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PROLOGUE

I was a B-17 pilot with the 2nd Bomb Group, 15th Army Air Force, based at Amendola, Italy. On my 38th mission our aircraft was shot down over Czechoslovakia enroute to the synthetic oil plant at Bleckhammer, Germany. I evaded for eight days and passed out in a field inside Slovakia from exhaustion and polluted water. A young Slovakian farmer found me. He took me to his gypsy wagon and outfitted me in civilian clothes. Later that day I was captured on the Slovakian-Hungarian border as I passed a checkpoint into Hungary. I was subjected to nude public display and later a severe beating by two Hungarian home guards in which I lost control of my bodily functions. I was then transported by commuter train from Vienna to Budapest, Hungary, and then to a civilian jail in that city.

My experiences in that prison served as the basis of my short story 'The Forty Days Of Mr. Kellogg.' The story is included in the Anthology 'Through The Eye Of The Needle' published by Stalag Luft III, former Prisoners-Of-War. The book documents survival stories of sixty-eight flying Officers shot down over Europe during World War II who were eventually incarcerated at Stalag Luft III, Sagan, Germany. This P.O.W. camp became famous as the result of the movie 'The Great Escape.'

Copies of the book 'Through The Eye Of The Needle' were presented to the libraries of the Air Force Academy and West Point where it serves as a valuable reference material for scholars, writers and students of this period of air history. It is also distributed in the libraries of Military schools, Survival training units and the libraries of Universities and Colleges that conduct major Air Force R.O.T.C. programs.

My short story begins on July 14th, 1944, the night I entered the notorious Hszalalabyai prison in Budapest, Hungary. This literary piece is a classic example of an American flyer captured in civilian clothes and held in solitary confinement for forty days, subjected to brutality, and techniques of coercion administered by a skilled Interrogator.

THE 40 DAYS OF MR. KELLOGG

The jail in Budapest seemed quite old. There was an odor of antiquity about it. I was taken to a holding room and thoroughly searched, then the two guards took me to a cell on the third tier. The door was huge, very thick and opened with a long, heavy key. The cell was approximately six by ten feet and the furniture consisted of a metal cot with a straw tick. No blankets were in evidence. There was a bucket in the corner which served as a latrine. The two guards sat me on the cot, the door banged shut and I lay down trying to find a body part that didn't hurt from the beating I had received that day from the Hungarian guards in which I had lost control of my bladder and bowels. As I drifted off into an exhausted sleep I heard a distant groaning, then awoke suddenly and realized it was me. When I came to again it was still night. Had I slept through until another night? I couldn't tell and it didn't really matter. I wasn't going any place.

The next morning the door opened at dawn. The guard placed a pewter dish on the floor. It contained a cup of barley coffee and a slice of sawdust bread. The daily ration was water, a cup of barley coffee, two thin slices of bread and two bowls of watery barley soup. In time I came to treasure those moments when the food came. When the noon meal arrived and the food lay untouched on the floor, the guard realized I couldn't get up and pushed it closer to the cot. With a spoon I made a scratch on the wall each day to mark the passage of time. On the seventh day a guard entered the cell and indicated that I was to carry the bucket outside and set it in the hall. He became agitated when he saw I hadn't used the bucket and when I bent over to set it down, he hit me over the head with the long key. This occurred each time the bucket was carried out. Later I learned other airmen incarcerated there had the same treatment. It was probably part of the softening up process for interrogation.

In the early morning of my seventh day in the prison two guards arrived and escorted me to the interrogation office. The office was quite ornate. A large picture window overlooked a courtyard below. Along one wall were loaves of sawdust bread stacked about three feet high. In front of the window was a beautiful hand-carved desk. Behind the desk was a Luftwaffe Hauptman, (Air Force Captain,) in a resplendent blue uniform. He was pure Aryan, with a very professional look. He appeared to be in his middle thirties. The two postens (guards) who had escorted me were curtly dismissed.

The door closed behind me and I stood for a moment until he told me to sit down. He spoke perfect English in well modulated tones.

"What happened to you?"

"It was the Hungarian militia."

His voice rose, "I am not responsible for the Hungarian's actions. I am the German Interrogator in this prison. You and I are guests of the Hungarian government. My sole function is to interrogate Allied airmen under the auspices of the International Red Cross. Fortunately I have been able to identify nearly all of the Allied flyers and they have been transported to Germany, but you are here under suspicious circumstances. How long you remain here is up to you. I can only carry out my duties as your protector if you cooperate with me in establishing your identity. Do you understand the precarious nature of your position?"

