# The AMERICAN LEGION Weekly

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## A Prisoner of War in Germany

An American Officer's Experiences from His Capture on the Hindenburg Line to His Final Return to French Soil

By HARRY F. SULLIVAN

A ber 26, 1918, Captain William E. Blaisdell, commanding the Third Battalion of the 106th Infantry, then in line about one and one-half miles west of the mouth of the Tunnel of the Nord Canal, between Cambrai and St. Quentin, the most important point in the German defence, sent for his company commanders.

At that time I was in command of K Company, 106th Infantry, and reported at battalion headquarters at 10:30 A. M. Captain Blaisdell told me I was Captain Blaisdell told me I was honored by being given the hard-est nut to crack that any com-pany had ever attempted; that six ineffectual attempts had

T about 10 A. M. on Septem-

been made to break through at

this point and that the next morning at 5:30 A. M. we were to break through and my post,

the post of honor, was to ad-

There were but few maps available at this time and I was handed three. Before I left, Captain John F. Callahan, com-

manding M Company, was given his instructions and we talked over our plans for reconnais-sance and plans for our ad-

Immediately upon returning I assembled my company officers, Lieutenants Willard M. Webster

and Horace B. Scanlon, both of

and Horace B. Scanlon, both of whom were posthumously deco-rated with the Distinguished Service Cross for their gallant conduct in this attack, and we

studied our positions and all the landmarks on the map and those on our objective. In the afternoon the orders or the attack were received

and Lieutenant Webster and myself went to Zebra Post, where

part of my company was sta-tioned, and to Yak Post, where

a second part was stationed, and assembled all the men who were awake and explained the plans,

the purpose of the attack, the importance of our gaining the objective and the features of the

ground, so that they would un-derstand when they had ad-

vanced to the objective, and in-

structed them as to organizing,

blocking of trenches, selecting

vance

THIS is the story of an American captain who went over the top in a hot sector, was rushed by some sixty Germans while in a shell-hole with two wounded men, shipped to the prison camp at Villingen, escaped, recaptured, and rewas recaptured, and re-mained in enemy hands until his release following the Armistice. It is a vivid personal narrative, without embellishment but filled with all the thrills that go into the making of an exciting adventure. Mr. Sullivan went overseas as a first lieutenant in Company

A, 106th Infantry, Twenty-seventh Division. He later was promoted to captain and transferred to Company K of the same regiment, which he was commanding at the time of his capture. He is now in the general insurance and real estate business.

Captains Sullivan, O. E. Safford and Arthur House, and Lt. Col. Levi G. Brown, senior American officer captured during the war, from a photograph taken at Villingen prison camp

of Lewis gun positions, mopping up and methods of resisting counter attacks. The front assigned to my com-

pany was four hundred yards in width and the objective was a trench, a part of the old first line which was the farthest point east ever reached by the Point east ever reached by the Allies up to that time. There were three trenches (boyaus) leading into this from the Boche stronghold, the great Hindenburg tunnel. We came back and took men

who were holding trenches at company headquarters and relieved them in small groups and explained all plans and inten-tions, as we did to the outposts. We then reconnoitered, taking two sergeants with us, and decided on our route to reach the jumping-off point, where we had been ordered to be one hour be-

fore the zero hour. About 11 P. M. I received sufficient message maps to enable me to give one to each sergeant and also received a map showing the lifts of the barrage.

Plans were arranged to supply each man with two hundred rounds of rifle ammunition, five grenades, two days' rations, two canteens of water and a pick or shovel, all of which was to be carried in addition to rifle, bayonet, slicker and pack. Each man was thoroughly inspected to see that he had these articles. The non-coms carried additional equipment. The members of the Lewis gun team carried extra magazines, spare parts and in some instances eight hundred additional rounds of ammuni-

One detachment from an outpost got lost and roamed around for about an hour before we were able to bring them to the ammunition dump, where they were inspected and given their extra luggage.

The night of September 26 was very rainy and the men were not awakened until 2 A. M. of September 27. It was our desire that they sleep as much as possible because we all real-ized how hard a fight we were to have and did not know when we

could expect to get sleep again.
At 3 A. M. Sergeant Major

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Sharatz reported with orders that my company be used to load ammunition on some tanks which had been brought on some tanks which had been brought on the position of the company of the position of the company that the content of the company half an hour in starting, and then we started for our jumping-off point. It is the practice or one officer to lead and one officer or one officer to lead and one officer if anything occurs. Lieutenant Web-its and the company and I marched in

the rear.

The adjutant had stated where guides were to meet us, but when Lieuguides were to meet us, but when Lieuguides were not there. The Germans at this time were shelling us and using considerable gas, and all the men were wearing their gas masks. Lieutenant Wester, having previously reconnoiproceed. He took a turn to the left, this at the junction of two roads.

some of the men following him, others continuing to go straight ahead, some others turning to the right.

It was so dark that it was impossible to see more than three feet ahead with gas masks on, so I took off my mask, went with the seed of th

still very heavy.

The company was then being held up by German machine gunners firing along the road.

