



COL. THOMAS D. DRAKE, repatriated prisoner of war who returned recently on the Gripsholm and MRS. DRAKE as they appeared on a recent visit to New York.



Colonel's Fighting Spirit Carries On After 19 Months in Nazi Camp

BY IDA BELLE HICKS.
Staff Writer.

NEW YORK, Oct. 17 (Delayed by Censorship).—Undaunted by an experience of 19 months in a German prison camp, the fighting spirit of Col. Thomas D. Drake is carrying on now that he is back in this country and at liberty to speak his mind in a land where the freedoms still prevail.

He is home again with a pain in his stomach and a vivid picture in his mind. Now in marked quarters at Walter Reed Hospital, Washington, he came back in September on the Gripsholm, an exchange prisoner returned because of illness.

FOUR FROM FORT WORTH.

Behind him Colonel Drake left 39 Texans (four from Fort Worth) in the German prison camp, Offlag 64 at Alburgund which is the German designation for Schuben, Poland.

One of the first things he likes to say when he gets to expressing himself is that families of these boys, and those of the remainder of the 620 held there, should have no fear for the spirit of the American officers. It will remain unbroken, even if the men don't always have enough to eat.

Without much urging Colonel Drake will speak freely of the life of the boys who were removed from combat duty and forced into cheerless inactivity.

Their day's routine begins with the German "appel" which is the first of their four daily roll calls—a means of checking to see that none has escaped. This over, the American officers stand inspection for cleanliness and dress, a routine that is considered highly important from a morale standpoint. This is conducted by the American officers in charge.

Breakfast consists of whatever they have in their Red Cross parcels. The only meal furnished by the Germans is at noon when the prisoners are given one-half to a pint of dried cabbage and carrot soup, a slug of heavy German bread and two potatoes that have either started to sprout or are ready to spoil. None of it is very appetizing.

LESS THAN CIVILIANS.

This is far less than the food allowed German civilians. Depot officers (German soldiers assigned to guard duty) receive better food than the civilians and the men in German combat service, the colonel states, get red meat, three loaves of bread a week and butter. Ration rules are laid down by the German high command.

There is limited nourishment and small comfort to be found in a prison camp, the colonel states as he describes the sleeping facilities at Offlag 64. In one room there are 40 double-deck beds, placed so close together that proper ventilation is impossible.

The mattresses and pillows, covered with gingham, are filled with excelsior and there are no sheets and pillow cases. The two thin blankets furnished by the Germans are made mostly of cotton and contain only a small percentage of wool, if any.

The United States Army blankets, supplied through the American Red Cross, are a salvation to the men in a climate that often has a 40 below temperature.

Besides the one-decked bed to two men, the furniture consists of a small wooden locker, five feet high and 14 inches square; one small stool to each man and a small table to six men.

According to regulations at Offlag 64 they are entitled to 2¼ pounds of coal a week per man but it isn't every week that they get it. When it is available it is still inadequate and supplies not enough heat to keep a man warm and certainly not adequate during the 40 below zero weather.

MEN KEEP FIT.

While the Germans are not "out and out discourteous" to the American prisoners of war, they apparently are not concerned with the captives' comfort and welfare. It is not uncommon for the Germans to withhold athletic equipment directed to their prisoners.

This sounds pretty dismal, Colonel Drake will admit, but the men spend their time studying, playing games and keeping fit through outdoor exercise when the weather will permit.

However, exercise out-of-doors is not a simple routine. On a tract of ground covering less than seven acres, which makes up the land set aside for the prison camp prepared for 1,000 men, there is a recreation playground that measures 150 feet by 200.

Most encouraging to families of men in prison is the fact that they recover quickly after they are liberated. Colonel Drake arrived home thin and, at times, depressed. But during his brief stay in

Walter Reed Hospital, he has gained 10 pounds and now has a twinkle in his eye.