I replied, "yes."

"Fine, there is a process we follow in screening enemy soldiers, and the first procedure is a Red Cross Form which I must fill out and return to the International Red Cross for their records. The Red Cross will then notify your government and they in turn will inform your relatives that you are a prisoner-of-war. Do I make myself clear?"

I replied, "yes."

He picked up a pen, poised it over the form, and began:

"Name?"

"John F. Kellogg."

"Rank?"

"Second Lieutenant."

The pen dropped, his voice rose.

"That's a lie, soldiers wear uniforms. We cannot continue the conversation at this time. You will be returned to your cell to contemplate your serious situation. You were captured in civilian clothes. As such you were assumed to have been engaged in illegal warfare against the Third Reich. I cannot offer you medical attention, which you obviously require. You are not covered under the rules of the Geneva Convention. You must cooperate with me." There was an ominous note to his voice. "For now I will refer to you as Mr. Kellogg." His voice rose, "Posten, take this man to his cell."

Two days passed while I reviewed my options. The military code of conduct was clear on information to be given to the enemy. Name, rank and serial number. The captain had stopped me at rank, and of course he was correct in implying that soldiers wear uniforms. I had seen some American flyers in uniform on my way to the office. My situation had reached the critical stage. Classified as a spy by implication indicated that any protection that I might otherwise receive as a P.O.W. fell outside the provis-

ions of the Geneva Convention. It was a certainty that the Interrogator would explore my psyche, probing for a weak spot in my armor, testing my resolve as a soldier by deprivation, and exploiting any area of vulnerability in my character. If I were to retain any measure of control it was contained in those words: name, rank and serial number.

t The sinister title of Mr. Kellogg was an alarming event. Stripped of a military designation indicated criminal activity on my part. The singular act of a soldier masquerading as a civilian in enemy territory during wartime did not necessarily indicate an intense craving to commit espionage or sabotage. My homing instinct had remained intact and the passion for freedom had been my only objective and I felt innocent of any infamy.

My strategy was not to become involved in any discussion, innocuous as it might appear. The Germans had years of experience in gathering intelligence from P.O.W.s. Innocent as it might seem, light banter was a trap in which an expert interrogator could extract vital data to incriminate a prisoner-of-war and others who had aided and abetted the enemy.

Historically the German military had a strong sense of duty and loyalty to the cause for which they fought. In the perilous days ahead the interrogator would, by any devious maneuvering, search for a weakness in my stance as a soldier. The captain held the cards, and it was a stacked deck where I was concerned. Still there was an opening, I had not shown him my dog tags. Those precious tags, they might be my ticket out of this miserable jail into the relative comfort of a prison camp.

Another week had passed and the guard escorted me back to the office. The Hauptman seemed quite cheerful and he spoke quietly. "Good morning, Mr. Kellogg." I replied, "Captain, my title is Second Lieutenant." I reached across the desk and showed him my dog-tags. He studied them for a moment. "In your travels around the countryside you stumbled upon the remains of a dead American airman and stole his dog-tags. When we were breathing down your neck, you assumed his identity. It just doesn't wash. That evil smelling suit where did you get it?" "My name, rank and serial number thats all I can give you." His voice became that of a conspirator in distress. "You must come clean with me. I am required to forward your reports to the Hungarian government. Capital punishment for spies in Hungary is death by hanging. They are getting impatient. I am buying you precious time. If you don't care about yourself, think of your loved ones at home. Time has passed and they don't know any more about your status than we do. Recognize that you are your own worst enemy and we can make a fresh start. The posten came and returned me to the cell.

That night I had a strange dream. I stood at the edge of a forest looking at a glade bathed in moonlight. From the opposite side a shadowy figure emerged from the trees and bent over a body lying in the grass. When he stood up he was holding a set of dog-tags.

The next day Budapest was under attack by the American air force. The opening of the attack was dominated by the shrill sound of the sirens, closely followed by the rising crescendo of the heavy flak guns and finally the earth shaking thunder of the falling bombs. When the all-clear signal came it was too late for lunch and by supper time I had a full blown case of the shakes in anticipation of the food.