I proceeded to the head of the company and sent Lieutenant Webster to the rear and led the company up to the jumping-off place. All positions had been assigned the previous day and there was comparatively little confusion in vetting the men in vetting the men in

assigned the previous day and there was comparatively little confusion in getting the men in their proper places. No sooner had we arrived in the line than it was discovered

that there were a great number of men from other companies on the road behind us. They were being held up by great volumes of machine-gun fire. Lieutenant Webster went out of the trench and brought

The Boche evidently knew that something was to occur; for he kept throwing Very lights, some of which dropped behind us. These lights lit up the front until it seemed almost as bright the men moving about seemed like shadows passing a cuttain. Men were being hit constantly. They dropped and were passed by the others. They were it was a real hell we were entering.

A T 5:15 A. M. I sent back a message to battalion headquarters that we were at the jumping-60f place and were prepared to go. I then joined up with the company on my right, which was I Company of the 108th Infantry, and sacertained that a company of the 108th Infantry was to swing out and form a line to prevent the Boche from coming

in behind us as we advanced. This company was getting in position at 5:15.

I spoke to one of the officers, who told me of his plans, which coincided with my instructions. We were anxiously waiting the minute for the advance, and it seemed that the machine guns which opened up several minutes before the artillery were just skimming over our heads.

At the minute of 5:30 beddam let loss and our artillery fire fell directly in front of us. One minute before the interest of the control of t



THE jume of line of Captala Sullivar's company is indicated by partilled rows of dashes juint at the right of the enter of the map, and the dotted lines training that the right of the enter of the map, and the dotted lines the strong points and along the discrete he wise surrounding the strong points and along the discrete the strong points and along the skirts of the village of Lompier. The names of the rouls and skirts of the village of Lompier. The names of the rouls and extraord the strong that the strong th

was lifting one hundred yards every three minutes, and if we did not keep up with it we should lose its protec-

Direction was maintained by compass hearing, as it was not yet daylight, and fifteen percent of the shells coming over were smoke bombs. Our artillery was sending over fifty percent high explosives, thirty-live percent shrapped polaves, thirty-live percent shrapped up with the harrage it was necessary up with the harrage it was necessary to have the shrapped burst directly over our heads. The force with which telt the gun carried the fragments forward and made it comparatively safe, with the exception of a few cases, for

the advancing troops to keep close to it. We started to take prisoners before we had gone two hundred yards, and one of our greatest difficulties was in sending them back, as our companies at this time were very small and we did not want to let any of our rifle strength leave the line. But this was quickly solved because of the numerous

men injured, those who were not severely wounded being used to take the prisoners to the rear. With both hands upraised, the Germans, in groups of thirty to fifty, were thus marched back under the escort of two Americans to a group.

group.

During the morning of this advance at least 175 Germans were captured by my company alone. At a point in the sunken road east of Lempire a whole platoon was surrounded and taken

after a short though flerce resistance. Dead bodies were strewn throughout the advance, and the havoe wrought by the artillery and machine guns was terrific. No attention could be paid to the wounded. The object was to advance. The wounded would be taken care of later by the stretcher bearers.

A BOUT midway in the advance one of my lieutenants, Lieutenant Webster, came to me and said he had lost his compass and wanted to be

shown the direction. I had an extra compass which I gave him. At this time I noticed a hole in his face made by a bullet. I told him he had better go back and have it dressed, to which he replied that he wasn't done by a told him he had better go back only shot and was going up to the line because we should need every officer we could possibly get up there.

With that he went forward.

With that he went forward, and shortly after this I saw him on the line which was our objective. He had again been the same of the same of

of the 306th Infantry, was shot through the thingh in this attack and came to me to ask where the Third Battalion aid post was I gave him directions for reaching it and he left for the rear. The man assisting him returned a few minutes later with the information that Captain Hardy had been shot through the head and killed. If spite of the heavy losses,

In spite of the heavy losses, single reached our objective and signale reached our objective and the twent by firing a rocket. We then proceeded to organize. The company on my right had not advanced so rapidly as my company and were not on my flank. I discovered that they were from one hundred to two hundred yards in the rear and went to them to bring them up to the line.

The sergeant in command told me that their officer had been killed and he had stopped because he thought he was on his objective. He had about forty men with him and did not know the control of the their control of the service of the term of the their control of their control of their control of the their control of their

This advance was made through a country most of which had formerly been farm land, but which was now (Continued on page 22)

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### A PRISONER OF WAR IN GERMANY

were very heavy. The Boche was hur! we found there:

ing his potato masker greenades every remains a caused many cass in the work caused many cass draw to shell holes. This was after I knocked me down, wounding me, and trench. The transfer among some off temen causated the trench, (To be continued)

full of shell holes, strongly fortified and the forty men. Before leaving the protected with every sort of defence trench we blew up machine guns, an which the enemy could contrive. and t-lank rife and a minemerver and in maining men took a very good position. The casualties in the advance line where the protection of the strength o caused many casualties to the enemy in their attempts to recapture the



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