

8402-89 Ave

Woodhaven 21 Ny

March 28. 45

Mr. Amos G. Carter

My dear Mr. Carter

I have yours of March 27
and I'm sorry its so disappointing.

I'm dreadfully sorry you
haunt yet heard that Amos Jr is now
free and the same goes for Mr Jones.

I have not only had word
from the War Dept. on March 8th
that Rice is free but ~~only~~ ^{also} today
along with your mail is a letter
from him ^{dated Mar. 14. 45 - apparently from Cairo.} saying: "Montana Rice
rides again! and he intends to spend
"round-up time" at home in New York
within the next 30 days." This "re-habilitation"
has us in a constant whirl. Our people
are treating us royally, to say nothing
of the way we are being fattened up.

Physically & mentally I should again be
in good condition on arrival in the States."

You see Mr. Carter, - the boys were very
badly starved by the Germans between early
Sept. & Xmas - no Red Cross parcels hav-
ing arrived at Oflog 64 until early Dec. (G) ^{It}
issued Xmas Eve! They rec'd their Xmas
parcels ON Xmas Eve.

I am NOT confused. I have person-
ally interviewed 3 recently arrived
repatriates (escapees) from Oflog 64.
They confirmed the story they gave
to the Press at Moscow & their stories
corroborated both the letters from
my son & those of another neighbor
also at #64 - "sheer starvation!"

I have ^{MUCH} unpublished
factual data which I have
deliberately ^{NOT} revealed.

I enclose one story (which please
return). I have additional details, some
not so good. However, I sincerely
hope you & Mr. John Jones will hear
from your sons before long. The same
as I did. Clipping with my son's picture
(which please also return) quotes actual facts also.
My son, incidentally, was Winter Sports Officer at
Oflog 64 and I may have some material

that you may care to use for a
story. Bill is the former Ski
Coach at University of Montana
• Ski Maestro at Mt. Rainier, Wash
as well as pro Dude Rancher
between Ski engagements. His
nickname "Montana Bill" was
bestowed upon him by the
Cowpunchers. He is actually
Brooklyn (where a tree grows) NY
born on Apr. 4. 1918

He intends, after his Army career,
to open a super-duper Ski-Ranch
somewhere in the Northwest.

He is one of the heroes of "The
Road to Tobruk" a factual story of the
Tunisian Campaign by David Rame the
English War Correspondent who dedicated
the book to 704 Tank Destroyer
Co. "C" (Bill commanded Co. C.)

Sincerely
W. H. Burghardt

noted for you
- 1000
1000

Woodhaven Lad Among 800 American Soldiers Freed From Nazi Prison Camp by Russians

First Lieut. William C. Burghardt, son of Mr. and Mrs. William H. Burghardt of 8402 89th avenue, the first Woodhaven lad to be taken a prisoner of war by the Germans, has been freed by the Russians after three years in a German prison camp.

The news was received by the family on Friday, first by a telegram from the War Department, then in a letter, delivered the same day, from Gil Redfern, editor of the Prisoner of War Bulletin of the American Red Cross at Washington.

The telegram reads:

"Am pleased to inform you, report read from the U. S. Military Mission at Moscow states, your son, 1st Lieut. Wm. C. Burghardt, previously reported P. O. W. has been released from a German P. O. W. camp in Poland. The War Department invites submission of a 25-word message for attempted delivery to him."

From Editor Redfern comes the following:

"A telegram received from Geneva dated March 6th stated that 800 American officers from Oflag 64 were resting for a few days near the town of Alt Kelen. Alt Kelen is near Rostock. The cable stated that the men were in poor physical condition, and for that reason their westward march had been halted.

Americans from other camps in the East (notably Stalag Luft IV and Stalag 2B) were being assembled in the vicinity of Steiner Haff presumably for transfer elsewhere. The Germans are probably moving them in the direction of Lubeck or Bremen, but the situation is so confused that it is quite impossible to get an accurate picture of it.

