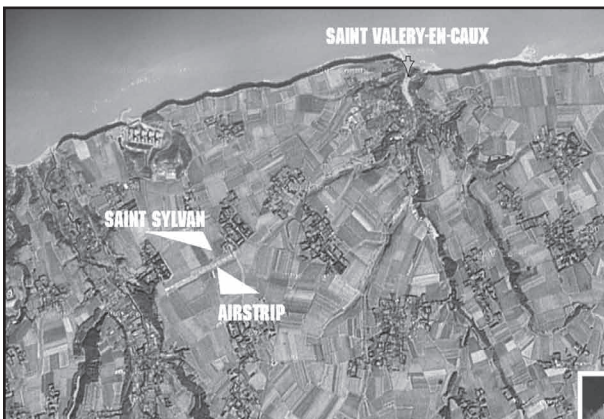
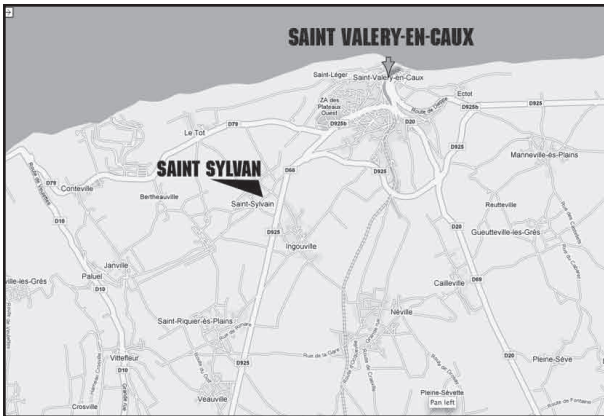


CAMP LUCKY STRIKE

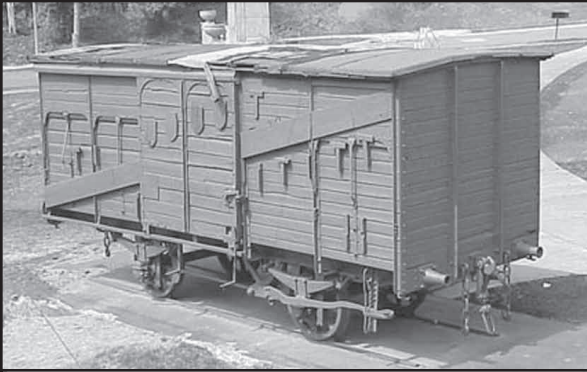
day 128 - 161

Friday, June 29, Melvin departed Garmisch-Partenkirchen on a “40 & 8” rail car (so named because at only 20.5’ long and 8.5’ wide one car could hold 40



Camp Lucky Strike

men or 8 horses. The 40 & 8 rail car was only about half the size of the standard American rail car). He was bound for Camp Lucky Strike on the coast of France. Stops were made periodically on the 450 mile journey, one such being Paris, France, where he was allowed to spend one day



40 & 8 Rail Cars

site-seeing including a visit to the Eiffel Tower.

Camp Lucky Strike was located inland in the town of Saint-Sylvan, France, about two and a half miles from Saint-Valery-en Caux on the coast, and thirty seven miles north of LeHarve, France. When the

Germans had oc-

cupied France, they had built an airstrip at this location. In early 1944 they added several V-1 rocket launch pads in the surrounding woods to enable a more effective offensive against Great Britain a short distance across the English Channel.

Great Britain had bombed the site repeatedly throughout German occupation; however, after the D-Day landing on June 6, 1944, the air-



*German V1 rocket
(known also as a Flying Bomb)*

strip was bombed heavily to the point of being unusable by the Germans, therefore driving them out completely. In September, 1944, American Engineers entered the area and rebuilt the landing strip and camp for U.S. use. It was to be managed by the 89th Infantry Division. The camp began to be occupied by American soldiers at Christmas in 1944.

Camp Lucky Strike slowly became for all intents and purposes, a 1500-acre American city. Soldiers were housed in one of four “neighborhoods,” each with 2,900 tents housing 14,500 men for a total of 58,000 soldier capacity, all built around the central airstrip which became the “main street” of the camp. There were shops, a hospital, clinics, dental offices, churches, a movie theater, and a post office all within the camp limits. After Le Harve was captured on September 12, 1944, by the British (bombing had destroyed nearly 85% of Le Harve), most soldiers either arrived in Europe or departed through Lucky Strike. And, towards the end of the war in Europe, it became a staging ground for sending highly experienced European theater soldiers to the Pacific theater to further engage the Japanese who were still holding strong at that time. Melvin entered Lucky Strike on or around Monday, July 2, 1945.

