

GNGBU

G	Good	** **
N	Night	*** **
G	God	** **
B	Bless	* **
U	You	**** **

A story of Scouts, sports, prayer and honor.

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This story is an excerpt of two chapters from the book GNGBU, published with the permission of George T. Coker, a Great American hero and an Intruder Legend.

Chapter 9

What is Torture

Perhaps it would be appropriate to discuss what torture is and how we used the term. I suppose others would call all our treatment as torture. However, we distinguished three levels of bad treatment or torture. There was bad treatment, harsh punishment and very painful torture. The three adjectives describe the levels: bad, harsh and very painful.

Bad treatment would include being hit or slapped around; being put in leg irons for less than a week; being left on a stool or standing overnight (sleep deprivation); being put in stocks for less than a week. Stocks were foot stocks at the end of the bed. Your ankles fit into a groove in the wood and a steel bar was lowered down and secured, which left your feet locked down tight at the end of the bed. You could not move much. You could lay on your back or twist a little left or right onto your shoulder. It was very uncomfortable and a constant mental nuisance. There were two types of irons; traveling irons and jumbo irons. Traveling irons consisted of a bar about 2 ½ feet long and ¾ inch in diameter with a knob at one end and a hole at the other end for a lock. Two iron U shaped loops with round turns at the ends of the U shape were just big enough to fit over your ankles. The loops would be put over your ankles and then the iron bar would pass through the ends of the U and your feet would be secured to the bar. The U shape was very narrow so you could not turn your feet around once in the irons. You could slide your feet to one end of the bar and then be able to turn over or change position. Total weight was about five pounds. Jumbo irons were made the same way but were much bigger. The bar was eight feet long and 1 1/2 inches in diameter. Total weight was about twenty pounds. Being in jumbo irons was a lot like being in stocks. You were weighted down and could not change position very much.

Harsh punishment was often just an extension of bad treatment. Being in stocks or irons for over a week or two, moved you from bad to harsh. Also, handcuffs were often used. We were

usually in handcuffs whenever they moved us about, but it was not especially hurtful. However, if you combined having your hands cuffed behind your back with being in stocks or irons, then it became harsh. In this situation you could not really change position and the cuffs would always be pulling against your wrists. It hurt and you could not sleep much. Sometimes they set you on a stool with the irons pulling down on your ankles and hands cuffed behind your back. It did not hurt as much but you couldn't sleep at all. Sleep deprivation, coupled with the discomfort of irons or stocks, became a very harsh punishment. Throughout all this you were subject to being hit or poked with a rifle. Time was a major factor in going from bad to harsh. Two days in stocks was nothing compared to a month in stocks. Standing, kneeling, sitting on a stool, and sleep deprivation would move you from harsh to the painful, so you might say that bad treatment was very uncomfortable, while harsh punishment was exhausting and painful.

Then we come to what we called torture. For us it meant extreme pain. You might be experiencing all of the above treatment, but now the V inflicted real pain. The most common form, and the most notorious and best known, was being tied up like a pretzel with ropes or straps. Your wrists would be cuffed or tied behind your back. You knew real trouble was coming because they gagged you to stop the screaming. They would wrap a strap around your upper arms and pull the strap so tight that your elbows would touch behind your back. This alone felt like your arms were being pulled out of their sockets. On occasion an arm was dislocated. Then in a sitting position they would cross your leg and tie a rope around your ankles where they crossed. The rope would then be pulled over your shoulder and looped around your bound wrists. They would continue pulling on the rope such that your arms were being pulled up over your head and your legs would be twisted and wrenched upward. Now your hip joints were screaming with pain, accompanying the pain in your shoulder joints. At times they even tied the rope over your shoulder to a large hook in the ceiling and you were left hanging like a badly twisted pretzel trying to rip itself apart. This really, really, really hurt. This was extreme pain.