Between 200 and 300 American



LIEUT. WILLIAM C. BURGHARDT

officers from Aflag 64, we understand, fell into Russian hands after a spectacular escape from the German captors, but only a few have as yet reached the United States.

It is not believed the War Department has anything like a complete list of the men who have been released by the Russians.

There were about 1500 men in Oflag 64 when the camp was evacuated on January 21st, 1945, so that about 400 are still unaccounted for. Previous cables from Geneva had announced the arrival of men from Oflag 64 at Stalag 111-A (Lucken Walde, Germany) and it was stated that they would proceed from there

to Nurnberg, Germany. It is to be assumed the Protecting Power and the International Red Cross will advise promptly by cable when they learn from the Geneva authorities the ultimate camp destinations of our American prisoners. The Red Cross realizes what an anxious time this period of waiting and uncertainty must be for the relatives and everything will be done to facilitate early receipt of information.

A large fleet of motor trucks has been organized to try to get food to the men while they are on the march, and as soon as they reach the camps, but, here again, it must be realized that, while the Red Cross is doing its utmost to get relief to the men, it is up against tremendous difficulties. Supplies have already been delivered by truck to the men at Alt Kelen.

Several men from Queens County were returned from Moscow by air to Washington, D. C. and are now on leave to their homes.

(Signed) G. REDFERN.

(Latest radio and AP reports have it that 1200 of these men left Odessa for he U. S. on March 7th, 1945.)

Lieut. Burghardt was known as "Montana Bill" to many thousands of outdoor sports lovers. He was the former ski coach of University of Montana and a former dude-rancher at Montana. He was also ski maestro at Mt. Rainier, Washington and ski pro to Idaho Ski Association.

He was the sports officer of Oflag 64 and was given a battlefield "spot promotion" from second to first lieutenant for gallantry in action at Medjez El Bab while attached with his platoon, the 37 M.M. Light Platoon of Co. C, 7001st Tank Buster Battalion to the British First Army and the French Army Couriers.

Fatted Calf Awaits Montana Bill

Out at the Burkhardt home, 84-02 89th St., Woodhaven, Queens, there is feverish activity these days. A bedroom is being re-decorated and repainted; fresh curtains filter the first spring sunlight, and books, athletic equipment and other long-unused possessions are being arranged just as he left them. For Montana Bill, recently freed from a German prison camp, is coming home.

It was more than two years ago that Mr. and Mrs. William H. Burkhardt last saw their son, Lt. William C. (Montana Bill) Burkhardt. They are used to waiting but they couldn't hide their eagerness and joy today over the knowledge that he soon will return. Mr. Burkhardt's face was shining as he said: "We are treading on clouds. The neighbors are almost as excited as we are and if our son can stand it there will be the biggest welcome home party at our place you have ever seen."

In Battle at Oran.

And there will be stories aplenty to entertain that party if Lt. Burkhardt is in the mood to talk. One of the first officers ashore during the battle of Oran in November, 1942, he received citations for gallantry and was promoted from second to first lieutenant on the battlefield. Lt. Burkhardt was in numerous battles with the 701st Tank Destroyer Battalion in North Africa before his capture by the enemy while on a midnight reconnaissance patrol into the enemy lines in Tunisia on March 24, 1943. His last words before his capture, spoken over a walkie-talkie to his commanding officer, were "I'll be off the air for several hours. This place is crawling with Germans."

He was listed as missing in action until April, 1943, when his parents received word that he was a prisoner of war in an Italian camp. Through the Red Cross they were kept informed of his movements and learned that he had been transferred to Oflag 7B, German prison camp in the Bavarian Alps, and then to Oflag 64, American ground force officer's prison camp in Schubin, Poland.

Made Sports Officer.

It was at this latter camp that he spent the greater part of his imprisonment and was appointed winter sports officer. Mr. and Mrs. Burkhardt have had no letters from him since he wrote on Dec. 18, 1944, but were informed recently that he was released with other prisoners from the German camp on Jan. 22, 1945, and is now somewhere on the Mediterranean Sea en route to the United States.

