

Weihnachten 1944 im Palace - Hotel Wengen

U.S.A.A.F Swiss-Internees Camp Wengen, Switerland

Auszug aus dem Tagebuch von Radio: T/Sgt. George W. Michel, B-24H, Serial Nr. 42-51106, 8th Air-Force, 392 Bomb Group, 576th Squadron, in Wendling gestartet und nach der Mission München am 11. Juli 1944 in Altenrhein notgelandet. Die B-24 H hatte den Namen «Georgia Patch», aber der Name wurde nicht verwendet, bevor das Flugzeug notlandete.

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over to Mr. Gertsch, who seemed rather surprised, we went to see "Daytime Wife".

Dec. 23, 1944

The ski trip that we took today gave me a new boost of confidence that I more than needed. We made 5 trips up the ski lift, with the instructor making each down-hill run more difficult. In several places on the final trip, the grade was more than 45° from horizontal. When you lean forward on such a slope to do a Christie, you think that the bottom, if not yourself too, is going to fall right out of this world. The snow conditions were perfect and we were able to turn just about where and when we chose. Those were the conditions until we got past Wengen-Alp but after that station we had it: the instructor took us through a woodland trail that had never been broken and I mean it when I say we broke it. We were continually dodging trees and stumps: Kobiernicki did the splits around one stump, to say it was close would be putting it mildly. I got a swell Christmas present today in the form of a cable from home. Drake made it home and told them all about this place, I hope. I got a lot of satisfaction out of delivering the Christmas basket to that poor family tonite. It seemed that I slipped half way to Lauterbrunnen to deliver it but they sure were tickled to get it. I don't imagine that the 4 day old baby knew much about what was going on but he sure looked cute to me, that excused him.

Dec. 24, 1944

Yes, the day before Christmas but the way it started out you'd never have known it. However, around noon a bunch of us got a job hauling a load of Red Cross food parcels up to each hotel and at least it somehow



Prof. Luigi de Simone

Michel

Nordgren

Flamia

Fatico

Grediceck

Hederick

Gallupe

McKinnon

25 December 1944

aroused a sleeping Christmas spirit in us because by dinner time, no one had the "blues" anymore. Just seeing those packages from the States did the trick. It sure would have been nice to spend Christmas in a big city where the people live instead of just exist as they do here in Wengen. I heard my first Christmas carols this afternoon coming directly from a naval hospital in Omaha, Neb. I've come to the conclusion that I'm AWOL: not Absent With Out Leave --- just Awful With Out Love. The crowning point of the day came ce soir at the "prof's". Herb and I arrived there stuffed with a half a chicken a piece, French fried potatoes, peas, cider, nuts, cookies and apples. When everyone had arrived, the Christmas tree was lit. Well anyway, the candles were. Something I don't remember ever seeing before but something that has electric lights beat a mile. We spent a good share of the evening in the light of the candles only. It was a dreamy atmosphere and I sure did dream. I wonder what everyone was doing at that time? Oh to be just cuddled up on the davenport with her beside me, soft music, low lights, and no end of time. To be with Mom + Dad just coming from church, on our way home just to be together. Gosh, how many times I've done that and never thought about it. I guess this separation is good for me; for sure, I'm better off than those millions of fellows still fighting tonite. For the rest of the fellows, the evening was livened up by the several bottles of various kinds of wines, one each of rum and the Italian special: grappa! I enjoyed the pastries and coffee but most of all just the Christmas feeling in the room. Feeling that you belong to someone and that someone still cares for you. Just before leaving, he played Santa Claus still more and gave us all presents, with the hint that they weren't to be opened until tomorrow. He said that it was the custom and the time that he would open our little present to him.

Dec. 25, 1944

My first Christmas in a foreign land and it certainly was a lot more jolly than I had ever thought possible. I was no sooner out of bed and opening the professor's present of "Macbeth" in French and English than Joe handed me a box of chocolates. Where and how he ever got the coupons seems to be his own little secret. Funny how some fellows will find something out and then keep their little secret as though they held the fate of the world in their hand. I can't understand it. We all went to church at 10:00 and Joe and I stayed for Communion. It may be a stupid thing to say but for all that I've found out about Communion, it still is a puzzle to me. I think I know what it represents but something is still missing. I wish I could find out what it is. After lunch, I borrowed Tonnesson's skates and tried out the ice rink, paying a franc just to get at the ice. It's the first time that I've ever payed to ice skate. The first half an hour was really rough on my arches, used to the wonderful support in the ski-boots. We left early enough to get back to the hotel for the party given by Mr. & Mrs. Pinehart. They decorated a tree for us and put on those sparklers that we used for the 4th of July in addition to candles and I've never seen anything to compare with it. After the candles were burning brightly and to a background of soft Christmas carols, Mr. Pinehart gave a little speech and then we were given a Red Cross food parcel, a carton of cigarettes, and each of us a package from the hotel owners which contained a bar of soap and a pair of hand-knitted socks. What a lot of work it required to make all of those socks. We entered a rejuvenated dining room at 6:30 for our Christmas dinner. Pine bows were on the tables together with favors. The professor's presence was very proper and he ate with his boys at

