given. Escape pouches, which contained money, water purification tablets, chocolate bars, rubber maps, and a small compass were also given. All pouches were sealed and were not to be opened in enemy territory. Everyone was ready. (pp. 44, 45)

[Note: Major Doyle Yardley became Lieutenant Colonel Doyle Yardley on 4 January 1943 at AFHQ (Allied Forces Headquarters), Hotel St. George, Algiers. His involvement in the Invasion delayed his diary entry until 4 January 1944.]

INVASION OF NORTH AFRICA

November 7, 1942

The 60th Troop Carrier Group commanded by Col. Schofield, Air Corps, staged the planes. Just as everybody was about to board, Col. William Bentley of the Air Corps told us that a message had come through from E.T.O.U.S.A (European Theater of Operations United States Army), stating that the French in Algeria were on our side and the planes would land at the Airdrome without a fight.

6:00 P.M. The order was given to load up. The American troop-carrier planes with complete battle rig warmed up and sailed into the air—to a ‘peaceful’ land, the Great French North Africa. For eleven hours and for 1500 miles, forty-eight C 47s, with 610 paratroop officers and men, flew across Spain and the Mediterranean Sea, headed for the Tafaroui Airdrome, Algeria.

Passing over Oran, Algeria, three French fighters shot down three planes before we reached our point to descend. Three minutes later we were sailing down to the ground—the objective, Tafaroui Airdrome. At this very moment, American Amphibious Armored and Infantry Units were landing at Casablanca, Oran and Algeria. Legionnaires, commanded by the Nazis or sympathizers, were defeated and by late evening all units around Oran had surrendered.

This ended the first battle for our battalion. Exactly 17 days later, the battalion flew and dropped in Southern Tunisia at ‘Youks Le Bain’ near Gasfa, Tunisia. On this airstrip, there was a battalion of the ‘French Zouaves.’ They recognized our planes as being American, and did not fire. Instead they helped us to disengage from our parachutes and kissed our cheeks and brought us wine. This was the real surprise of our lives. The kind of war I liked. (pp. 46-50)

Faid Pass was won, lost, and recaptured by the American 1st Armored Division in February 1943.

In March 1943, the battalion was moved back to French Morocco to train the French Parachute Regiment of Col. Souvenac in American methods, and the use of American equipment and aircraft.

July 1943, the battalion was active but “played only a minor role” in the landing of the Sicily Invasion. In September they were stationed in Licata, Sicily. The landing at Salerno was difficult; though costly, it was successful. (p. 50)

September 14, 1943: Midnight

Yardley's battalion was flown from Sicily and dropped from C-47s at St. Lucia, Italy. Unfortunately, as Yardley's parachuters were dropped in between two mountain ranges, Germans fired while some were still in their chutes. Enveloped in a trap (a Panzer bivouac area), the men fought bravely, but were outnumbered and outgunned.

CAPTURED

At 2:45 A.M., September 15, 1943 near Avellino, Italy, Lieutenant Colonel Yardley had been shot in the left hip, discovered by a German and dragged to an enemy aid station where he was treated for his wound. Taken next to a Panzer headquarters, a German who spoke Oxford-English interrogated him (without success) about the war, the US, etc. while offering Yardley some whisky and ersatz coffee. Yardley was not allowed to communicate with any captured paratroopers, but the next morning, he did talk to Lt. Jack Pogue, who was critically wounded. Sadly, he learned of other American deaths the next day, the cost being high for both delayed and diversion actions. Placed in an ambulance with Lt. Pogue, Yardley stated that the vehicle was divebombed and strafed by American Mustangs and 'Lightnings' (American fighter planes): *Fortunately for us, the bomb struck 40 feet away and the machine guns had cut a pattern on either side of the road.* (p.53)

Arriving at an evacuation hospital at St. Angelo, Italy, many wounded and dying soldiers were crowded within its crumbling, filthy walls, including 12 British and American soldiers. To make matters worse, two English speaking Germans criticized the actions of American pilot barbarians and President Roosevelt. Yardley responded in kind.

September 17, 1943

The next hospital was at Paranopoli, east of Naples and its accommodations were a repeat of the earlier one. Yardley recalled sights out of the windows as the poorer people of Italy went about their daily lives —showing little interest in their German Allies. Yardley's diary notes continued to include stories of the men he met and the meager meals served. Lt. Pogue received little medical attention.

September 22, 1943

Loaded onto a truck with some of his men, Yardley, Lt. Pogue, and British X Corps men were moved with German wounded to a hospital in Rome. This one, a former Fascist headquarters building, was equally filthy. Fortunately, the forty wounded were soon placed on a hospital train bound for Germany. Yardley noted that railways around Rome were still in working order and all trains in Italy and Bavaria were electrically powered. Devastation, however,

was widely seen in Bologna and Nurnberg. A farmer himself, he noted the effects of war on rural Germany and its people through the train's windows.

Our train arrived at Abelsbach, where I remained at a Reserve Lazaroff [sic] (Hospital) for Allied troops. Before quarters were assigned, we received a 4-minute hot shower, turned over our clothes for decontamination, and received a pair of pajamas. Next, we were assigned bunks in a building partially occupied by New Zealand and Australian repatriation selectees.

These men had been captured in Crete, May 1941. At 9:00 P.M. I received my first real meal since being captured on September 15—food from Red Cross parcels! These [were] precious and coveted gifts! (p. 58)

Daylight bombings were common—sometimes as many as 400 Flying Fortresses flew overhead in groups. One made a forced landing near their hospital; *'the pilot climbed out, backed off and saluted his plane.'* Executed immediately, rumors spread that *'this super-ship was armed with 30 to 40 machine guns.'* (p. 59)

Yardley also noted the varied number of nationalities hospitalized at Abelsbach: Americans, British, Australians, New Zealanders, Serbs, Polish, French, and Russians. Everyone received International Red Cross parcels, except the Russians who never signed the International Convention at Geneva agreements. They were restricted to bread, beet jam, soup and ersatz coffee. Dr. Ingram McDonald, a POW from Edinburgh, stated that treatment and food had improved in the last six months.

September 28

Yardley and a Major Monroe-Fraser were next transferred to Stalag XIII C near Hammelburg. There he was given a British battle suit known for its warmth. This much appreciated gift would help him endure more comfortably the cold and rainy weather in southern Germany.

