

AWM 65

[4661]

SHERMAN, RAPHAEL

404804

AUSTRALIAN ARCHIVES
ACCESS STATUS

OPEN

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE

The following biographical details are required for use at
R.A.A.F. Overseas Headquarters, London:

SURNAME SHERMAN NUMBER 404.804
CHRISTIAN NAMES ROBERT
AIR FORCE RANK AND MUSTERING 460 Sgt.
DEGREES ETC.
DATE OF BIRTH 23. 10. 1910 PLACE
EDUCATED
DATE OF ENTERING SERVICE 8. 11. 1940
PREVIOUS SERVICE EXPERIENCE
PLACES OF TRAINING
CIVILIAN CAREER AND ACTIVITIES Accountant
SPORT (TEAMS REPRESENTED) CLUBS ETC.
FATHER
WIFE
HOME ADDRESS 279. Queens Street. Brisbane.
SIGNATURE
DATE
DATE OF EMBARKATION

HEADQUARTERS USE ONLY - DO NOT FILL IN

AWARDS
CATEGORY INTERVIEWS
RADIO OTHER REFERENCES
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ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE

R.T.A.

The following biographical details are required for use at
R.A.A.F. Overseas Headquarters, London.

SURNAME ... SHERMAN NUMBER 404804

CHRISTIAN NAMES ... RAPHAEL

AIR FORCE RANK AND MUSTERING ... W/O 460 SgD

DEGREES ETC.

DATE OF BIRTH PLACE

EDUCATED

DATE OF ENTERING SERVICE 8. 11. 40

PREVIOUS SERVICE EXPERIENCE

PLACES OF TRAINING

CIVILIAN CAREER AND ACTIVITIES ... CLERK

SPORT (TEAMS REPRESENTED) CLUBS ETC.

FATHER

WIFE

HOME ADDRESS No. COLONIA, MUTUAL LIFE OFFICE, 289 QUEEN ST. BRISBANE
Q'LAND.

SIGNATURE

DATE

DATE OF EMBARKATION

HEADQUARTERS USE ONLY - DO NOT FILL IN

AWARDS

CATEGORY INTERVIEWS

RADIO OTHER REFERENCES

Personal file.

File 19/Enc. 13

SECRET

M.I.9/S/P.G./LIB/291

The information contained in this report is to be treated as

SECRET

STATEMENT BY

A.404804 W.O. SHERMAN, Robert, 460 sqdn., Bomber Command.

Captured: 28 Jul 42.

Liberated: 22 Apr 45.

Date of Birth: 23 Oct 10

Peacetime Profession: Accountant.

R.A.F. Service: Since 8 Nov. 40.

Private Address: 289 Queen Street,
BRISBANE, Australia.

1. CAPTURE

We were shot down on 25 Jul 42 on our way back from a raid on DUISBURG I landed about 3 kilos, from DUISBURG and buried my parachute etc. I landed in a swamp and slept the rest of the night in a forest. Next day I walked towards HOLLAND and made contact with a Dutch family west of GELDEN. It was a small farm, and the farmer fed me and let me have a wash. I slept in a forest again that night and was discovered by some members of the German Army who took me to MUNSTER to the Luftwaffe. I spent the night here and was then taken to DULAG LUFT.

2. CAMPS IN WHICH IMPRISONED.

Dulag Luft (FRANKFURT)
Stalag 344 (LAUSDORF)

29 Jul - 7 Aug 42
8 Aug 42 - Jan 45.

3. ATTEMPTED ESCAPES

In Oct 42 I changed identity with Pte. SHARP of the Palestinian Pioneer Corps and joined a working Commando. I made my escape along and walked to STETTIN. I had chocolate and sandwiches and went on walking to GLEIWITZ. Here I was caught by the Germans and sent straight back to camp. I did seven days solitary confinement for this.

LIBERATION.

I was liberated 22 Apr 45.

INTERVIEWED BY: I.S. 9(W) 2 Jul 45

Personal file

TOP SECRET

The information in this report is to be treated as;

MOST SECRET

NO: A404804 RANK: W/O. NAME: SHERMAN INITIALS: R.

