

Photographer Noel Relates His Escape That Ended A Few Miles From Yalu River Boundary

Editor's Note—Frank Noel, AP photographer and Pulitzer Prize winner in 1948, came back from more than 32 months in a Communist prison camp Aug. 9. In this second of a series of three stories he tells of the thwarted plan of an American pilot whom he escaped to steal a Russian-made MIG15 jet fighter and fly it to an American base.

By FRANK NOEL
As told to Olen Clemens
TOKYO (AP)—In the minds of

prisoners—whether it is Leavenworth or a Communist hole in North Korea—escape always is running through your mind.

Four times I planned to escape. Once I did.

It was with a pilot, Capt. Zachary Dean of Kansas. It happened in August 1951.

I had been a prisoner of the Communists then nearly a year. Dean, an F51 pilot, was shot down in April 1951. He was a bridegroom of six days.

Rise Spurs Ontario Spuds

SALEM (AP)—A 25-cent upturn in the potato market a week ago started such a rush of potato shipments out of the Ontario district that 20 additional shipping point inspectors have been sent into that area, according to W. L. Close, state supervisor for the shipping point inspection service the early drop now moving is chiefly whites and reds, Close said. Early Russets have not yet started in volume.

Close said V. E. Nygren, district supervisor in that area, informed the Department of Agriculture Monday that 160 carloads of spuds were shipped out last Friday. That is an all-time high for any commodity in a single day in Oregon.

The inspection service has dispatched men from Medford, Hood River, Klamath Falls, Redmond and other points to help in the potato deal in Malheur County. It has also sent men from the Hood River and Salem districts to assist in fresh prune handling at Milton-Freewater and frozen corn at Ontario.

Prune shipments now moving from the Umatilla County center are the early crop. Shipments of the main crop from that section will get under way about Aug. 24, or at the same time Bartlett pear harvests open up at Hood River and Medford.

75 More GIs Liberated

PANMUNJOM (AP)—Seventy-five more Americans streamed back to freedom today as the great Korean War prisoners exchange entered its third week.

Besides the Americans, the Reds turned back 75 British and 300 South Koreans—50 more than the 400 daily the Reds originally promised.

Again tomorrow, the Communists planned to step up deliveries. They said they would return 458 Allied captives—75 Americans, 75 British and 356 South Korean. It will be the largest single group returned.

In 14 days, the Reds have returned 1,105 of the 3,313 Americans they claim they held, a figure far less percentage-wise than the number of British—570 of 921—returned.

US Set To Lead Off Korea Debate

UNITED NATIONS, N. Y. (AP)—The United States prepared to lead off the U. N. Korean debate today with a strong plea to bar so-called neutral countries—India, particularly—from the forthcoming Korean political conference.

Russia, however, was reported ready to plump for a widely based plan to include some countries who sent no troops to the conflict. Some diplomats felt the U. N. Assembly majority might agree with the Russians.

The Soviets and India both have been proposed for membership in the conference, their sponsors contending the party should be a roundtable affair rather than a two-sided negotiation. If the U. S.-opposed view is adopted, still other noncombatants might be invited.

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Dean, a lanky Kansan with the guts of a lion, wanted to steal a MIG15 and fly it back to an airfield in South Korea. Being Air Force he knew how much those things were worth. So we planned to swim the Yalu, sneak down around Antung, Manchuria, lie up around the airport a few days, and watch the Chinese security guards. Eventually he planned to snatch a hot jet and fly it away.

I was going to steal a fishing boat or bribe or clobber somebody and get out the best way I could.

There were three of us involved in the escape plot.

We began to connive, scrape food bowls for leftover and horde up everything we could lay hands on that we could eat or use for trading or bribery.

Communists are easy to bribe. We knew the route from the camp we were going to take. It was through a corn patch. But the corn wasn't high enough. So we watched that corn grow, kept an eye on the moon and bided our time.

One stormy night looked like the night. We were ready.