October 1

Yardley and two guards (known as *'postums'*) made their way to the rail station where he was seated in third class as word passed around the train car that he was *"Amerikaniche Oberstleutnant"* (American Lieutenant Colonel). Other prisoner nationalities were commonly seen, but not American.

Prior to departure Sgt. Major Brown (the "go to" man) had given him a Red Cross food parcel with cigarettes he shared with the guards. In Posen, he was taken to a German Red Cross Canteen where they set up a display of *coffee, powdered milk, sugar cubes and biscuits all lined up conspicuously on the table, then the coffee was made with hot water from the kitchen.* (p. 62)

The German soldiers were amazed that a POW could have such luxuries which they had been deprived of for years. *This Red Cross food parcel had as much propaganda value as it had food value.* (p.62)

October 2, 1943: Arrival at Oflag 64

Yardley began to see changes in the more productive land areas once more. The guards, now friendlier, called this area the Polish 'corridor'. Many towns had Polish and German names, most currently populated by German families. He also noted the presence of soldiers headed for the Russian Front; uncertainty expressed across their faces.

At 1:30 P.M. the train arrived at Altburgund, where a prisoner camp (*Offizierlager, called Oflag 64*) was located. Yardley was searched again and allowed to keep his pocket knife and his Red Cross food cans.

Each new prisoner is welcomed at the gate. There is always a friend in the crowd, perhaps someone you served with at some time. Questions are eagerly asked of each new arrival, most of them unanswerable! After two weeks of constantly moving and being pushed around, I almost welcomed the camp life.

Lt. Col. John Waters, former Commander of an armored tank destroyer unit, assigned me to a room. Maj. M.A. Meachum, Col. Drake's assistant, issued me four blankets, eating utensils, and other necessities. By this time, a supper of hot water, bread, and the Red Cross parcel were ready. More questions were asked and at last I fell into bed. (p. 63)

October 3, 1943

Following 'Appell' (camp formation for head counts), Yardley describes the atmosphere at Oflag 64.

At 9:30 A.M. I called on the Camp Senior, Col. Thomas D. Drake, who formerly had commanded the 168th Infantry and had been captured at Sidi Bou Sid, Tunisia, in January 1943. Oflag 64 had formerly been a prison camp for R.A.F. pilots. Until June, the Americans had been imprisoned at Eichstagg, near Munich, with some British officers. When the Germans decided to separate the Americans and the British, Oflag 64, which is 125 kilometers from Danzig, was selected as a permanent camp for American officers, exclusive of Air Corps officers who were imprisoned in separate camps. As of today, the strength of the camp is 189 officers, 18 American orderlies, 10 British orderlies, and 20 Russians who perform menial tasks for the German personnel.

The Red Cross supplies the food and clothing and the Y.M.C.A. supplies recreational and educational facilities, such as sports equipment, musical instruments, stage decorations, costumes, text

books, novels, and notebooks. By the courtesy of these two agencies, life is made bearable. Camp life is frequently reenacted while Lt. Robert Rankin's 12-piece orchestra provides the music, with Jim Marlow as vocalist. (pp. 64, 65)

October 6, 1943

The German radio confirmed the rumor (via a German guard) that Naples has fallen to the Allies. The Germans ('Goon' in camp slang) provide us with music [mostly classical] and propaganda by means of a loud speaker in the camp. William Joyce (Lord Haw-Haw) comes on each night at 10:30 P.M. with his analysis of the 'News' which we all enjoy but not in the way [sic] he supposes. (p. 65)

[[Wikipedia](#): William Brooke Joyce, nicknamed Lord Haw-Haw, was an American-born British fascist politician and Nazi propaganda broadcaster to the United Kingdom during World War II. He took German citizenship in 1940. Captured by British troops in 1945, he was found guilty of treason and hanged in 1946].

Today, a Representative of the Swiss International Committee visited the Oflag. We appreciated his visit because the lights remained on in the camp while he was there, and we were able to get on with our studies. The Committeeman confessed to Col. Drake that the Swiss people fully expected an Allied victory in 1945. (p. 65)

EXCITEMENT ABOUT DARK

This section concerns the unsuccessful escape attempt by Lt. Col. J.H. Van Vliet, Lt. Roy Chappell, Lt. William Higgins, and Lt. Frank Aten. 'Because this was Aten's fifth escape, he was being held for decision from Posen headquarters.' Prisoners who attempted multiple escapes were considered a higher risk—so punishments were more severe. This tactic worked unsuccessfully until the British camp escape at Stalag Luft III resulted in the shooting deaths of 50 escapees (on Hitler's orders), so Col. Drake, the Senior American Officer (SAO), removed permission to attempt escapes as the risk was too great this close to the end of the war. The group was released from solitary confinement on 22 October. (pp.65,66)

[The movie, *The Great Escape*, was based on this travesty that occurred at Stalag Luft III.]

Before an officer attempts to escape, he must have a plan and this plan must make sense. Before the SAO will approve the plan, all Red Cross foods to be taken along must be changed from the original state. Chocolate and cheese must be melted to prevent the

German authorities from asserting that the parcels were being used to aid in escaping. (p. 66)

[The following account was added by Yardley's editor, Charles Turnbo:

'While in prison camp, Yardley organized and trained a group of officers to dig a tunnel to escape from the German camp. The tunnel was almost complete when the Russians broke across Poland in 1945, at which time the Germans forced everyone to march out of the camp for Germany.' (p. xv)]

October 7-October 20

More POWs were arriving almost every day at Oflag 64. Yardley's lists included those from the 36th Division and officers captured in Tunisia during January and February 1943. *The 36th Infantry Division was practically annihilated by two Panzer divisions.* Thirty-one from the 36th showed up on October 20. Next to show was Larry Allen, Naval Correspondent for Associated Press, captured at Tobruk.