In his last letter, written just before Christmas, Lt. Burkhardt spoke longingly of food, "any kind of food," and a sleeping bag. Allied bombings of German transportation routes, he said, had held up Red Cross food parcels and the German ration was down to no breakfast, watery turnip soup and bread for lunch and a few small potatoes for supper. Also, there

were not enough blankets or coal to keep them warm.

However, his parents learned through a repatriated prisoner that Red Cross food parcels arrived in time for a Christmas Eve dinner of "turkey, plum pudding, cranberry sauce and all the fixings." In all of his letters, Lt. Burkhardt spoke highly of the Red Cross and put special emphasis on the importance of the food parcels

sent to American prisoners of war.

Lt. Burkhardt earned his nickname of Montana through his keen interest in bronco busting during time he spent on Western dude ranches in his post high school days. Sports writers, who rank him as an expert ski instructor, added the Bill and the handle has stuck. He was the first ski instructor at the University of Montana.

RUSSIANS FREE MONTANA BILL

Woodhaven Ski Ace Held 2 Years by Nazis

First Lieutenant William (Montana Bill) Burghardt of Woodhaven, captured in North Africa by the Nazis just a few days short of two years ago, has been freed by the Russians in their sweep across northeastern Germany, the War Department informed his parents today.

Burghardt, who will be 27 on April 4, was one of the leading ski instructors of the country before he entered service in March of 1941, but an attack of pneumonia at the wrong time kept him out of the Army's crack ski troops, and sent him instead to the desert of North Africa.

He was captured March 25, 1943, in Tunisia, where he commanded a tank destroyer company, and eventually reached Oflag 64, Nazi prison camp near Blumberg, Poland.

The Germans attempted to move prisoners from this camp westward to the Reich but the Russian steamroller overtook and passed them. Almost all the American prisoners were liberated.

Lieutenant Burghardt is now in Moscow, according to his father, William H. Burghardt of 84-02 89th avenue, Woodhaven. There has been no direct word from him, but the War Department telegram confirmed his arrival in the Russian capital.

The elder Burghardt said several weeks ago he was confident that "Montana Bill" had been freed, after hearing of several other Queens soldiers who arrived in Moscow following their liberation.

Lieutenant Burghardt, a graduate of Newtown High School, learned to ski on the slopes behind the Ottilie Orphan Home in Jamaica. Sub-

(Continued on Page Ten)

REDS FREE WOODHAVEN SKI CHAMP

(Continued From Page One)

sequently he studied under several European instructors and became one of the top-flight ski experts in the country.

He earned his nickname during the two years he spent on a dude ranch in Montana.

Lieutenant Burghardt was attending officer school at Fort Knox before Pearl Harbor, and was to have become an instructor of the ski troops.

He came down with pneumonia before he was commissioned, and then war came. When he left the hospital and received his bars at last, the North African invasion was already in the planning stage and the young officer was assigned to a tank reconnaissance unit, later transferring to the tank destroyers.

He fought in North Africa for five months before his capture.

Hollis Officer Describes How Russians Set Him Free

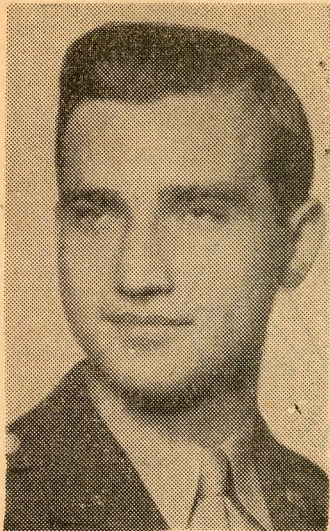
Too Sick to Walk, Germans Abandoned Him in Flight from Poland

(Lieutenant David A. Englander of 191-21 Foothill avenue, Hollis, Army combat movie photographer, was wounded and captured by the Germans at Aachen. He spent five months in a prison camp in Poland before he was liberated by the Russians. He returned last week from Moscow by plane. In the following story, Englander, a former newspaperman, describes his liberation.)