After arriving by the 40 & 8 in Saint-Valery-en Caux, it was a short two and a half mile truck ride to Lucky Strike. Upon entering the gates, the trucks were slowed to a stop, and Red Cross nurses and volunteers served hot coffee, cakes and donuts prior to being processed

and assigned their tent quarters. This was the closest thing Melvin had seen to America in five long months of constant daily battle conditions.



*Welcoming Red Cross tents
at Lucky Strike*

Accommodations at Lucky

Strike weren't exceptionally comfortable for the soldiers. However, a large tent and a cot every night far exceeded sleeping and living inside a small cramped Sherman tank with four other men. The winter of 1944-1945 had been unusually severe. Therefore the quality and abundance of food available to the occupants of Lucky Strike was poor. But with the assistance from French civilians, breads, jams, and jellies were available and eaten almost



Tent city at Lucky Strike

exclusively by the soldiers until late 1945 when food began arriving from America on

a more regular basis. For a month Melvin's diet consisted almost entirely of a large scoop of peanut butter, a scoop of orange marmalade, and a slice of bread



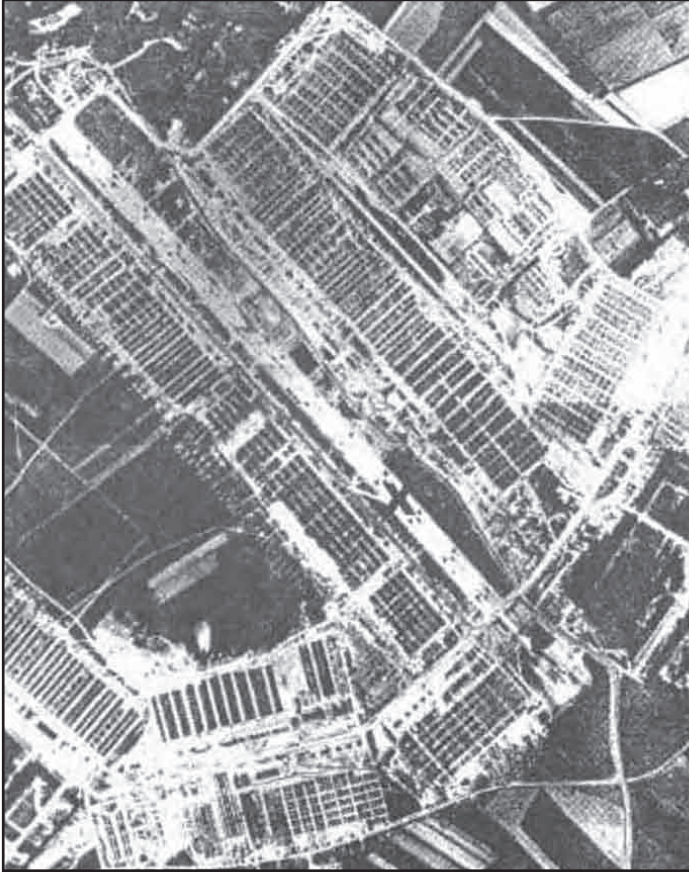
Meal line at Lucky Strike

with coffee three meals per day. Every man was ordered through the food line. At the end of the line if you didn't want your "meal," a large dump bin was nearby. However, every man was given the opportunity for three meals each day. "You had to go through the line, but they couldn't make you eat," Melvin recounts.

Japan had yet to surrender. The war was considered far from over, and plans were being drawn for a U.S. invasion of Japan. The additional soldiers needed for the invasion would come from Europe. Camp Lucky Strike as the largest allied military camp in Europe was the natural place of staging and embarkation to Japan.

Plans for the invasion of Japan were drawn, and on October 18, 1945, the Sixth Army would invade the southern coast of Kyushu. Over half a million men and 3000 warships were to be involved in the largest land invasion in history. On May 1, 1946, assuming the war continued, two additional armies would land in support

of the Sixth Army. The Seventh and Third Armies who had performed so flawlessly and aggressively in Europe were the likely candidates after receiving additional island warfare training back in the States.



*Camp Lucky Strike by air.
Airstrip in center of photo.*