The Germans were fond of inspections. Mostly interested in contraband equipment, Col. Drake received permission that American officers *'accompany the searchers, since the guards have helped themselves to personal possessions on previous raids.'* (p.67)

October 21

Today I took my first 'Parole Walk.' Every officer has the opportunity to go on a five-mile walk each week. The group must not exceed 50 officers, who are guarded by two Germans. As extra security, each officer must give his word not to escape. Once this word of honor is broken, there will be no more 'Parole Walks.' This privilege has not been broken as of this date. (pp. 68, 69)

October 27

Col. Drake went to Posen to discuss repatriation and while there, visited the British camp. Drake talked to the British "Man of Confidence" about food and clothing for the camp as the British had 5,000 Army uniforms and Oflag 64 had none. Drake expected that the representative in Geneva was not sympathetic and the International Red Cross would not accept Drake's numbers concerning 'camp strength' but did accept British numbers, which must be read and signed-off on by the German Kommandant.

Some days were discouraging, even for a determined soldier like Col. Drake.

October 28, 1943

In bloody battles, one sees many horrible, cruel, and blood-curdling things. After the war many yarns will no doubt be told; however, I think the battle stories, re-enacted with all the gestures

and demonstrations, can be classified as reasonably reliable. I am about to write one down which I wish to remember. There were half a dozen witnesses and I believe their story.

On September 12, a battalion of the 143rd Infantry was counter-attacked near Eboli, Italy and practically annihilated to the last man by the German 16th Panzer Division. For several hours, tanks engaged in a type of warfare that was hither-to unknown to the members of the battalion. The tanks sought out individual foxholes, approached within a few yards, lowered their cannons and blasted the doughboys out, point blank! Many soldiers were blown to smithereens. A few miraculously escaped death. Cpl. G.E. Oskarson, Granada, Minn. is one of these fellows. About sundown, he was blasted in his foxhole and subsequently packed in by the crushing weight of the tank. When Cpl. Oskarson regained his senses, some 20 hours later, a tank was parked over his foxhole. The tank personnel pulled the tank from over his body and tried to pull him out but only succeeded with the aid of shovels! Paralyzed from the waist down and punctured in many places, the Corporal lived. This moment he is recuperating in our hospital at Oflag 64. He will be a hospital cook. (pp. 70, 71)

November 2

Twelve new prisoners of war, from the 36th arrived today. Lt. Col. Charles H. Jones Jr., Temple Texas, is the group senior officer and was one of the eyewitnesses to the packing of Cpl. Oskarson, whom I had mentioned under the date October 28.

There are now 281 officers in this camp and 37 are from Texas. Barrack 3-A was labeled 'Hotel Texas'. (p. 74)

Lt. R. F. Bonomi, Wallace, Idaho, returned from Berlin where he went to edit, voluntarily, the 'O.K.', a newspaper, printed by the propaganda ministry in English for American prisoners of war. Dr. Goebbel's assistant agent informed Bonomi that he would 'work on the last two pages only.' He replied, 'I would rather not accept the job.' Each said good-bye and Bonomi returned to Oflag 64. (p. 74)

November 4

Four hundred pairs of bowling shoes arrived from the Y.M.C.A. We have no bowling equipment, but just the same, they are gratefully appreciated (we can use them as house slippers). In my diary on October 19, I told the story of American prisoners of war in Italy falling into the hands of Air Marshall Eric Student and his paratroopers. Today, his picture appeared in a newspaper. The occasion: awarding medals to German paratroopers for rescuing

Mussolini. Larry Allen, the Associated Press correspondent, in his little daily analysis of the news, cut out the picture and substituted the headline, 'The man who took 1,500 POWs at Chiete, Italy.' This was displayed on our bulletin board! The 'Goons' did not protest.

After telling this one I shall call it a day. Lt. I.C. Erie was tried today for yawning in the face of the German Security Officer, Capt. Zimmerman. His sentence a reprimand and a warning never to do it again. (p. 75)

November 9

Yardley devoted several pages of his diary: (book pp. 78-82) to the exact words of Col. Drake's 'Protecting Power' Concerns to the Camp Kommandant. Detailed accounts concerned the following issues:

1. *Coal Insufficiencies*
2. *Theatre Prop Distribution*
3. *Promenade Walk*
4. *Seized Shoe Repair Materials*
5. *Removal of Scrap Cloth from Tailor Shop*
6. *Shipping of Piano to Stalag VIII*
7. *Barracks 3-A and 3-B Overcrowding*
8. *Mistreatment of Officers [Use of the word "mistreatment" does not imply physical abuses; it concerns living conditions and officers' entitlements]*
9. *Confinement of Officers [Confinement of Lt. Higgens 'for a period of greater than 30 days—a violation of Articles 47 of the Geneva Convention.]*
10. *Request for Additional Orderlies*

November 14

At 7:30 P.M., a training film titled, 'German Labor Camps' was shown in the mess hall. The film represented three stages of youth 'molding,' namely, 'Yugendvlok' (Young Boys), 'Hitler-jugend' (Hitler Youth), and 'Reichsarbeitsdienst' (Reich Labor Service) that are important in Hitler's 'molding'; process. Remember that our C.C.C. camps, which no doubt did a lot of good to a lot of unemployed young men, but in which public sentiment would not approve any semblance of military training. Hitler thought that our C.C.C. set-up was worthwhile, so German representatives were sent to the United States to observe its operation. The system was replicated, except with different purposes: to develop and train potential Army officers and men. It was meticulously informative. (pp. 82, 83)

November 16

'Kriegy Cakes'—those luscious delicious, homemade cakes! Everybody is making them, so I made my first today. My first 'Kriegy Cake' concocted like this: (1) brown bread (German spud bread) always hard but good, ground up and dried out; (2) powdered milk, orange-jam, sugar and water; (3) raisins or prunes; and (4) a bicarbonate pill (stolen from the medicos) for 'expansion'. Stir and mix thoroughly. Place in a can or your steel helmet, cook for one to ten hours, depending on the present supply of coal. Try it!

