

Story told by Jack C. Beckett:

"I was shot down in April 1945 on my 13th mission. We crash landed on the beach of the Zuyder Zee (Must be Ouddorp beach on Goeree en Overflakkee island), in Holland. We were captured by young German soldiers who shot over our heads and of course we were exposed out on the beach and had no choice but to throw our small guns away. We had 45 caliber pistols which we threw back into the plane into the fire then put our hands up and marched toward a big sand dune on the beach.

Nobody in our plane, we were very lucky, nobody was hurt in the crash. The plane was shot at and the radio room caught on fire. The oxygen system caught fire. We had a radar man flying with us who got some slight burns on his ears and his hands. That was the only casualty that we had. We were very very lucky.

We were captured by the Germans and were marched about 5 miles that first day, then put into what looked like a cellar of some sort. They only kept us there over night. The next day we were put on a truck that burned wood and took us to a large city which we thought was Copenhagen. No, I'm sorry it was Amsterdam. There our officers were split up from the rest of the crew and the fella that was hurt went to the hospital to get fixed up. We were kept in what looked like an old hotel there for two days. Then they moved us again to a little town names Aalsmeer where they put us in a building that looked like a school of some kind. They had bunks set up for us. We stayed in that. We had a lot of Canadians, British, and a few Russians who had to do the dirty work. Cleaning the toilets, etc. They had been prisoners for a long time.

They did not hurt us or anything like that, in fact they told us that the war would soon be over and that we should just behave in order to be safe. Of course they interviewed us, but all we gave was name, rank, and serial number. They did not press us for more information.

The war was just about over in April 1945. The British has surrounded Holland and a few days later, so the Germans were about as much a prisoner as we were. They didn't have much food, in fact the whole country was about to starve. So all we got to eat was some horse meat put into barley soup. Some black bread and some stuff they called butter and some weak tea. That's what we subsisted on for about 30 days. The Germans didn't have any better than we had. There just wasn't any food available because all the transportation and all the roads had been knocked out by the Air Force. The British and American troops were pushing up the line very fast. Just about all the transportation had been knocked out in that area. There just wasn't any place to get anything.

Eventually, on May 7th I believe, we heard that there had been an armistice. That the Germans have surrendered. Sometime that night the British sent big trucks in to pick us up. When we were going out we were told to lie on the floor of the truck because there was still some fighting going on around us. Particularly some of the German and Dutch SS were still shooting at convoys and stuff like that. In fact we could hear some of the fighting as they drove us out of the war zone. They took us back behind the British lines where we were safer. They took us to a place called Namur, Belgium. That was a big fortress there. That's where we stayed overnight. They took our names and everything and informed our relatives that we were safe. I didn't get to call my mother until the next day. We had been listed as missing in action up until that day, so our families didn't really know what had happened to us. The next night we went into Brussels, Belgium and spent two days there. We only had our flying suits which we had now been wearing for over a month. We went out for the celebration since the armistice had been announced. They turn the lights on in the city of Brussels and they were really having a celebration. It was really interesting to me to see how happy the people were that the devastating war was over".