Being in the ropes for only half an hour seemed like an eternity. The pain was excruciating. In time everyone would give in to some extent after being in the ropes. You could still evade answers or avoid telling the truth, but after several rounds in the ropes you tended to yield a little. The pain was so intense that just the thought of it brought terror to your mind. Being threatened with going into the ropes again was truly a terrorizing moment. Yet there were many who were put through the ropes numerous times while only yielding a tiny bit, and then resisting again. I mentioned earlier about the comm purge at Little Vegas and many POWs being tortured. This is what I meant. They were subjected to the ropes until the V finally got the info they wanted. This is what I encountered prior being moved to the Dirty Bird.

A point about the torture we endured: it did not include bloody, disfiguring, life threatening torture used in other environments. The POWs had a great propaganda value, so the V did not want to leave marks or obvious signs of torture. Although a few had marks from the ropes or had dislocation, and several may have died "accidentally," in general after a few months there were no indications of observable torture. Bone and joint damage were common to most

POWs, but seeing a former POW walking down the sidewalk, you would not realize he had been through the ropes on numerous occasions.

Chapter 10 The Escape

The Dirty Bird was a long rectangular compound that probably had been a row of workers' apartments. It was right next to the southeast corner of the Thermal Power Plant. Each apartment had one large enclosed room about 15' X 15'. One side faced a street and the inner two walls were adjacent to the rooms on either side of it. The last wall, opposite the front, had a door in the corner that opened into a small courtyard and a cooking area. The front of the room facing the street had a door and a window, but both had been bricked up. The one door in the corner of the back wall was the only entrance, with a peep hole and kept locked. Outside this door was an open area, like a small courtyard, the width of the room by about 6-8 feet. Beyond that was an open cooking and bathing area, 15' x 15'. It included a small cistern or basin with water, a fire pit, a brick oven, and an "oriental" latrine. The back wall was 12' high but the walls between the adjacent cooking areas were only 5' high. On either side of the courtyard there had been a wall separating the little courtyards from one another, but the wall had been knocked down, such that a long corridor ran between the rooms and the cooking areas. The walls of the cooking area seemed to be very substantial, while the rest of the structures were standard light construction. In case of bombing, the cooking area provided the best protection from the bomb blast.

There were about eight rooms in a row, then an entry hall and guard spaces, and then another row of four rooms. I was put in the first room from the guard spaces toward the power plant. During the day I was taken out to the cooking area opposite to room 2. Most of the cooking areas were filled with debris, bricks, broken boards, rubble and just thrash. This cooking area had been cleared out, probably just throwing the trash over the wall into the next cooking area. In the cooking area, I had one ankle handcuffed to the opposite wrist. This kept me hunched over on the concrete floor. There was a lot of debris and junk left around, and probably the remains of damage done by bombing. After the dinner meal, I was taken back into room 1, but my hands were handcuffed in front of me. They told me I was being punished for lying during my interrogation, but I could put up my mosquito net and lay down. Bright and early the next day I was woken up and taken out for another day in the cooking area. This continued for ten days. I did start having ideas of escape because there were no high walls with barbed wire, and no guard towers, and lots of debris that provide potential tools.

After two weeks (I think 30 September), I was moved to room 3 (third from the guard and during the day I was put in the cooking area opposite room 4. At night I was no longer handcuffed. I got the impression that another POW had been moved into room 1. Someone was bringing the meals and doing the dishes. It turned out to be George McKnight. So, we were two rooms apart and two cooking areas apart.

As mentioned earlier, The Dirty Bird was right next to the Thermal Power Plant and there was evidence of intensive bombing. Large thick walls had been built around the plant such that only a direct hit could do much damage. Also, it appeared that the V wanted it to be known that POWs were being kept nearby. Usually, we were never paraded about unless for specific propaganda purposes. However, George was taken out several times to “keep the cow.” It was a small cow with a lead and George would walk the cow back and forth on the street side of the compound. Again, it appeared that the V wanted him to be seen and word would filter back to the US that POWs were here, and thus, we would not bomb the plant.