While on the subject of 'eats' I might say that our eating 'habits' rarely change. Neither does the German ration, or the Red Cross parcel. Once a week, the 'Hauptman' (Captain) issues per person the following: 1½ oz. cheese, 4 oz. sugar, 6 oz. jam (pressed stock beets), ¼ lb. margarine. Our daily issue: 2 slices of bread, 40 grams meat (which goes into our noon soup), and four potatoes. Incidentally, the U.S. Army meat ration is about 18 oz. daily per person; however, with our Red Cross parcel, we fare splendidly. Probably, those who were once prisoners of war will tell many fictitious stories about how they lost ninety pounds by eating boiled weeds and chewing shoe leather. The Russians I know have eaten boiled weed soup, but not so with the American POWs in Germany. I know that there is a food shortage inside the 'Goonland'—except for potatoes. Brother, the German people have millions of potatoes and utilize them for every purpose. (pp. 84, 85)

November 17

Sgt. Maj. C.J. Edwards, Ashfort, England, Kent, England, and seven British officers arrived back at this camp. They were taken prisoners at the fall of Dunkirk, 1940. I will quote his story.

'After capture at Dunkirk, we (all POWs) were marched to Belgium through Holland, where we were shipped in cattle cars to Germany. In 1941, we were sent here. (Oflag 64 was then a British Stalag). In the winter of 1941, there were three thousand POWs crammed into this coup. We slept in tents for there were only two buildings. Twenty men died (now buried at Schubin Cemetery) In those days, if a POW failed to salute a German Private, he was punished. The Polish civilians were not allowed to walk on the sidewalk, but had to use the alley or street. The Poles had to remove their hats in the presence of Germans. They still do. No church services or public gatherings were permitted in Poland (which holds to this day).'

The other day, just prior to being sent here, I heard from a German guard that all Polish and Dutch officers were being called into Germany, away from their conscripted employment in their own homeland. The Germans fear that those officers will be instrumental in organizing guerilla warfare, in view of the Russian success. (p. 85)

DIARY TWO

November 18

The issues addressed by COL Drake on October 27 have been addressed by him in another official, and very significant document—a copy that Yardley included in his book (pp.89-91). Specific lengthy points are not included below, but a content summation is included within his reply:

Oflag 64

Alzburgund, Germany

Nov. 14, 1943

To: International Red Cross

Relief Division, Commercial Dept.

Palais du Conseil-General Geneva, Switzerland

Subject: Clothing and Food Requisition

Gentlemen:

I do not propose to suggest a method of operation for you, and I can understand your requiring notification on figures of strength from French, Serbian, etc. POWs in giving out American supplies, but I can assure you that there is nothing more official than the word of the Senior American Officer, in reference to the needs of American POWs; furthermore, American people have donated money and supplies to the Red Cross for the benefit of their prisoners of war. Any system which frustrates or delays the expressed benefit is not in accordance with their wishes. Regardless of the merits of the whole situation, the facts are that we are badly in need of clothing and blankets. We have been for some time and cannot get either the supplies or a definite word as to the reason.

May I assure you that I regret having to write so plainly, and do not have any doubt as to your good intentions or integrity, but I feel that there is something, somewhere, that we do not know about.

Hoping that the situation may be cleared amicably, I remain,

Sincerely yours,

Thomas B. Drake Colonel,

U.S. Army Camp Senior

November 20

A blanket of white, 2 inches of snow, greeted our eyes this morning. For a Texan, from the sunny lower Rio Grande Valley, snow is still a novelty. Several made ice cream by concocting a mixture of snow, sugar, powdered milk and British Red Cross syrup. (p. 93)

November 24

The Goons made a shakedown raid on Barrack 3-B looking for indelible pencils, derogatory diaries, radio equipment, etc. The searching party consisted of German officers, 2 Gestapo, and 2 SS men. Twenty-two Americans were searched. Col. Drake immediately protested on the grounds that under Article 21 Geneva Convention, the searching of the officer's person by soldiers and civilians is forbidden. (p. 93)

November 25—Thanksgiving

A special menu was prepared for the oldest American holiday.

Breakfast: Red Cross Oat Meal, Hot Water

Lunch: Red Cross Stew

Supper: Scrambled Eggs and Bacon, Peas and Carrots, Hot Spam, Mashed Potatoes, 'Schubin Pudding', Tea

Every item on this menu came from American and British Red Cross parcels, except the carrots and mashed potatoes and the apples in the 'Schubin Pudding'. Lt. Col. Oaks, just prior to supper made this announcement:

'Gentlemen at 4:45 P.M., everyone will march into the mess hall and remain standing while Chaplain Steve Kane (Des Moines, Iowa) says 'Grace' then the chow will be served by courses. If this scheme works well, we may try it again this time next year, here.' Someone in the back yelled, 'Hang him!' (For his last remark.) The meal was the best since being a 'Kriegy.' Following the splendid supper, local Kriegies gave us the play, Brother Orchid, directed by Frank Maxwell from Jersey City, N.J. It too was a tremendous success. (pp. 93, 94)

November 29

This week's issue of Signal, a German propaganda magazine printed in English, contained a lengthy article on the Allied bombing of German cities. It stated that, 'Germany bombed London in 1939-40 as a new scientific strategy, affecting only military objectives. It is true that a few civilian casualties were unavoidably produced. With the Allies, there is a different objective: to destroy civilization.'

I am certain that the relatives of some 30,000 dead, caused by the German Blitz in the St. Paul and Thames districts of London, would write a different story. The German press has just announced that Berlin has received three devastating night raids in five nights. Their reticence to expatiate on the bombing effects, speaks enough to reveal the true story. (pp. 94, 95)

December 1, 1943

Issue No.2 of The Oflag 64 Item came out today with the headline 'Oflag's six months anniversary to be celebrated with Ersatz Scotch, Films, Thunderous Oratory. Gigantic celebrations this week will mark the first semi-annual anniversary of Oflag 64.' (p. 96)

December dates and programs were listed below.

December 3

Four Geneva Convention representatives arrived for an 'informal inspection'. Col. Drake and red-faced 'Oberst' Schneider were both present while Drake held court about the deficiencies of the Red Cross and his subsequent letter to the Geneva office. A Mr. Wilcox stated his surprise about the American Red Cross not forwarding Christmas packages for POWs and that the supply in Geneva was plentiful. Furthermore, according to Wilcox, a monthly report stated that American POWs were 'being taken care immediately by the American Red Cross and that American reps visit each camp monthly to correct deficiencies.' (pp. 97, 98)

It soon became clear what the real story was.