The night I had been processed into the jail they had taken my Y.M.C.A. pocket Bible which I had carried on all my missions. I had longed to have it back to seek solace among its pages. I felt my time was growing short. I had read the messages scratched into the pewter bowls. There were words like: *Germany, here I come, the food is lousy, damn the bedbugs, etc.* A few gave their names with the number of days imprisoned there, most running from two to five days. These messages were scratched out by airmen held at the jail awaiting transport to a German prisoner-of-war camp. One day a new pewter soup bowl surfaced, I took a spoon and scratched on it John F. Kellogg, 2nd Lt., O-751-345, thirty-five days. Please remember my name. If I didn't make it, I felt certain some airman would carry the message home.

The ravages of time and malnutrition was taking its toll. Whenever possible, I had tried to walk in the tiny cell, but slowly my legs had turned to rubber. Mind games, memories of better days and the faces of those I loved gradually receded. What remained of reality was totally dominated by fantasies of food. I planned menus, conjured up images of endless buffets, and began to have uncontrollable shakes when I heard the watery soup arriving in the hall. The filthy cot had become my toilet. Physically I had reverted to an earlier time with the elimination habits of an infant. My days had become horizontal and I became a feeding ground for hordes of bed bugs that left angry red welts. Forty days had passed and my instincts for survival were waning. I had become tormented by periods of waking up in the morning, lying on the soaked straw tick, and could not distinguish whether this behavior was caused by bladder problems or night sweats.

With the passage of time the Interrogator's line of questioning had shifted. He was no longer interested in the details of a military nature. This had been a veiled attempt to draw my attention away from the core of his problem. Who supplied me with the suit? What ties did I have with the underground? I knew that decision time had arrived, either they would break me or

it would be the hangman's noose.

That same day a guard entered the cell. He handed me the Bible they had taken the first day. Was this the last desperate attempt? Was this the final meal before the hanging? It no longer mattered, I found solace in the sure knowledge that I had not revealed any details about the brave peasant boy who pulled an American airman out of a field and saved my life. Name, rank and serial number; I had kept the soldier's faith.

There were footsteps in the hall, the door swung open and two guards entered. My legs were like rubber and they supported me on each side as we made what turned out to be the final trip to the Interrogator. We entered the office and the guards sat me down in a chair.

The Luftwaffe Captain smiled. "Good morning, Lieutenant." For forty days I had been known as Mister; was this another ploy or a ticket to Germany? He continued. "I have something to show you." He unrolled a wall chart, I stared in disbelief; it was labeled in large letters, 'TABLE OF ORGANIZATION OF THE SECOND BOMB GROUP.' My group. So he knew all along! The Commanding officer was listed--Col. Rice. The four squadrons were listed with their identification numbers. A red line was drawn through a few ships, and where a ship was red lined there was a date. The captain must have read my mind. "The red lined aircraft have gone down this month of August." "Yes, Lieutenant, we knew you were on a B-17 number 183, shot down over southwestern Slovakia. The number on the tail section survived the crash. You might be interested in knowing that Col. Rice has completed his tour and is now a Brigadier General in the Pentagon." (later at Stalag Luft III in Germany I was able to confirm this report by a pilot from my group shot down at a later date.) I Tried to appear calm, but inwardly I was astonished by these revelations. He continued. "So Lieutenant, we knew on July 7 who you were, but what had you become? You disappeared on that day but surfaced many kilometers and eight days later near Vienna, Austria, not as an airman but as a spy in civilian clothes."

"What have you seen, whom did you contact, what information do you have? It is not important now, this is a fast moving war, last month's knowledge is obsolete. You will now go to Germany and play baseball with your comrades." He handed me a loaf of bread from the wall, and the two guards took me to the transport room. They pulled the door open and pushed me inside, my rubber legs gave way and I sat on the floor clutching the bread.

There were approximately thirty-five allied flyers in that room, all in uniform. The room fell silent as they viewed this apparition in their midst. My last shower had been forty-eight days ago, I had not regained control of my

bladder or bowels. I had lain in my own excrement for days. The large black suit was nearly falling off. The silence was broken by an American sergeant. He pointed down at me and said to no one in particular. "Who is that." A sergeant standing next to him said, "That must be one of those Yugoslav partisans." I pulled out my dog tags and waved them joyously in the air. Laughter filled the room. It was a spontaneous celebration for one of their comrades who had survived. It was a wonderful moment. It was August 23, 1944. I was home again.

Epilogue

In the spring of 1946 I was contacted by an agent of the F.B.I. in San Diego, Ca. He wanted a deposition relative to the beating by the Hungarian guards. I was able to furnish the date, a description of the two guards, circumstances of the attack and a rough location of the shack where the atrocity took place. The deposition was to be turned over to the War Crimes Commission in an attempt to apprehend the two guards and bring them to trial.