George was being treated the same as me, daytime in the cooking area, wrist cuffed to the opposite ankle. George knew how to pick the cuffs, and the next afternoon (5 October) I was surprised by this tall, skinny white guy shaking me and telling me he was George McKnight. He thought there was another POW nearby because he was washing three sets of dishes and saw clothes hanging on a line. After telling me how to pick the cuffs, we decided we could quietly talk over the walls separating us during the day. Afternoon nap or rest time would be ideal for talking since the guards were very lax during this time. The next day, George found John Frederick on the other side of the guard area. He made contact but said it was too risky to see him again. George told me about “keeping the cow.” I do not recall who said the magic word first, but escape was on our minds. All our comms was about escaping.

The first obstacle was to figure out where we were. George thought that we were close to a river, not too far away. As he walked the cow about, he was able to reconnoiter the area. I told him to look for some indication of a bridge the next time he was out, especially some kind of superstructure. The next day he reported what he thought might be a bridge. I asked him to describe what he saw, and I immediately recognized his description of the girders of the Dommer bridge. The NVN called it the Long Bien Bridge. From target study I knew what the bridge looked like, and also, just where it was. It is on the northwest side of Hanoi and the Red River ran southeast through Hanoi for about five miles, and then it passed through paddy area until it went through Nam Dinh and then to the sea. We estimated that the river was less than half a mile away.

The next obstacle was how to get out of the immediate area. Again, George was able to closely study the area for an escape route while keeping the cow. At the far end of our building away from the power plant, past the guard area, there was a large coal storage yard. It was just a yard with high walls on three sides with the coal piled in, forming a hillside. George devised a way for us to reach the high wall and thus get to the coal area where we could just slide down the coal and reach the low wall. It would be way too risky walking past the guard area, and George was not sure how we could get up on the high wall beyond the guard area. However, he could see the rest of our building, and if we could get up on the high wall anywhere, then we could just crawl along it until we got to the coal area. He determined that if we got out of our rooms, we should go to the end away from the guard area. At the end of the building we could climb onto the roof and from there to the top of the wall. Then we would be able to get to the wall at the back of the cooking areas and follow it back past the guard area and then to the top of the coal area. The only glitch was that there was a twenty-foot break in the wall near the

guard area. However, there was a four-inch pipe going across this section, like a heavy water pipe. We would have to work our way across this section with our hands and legs wrapped around the pipe. We would be relatively high with a dark sky overhead, so it would not be easy to see us if we were very careful.

Next, we needed a long-term plan. There was a small street running behind the cooking areas and past the coal area. George was not sure how high the wall was from the street side since the street seemed to be a bit sunken. George had not been able to see beyond that, but the place seemed to be deserted. He saw very little indication of people being about. This made sense, just like our building being deserted, the people had been moved away from a major bombing target. So, once we got to the bottom of the coal pile, we would drop into the street and head east and north toward the river. This would be like escape and evasion from this point until we reached the river. At the river we would discard our long pants and shirt and begin swimming downstream. It was fifty miles to the coast and my plan was to get about fifteen miles per day. It would be a day and a half getting near the outskirts of Nam Dinh, which we would pass during the night. Then we would hopefully be able to reach the coast by late on the third day. In the early morning we would steal a boat and begin sailing for the Sixth Fleet carriers.

By moving in the direction of the bridge, we should be able to get to the river in an hour. Then we would start swimming. I was familiar with delta rivers like the Mississippi, which served a large area with water runoff. Based on my limited expertise, I expected the river to flow between two and four knots. I added our swimming to the two-knot estimate and figured we could count on moving at about three knots. Assuming we reached the coast, this would be the one time we would use force, if necessary, to steal a boat. We both knew a little bit about sailing (George just a little bit, and me even less - nothing like on-the-job-training). The carriers operated in the area of Yankee Station, which was about sixty miles southeast from where we would be departing the coast. That would be a two- or three-day trip in our little sailboat. It really would not be hard to find the carriers, since all day and night, planes would be returning to their carriers. So, we would just follow the birds returning to the bird farm.