New Year's Day-1944

The New Year was ushered by an all-out aerial bombardment of the Reich. For the prisoner of war, it means liberation (we hope)! For the Germans, total defeat (we hope)! (p.104)

January 4

Reichsfuhrer Adolph Hitler stated to the press today: 'The German defeat at Stalingrad was due to the failure of the Italian fighting

units, fighting on the Eastern Front.' He further charged, 'The Italian betrayal in capitulating to the Allies necessitated the employment there of troops previously designated for the Russian front.' This, he continued, 'is the reason for many sorrows and troubles you have to suffer, comrades of the Eastern front.' (p. 105)

One year ago, today [1943], I received my promotion to the Lieutenant-Colonelcy at AFHQ, high on the hill, Hotel St. George, Algiers. (p. 105)

January 10

Silver Taps blow in memoriam today for Richard Torrence, who dropped dead at roll call. Autopsy revealed that a blood clot on the brain was the cause of his death. Capt. Torrence who fought with distinction in Italy, has received the Purple Heart and has been recommended for valor. Services were held in the camp chapel. He was buried in the Altburgund Cemetery. We have lost a cheerful companion, the army a courageous soldier, and his country has lost a faithful servant. He was a member of the Second Battalion, 143 Infantry. (p. 106)

January 13

Hitler's newspaper, Das Reich, carries pictures of Eisenhower, Tedder, Montgomery, Spaatz, Maitland Wilson and Alexander, with brief stories of their careers and those of German Generals. (p. 107)

January 19

The greatest event in 'Kriegy' life comes when he receives that first letter from his wife, sweetheart, or mother. From the day I wrote my first letter, to the day I received a reply, the time interval was 108 days. (p. 110)

Later diary notation on 3 February stated: Mail from England is more than twice as fast as mail from the states. I just received a letter from Gordon Fraser, a friend from Hungerford, England, in exactly 30 days.

January 28

In my brief military career, I have seen American Generals frighten their subordinates, but not to the degree, indeed not, that German Generals scare the 'living wits' out of their own little 'Unterfuhrers'. For the past week, German camp officers have frantically prepared 'us' and the camp for the expected call from a German Inspector General. This A.M. he came and we 'Kriegies' enjoyed the comedy from a window-view. The German sentry was posted at the

entrance to every building to give the warning of 'his approach'. When he entered Barrack 3-A, I snapped-to and yelled 'attention!' The old camp Kommandant and his subordinates were so afraid that something would go wrong that their knees practically trembled. The General (who incidentally wore more red than a British Brigadier) asked the Kommandant five questions and I saw the Kommandant salute him five times. It is a custom, evidently, in the German army, to salute every time addressed. I must say they are the most military souls I have ever seen in uniform. (p. 113)

January 29 (The Sequel)

At the morning roll call, the old Kommandant made his appearance to express his gratitude for the splendid cooperation in yesterday's inspection. 'I know real soldiers, when I see them,' and he concluded, 'And I know that you are real soldiers. Oberst Drake and all of you are to be commended.' It will probably keep the old boy from the Russian Front, if the German General, too, was impressed. (p. 113)

February 18

American censorship is a peculiar animal. In North Africa, soldiers could not disclose their location; yet, Time magazine came out with an article on Lt. Gen. Mark W. Clark that his headquarters were at Oujda, French Morocco! No American POW is allowed to receive magazines or papers from the States (occasionally, however, one gets by the U.S. censor) yet, the German Propaganda Minister obtains all the latest issues, loads of them, through Portugal, Geneva and Sweden! The 'Goons' then reprint certain paragraphs of certain 'desirable' articles in their propaganda magazine for POWs called 'O.K.' (OVERSEAS KID). (p. 120)

DIARY THREE

March 23

It seems that mail service from Germany to the States is about twice as fast as from the States to Germany, just now. Lt. Teddy Roggen, Houston, Texas, received a letter with plenty of 'blackouts' which is obviously ridiculous censorship. An example: 'The Longhorns [University of Texas football team] played (black-out) BOWL'. (p. 133)

March 30

This second letter, concerning Roggen and his mother, concerns the same subject: censorship. His mother writes: *'Many of your letters have been returned by the U.S. Censors with instructions for me to write only three letters per week, and to write only one page, and that only next-of-kin may write prisoners of war. I am sorry if my letters have not reached you. Love, Mother'* (p. 136)

Yardley then expressed Mail Call issues in the following paragraph:

Not only several, but dozens of officers in the Oflag, have failed to get mail for the very same reason. Why should prisoners of war not enjoy the same privileges as other members of the armed forces? Because we fight for our country and are unable to serve any longer under these circumstances, are we to be kicked in the pants by some confounded censor, who says, 'By complying with these instructions, you will greatly alleviate the mail situation.' What he actually means to say is 'So that I will be able to knock-off at five o'clock!' I am certain that this will be corrected as soon as Col. Drake's letter reaches the War Department. (p. 136)

April 12

The first air-raid alarm sounded here in Schubin at 4:00 P.M. The Germans ran for their gas masks and hit the ditch until the 'all-clear' was sounded. The German radio programs are now interrupted to announce the location of 'Terror Bombers' within the Greater Reich. Thus, when the speakers are connected up, we follow the bombing pattern with interest. (p. 142)

April 19

While rehearsing a coming play, Lt. Wilbur Sharpe, the high-school 'girl', the flirt, all dressed up with skirt, brassiere and wig, ran out of the theatre pursued by a 'Kriegy'. The 'Goon' guard, outside, got all excited and called the Sergeant of the Guard. He thought a Polish female had been smuggled into the camp! Our stage make-up man had done a great job. (pp. 144, 145)

May 18

Convoys and bicycle brigades have been streaming by, going north, all afternoon. From ten to twelve bicycle men were observed being towed behind each vehicle! It means one of several things: (1) maneuvers, (2) reinforcing East Front troops, or (3) Baltic reinforcements for the expected 2nd front there. (p. 155)

May 24 ‘Things That Make Kriegies Bitter’

The U.S. Censors, or Customs Bureau continue to remove items such as cake mix, biscuit flour, sweets, and garden seed from our parcels. Typical examples of censorship (taken from POWs) are ‘_____ is now a Corporal.’ ‘The price of shoes is now _____’. ‘Mary is now working in _____, and John is in ATTU’. ‘Your blouse came back and I have sent it to the _____ tailors’.