Blond, of medium height and of a build which is generally termed "heavy set," Colonel Drake has a calm, deliberate manner that comes of 27 years in the Regular Army. Originally from Clarksburg, W. Va., he rose from the infantry ranks to his eagles. Today he wears decorations that include the Distinguished Service Cross and Silver Star with three oak leaf clusters; the Purple Heart with oak leaf cluster; the Victory Medal with six battle stars and a line of bars that indicate superior ability with weapons.

CHANGES NEEDED.

Though he is a placid man who does not resort to gestures for emphasis, Colonel Drake has a trigger brain—thinks fast, speaks slowly and evenly but his message is vital and dynamic.

He lets go with both barrels when he says that he thinks Red Cross officials dealing with Americans in German prison camps are derelict in their duty.

They are mostly expatriates—men who spent most of their lives in Europe before the war. They are neither especially conscientious nor efficient and do not understand the American people since they have spent so little time with them, he charges.

What the Americans need badly, the colonel says, is someone to deal firmly with the International Red Cross officials by demanding better treatment of the American prisoners of war.

This is one bombshell he sets off as calmly as he lays a card on the table. But he is not playing a game—he still is a fighting man and is aiming toward betterment of a condition that has existed too long and could be cleared and improved if the proper effort were made. More careful and business-like operation of this department of the Red Cross and a better handling of funds would result in an improved war prison camp, he says.

SHOCKED BY PUBLIC.

Next in line of Colonel Drake's fire is the American public. Here for a weekend visit, he is shocked at the apparent lack of concern over the war. He sees no evidence of a country in the struggle of combat. There is so much money, so much pleasure and such a careless abandon of duty that the colonel frankly is shocked.

Not all of the public, however, is unmindful of the men in service and the contribution to their country. When he is introduced in public, many in the audience rise to their feet in salute to a man who came through a trying ordeal with a fighting and progressive spirit.

It is not easy to endure the experience of being taken prisoner, he will tell you. There is no more desolate feeling. It was in Africa in February of 1943 that Colonel Drake, an infantry combat officer, fell into the hands of the Germans.

A feeling of depression came as humiliation was heaped upon him by an overbearing captor. Temporarily all hope of advancement had gone and a dismal future loomed ahead. But the discipline and morale of the United States Army saw him through the first unhappy weeks of adjustment to an inactive routine.

Colonel Drake was the ranking officer at Offlag 64 and during his stay in prison camp he was the highest ranking officer held by the Germans.

TEXANS AT HIS CAMP.

Among the Texans who looked to him as senior officer at the prison camp were: Capt. Joe J. Emerson, Itasca; Warrant Officer Roger Cannon, Waco; Capt. Newton Lantron, Borger; Lt. Ivan Carlisle, Taylor; Lt. Col. Gaines Barron, Waco; Capt. Clarence Ferguson, Groesbeck; Lt. Carmen Williamson, Malone; Capt. James D. Bond, Waco; Capt. Randolph Robinson, Eureka; Lt. Dalton Medlen, Bonham; Lt. Floyd Vaden, Dallas; Maj. Roy Irvin, Snyder; Lt. Teddy Roggen, Houston; Lieutenant Colonel Yardley, Dublin.

Lt. Edward Batte, Waxahachie; Lt. Roy J. Chappell, Grand Prairie; Lt. George Beazley, Ennis; Lt. Chester Warren, Lampasas; Lt. Ralph E. Crawford, Dallas; Capt. Eben C. Bergman, Clifton; Lt. Rex H. Slinkard, Bangs; Lt. James C. Lisenbee, Temple; Lt. John Kader, Goose Creek.

Four of the prisoners are Fort Worth boys—Lt. Robert T. Henry, Lt. Phillip G. Poteet, Lt. John T. Jones of Houston and Fort Worth and Lt. Amon G. Carter Jr.

Though Colonel Drake has returned to the comforts of his homeland, he can not forget the bleak life he left behind him. He is happy over the reunion with his mother in West Virginia; his wife (who accompanied him on his New York visit) and his West Point cadet son, Thomas Drake Jr., but a part of his heart and much of his thoughts are with the boys at Offlag 64. He is fighting for them and for thousands of others like them.