Our plan for food was a bit lean. Of course, we would eat all our meals, even if they tasted terrible, and drink all the water we could get from the V. Once we escaped from our rooms, there would be no eating. However, more than three days without water was a no go. So, my plan was to tank up on river water before it got salty as we neared the coast. We would also eat anything chewable for mental energy - grass, weeds, rice stalks, etc. We would need that for energy in taking the boat and getting it underway. After that we would no doubt become very sick from the river water. But we would just tie the sails in place to keep us heading toward the fleet. Hopefully, we would reach our ships within three days and before we expired from the bad water and exposure. What a grand plan!

All the time we were making plans, we were working on the last vital part of an escape: getting out of our cell. For this I remembered what Denton had talked about, back in the Zoo after I got off the wall. We were discussing the possibility of escape and he had devised a way

to get out of his cell by working on the locking method. The doors were solid wood boards, braced and barred tightly together. There was no easy way to work on the hinges, but the locking part was ripe for abuse. Think of a large cotter pin. The circle or loop at one end is about one inch in diameter and the shanks are about four inches long. From the outside the "cotter pin" was nailed or hammered through the door at the lock point. The extended parts of the shanks were bent back and hammered back into the wood. A similar cotter pin was hammered into the door jamb at the same level. This was done in such a way that the ring on the door overlapped the ring on the door jamb, and presto, you put a lock through the rings, and you were sealed up tight. However, with an ingenious tool or device, you could dig away the wood around the cotter pin from the inside, and this is what we did.

There was debris all around us, and we each found a large nail, like a five-inch spike, which we used to work on our door lock at night. I used the nail to pry out the shank ends and then I dug out the wood around the shanks of the cotter pin. Slowly, I was able to carve out a cone about two inches across and tapered down to the outside hole the shank came through. I could straighten out the shanks and then the door could just be pulled open. I inserted a small wooden wedge between the shanks, and this held the cotter pin tightly in place. Thus, with the wedge in place the cotter pin seemed solid and held the door closed with the lock in it. But all we had to do was take out the wedge, press the shanks together and simply pull the door open leaving the cotter pin hanging on the door frame cotter pin and lock. This took several nights. The last thing we needed was a way to hold the door closed after we left. I carved a wooden wedge about 4 inches long and found a small metal rod which I sharpened into an "L" shape. When I got out of the room, I would pull the door closed, put the cotter pin back into place, and use the rod to pull the wedge under the bottom of the door. So, if the guard shook the door the wedge would hold the door tight and not cause the cotter pin to pull away. George was doing the same thing but did not need to worry about the door wedge. He could get his hand through the peep door and reinsert the small wedge between the shanks. We never left the tools inside the room but always took them under our clothes out to the cooking area during the day. One thing we did right away was to move our sleep mat to the far corner from the door. I slept under the blanket so that is what a guard would expect when he checked on us through the peep door. The plan was to make a dummy inside the blanket so it would appear that we were sleeping as usual. The light was dim, and the mosquito net made it hard to distinguish us.

We had been working on this for a week or so and felt we were ready. Our discussion now was to decide when to go for it. On 10 October we had a surprise inspection. Let me flash back to a standard event in our POW routine. Every three to four weeks, the guards would come into our cell and give us a shakedown. It was like having mean cops serving a search warrant. They would throw everything around and shake everything looking for an "contraband." I guess they were looking for any written material with codes or names on it or wires or nails or anything that could be used for a tool. I don't know if they ever found anything, but it kept us on our toes, and if we did have some contraband, we had to hide it carefully. So, this day we were brought back to our rooms a little early and stood in the middle while the guards tore the place apart. Luckily, we had finished the work on the doors and did

not have any tools on us. What was really miraculous was the guards never looked behind the door. As I said, the door was in the very corner and pushed open against the wall. There was no real space behind the door since it was opened right against the wall. I am sure that George was shaking as much as me as the guards did their thing, but they never pulled the door away from the wall to look behind it. If they had done so, it would have been obvious what we had been doing. What a miraculous blessing.