By **LT. DAVID ENGLANDER**
Written for United Press

WASHINGTON — We knew the Russians were coming. Tension mounted as the radio announced successive "disengagements" and "hard, defensive battles" in the east.

Inside the barbed wire, 1,400 American officers could see an endless line of German refugees passing night and day through the little Polish town of Schubin, heading back toward Germany. Conversa-



LIEUTENANT ENGLANDER
Nazis Made Him Walk

tion in the camp—conversation that was formerly devoted almost exclusively to food—now dealt only with the possibilities of being liberated by the oncoming Russians.

But Berlin had some ideas on the subject too. On Saturday, Jan. 21, we were told that orders had come to move us out. Those who were sick, wounded or unable to walk were to be abandoned. The rest were to march toward Schneidermuhl, the nearest big rail center, 60 miles away.

Men Were Missing

The next morning we formed inside the barbed wire compound. The Germans counted noses once, twice, three times. Each check seemed to reveal more men missing from the formation. They hastily searched the camp, but could find none of the men who had hidden themselves away.

After a speech warning us
(Continued on Page 13)

4 Queens Soldiers Freed by Russians

The names of four more Queens soldiers liberated from Nazi prison camps by the advancing Russian armies were announced by the War Department today in Washington.

They are:

FREDERICK C. HYRNE, lieutenant, 95-18 Jamaica avenue, Woodhaven.

WILLIAM J. McCUTTIE, corporal, 25-87 45th street, Astoria.

ARNOLD RUBIN, lieutenant, 11-62 Boulevard, Rockaway Beach.

SALVATORE VASILE, captain, 83-01 Cornish avenue, Elmhurst.

Lieutenant Hyrne is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Clark M. Hyrne and has been in the Army three years. He was captured last October in Italy, where he was serving as an infantry officer.

OFFICER TELLS HOW RUSSIANS SET HIM FREE

(Continued From Page One)

man commandant marched us out of the camp. He rode in a small military automobile at the head of the column. We marched in platoons of 55 men, with five or six guards to each platoon. Any hope we still had of being overtaken by the Russians had disappeared because the last radio report put them at least 65 miles away.

The column of prisoners merged with the stream of refugee traffic moving slowly toward the town of Exin, 10 miles away. A warm sun took the sting out of the cold but the ice and ruts in the road made marching difficult.

Prisoners Faint

Several of the prisoners developed foot trouble or fainted from the unaccustomed strain. They were placed aboard civilian carts going to Exin. Some of the German guards—several of whom were middle-aged or wounded veterans—were having a hard time of it, too. They seemed to be as exhausted as their prisoners. A few bled from the nose; others began to throw away articles to lighten their packs.

By nightfall, we had reached Exin, but the Germans decided to march us on another five miles to a Polish manor called Wegheim. There we were ordered into barns for the night and slept as best we could among the horses and cows.

In the morning a number of us found it impossible to walk further. The Germans decided to abandon us, leaving a few guards behind, presumably to hand us over to German troops expected to fall back through that area.

We gathered in the farmhouse where the American doctors set up a hospital. A Red Cross flag was improvised and flown from a window. Local Poles brought word that the Russians were steadily approaching. The German guards became panicky and slipped away, leaving us to our own resources.

Alone, But Not Free

We were alone—but not yet free. There were still the Germans we expected would be passing us in retreat. The thought of a counter-attack worried us.

The day passed into evening with all of us sitting tight in the farmhouse. The windows were screened and strict blackout enforced. The Polish civilians returned to tell us that Russian reconnaissance units were reported 15 miles away.

Talk died down and we just waited. Before midnight we heard the roar of tanks in the distance. We argued about whether the approaching armor was Russian or German. It did not seem possible that the spearhead of the Red Army could have advanced so swiftly.

Those of us who could walk prepared for a getaway. Those who couldn't—like myself—suddenly remembered a few prayers we never realized we knew. After that it was just a matter of waiting.

Suddenly the officers at the door began to cheer. I found myself hobbling over to the window to look out at the road. My eyes scanned a long line of tanks until suddenly they fell on the unmistakable silhouette of an American-made Sherman. The Russians had arrived and we were free!