SQUADRON: 460

PEACETIME PROFESSION: Chief Clerk.

AUSTRALIAN ADDRESS: c/o Colonial Mutual Life Office,
289 Queen St., Brisbane,
Queensland.

NARRATED BY: W/O. R. Sherman.

Description of Stalag 344.

I CERTIFY that the following is a true and accurate account of my experiences.

SIGNED: R. SHERMAN.

DATE: 1.8.45.

STALAG 344 - LAUSDORF

The size of the compound at 344 was approximately 90 yds. X 50 yds. In this there were 8 huts roughly 90 ft. X 30 ft. in size. These huts were divided in two by a small wash-room and latrine in the middle. This made two dormitories, called "A's" and "B's". In these huts we normally had from 130 to 170 inhabitants, the peak being reached during the Winter of 1943 when there were 195. At that time about 60 per hut had to sleep on the floor, on forms, on tables and on the doors of lockers laid on the floor. The huts had concrete floors and were built on a slight slope in the ground. The result was that as the top ends of the huts had their floors about 18 inches below the ground level the moisture came through in quantity during the wet months.

In each dormitory in the huts there were eight 25-watt light bulbs for which, by bribery and scrounging, we substituted stronger ones. We had three-tier bunks with palliasses full of straw for mattresses. The water supply was very poor, there being only one tap for each hut, and water available for about three hours per day. Hot showers were available to us every ten to eighteen days.

The latrines were situated outside the huts each having accommodation for forty, for the use of one thousand men. The cisterns more often than not would not flush, and the place soon became decidedly insanitary. The International Red Cross complained to the Germans on each of their visits, but nothing much was ever done.

There were large central heating stoves in the huts, three to each section, but because of the fuel supply, they were not effective. A week's fuel issue would normally be sufficient for one day. We supplemented the fuel supply by bribery, scrounging and using bed ends or bed boards. To economise on fuel we built small stoves and miniature forges. Eventually the black-out shutters were used to give us warmth. Some of the Ps.O.W. working in the cook-house scrounged coal and this, with our ~~own~~ other little bits from the beds etc., usually managed to allow us fires for the coldest times of the day and year.

The cook-house supplied us with Swede Soup, cooked potatoes and, on occasions, hot water. The remainder of the cooking we did on our self-manufactured stoves.

The only area available for recreation was that between the huts, and naturally this meant that windows were occasionally broken. The Germans would never replace broken windows so we had to stop the gap as best we could with Red Cross boxes.

The food rations received from the Detaining Power were very meagre, consisting in the main of bread, potatoes, swedes and meat soup (every ten weeks).

The Air Force compound was in the midst of a large Army camp, which was a base for working parties. No aircrew were ever allowed out on these parties or for recreational walks. Some did substitute for Army personnel, either with the idea of eventual escape, or to work the Black Market and so ease the food situation a little.

Personal file

MOST SECRET

NARRATED BY:

Aus. 404804 W/O. SHEERMAN R.

Squadron: 460

R.A.A.F. Representative and Barrack
Commander at Stalag 344, Landsdorf

The information in this report is to be considered as

MOST SECRET

For some time after our arrival at Stalag 344, letters and parcels were coming through very irregularly to us, and the prisoners were wasting their only too few letterforms and postcards making enquiries to R.A.A.F. Overseas Headquarters. We held a meeting of all Australians and decided to appoint a representative to deal with all official communications with Overseas Headquarters, Australian Red Cross, Australian Comforts Fund. I was selected and worked in that capacity. Another part of my duties as Barrack Commander was the general welfare of those in my charge. This meant constant communication with the German Commandant through the German Lager Officer.