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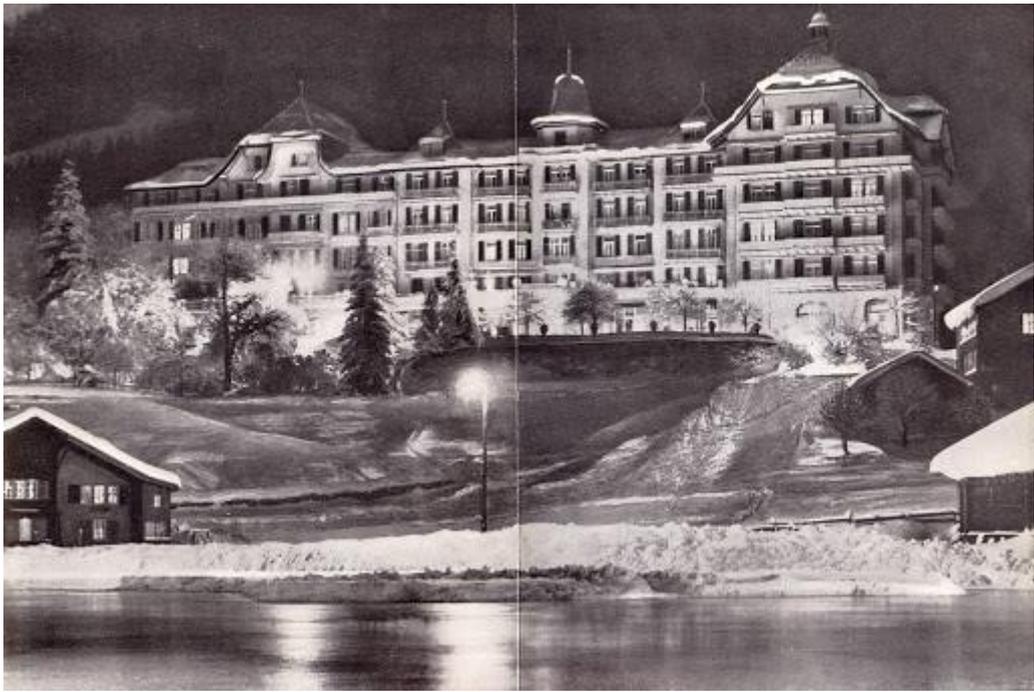
a special table. The duck or whatever it was, was a very good meal. The fellow from the photo shop was in drumming up trade with his camera. After supper we went with the prof. for coffee and apple pie. If only my folks could have known how much I enjoyed this Christmas.

Dec. 26, 1944

Using my Christmas present bar of soap, I did a good sized washing today: 3 suits of underwear, handkerchiefs, and 6 pairs of socks. I'll have to get a picture of my balcony with a good washing hanging out on it. I went skating again this afternoon but I'll have to find a cheaper way of getting on the rink, all of the G.I.'s can't see the reason for paying a franc each time and they're all complaining. The Christmas dance that has been in the wind for a couple of months and I imagine that if I had had a date I would have enjoyed it. As it was, I left after the break during which we sang Christmas carols. Joe and I came back to the room and started cooking up some K-rations. We cooked cheese, milk, and oleo together and it made a delicious sandwich spread. I was unsuccessful in the first attempt and I had a job cleaning out the pan. I told Joe that we'd never make cooks because we didn't have enough dishes and pans to dirty up.

Dec. 27, 1944

Say, it was a good thing that I got up for breakfast. Hardly anyone else did and I had all of the butter that I wanted, that's not exaggerated a bit. I got what was coming to me today for not going skiing the past few days. I could hardly keep control because my legs ached so much; and I had thoughts of trying the Standard. I'd be lucky to finish. I hope to make it in time before the season is over. There should be at least several Americans who can make it.



Quelle: Radio: T/Sgt. George W. Michel