Perhaps I should take a time out and talk about the concept of escape. Besides the technicalities, it shows mine and George's state of mind. There are two basic types of escape: a well-planned out and properly prepared operation and then an escape of opportunity. Our escape was kind of in between. It was not a lengthy and thoroughly planned escape, but we did the necessary planning, although it was brief and quick. At the same time, it was not a matter of suddenly seeing a door open and taking a quick opportunity to just run out. It was an opportunity in that several key bits of information suddenly fell into place. The POWs never really knew just where they were, and suddenly I knew exactly where we were. Also, the POWs never really knew much about the area around their prison compound but suddenly, now we did. Lastly, we had a valid way to get out of our room and this usually very difficult at best. Suddenly, the opportunity as there, and we quickly formed a plan to take advantage of it.

We had discussed the "odds" of success and the lack of contact with senior leadership. We were going without permission, but there was no one else with whom to discuss it. So "unless otherwise directed" we would be on our way. Another factor was the possible reprisals, but except for Frederick, there was no one else to be associated with the planning and activity, so we were on our own. However, we had the odds skewed in our minds. In reality, the odds of successfully escaping is about 1%. If you want to be very optimistic, maybe 5%. This is a historical fact. Although there might be reprisal after a failed escape, and probably some form of punishment, you were not expecting a firing squad. Less than 1% of escapees died due to environment, or recapture, or follow on punishment. Despite the drama in the movies, the odds of success were 1% and the odds of dying were less than 10%. Now what did George and I think? We worked out that we had a 25% chance of a successful escape; a 25% chance of being recaptured and living; a 25% chance of being recaptured and killed; and a 25% chance of dying from exposure. Our 25% chance of success was just a little bit higher than the reality of 1%. Also, we accepted the 50% chance of dying one way or the other, which is considerably higher than the reality of 10%. This is what I meant by saying this revealed our state of mind. For us this was an escape of desperation, not just to get home, but to get away from the fear and terror and pain. It also shows our complete lack of concern for the deadly aftermath of failure. If we died, so what; at least we tried. Years later after George and I were debriefed, we discussed what happened when we talked about these ideas with our main debriefer and a psychiatrist and we both got the same reaction: blank stares. They just could not get it.

Planning became reality, almost! I was to exit first and then signal George. I started to pull out the cotter pin when I heard a "clink" that sounded like cymbals in that quiet corridor. Apparently, the lock had been left in a cocked-up fashion and as soon as there was movement,

it fell down against the ring and gave the “clink” sound. I heard the guard coming, pushed the wedge in place, and jumped back out of view of the peephole, thoroughly petrified. The guard looked through the peep door and banged on the door. The guard left and I climbed back into bed with tears in my eyes. It was already over, and it had not even started. I felt sheer fright, terror, and a great plan going down the tubes. Two guards came back and looked through the peep door and beat on the door some more. I moved around in the blanket, so they knew I was where I was supposed to be. They jabbered for a few minutes and then left. After a few more minutes I realized that the silly fools were not going to open the door (they probably would have to have woken an officer to get permission). I tried to get my composure back, remade the dummy, and headed for the door.

I removed the small wedge and pulled the door open. Stepping out I pulled the door closed, leaving the large wedge and rod in place to pull the wedge in tight. I put the cotter pin back into its place and all looked good. I went up to George’s room and tapped. He was ready and opened his door, then quietly closed it. As he did this he was up against the door and I was squatting down in the middle of the corridor. Just then a guard went from their room across the little courtyard to the latrine. George was looking down at me and said my eyes were as large as saucers. The guard did not glance my way. Had he done so he would have seen me clearly silhouetted in the corridor. He passed on through into the cooking area and we hastily moved down the corridor away from the guards. I vividly remember the scare that went through me at that moment. I would have screamed but I was too scared. That was the second close shave and I was rattled. We quickly secured the doors and headed out.