During September of 1942 it was decided by the German Command that all P.O.W's in our compound were to be chained as reprisals because of alleged ill treatment of German prisoners in British hands. Eventually, early in 1943, we were informed that all Australian personnel were to be unchained in view of the fact that the Australian Government had refused to take reprisals against Germans held in Australia. We immediately refused to be unchained stating that we were still British and that we would take our share of the discomfort and hardship in the same manner as was being meted out to others of British nationality. I communicated, through the Red Cross, with the Australian Government and the British War Office and informed them of our attitude. The Germans refused to keep us in chains, but we were adamant. Finally the Germans broke the impasse by moving us to a compound where the chaining of prisoners had never been carried out, and put all Australians into the one barrack. It was clear to us that the Germans were continually trying to drive a wedge between the Dominion and United Kingdom personnel.

It was after we had been moved that I became barrack commander. I forwarded requests, complaints and suggestions, on behalf of those in my barrack, to the German Commandant once a month. Anything more urgent

/we

we tried to push through as quickly as possible. When new prisoners, whether R.A.A.F. or A.I.F. arrived at the camp I visited each of our chaps and collected articles such as surplus clothing, soap, cigarettes, etc., for distribution to the new, and scantily kitted out, arrivals. Also if any of the chaps were doing a term of confinement in the camp gaol (always known in Germany as the 'Cooler'), we smuggled as much stuff to them as was possible in order to make their solitary state not quite so unbearable.

I also did a lot of work auditing the Red Cross accounts, and gave a helping hand in the endeavour we made to pep up the administration of the camp which was being done by long term Army prisoners.

We found that generally speaking we managed to get a fair standard of co-operation from the German authorities, except during the tying up and chaining period.

I certify that this report is a true and accurate account of events in Stalag 344 during my term of imprisonment there.

(Sgd) R. Sherman

Date - 4. 7. 45

Most SECRET

UNRATED By.

Aus. 404104 W/o Sherman R.

SQUADRON: 460

R.A.A.F. representative and Barrack
Commander at Stalag 344 Lamsdorf.

The information in this report is to be considered as
Most SECRET.

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(SIGNED) R. Sherman

DATE 4-7-45

TOP SECRET.

The information in this report is to be treated as
MOST SECRET.

No. 404804 RANK: W/O. NAME: SHERMAN INITs: R.

SQUADRON: 460

PEACETIME PROFESSION: CHIEF CLERK

AUSTRALIAN ADDRESS: of COLONIAL MUTUAL LIFE OFFICE
289 QUEEN ST
BRISBANE Q'LAND

NARRATED BY: W/O. R. Sherman.

Description of Stalag 344.

I certify that the following is a true and
accurate account of my experiences.

SIGNED: R. Sherman

DATE: 1-8-45.



STALAG 344. LAMSDORF.

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This made two dormitories, called "A's" and "B's". In these huts we normally had from 130 to 170 inhabitants, the peak being reached during the winter of 1943 when there were 195. At that time about 60 per hut had to sleep on the floor, on forms on tables and on the doors of lockers laid on the floor.

The huts had concrete floors and were built on a slight slope in the ground. The result was that as the top ends of the huts had their floors about 18 inches below the ground level the moisture came through in quantity during the wet months.

In each dormitory in the huts there were eight 25 watt light bulbs^{of which}, by bribery and scavenging, we substituted stronger ones.

We had three tier bunks with pallets full of straw for mattresses.

The water supply was very poor, there being only one tap for each hut and water available for about three hours per day.

Hot showers were available to us every ten to eighteen days.

The latrines were situated outside the

huts each having accommodations for forty, for the use of one thousand men. The eastern most often than not would not work, and the place soon became decidedly unsanitary. The International Red Cross complained to the Germans on each of their visits, but nothing much was ever done.

There were large central heating stoves in the huts, three to each section, but because of the fuel supply they were not effective. A week's fuel issue would normally be sufficient for one day. We supplemented the fuel supply by birch, scavenged old using bed mats or bed boards.

To economise on fuel we built small stoves and miniature forges. Eventually the black out shutters were used to give us warmth. Some of the P.O.Ws working in the lookhouse scavenged coal and this with our other little bits from the beds etc. usually managed to allow us fire for the coldest times of the day and year.

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