It is regrettable that the U.S. Government employs ‘Nit-Wits’ to cause bitterness toward one of its Departments. And it is gratifying to realize that all departments do not employ ‘Nit-Wits’. The U.S. Government could do well by censoring and controlling the distribution of all the newspapers and magazines, instead of heckling military personnel with stupid, trivial censorship. Germany obtains current copies of Life, Time, Fortune, Colliers, etc. Some of them even give blueprints, of so-called military weapons! These are examples of ‘The Flying Fortress’, the M-I Rifle and the L.S.T.s and L.S.I.s. (pp. 155, 156)

‘Things That Amaze Kriegies

We are amazed that there are ‘Military Experts’ in the states and in England who criticize Gen. ‘Ike’ Eisenhower for not getting on with the second front. Gen ‘Ike’ is nobody’s fool; he knows better than ‘they’ do from his experiences in Africa, Sicily, and Italy and what it will take and how much of ‘it’ it will take to whip ‘Jerry’. (p. 156)

DIARY 4

June 6, 1944—THE INVASION IS ON

By strange coincidence, indeed, the ‘Invasion of Europe’ has begun on the Northern coast of France, on the same date as the anniversary celebration of ‘One year Behind the Wire’ at Oflag 64, Schubin’. Following the announcement of the fall of Rome yesterday, June 5th, the German Radio broke the news to its people at 2:00 P.M. with a laconic communique, ‘The long-awaited invasion has begun with the landing of Allied troops in great strength in the Normandy area, North France.’

Now the celebration is really in full swing with music, laughing and plenty of ‘bashing’ of Red Cross food at Oflag 64 (a Y.M.C.A. representative who arrived yesterday presented Sports Badges to several Kriegies before learning the news). To climax today’s glad and long-awaited event, 650 new No.10 Red Cross Food Parcels

arrived. These No.10s are the best yet! They have peanut butter, relished by everyone. It is a great day, this. (p. 171)

July 20

Plot to murder 'Der Fuhrer' fails. The papers all carried frontpage news and photos of the attempted assassination of Hitler. War news was shelved on back pages. Following this incident, Hitler reshuffled his government giving four Nazis over-all power. [In August, Dr. Karl Gerdeler, 'oberburgermeister', involved in the plot was arrested and executed.] (p. 177)

August 18

A number of officers, including myself, received our new Rolex Oyster Perpetual watches from Rolex, Geneva today (an international agreement). Now the proud owners roll their sleeves up instead of down. The common question: 'What time is it?' '8:31 and 2 seconds!' (Isn't it just like human beings?) (p. 185)

August 25

Colonel Millett was sent to Oberusel near Hammelburg to be interrogated for a remark he made at Chalon France: 'If you would get rid of Hitler, the war wouldn't last much longer!' (This was made before the attempt on Hitler's life). While there he became aware that 60 American pilots were being held and many were in 'pathetic condition.' He was given freedom to walk around the grounds without guards and returned by train to Oflag 64, where he annoyed Germans by smoking 'Prima' cigarettes and eating Red Cross box foods. One lady who spoke English, enjoyed one of the 'unbelievable' cigarettes while chatting with me. An old man who sat across from me, ate from my Red Cross box and asked what I was doing with American food. When I told him that I was an American officer, he looked rather chagrined! After all, who else could he suppose? Forced laborers are digging up great tank traps just east of Szubin (Oflag 64). (pp. 189, 190)

'Home-by-Christmas Clubs'

Last year before Christmas, 'Home-by-Xmas' Clubs were formed. Recently, membership has reached an all-high record! There is also a 'Home-by-Thanksgiving' Club! Vell, vot are ve waiting for? (p. 192)

September 1, 1944

Lt. Bill Schultz, an escaped Kriegy was returned to Oflag 64 and related stories about the extremely inhumane treatment by the SS during time spent at

various camps. He believes that letters from Col. Drake and later, Col. Millett, along with his US dog tags saved his life.

September 10

The Berlin 'News in English' Germany 'Bleeding' broadcast devotes very little time to the war front these days; on the other hand, much time is spent to propagandizing. (One of these days, Germany is going to bleed to death!) (p. 197)

The Last Straw

Das Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (OKW or the German High Command) ordered today that Red Cross parcel stock would be removed from camp and that a one-day's supply would be allowed inside the wire. All private reserves of food would be reduced at the end of two weeks. Red Cross parcels would be kept in a nearby warehouse, under German, not American, control. The Camp Kommandant, Oberst Schneider, has ordered that two parcels will be issued, thus, further cutting down our supply and the German ration would be reduced accordingly! Col. Millett, SAO informed the Kommandant, 'You will get the parcels out only by force!' Nevertheless, 2000 parcels were removed from camp.

The OKW motive behind this is obvious:

1. To save their own rations. 2. To gain control of parcel issue (violation of articles of Geneva Convention). 3. To prevent the POWs from giving food to the Poles and Russians, and to their own women and children upon capitulation. 4. To cut down food stocks in case of an Allied rescue mission (which is unlikely). The old 'Kriegies' in camp remember very well what happened to the parcels in Italy, September 1943; the Germans took them over and ate them in their presence!

The Germans have made a grave mistake in their manner of dealing with Allied prisoners. Instead of paving the way for good feelings for them, the Germans have done everything in their power to instill hatred in the POWs. (No POW would ever sympathize with the defeated 'Goons.') (p. 198)

Many entries from Yardley's diaries throughout 1944 contain lists of POW captives from multiple units.

October 1, 1944—Holland to Schubin in Four Days!

Lt. William L. Geddens, from the 101st A/B Division, attached to the British 1st A/B Division, holds record time in 'Flight of a Kriegy' to Oflag 64. He was captured near Arnheim, Holland, Sept. 27, and arrived here in Oct.! 'The Germans claim 6,635 airborne

troops were captured near Arnheim.’ Geddens says, ‘It’s not so. They didn’t have that many in the drop. Furthermore, I think that at least 3500 got back to the Reine, where they were holding the bridgehead at the river crossings, when I was captured.’ (p. 202)

No-Man’s-Land Hospital

‘It might be of interest,’ continues Geddens, ‘to say that here was a No-Man’s-Land Hospital used by both ‘sides’. Wounded were taken here, and if recovery seemed likely, they were sent back to their side with a Red Cross band as passport. Some came back several times, wounded again!’ (p.202)

October 10

Yardley’s diary states that the ‘Goons’ have become more harassing, *‘taking control of the Red Cross parcels, and refusing to turn over 2,280 family sent parcels which have been in German hands for several months in German warehouses.’* Col. Millett wrote several strong protests, resulting in a promise to distribute them, but this, too, was ignored. (pp. 204, 205)

October 18

Late today, 100 officers and 20 orderlies arrived. Camp strength is approximately 1000 Americans and 9 Frenchmen.

