

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
Personalkarte I: Personelle Angaben													Beschreibung des Gefangenen Nr. 20.649 Stalag IIB											
Kriegsgefangenen-Stammlager: Stalag IIB													Vater: Stalag IIB											
Name: GEIER													Staatsangehörigkeit: U.S.A.											
Vorname: CONRAD													Dienstgrad: Sgt.											
Geburtsort und -ort: 13.12.30 PENNA													Truppenteil: PARATROOP											
Religion: Prot.													Stellbefehl: STUDENT											
Vorname des Vaters: CONRAD													Matrikel Nr. (Stammrolle des Heimatlandes): 13151173											
Familienname der Mutter: BRITTON													Gefangennahme (Ort und Datum): SICILY 10.7.43											
Vichtbild													Ob gesund, krank, verwundet eingeliefert: GESUND											
Bild													N. d. e. r. e. Personalbeschreibung											
Merkmal													Befreiung											
Name und Nachfrist der zu beauftragenden Person in der Heimat													Name und Nachfrist der zu beauftragenden Person in der Heimat											
Mrs. REGINA W. GEIER													Mrs. REGINA W. GEIER											
McLEAIN, VA.													McLEAIN, VA.											

Beschreibung der Erfassungsmethode		Charakteristika (Hafte u. a.)		Besondere Fähigkeiten		Sprachkenntnisse		Hörsinn	
Nr. 20649									
Vater:									
Datum		Grund der Verhaftung			Strafmaß		Gericht, Datum		
26.11.44		Einstellung in Paratroop			3 J. geh. Arbeit		an Familienangehörige		
Schulungen während der Gefangenschaft gegen									
Technik		Geistige Leistungen (z. B. Lesen, Rechnen u. a.)			Kraftleistung		Körper		Vagartei — Reaktionsfähigkeit
am 10.7.43		A. B. SCHOL, 10cbm.			am		am		am
Erfolg		gegen			gegen		gegen		gegen
am		am			am		am		am
Erfolg		gegen			gegen		gegen		gegen
am		am			am		am		am
Erfolg		gegen			gegen		gegen		gegen
am		am			am		am		am
Erfolg		gegen			gegen		gegen		gegen
am		am			am		am		am

Datum		Grund der Verhaftung		Neues St.-Gef.-Lager		Datum		Grund der Verhaftung		Neues St.-Gef.-Lager	
7. Sep. 1943		Stalag IIB		Stalag IIB							
Kommandos											
Datum		Art des Kommandos						St.-Merkmal			
		im Lager IIIA - 1.2.45									

The German prisoner-of-war personnel card for Sgt. Conrad S. Geier Jr. that was issued when in-processed at Stalag IIB Hammerstein and then recovered from camp administration at Stalag IIIA Luckenwalde after the Germans fled the imminent arrival of the Soviet 33rd Army, 1st Belorussian Front in April 1945. (Photo by Conrad S. Geier Jr.)

Toothache

Sgt. Conrad S. Geier Jr.

A toothache was driving me nuts. I'd scrounged a couple of aspirin by trading for Camel cigarettes, but the aspirin were worthless, probably German ersatz. I even tried heat against my cheek but to no avail. The damned tooth had gotten the upper hand and seemed almost to delight in driving me at least temporarily insane with pain. The only solution was to have the offending molar jerked out.

There were no dentists in the American compound. Apparently, they are seldom in a position to be

captured. The grapevine rumored that in the Russian compound there was a Russian dentist who had a few German-supplied dental tools.

After a second sleepless night with intense throbbing, I realized that I simply could not outwait that devilish pain of an infected tooth. Since I heard that the tooth is the only part of the body that can't repair itself, I knew I'd have to do something, anything, I even went so far as asking or begging other POWs to remove the offending tooth with a pair of pliers. There were no

volunteers. Most just shook their heads and commiserated with me. In desperation, I approached the feldwebel in charge of the guards. With gesture, pantomime, and a very limited German vocabulary, I asked the feldwebel to arrange for me to see the Russian dentist. Near noon, two days and much pain and sleeplessness later, a guard found me and ordered me to accompany him to the Russian compound. By this time my jaw had swollen so that my cheek hung down full of infection.

