

Brothers Return From War Fronts



SGT. MICHAEL FERRANI



PFC. JOHN FERRANI

APR 24 1945

Back After 4 Months In Nazi Prison Camp

Sergeant Michael Ferrani Tells Experiences As He Comes Home on Leave

"Gee it's swell to be home". That is the way Sergeant Michael Ferrani son of Mr. and Mrs. Nicholas Ferrani, 129 Crest Avenue, feels after more than four years of service, and spending more than four months in a German prison camp. A brother, Pfc. John Ferrani, just back from Europe, is also home on furlough.

He arrived in this country two weeks ago, spent some time at Camp Miles Standish, Boston, and later went to Camp Dix. Yesterday, to the surprise of his parents, he arrived in this city. He has been granted a two months furlough. He will leave some time in the near future for Atlantic City, and following a rest cure, will be reassigned.

In the 30 months he spent overseas, Sergeant Ferrani saw lots of action. Following basic training at Camp Wheeler, Ga., and Fort Bragg, N. C., he was sent to Africa. He participated in the Tunisia campaign and subsequently fought with a unit of the Ninth Army in Sicily.

TAKEN PRISONER

He was sent to England, was among the Americans who invaded the Normandy beaches on June 6; was wounded during a major engagement in France on June 12; and after being hospitalized for a month, rejoined his outfit.

Following three engagements in France, he fought with his buddies in Belgium and during an encounter in the immediate vicinity of the Siegfried line, on September 18, he was taken prisoner by the Germans.

"They took us back of their lines," the Sergeant said, and kept moving us until we landed in a prison camp at Kustrin, about 60 miles

from Berlin and near the Russian border.

"There were about 2000 in this camp, including Americans, Italians, French and Russians. The treatment accorded the Americans was good, but the food was terrible. I lost about 12 pounds. Each morning we received about three inches of bread and soup. The latter was more like water, with a slight sprinkling of some vegetables. Our evening meal was a cup of coffee.

PRAISES RED CROSS

"Wednesdays and Sundays were special occasions. Sometimes we got butter or cheese, or meat, but the quantity was decidedly small. The only friend we had was the Red Cross. Without that aid I don't know what we would have done.

"The American non-com's were not obliged to work. We sat around all day. All of the privates were obliged to work in factories or in the fields.

"Russian, French and Italian prisoners were compelled to work. They did not get the same treatment that we Americans received, particularly the Russians. For the slightest reason, and in some instances for no reason at all, the German guards would hit them with the butt end of their guns and then kick them, and if they were rendered unconscious, they were carried back to the camp for treatment. There were a few Russian women in the camp but they were not asked to work.

"Most of our guards were Russian or Polish, taken prisoners and then forced to join the German army. They were like us, always planning some way of escaping. As a rule, they treated the prisoners better than the German guards did. We were not permitted to talk to

any of the prisoners, French, Russian or Italian, not even to ask them their name. A wire fence surrounded the camp, and most of it was electrically charged.

"When it became apparent that the Russians were nearing the border of Germany, we were started on a hike to Berlin, 60 miles away, and while traveling, the Russians started dropping mortar and artillery shells near us, and our German guards started running. We returned to camp.

"One of the shells struck in the middle of an American column, killing three and wounding quite a number. We were then packed into trucks and returned to the camp. All of the American wounded were given treatment.

"On this hike the ground was covered with snow, and those who—weakened by hunger—fell by the roadside, were left there.

"Only a short distance from the prison camp was an immense potato patch. The prisoners planted, cultivated and harvested the potatoes, but never got any. They were all sent to the front line. One day as a truck loaded with the potatoes was passing near where we were, an American who made an attempt to get some of them, either fell or slipped from the vehicle and was run over and killed. He was given a proper burial.

"Some of the prisoners were taken to Kustrin and put to work repairing buildings that were damaged by shells, and also repairing highways that suffered through bombardments. The civilians treated the prisoners well, provided they had an opportunity. They would sneak them something to eat, and that was appreciated.

"After being taken prisoners, the Americans were interrogated by German officers, while other groups walked among the prisoners seeking and taking everything of value, particularly watches and rings. They were anxious to get silver.

REDS BREAK THROUGH

"January 31, was a day of joy for the prisoners at Kustrin. On that day the Russians broke through. Tanks rolled into that section and

*Ferrani, Michael
John*

headed for the camp. Some of the guards were fortunate to escape, but most of them were mowed down.

"After our liberation we were sent back of the Russian lines, traveled through Poland to Russia, and boarded a boat at Odessa, which took us to Boston."

BROTHER HOME, TOO

Pfc. John Ferrani, a brother, is also spending a well-earned furlough with his parents, after 35 months of service. He arrived in Bethlehem on April 13, has a 45-day respite, and must rejoin his unit in France.

He was inducted into the armed forces on March 26, 1941, and was assigned to the U. S. Medical Corps. He received his preliminary training at Camp Croft, S. C., and participated in the Carolina maneuvers.

As a member of the 30th General Hospital Unit, he was sent to a base in Scotland, and during the German breakthrough late last year, he was transferred to an infantry unit. He suffered a knee injury, and was subsequently assigned to service with the Quartermasters Corps. On his return to this country he, together with a number of other servicemen, guarded German prisoners on their way to internment camps in this country.

April 24, 1945