Col. Paul R. Goode, famously known as ‘Pop’ Goode and two other full Colonels were among the new arrivals. Col. Goode, graduate of West Point, class of 1914, highly esteemed by those serving under him, now becomes the new SAO. The Colonel reputedly fought for the rights of American POWs from Chalon, France to here. (p. 205)

Food parcels’ existence and distribution continue in Yardley’s notes throughout the month of October.

November 1, 1944—‘France Crumbles’

In June 1940, came the invasion of France. Army units fought valiantly but were cut to pieces by German Panzers and the Luftwaffe. The panic and commotion of the civilians, which clogged the roads, did more to hasten the defeat than anything else. So in 17 days France surrendered, with France’s oldest soldier, Marshal Petain, signing the armistice. It is interesting to note that Italy would not accept the armistice terms until M. Laval, Italy’s favorite, was made a cabinet member of the provisional government.

The French still looked to America for help, which did not come, but their patience never gave out. America entered the war. German propaganda hit a new high to play up terrorism in American bombings. But many an American pilot has been taken care of by

French men and later aided across the Spanish border. Resistance movements increased. This invisible army was most dangerous to the Germans, who haven't stopped fearing it. (pp. 209-211)

December 5, 1944—Morale Shoots Up!

After being out of Red Cross food parcels for seven weeks, a shipment of 2,350 has just arrived and every officer (some 1,145) has been issued a parcel. 'It is wonderful to feel full once more,' is the general murmur. 'Hurray for the Red Cross,' is the common feeling. (p. 218)

December 24 (Christmas Eve in Schubin)

Yardley writes that even though the temperature is low (7.5 degrees F):

Kriegies are celebrating by cooking, basting, boiling, baking and bashing the Red Cross parcels, it is a Merry Christmas—even under these circumstances. Even though some of us have not seen or eaten whole eggs and milk for over sixteen months, it could be a lot worse. We are alive, and that is a lot to be thankful for. Perhaps us Americans are the most spoiled people under God's sun—America, the land of plenty. God's Country! Ask any POW! (p. 221)

DIARY FIVE

January 14—Schokken, Germany, Oflag 64-Z

An auxiliary camp has been set up here at Schokken, Germany, for American prisoners of war. A staff from Oflag 64 has been sent including Capt. Amelio B. Palluconi, who speaks Italian fluently; Lt. Graig Campbell, my adjutant, from Houston, Texas; Lt. George Muhlbauer, who speaks German fluently; Lt. Pete Lampru, from Jacksonville, Florida; eleven orderlies; and myself.

This camp is to be Oflag 64-Z. This was an orphanage in peacetime and there are now 200 Italian generals and admirals interned in this camp. Col. Gen. Geloso is the Senior Officer; Col. Dulchi, Adjutant, etc. They have been interned here since the Italian armistice. September 1943. (p. 229)

The Americans will live in one of four buildings—much warmer than his barracks in Oflag 64. The arrival of forthcoming Red Cross food parcels is a big concern. Col. Hurley Fuller of San Antonio with 87 other Americans arrived the 15th and related this horrific story:

'Just before the big German offensive started, for several days I warned the Division Commander of the 28th Infantry Division, of

the imminent German offensive in the Bastogne sector. The general and his chief of staff laughed at me. The attack did come. I allowed the chief of staff over the phone to hear the rattle of machine gun bullets against the building walls which served as my command post. Germans marched 1800 Americans from the 106th and 28th Infantry Divisions inland 120 miles. No food or water or halts for three days. The people back home would never believe the stories I could tell about the treatment at German hands' (pp.229-230)

January 20 – “The Kommandant Has a Grave Announcement for You”

At 6:00 P.M. the German interpreter delivered the following message to Yardley in his room at Oflag 64-Z: ‘The Kommandant, Hauptmann Martz, has a grave announcement for you and Col. Fuller. He would like to see you immediately!’

‘Gentlemen, due to the grave situation for the Germans, the camp is being evacuated at 4:00 A.M. tomorrow’.

When asked about the direction of the march, the reply was *‘Westward toward the Reich. Arrangement for quartering and rations will be made along the route’.* (pp. 230, 231)

January 21 and January 22 ‘Schneller, Schneller’ (Faster, Faster)

At 4:00 A.M., a group with 94 Americans and other listed ‘campers’ began the slow and somewhat pathetic movement westward. Stumbling over suitcases and other treasured items left behind, the column walked 27 miles that first day and slept in a horse barn after being given milk and pork stew from the Poles. The next day, joined by German civilians, the column marched through Rogozno and halted again around midnight at a ‘Commando Camp’ (a POW work camp). Yardley, noting a chance to escape, told Col. Fuller that his plan was to escape the next day. (pp. 231, 232)

January 23 ‘Freedom’

Volunteering to search for coal, Yardley followed others out of the barrack then turned left, found a haystack and slept until 5:00 A.M. Several hours later and avoiding Germans, he knocked on a cabin which had been evacuated by the Germans, was welcomed by a Polish couple and fed well—the first in 471 days. Their real home with animals and valued possessions had been forcibly taken over by a German family, and they were left to fend for themselves elsewhere.

ON THE ROAD AGAIN

Three days later, on January 27 he left and was next taken to a home occupied by Germans (Volkdeutsche), the Zellmers, who had actually lived there for

many years. They also fed him well and asked him to contact a family member POW in America, showing him the postcard.

Early the next day, he met up with Russians repairing a GMC, announced himself as 'Amerikanski' and was welcomed with vodka, bread and fat meat. In good spirits they invited him to 'go with them to whip Hitler.' Go along he did.