Following our plan, George led us to the end of the building where we could easily climb onto the roof. Then we got on the high wall that was running behind the guard area. We passed the guards and then hit the missing wall space. We shimmed across the pipe and was on the high wall again. A little further and we were looking down into the coal bin. We slipped on the coal and slid down the side and reached the short wall. It had some glass shards on top of it, so I put my shirts over the top and let George climb over me and be prepared for me to lower him to the ground. This ended up being simple because when George hit the ground, his head was level with mine. It was only a drop of six feet into a dirt road. I climbed over onto George, retrieved the shirts and we were ready to evade.

The place was dark and deserted, but then we noticed an old lady just ambling down the dirt road, away from the power plant and toward us. We laid down in the gutter and the lady passed by without noticing us. After a five-minute delay, we headed east, away from the power plant and toward an intersection just ahead. We turned north along a paved road and were proceeding carefully in the shadows of the buildings when we heard a sound and saw a guy riding a bicycle coming toward us. We laid down on the sidewalk next to the building and the guy passed never noticing us. We moved another three blocks north and came to a main road, probably like a portion of a beltway going around Hanoi. Again, we heard the sound of a bicycle, so we laid down in the gutter until the guy was well past us. We watched for a few minutes, and not seeing any kind of movement, we dashed some 50 feet across this road and then another 30 feet across some train or trolley tracks. Then we were at an embankment

which dropped about ten feet. We slid down and now we were out of sight from anyone on the road or around any of the buildings. In fact, we were standing on the floodplain of the river. We could see the bridge about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile further east and the bridge location indicated that the river was about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile across the floodplain.

The V were using an arc welder to do repairs on the bridge. This generated a lot of light around the approach to the bridge. So, we could not go straight to the river and walk under the bridge without being seen in the bright light around the arc welder. Instead, we proceeded southeast along the edge of the floodplain, intending to go a $\frac{1}{4}$ mile past the bridge and then going to the river. There were rice paddies all around this area. We were frequently walking knee deep in water, going through the paddies. Suddenly, a siren sounded loudly. For a second, we thought it was about us, but we could hear the sound of jet aircraft and it immediately became obvious that this was a bomb alarm warning. Guns started blazing away. Just ahead of us and on the sandbagged redoubt on a high point near the road was a AAA gun emplacement. Tracers lit up the sky and we could hear the sound of bombing and the bright flashes of explosions. This went on for about 5 minutes and then the all-clear was sounded and it became quiet again. We had crouched down in the paddy during this exciting episode, and at one point, George turned to me and said, "Someday you are going to have a hell of a story to tell your grandkids." There are moments in life when an event is seared into your brain. This was one of them. Today, as I type, I can vividly see and hear that moment.

This spectacle did alert us to the gun emplacement and the military guys who would be up there, with eyes and ears open. Very quietly and stealthily, we continued southeast past this area. We continued until we were well away from the lights near the bridge and turned directly toward the river. The floodplain probably sloped down slightly toward the river, and when we reached the main river, it was only a few inches below the floodplain. It was time to swim. I felt the current and it was a good three knots, maybe closer to four. That was great news. We stripped down to shirts and t-shirt. I took the drawstrings that George had taken and tied them together into a 15-foot line. I tied one end to George's hand and the other end to my hand. This would keep us from becoming separated in the darkness and the current. We slipped into the river and started breast stroking downstream.