VIGNETTES

Comment & Jottings
From the Texas Press
By Otto Bordenkircher

Today's War Picture.

There are many predictions as to when the war with Germany will come to an end. One prominent business man estimates that it will be in about three weeks, a minister says just before the national election and still others say that it will go into 1945.

Most everyone seems to feel that the Japanese war will take several years and I am in a terrible predicament, because I make it a habit of buying a new suit of clothes every four years whether I need it or not, and I have been holding off this year because I have been thinking that the styles in men's clothes are going to change like a bridge falling as soon as Germany gets knocked out, but I am beginning to doubt that the part of my pants that gets the most punishment is going to stand the strain much longer.

I think I'll build a flap on the rear of my coat.—A. M. Jackson in the Slaton Slatonite.

Chamber of Commerce Stuff.

Of course, we don't know the military reaction to other towns but it looks as though Hereford must have a special attraction, judging from the fact that some of the boys formerly stationed at the Hereford camp come back here to spend furloughs after they have been transferred. At least it speaks well for Hereford hospitality—or maybe for Hereford girls.—Around Town in the Hereford Brand.

'Way Back When.

It's getting hard to remember such things as a store window decorated with a display of alarm clocks, cigars, knives and chewing gum.—D. P. Harrell in the Citizens Journal (Atlanta).

Arsenal of Democracy.

We figure that maybe Uncle Samuel has a new secret weapon after all. We read in the daily papers this week that Japan had sunk our fleet, including the aircraft carriers, that were attacking that island, but that the bombing of Formosa continues. Maybe Uncle has a landing field floating around in the sky. It won't be long until the Japs will begin to believe that to be the truth anyway.—Charlie Aiton in the De Leon Free Press.

Life in the Panhandle.

There's music on the roof today. It is slow falling rain and it's a royal symphony for cattlemen and farmers. It will make the range green again and furnish wheat pasturage for the herds. The cool weather will slow down polio danger and, all in all, it's pretty fine. Incidentally, it revealed two holes we didn't know we had in our shoe soles.—Bill Rutherford in the Moore County News.

Do You, Too, Suffer?

Perhaps I am suffering from some form of chronic optimism but my future always promises to be less confusing than my past. The affliction is not painful except in the rare instances when I deliberate on the fact that my past was once a future.—Douglas Meador in the Matador Tribune.

He's a Dilly.

Some lady called Mrs. McCracken the other day and asked if she had any dill. Mrs. McCracken thought she said Bill, and so she said he was at the elevator. The lady said, "No, I want dill to put up pickles." "Well, Bill's pretty busy now with the harvest, but I'll ask him if he wants to do it . . ." Confidentially, I think old Bill is pretty salty myself, but I doubt if he could make dill pickles.—Roy Hahn in the Briscoe County News.

World peace based on human understanding is all right as long as we are not dealing with rattlesnakes.—Burt Lockhart in the Pittsburg Gazette.

If the Germans are licked, says Goebbels, they won't have another chance for at least 10 years. It will take that long to borrow the money from America.—Sketch in the Menard News.

Handicapping 'Em.

Andy Gossett wonders how Army Engineers can do their work properly without any of those "Men at Work" signs to tell what's going on.—T. W. Parker in the Melvin Enterprise.

The Female of the Species.

"Nothing gets under my skin," a local woman said, "quite so much as to have some woman say in her best broadcast manner, 'I always did like that dress on you.' There is a certain accent put on the word 'always did' that fills me with a primitive instinct to claw something."—Jack Lewis in the Lewisville Enterprise.

The International Scene.

A hard peace imposed on Germany won't be as rough on them as the hard war they loosed on the rest of the world. Hard peace terms may not prevent future wars, but at least it will let any nation that starts a war know what the price of losing a war is.—J. E. Horton in the Eden Echo.