The third man had just come down with yellow jaundice.

Dean and I decided to go it alone. That is not good because in that country you might sprain an ankle tripping over undergrowth. It is best that three men go together—at in case of illness, injury or to keep watch while the other two slept.

But Dean and I were eager.

We sneaked out into that corn patch.

The rain was beating down. We had all our possessions—Dean's wrist watch, two or three fountain pens, about \$10 in greenbacks I had borrowed from Turkish prisoners, a straight razor Dean had stolen from the company barber shop, a Boy Scout knife I had, a couple of rocks and the cover for a sleeping bag which we were going to use for a sail on any small boat we might steal.

We got through that corn patch all right. Then we hit a wood and tripped over the undergrowth and I slid down an embankment that left my derrier bare. I think it was an open grave the Reds had dug. We floundered around there and got going again.

It was black as pitch. We didn't know it but we had night blindness due to a lack of vitamins. We stumbled on and pretty soon we came to a little opening. Blindly I walked on, fell over a fence and right into a pig sty.

Well, that damned pig wanted no human company. He squealed and mouthed around there until he woke up the Korean farmer. The farmer poked his head out of a window, a cigarette glowing, but he never did come out.

We held our breath.

Nothing happened. We would have killed that pig if we had a weapon.

The rain was beating down on those corn stalk leaves, making a sound that is conducive to sleep. That lulled the pig and that North Korean. The pig quit squealing. The Korean quit smoking. Dean and I stole silently away.

It took us most all night but we swam the half-mile-wide lake and got over on the other side of it. Probably all night long we walked. Yet we didn't make over a mile from the camp. But we had the lake between us and the camp.

We slept all day in some bushes. It was raining and we were wringing wet.

We were headed for the Yalu, going to swim across.

Trails in that country all have security guards on them. We traveled only at night, of course, and we couldn't see much on account of this lack of vitamins. We almost bumped into two or three guard huts but escaped by a hair.

That night we had a talk.

Dean said:

"I'm going to steal a MIG. (MIGs cannot carry any passengers.) And I'll have you along. What are you going to do?"

I said:

"I'll stick with you until you take off then I'll go on down the coast, steal a boat, bribe a fisherman or something and try to make it down south of the 38th Parallel or hit an Allied carrier or something out in the Yellow Sea and get aboard it."

We decided we would stick together until the MIG stealing because you can never tell, a guy might get sick, break a leg tripping around at night like that or something. You know how it is.

Our tobacco was wet. The book Dean brought along so we could tear the pages out of it to roll cigarettes was all wet.

We were miserable.

But we were free.

That night we stumbled right into a Korean road block.

There were a couple of guards in the hut and they heard us. They stumbled out in their underwear, carrying those bamboo pike spears of theirs and making a lot of noise because they were scared. Like a couple of schoolboys in a graveyard at night.

They looked around, went back into the hut and closed the but door.

Dean and I took off in high gear.

We jumped in behind a high clay embankment facing the lane. Ten or 15 minutes later the Koreans came yak-yaking down the road.

We were trying to roll cigarettes and were not paying any attention to the noise the Koreans were making coming down the road. They were scared of their own shadows, and we knew it.

We just shut down everything

They walked right past us. Their wet tennis shoes squished.

Then we sneaked up on a hill, hid in some bushes all day, because we knew we had been detected.

It was good and dark when we stirred. Only Dean had a watch.

Dean began to get sick. His back hurt. There was a swelling in his groin. It was jaundice Dean had. There was no mistake.

Dean was very sick.

"I can't go any farther," he said. "We've got to find a hiding place for a couple of days."

We had to find a place to hide. We were on a high hill. The clouds went floating by.

Finally we saw a cowshed and crawled in there. Dean felt bad. He wanted to smoke and so did I.

We had been three days and nights in a torrential rain. We were cold. We wanted warm food. We saw the farm compound.

We decided we'd take a chance. Maybe they wouldn't turn us in. Dean could get two or three days rest.

