

This one is written by Uncle Wally himself and I'm not sure whether we photographed it or not. I think we photographed a handwritten fair copy but when I checked it didn't contain as much info as this and ended abruptly at the beginning of the long march they did.

Elbing, East Prussia, 10 January 1945

I was on a working party with a timber firm in a road between two main roads. The one end of the road was a hospital. On this day it was 20 below with 6 to 8 feet of snow. On both sides of the road were horse drawn ambulances containing four wounded soldiers (German) at least twenty ambulances. In the morning the Russians started to shell the town. Later Russian tanks moved in, went up the road between the ambulances with machine guns blazing into the ambulances including the horses. We could see this threw (through) the barbed wire around our huts, the blood started to pour out of the ambulances and horses into the snow and gradually moved towards us. It was a most moving sight ;you could ever see and hopefully never see again, all the rest of the day moving towards us.

We have had news from a Polish man that the Russians had machine gunned a French POW camp near Koningsburg a few days before. The Russians took no prisoners. So we had a meeting, there were 24 of us, we decided we would have a German between us the the Russians. That evening about 10pm the guards told us they were moving us out. There was only one bridge across the Vistura out of Elbing and if the Russians took it we would be trapped. To get out onto the road we had to walk through the sea of blood, we called The Death March. Crossing the bridge onto the road to Danzig we were joined by other POWs and ;citizens mainly women and children. It was heart breaking to see these poor people having to leave their homes in those dreadful conditions. We saw the same as this leading up to Dunkirk but then it was summertime (where I was taken POW).

It took about 12-15 days to reach the outskirts of Danzig with the ..... Shelling from the Russians, with no food or water, we were breaking icicles from trees and sucking them to obtain water, eating anything we could lay our hands on like stalks sticking out of the ground and bits of paper or cardboard. On reaching the outskirts of Danzig us British POW, I think about 500, were put into a large barn and given some bread. 30 men to a 2 kilo loaf. Frozen hands and no knives to cut them up, we broke them up into crumbs and had a handful each, but chewed some of the wheat and barley that was in the barn.

Next day must have been the end of January, we heard the sound of aeroplanes. Looking out through holes in the walls we saw they were Lancs Bombers floating bombs towards Danzig to help the Russian advance (the Russians did not do much bombing

from the air). Strange to say my brother was on that raid. Still very cold and lots of snow.

A few days later, in February, we got on a ferry boat, we had no idea where we were, almost out of our minds, starving hungry, still living on ice, freezing cold, worn out clothes that I had in 1939. We landed on an island called Swineamender, that's what the guards told us. A lorry tipped a load of potatoes which we really fought over. We were eating raw potatoes. Next day a train pulled in with Russian POWs, they had been locked in for weeks. They all jumped out, but left five skeletons behind they had died and then eaten just leaving the bones. We built ourselves snow huts so we could sleep in at night to keep warm. We are now only 800 miles from London, I spent my 25<sup>th</sup> birthday there 19<sup>th</sup> Feb.

A week or so later we were moved on heading west into Germany. There were no road signs so we didn't have an idea where we were. It would not have made difference anyway because I was out of my mind, still eating bits of grass and cold with more snow.

Each day we marched or should I say crawled between 10 and 20 miles a day. We reached a river and once again came under shell fire from the Russians, after three attempts we managed to cross a bridge, by this time there were not many of us left, that's why I'm trying to write this in memory of those not so lucky as me.

All through March, April into May we got to the river, I think it was the Elbe into west Germany. We were by this time between two retreating German armies, we tried to cross the bridge five or six times but came under fire from the Russians and Americans. We crossed the bridge one night and went into a barn in a field. Next morning at daybreak we found that the guards had left. We were alone, down to between 50-60, not knowing what to do. We laid low. We must get hold of some food and water. On looking through a hole we saw a tank. Who's was it, German? Russian? American? We didn't know what to do, just wait and keep watching. After about three hours one of our chaps blew his top and did a runner towards the tank which turned out to be American. He turned and waved us out. I'm glad he did because we could have been in there for days. The tank crew gave us cigarettes and drinks which they soon ran out of.

The Americans got us through to somewhere in Holland where we were taken care of by the Red Cross. I cried when a nurse gave me a handkerchief. The Airbourne lads also took care of us and got us to Brussels and we flew home in Dakotas to Black Bush on 24 May, 135 days after leaving Elbing.