I was marched to the dental office—a tattered and faded green tent in the Russian compound. The sides of the tent were rolled up to catch any wayward breeze that might wander through on that warm, humid day. Waiting patients sat on several benches. “Komm!” ordered the guard, pointing to the entrance in the tent. Inside, the tent was bright from a lamp that dangled from the center pole.

The dentist briefly paused from his work to bow to us as we entered. An old barber’s chair sat on the dirt floor in the center of the tent, both arms frayed and torn from many clenched hands and stiff fingers that had pulled at them in pain while undergoing dental work. There was no little white ceramic bowl with its stream of whirling water, no paper cups to rinse, no little tray to swing around with all the tools and equipment neatly

Sgt. Conrad S. Geier Jr., message center chief for HHC 1st Battalion, 505th Parachute Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, was captured in Sicily on 10 July 1943 during Operation Husky. Routed through transit camps, he arrived in Sept. 1943 at Stalag III B at Fürstenberg where he remained until the force-marched in January 1945 to Stalag III A in Luckenwalde. The camp was liberated on 22 April 1945 by the Red Army front under Marshal Ivan S. Koniev’s command. Sgt. Geier died in March 1988.

laid out to do a first-class job—just that old barber chair standing in as their replacement.

To one side was a small folding table with several instruments and crumpled towel. A bucket of water with a ladle in it sat on the floor. To the other side, away from the chair but attached to it by cable, was an apparatus that looked like an old-fashioned sewing machine, its heavy, broad metal legs supporting a foot treadle.

To make one of those sewing machines work, the treadle



Wearing a hat and belt abandoned by German military personnel who had fled Stalag III A Luckenwalde before the arrival of advancing Soviet forces, liberated former U.S. POW Sgt. Keith Sekavec mocks the standard Nazi salute with a “Heil, Truman!” (Photo by Conrad S. Geier Jr.)

needed to be worked back and forth with the feet. This same type of arrangement was the power for the dentist’s drill. A steady pump on the treadle maintained the steady whirr of the drill.

Each patient waiting to see the dentist took a turn at the treadle before moving to the chair. At the sharp command of the dentist, the POW at the machine began supplying power to the drill by pumping the treadle with a steady rhythm. The drill slowed as the treadler’s legs tired, followed from shouts from the dentist to pick up the pace.

Drilling continued on the man in the chair. At the slowing whirr of the drill, the patient moaned and clutched at the tattered armrests with an intensity that drained the color from his knuckles. It hurt when the drill slowed and even the admonishments of the dentist were to no avail to the undernourished POWs working the treadle.

The dentist worked quickly, extracting, cutting, drilling, filling, and advising. He used a stained, damp



Russian halftrack with crew and ex-POWs at Stalag IIIA Luckenwalde, Liberation Day, 22 April 1945. (Photo by Conrad S. Geier Jr.)

towel hanging on his neck to mop his face and hands from time to time in the suffocating tent air.

When he was done with a patient, he would urge him out of the chair toward the door, and the POW at the treadle became the new patient.

At my turn, I became treadleman for a Russian POW who seemed to have drunk himself to the point of painlessness. He may later have wondered where he had been—but for the clue of the gaps left where two teeth had been.

I finally got into the chair and a sickly looking POW took my place at the treadle. In the chair, I briefly remembered getting a haircut as a kid in grampa's old barber chair. But terror seized me when I leaned back and saw that metal drill arm above.

The dentist, who didn't speak my language, did a quick examination with a curved, sharp probe, his

sharp pricks intensifying the pain. With my knees locked and my legs braced against the footrest, the dentist isolated the problem area.

I don't know what was worse, the pain from drilling the tooth or from cutting into the gum area. I locked my legs and clung to the tattered arms of that barber chair for dear life for what seemed like hours but was probably over very quickly. The procedure seemed dangerously primitive and unhygienic, and the pain was like nothing I had ever felt in my life. But when I told an American periodontist this story after the war, he said that the Russian dentist's work—drilling the cavity, filling it with gold, and cutting the gum to drain the infection—probably, saved the tooth. ■

This story is one of a set posthumously collected by Peter Geier, the author's son.