We made a mistake.

There were about seven families in it. That's where your communism comes in. One of them turned us in. We'd taken a long shot and lost.

They did give us warm food, clothing, dry tobacco. Then the insidiousness of communism reared its ugly head. They had to tell the gестапо. Too many people had seen us.

It was that old snitch government, that shogun diplomacy again. The Koreans could not trust their fellow Communists. Somebody had to report us. We knew. So we started to leave.

We got out on the road. We didn't know it but we were only six kilometers from the Yalu. We knew its direction and we started that way. These Koreans said that we should go the other way.

We said we are going our way.

Dean offered them his watch. They grabbed us.

Dean was much taller so two of the three men who were trying to detain us grabbed him and one grabbed me on the left shoulder.

I grabbed his thumb and doubled it up. It must have hurt him to his elbow. He was at my mercy.

Dean whipped out this razor he stole from the company barber and he made a couple of swipes at his two tormentors. They retreated to the embankment.

I didn't let go of that thumb. I knew he was hurting up to his

elbow. I bet he hasn't got that untangled yet.

Dean, who was free, said:

"What the hell are we going to do?"

I said:

"Let's get over in that cornfield and fight them if they find us."

So we made a couple of "y" turns and dove into that cornfield and under some climbing bean vines the Koreans always have in their cornfields. We lay there in the mud for about an hour.

They found us. The kids found us.

They turned about 50 boys between 10 and 12 loose to look for us.

They found us and raised hell. We were captured by a bunch of kids. We didn't want to kick their little teeth out.

Then the grown folks moved in. They bound our arms behind us and bound us together with ropes. Dean told them he'd give them his watch. If we had had two, we'd have been free.

When we walked, we almost goosed - stepped. We must have looked ridiculous.

Then Dean broke out with dysentery. It was bad.

There we were tied together. They said we had to march back the whole 27 miles we had come from the camp.

Dean was sick, bad. Have you ever been tied to a man with dysentery on the road? When he look a step I took a step. When he did anything I had to assume the same position.

They never let us loose until we got back to the camp.

Then they threw us in the hole—Dean for two months. I got six.

Neither of us served the full sentence but the Communists never let us forget that we still had part of our sentence hanging over our heads.

Dean served about 32 days in that hole—an abandoned, uncleaned latrine.

I served about 42 days, because Dean's sentence originally was shorter than mine, in a better hole which was not a latrine. But it stank.

They gave us flea-laden uniforms and those fleas hit us like they had fish hooks for snozzles. It was bad.

But we were lucky. We thought we'd be shot.

One thing I'm pretty proud of was when those sentences were pronounced.

There was a small (maybe I imagined this) but it seemed a very small amount of applause rose from the 1,500 men in Camp 5.

There was complete silence from the officers.

I was the prize reactionary.

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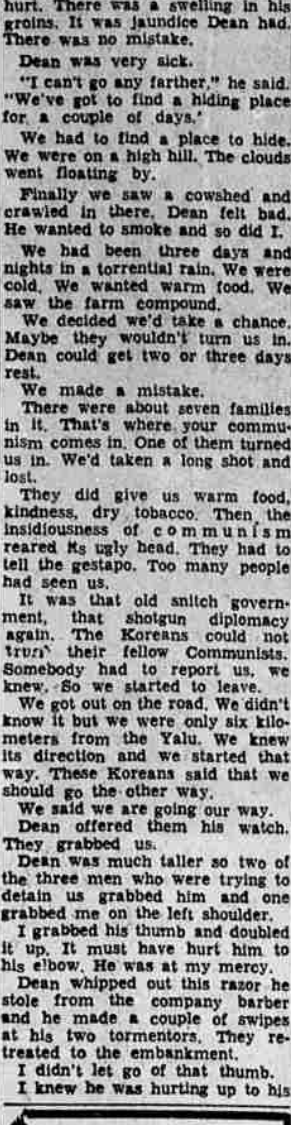
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