

20 May, 1980

Dear Steve: *BULSOK*  
*517-6 Paul, Gemist-Actoma, PA 16601*

I surely was glad to find you alive and well last night when I phoned. You sounded well and happy, anyway.

I hope you will please fill me in on the details of that mission to Bremen on 20 December, 1943. I wanted to stay on the 'phone and ask you the pertinent questions regarding it, but, as you know, the expenses prohibited it. The official (so-called) records were never much better than what we brought back from the mission. As you know, that often wasn't very much, if anything, as the speeds and distances were too great to see much for more than a second or two. We never knew, either, what was going on in the ships that were going down.

That's why I'm most earnestly asking you to tell me the details. I am trying very hard to write as accurate history of the 381st as I can. Only the living men who went through it can make it accurate.

I kept a diary, of sorts, and for 20 December I have four crews missing on the Bremen raid from the 381st Bomb Group(H), Ridgewell, England: Crosson, Lane from 535th and Hollenkamp and Canelake (don't have the Sqdn or Sqdns they were from.). I have the crew with Crosson as: Lt. Waldo B. Crosson, Pilot - the same man and crew with which I flew 3 Nov., 1943, to Wilhelmshaven in the largest force yet used; some 700 B-17s and B-24s! We had P-38 and P-47 escort which got three and 13 FW-190s, respectively. First time the P-38s escorted us, and to the target, too, not just half way in as the early Spitfires did due to limited gas capacity in '42- early '43.

Your crew, as I have it - correct me if I'm wrong - were: in addition to Waldo, Lts. Opitz, Burke & Curran; Sgts Allen, McFarlane, Glawson, Klima, Elce. You said, over the 'phone that Elce was TG and died a few hours after hitting the ground; also, that Klima was KIA. Did you get together with the others? Did you see Klima after he died? Were any more killed?

What prison were you put in? Heidekrug? Some of them were sent to Stalag Luft I, where I was, after I was shot down 29 April, '44, almost four months after you. That is the Heidekrug Sergeants were sent ahead of the advancing Russians and our camp got them. The poor guys had to lie on the floor! At least we had potato sacks filled with excelsior, a straw-like substance, which was very hard after a few minutes! But still not like the floor; nor like the poor Vietnam POWs, who were "in" up to seven years - and tortured, to boot!! Dear God, how did they stand it? Many did because of their strong faith. Right?

I looked in the book, Behind Barbed Wire, which I bought from one of the guys who was in our camp & who had it published after the war, for Crosson's name, but he must have been put in Stalag Luft III, Sagan, from where the Great Escape was originated and became the book and the movie. Can you tell me? Also, Waldo's address? Please send it if you have it. Thanks. Lt Lane & crew went down same day as you, too, in "Tinker Toy" which I had flown on occasion, also... I was grounded 20 Dec. or I would have been with you.. had ears all "plugged" up!! "Got it" on my 25th over Schweinfurt, 1/3 Apr. Well, my very best to you and yours. WRITE, doggone it!! Your "Buddy," *Raf*