SPORTS

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★ ★ ★



Mike Lee

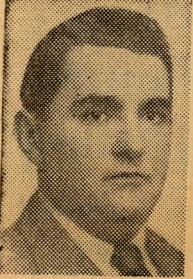
Reports

* * *
Lieutenant W. H. (Montana Bill) Burghardt, Woodhaven ski master, a prisoner of the Nazis, keeps his mind occupied in Krieftsgef-Offizierlager 64, by planning a "super super" sportsmen's paradise he hopes to build after the war in Wisconsin or Michigan . . . Bill has capital

Interested in the plans and the Chambers of Commerce in both states are actually hot about it . . . while the resort will be principally a ski ranch, Bill expects to cater to every sport, including hunting, boating, riding, fishing, skeet shooting, golf, tennis, baseball, football, boxing (for training only), hockey, basketball, bowling, roller and ice skating, skiing and dude ranching . . . Bill has the experience, and the personality to put such a vacationing dreamland over . . . he built up a big following as a ski master in the Berkshires and Rockies and at exclusive resorts across the country . . . he is keeping physically fit, too, by plenty of sports activity . . . he wants to step right into those resort plans the minute he gets out of the Nazis' hands . . . may that day be soon!

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L.O. Press - 10/25/44

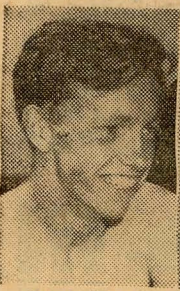


Mike Lee

Reports

All families with loved ones held as prisoners of war in Germany or Japan are close students of the progress of Allied victory, but would wager, sight unseen, that there are none as avid about it as Bill Burghardt and his wife of Woodhaven . . . they are the parents of 1st Lieutenant William C. (Montana Bill) Burghardt, the renowned ski master, who was captured by the Nazis during the North African campaign almost two years ago . . . Bill has been moved around in prison camps and now he's at Oflag 64, somewhere in the eastern part of the country . . . in a recent letter to his family Bill paid glowing tribute to the Y. M.

Protest Decision
On Tap Tonight



Frank Martin Bill Burghardt

C. A. War Prisoners Aid for sending skates and other sports supplies to the officers held at Oflag 64 . . . Bill, as sports officer, has taught all of his fellow "kriegies" how to skate . . . he figures correctly that they need that kind of exercise to hold off the danger of carbohydrate fat that seems to grip all prisoners of war . . . the food situation is not good, but thanks to the Red Cross and Y. M. C. A. and the packages from home that are permitted but once in 60 days, the situations is tolerable.

They used to let Bill get around the countryside on skis, but then some Nazi suddenly remembered that Burghardt was one of the best men in the world on a pair of wooden runners and they removed that escape possibility if it ever existed in Bill's mind . . . he's wrapped up with two thoughts . . . coming home to his mother and dad and to get started on the project he has been nursing in the back of his skull for years, a high class winter sports vacation resort somewhere in upper Wisconsin or Michigan . . . he's the boy for it, personality and experience.

We spent a pleasant hour with the Burghardts the other night . . . they are laying in quite a supply of cheering liquid against the day that Bill walks in the front door of the corner house on 84th street and 89th avenue and we had a sample or two of some cognac that's out of this world . . . we asked how Bill and the other boys kept up with news of the world . . . the Nazis don't permit them to have radios, papers or magazines . . . the publications they do get are entirely devoid of any news of the outside world . . . however, the solution is simple . . . the newcomers to the camp are the bearers of good tidings of what the Allies are doing to Hitler and his gang . . . and woe to the newcomer who doesn't know all the answers, from politics down to sports . . . the possibility is remote that a sudden rush of American or Russian arms will free the boys at Oflag 64 and other camps . . . the Geneva Convention specifies that P. O. W. must be removed from the combat areas, but the day is coming sooner than we had dared to hope for the liberation of Montana Bill and all the other gallant young men held by Berlin and Tokyo.

* * *