So, in an American truck with ten Russian soldiers from an artillery regiment which must have been miles ahead, we set off for the Front. The comrades had no suspicions of me, obviously, for I was never searched or stripped. For miles and miles westward, the road was a continuous stream of foot infantry—thousands of them, marching an average of 46 km a day, trying to catch up with the Armored units. At Wielan (Filehne) we stopped at a general's house who had fled.

Next day, I rode in a horse-drawn coach with a front-line Infantry recon battalion until we reached Kreuz, Germany, on the Netze River, where the Russians had run into stubborn German Panzer units the day before. (p. 235)

MARSHAL ZHUKOV, 20TH CENTURY GENGHIS KAHN—ESCAPE TO FREEDOM

During January 21, 22, 23 the Marshal's mighty Russian armies ploughed through the area of Poland, Szubin, Skoki, and Posen where American, British, Italian, and Yugo-Slav prisoner of war camps were located.

He was assigned this area because 'it was considered to have been the hardest nut to crack and his Panzers pushed the Germans back 400 km in 16 days'. (pp.235-237)

Yardley, being one of the recipients of Russian 'mobile' hospitality, recorded the following reality:

POWs either escaped or joined the first Russian unit, Armored or Infantry, or similar units liberated them. The moment they were identified, by word or other means, as 'Amerikanski', the welcome was extremely friendly, hearty and cordial. The reception or welcome consisted of too much 192 proof Russian drink, raw fat meat, whole grain bread and anything else the 'Rusky' soldier might have. In many cases, the Rusky gave his fur-lined mittens, his fur-lined coat or his wool cap to a needy American comrade. Out of the bigness of his heart, anything he had was yours. (p. 236)

Through Yardley's writings readers 'see' another young Russian with his hands on the throttles of an enormous Russian 'Voroshilovgrad' tank, who, perhaps for the first time in his life, commanded a vehicle, carried a weapon with 'much' ammunition, drank portions of vodka that dulled his senses and commiserated with comrades in a war zone where realities changed with each encounter.

The following prologue summary, written by his nephew editor, Charles Turnbo, is mirrored in Yardley's book, *Home Was Never Like This*.

Colonel Yardley joined the Russian 5th Army's Invasion into Germany until they reached Driessen, Germany. He saw the Russians battle and kill Germans for 21 days. Sent to the rear lines to Warsaw, Poland, and from there he was sent down through the Ukraine to Odessa, Russia. On 7 March 1945, he sailed from Odessa, on the British ship, H.M.S. Moreton Bay, passing through the Bosphorus Strait, Istanbul, Turkey, the Dardanelles, the Aegean Sea, then to Port Said, Egypt, departing on the H.M.S. Samaria to Naples, Italy. On 2 April 1945, Yardley flew to the U.S. [on a C-54] via Casablanca, the Azores, Newfoundland, and lastly to his U.S. destination of Washington, D.C.

EPILOGUE: BACK IN THE USA

Upon his return to the U.S., Col. Yardley sent a postcard to his folks.

My, it is wonderful to be back—free from Uncle Sam's boys. You will never know my feelings, Darlings, I am waiting transportation home. I will call you as soon as possible upon my arrival there. All my very best regards and love to you all.

Your loving son,

/s/ Doyle

After a 90-day R & R, the War Department sent Col. Yardley to Panama to work with the Military Mission under General Jerome Waters, Sr. Fluent in Spanish and on a goodwill tour, Yardley told audiences about his experiences as a POW under the Germans. He returned to the U.S. in August 1945 and was divorced this same year. Col. Yardley was discharged from the military on 4 February 1946.

Deciding to sell his farm and work with his parents on theirs in East Texas, he became active in the American Legion, Texas Chapter to assist them in writing policies for veterans who want to become farmers. The week of April 16, he spent three days working with the American Legion Committee in Washington, D.C.,

on this veterans' project. Minutes of that meeting indicate that he and colleagues met with and were briefed by top officials of the Department of Agriculture and a number of other officials. (p. 277)

After returning to Texas, a tragic accident occurred which caused his death. According to a newspaper report, he was cleaning his hunting rifle when it discharged, killing him instantly. The date was 23 April 1946. Yardley had just celebrated his 33rd birthday.

Funeral arrangements were conducted by The American Legion. Colonel Yardley was buried with military honors at East End Cemetery, Lingleville, Texas.

Survivors included his parents, Alvin Alford Yardley and Emma Edna Yardley; and two sisters, Nita Yardley Gauntt and Peggy Yardley Turnbow. A brother, Herschel, had died at the age of 12.

CLOSING COMMENTS

These five diaries offer a more complete understanding of the world which faced young people like Yardley during the 20th century. Intriguing statements were written within Colonel Doyle R. Yardley's Introduction.

Home was never like this—as far as the GI was concerned, in Great Britain, French North Africa, Sicily, and Italy. This diary covers my experiences as a prisoner of war, for seventeen months, under the Germans, and as an escapee with our Allies, the Russians and Poles.

The diary was buried when I left Oflag 64, and was secured from the "hide" by Lt. Lou Otterbein, who carried it until I met up with him in Rembertow, Poland, February 1945, after being with the Russians who kindly allowed me to keep it.

As readers, we are grateful that they were secured and published. If fellow POW Otterbein had acted otherwise, this opportunity might have been lost since Yardley died in 1946—less than a year after war's end.

Yardley's diary entries placed readers within the events he witnessed, the thoughts he committed to paper, and the sounds of war he endured. Firsthand accounts filled page after page with personal observations and those of many others—military officers and enlisted personnel, civilians and refugees—who engaged him with specific details concerning their lives and losses. Sadly, many remained unenlightened that the political and cultural environments which existed before and after the absolutes would now shape their futures.

Families being evicted from their homes and farms; Germans believing in the superiority and the fallibility of the Third Reich; Russian armies extending their brute forces over the lands; Polish families risking their lives protecting escaped American POWs; and last—but certainly not least—Americans in the hands of their enemies, living with hope that each day will bring freedom and a safe passage home.

If Colonel Raford Yardley had lived, perhaps he might have continued his chronicles, but since this is not a possibility, these diaries represent the life and actions of a member of America's Greatest Generation—patriotism and service to others their sacred honor.

Biography written by Kriegy Research Group writer Ann C. Rogers