

Aug. 24, 1998

Dear Mr. Thompson,

I'm sorry to be so late in responding to Bill Warthan's request. I have ~~been~~ ^{been} struggling of late with roadblocks that advancing age ~~strows~~ ^{strows} in our paths and with trying, without much success, to talk to the ~~five~~ ^{four} people who chose escape with me that confusing night of March 27, 1945.

The only one I talked to was Sam Gwosden of 2242 ~~12th~~ Abby Road Akron, Ohio, ZIP 4431. The others ^{escapes} included me, Thomas O. Morton, 54 Windsor Ave., Pittsfield, MA, 01201; Patrick Ward, 413 Lynwood Blvd., Nashville, TN, 37205; Boyce Nunnally, 6301, Deep Day Creek Drive, Prospect, Ky, 40059; and Carl Hansen, ^{None of whom could be reached} but a Mrs. Carl Hanson is listed at 220 Durleigh Hill Road, ~~San~~ Sanbernton, N.H.. I believe Carl is dead.

At any rate, the five of us were in walking shape and decided to try and reach the lines on our own, sensing in a talk with ~~some~~ with some of the crew in one of the task force vehicles that things were FUBAR. ^{We took action from the crew & took off.} We lasted about a week and finally stole a boat and crossed the ~~main~~ ^{main}. The next morning we heard a fire-fight going laterally across our front and decided to break a rule and march in ~~at~~ daylight. In about 15 minutes ~~we~~ we were stopped by the last German outpost between us and the American forces.

We were shipped back across the river to, I believe, Karlstadt. We were kept in the city jail for a day or two and then ~~turned~~ turned over to a German guard force again. We were marched toward ~~Remburg~~ ~~Remburg~~ ~~Remburg~~ Remburg along with a newly captured small group of ~~xxx~~ GIs, and eventually put on a train -- in the coach section, not a boxcar.

We were then turned back to German walking guards. Somewhere during this period Sam Gosden suffered such a severe attack of dysentary that he was sent to a German military hospital.

The other four of us resumed the march, being kept in farm buildings each night and having new ~~guards~~ guards each day. One morning we woke to find the heaviest fog that any of us had ever seen. We decided that was a good opportunity to escape and did so without a shot being fired at us.

This time we swore absolutely not to march in daylight again. And we did so until April 13 when we heard clearly an American voice directing fire on a radio. We all agreed that this time we certainly couldn't go wrong by heading for the voice. We kept away from the road, not wanting to be shot by our own troops. Suddenly there appeared before us three German officers. We thought we had bought it again, but discovered they ~~were~~^{had} escaped from our troops and were heading for the retreating Germans. We shared a smoke and returned to our individual goals. Within half an hour we were still in the woods but directly across an open field ~~from~~^{from} from an American motorized unit in pursuit of the enemy. We ran across the field and met an advance unit of the 45th Division.

So much for we four former Kriegies.

Now, I have a request that I wish you would forward to whoever is in charge of the agenda for the reunion. I have ~~found~~^{learned} only recently that two of my fellow Pittsfield residents also were present ~~at~~ at that Hammelburg debacle March 27, 1945. One is

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Fabio Eccher, 1965 East St., Pittsfield, MA, 01201. He was a corporal with the 168th Combat Engineers and was wounded and captured in the Battle of the Bulge. Still somewhat crippled from the wounds, he was in no condition to go with the tanks or try an escape march, so he went back to the prison camp with Col. Goode.

The other Pittsfield resident there that night was Sgt. Silvio J. DiVirgilio of 75 Alfred Drive, He was a tank driver with ~~D. Green~~ Co., 37th Tank Bn., the unit that accompanied Baum and ~~his~~ armored infantry from the 4th Division. He was temporarily blinded by a panzerfaust blast ~~that~~ hit his tank shortly before the Baum task force ~~was~~ destroyed and he ended up back at the Hammelburg camp.

Mr. DiVirgilio received no medal for his part in the raid. And there probably were many ^{more} also not cited for bravery in ~~the~~ Patton's escapade. They should be. It took the Canadian brass a long time to decide to strike a medal for all those who participated in the ^{disastrous} raid on Dieppe. It should not be too late to do the same ~~for~~ for all the brave men in Task Force Baum.

Mr. Eccher and Sam Wosden join me in making such a suggestion if the former Hammelburg prisoners present at the coming reunion ~~choose to do so~~ choose to do so. I believe Rep. John Olver, congressman from the 1st Massachusetts District, would be glad to ^{do} whatever he can to push ~~it~~ such a proposal.

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could you kindly put the proposal in the right hands for
action. and would you please give the enclosed check for the
postal fund to the correct ~~per~~ person.

Thanks for your patience with my typing,

Tom Mastro

I would appreciate information on what action, if
any, is taken on our suggestion.