The edge of the floodplain sloped down to the deeper water of the main channel. The water moved faster near the center of the channel and with our swimming, we were drifting along at over 3 knots. The water was not very cold, but it was very cool, for the water came from the mountains well west of Hanoi. Near the edge it was a little warmer, but the current was slower. As we went past Hanoi, (as I mentioned earlier, we would be going from the northwest corner of Hanoi to the southeast corner, a distance of about 5 miles), it was dark and quiet. A lot of boats were tied up along the side of the river, like barges parked end to end along both sides of the river. Only rarely did we hear the sound of anyone aboard. We had left our rooms about 10:00 PM on Thursday night, October 12th, Columbus Day. It had taken a good hour to get to the river. After another two hours we had drifted past Hanoi and were now in the countryside. It was about 1:30 AM on Friday, October 13th, Friday the Thirteenth. The night was dark and quiet and there were no boats anywhere.

We continued swimming and drifting, and after several hours in the water, the cool water had become cold. George was starting to have a hard time. George had lived through the winter of 1965-66 when the POWs were getting little more than a starvation diet. George was tall and lean to begin with, and now he was down to skin and bones. He was a fair swimmer, but the cold and exertion were wearing him out. Periodically, we would move close to the bank where the current was slower, but the water felt a lot warmer. Close in, the water shallowed out and we were able to walk along the bottom. After a few minutes to catch our breath and to regenerate our energy, we returned to the middle and kept on swimming. By morning, I estimated that we had covered at least 15 miles. It was time to hide.

The dawn came on very fast. It had been very dark with nothing more than starlight. Then quickly, the sky started to light up and it was full daylight in 20 minutes. We were really scrambling as soon as we noticed the dim glow of dawn. We climbed the embankment of the river to look around. As far as we could see there were rice paddies. There was no sign of brush, or trees and anything that would conceal our presence. So back to the riverbank, almost in panic. The embankment was steep, 60 to 70 degrees and about 10 feet high. It had probably been built up like a levee system because the rice paddies were at least five feet lower than the top of the embankment. The soil was a red clay and when wet it was muddy. We were running along the bank when George noticed a small crevice and started digging it deeper and stacking the mud on top of the crevice. Soon when had a small fort of mud, about 5 feet wide, 4 feet deep and maybe 2 feet between the crevice and the rest of the bank. This was our hiding spot and we got into it just in the nick of time. As soon as it went from twilight to daylight, boats began moving down the river. A boat or barge would go by very minute or two.

We were pretty secure in our mud fort. No one could see us from the boats passing by. We were not visible to anyone in the paddies, and you could not see us from the embankment EXCEPT if you were on the embankment immediately above us. If someone stopped there and looked down, they would be looking down on us in our little fort. I had suggested that we should sort of bury ourselves with the mud. George was chilled to the bone and wanted to be able to have the sun shine on us. As the sun rose, it did shine down on us with its warmth, and it did feel good.

We discussed our situation. Our best asset was that no one knew where we were. If spotted, the V could mobilize a thousand peasants to search for us. It would be like having a huge fishing net thrown over the entire area. So, there did not seem much point in being heroic if we were spotted. On the other hand, if we made it to the coast, we were ready to use any force necessary to get a sailboat and get it launched. We also decided to just tell the truth if we were re-captured. No one else was involved and there was no big secret about what we had done. So rather than being played off against each other in an interrogation, we would just tell it the way it was. The exhaustion was hitting us, and we tried to nap a bit, but we were still wired up from the escape and chatted a little.

Then it happened. I was looking down the river and saw a fishing pole swing out over the river about 20 feet from us. I indicated to be silent and hoped the fisherman would go

away. The pole went out over the bank again, but it was only about 10 feet from us. Finally, the little fisherman was standing right above us and swung the pole out and looked down. There we were in his full view. I am not sure who was more scared, the fisherman or us. He took off yelling and we jumped up to see if there was anywhere, we could go. We started to run along the bank and saw a hundred people running toward us. They had sticks, or pitchforks, and some had old rifles. The gig was up. We raised our hands and the great escape was over.