

WWII POW Captain David H. Brown

oral history interview transcript

Source: [Brown, David H. - Interview and Memoir - Oral History Collection of the University of Illinois at Springfield - Illinois Digital Archives \(idallinois.org\)](#), tape 2 of 4

xx:xx {timestamp} = approximate recording timestamp

[Upon arriving in Germany after capture; mentioned later he thought it was in Frankfurt]

Brown 48:42 – I was taken out, and taken over to meet the Luftwaffe captain, who was the head interrogator.

Brown 54:22 – He questioned why I was lying about my rank. I was still wearing 1st Lieutenant bars, and he said that I was a captain. And I had been a captain for 5 weeks, but I had never received the orders. But he knew it!

[After arrival in POW Stalag Luft III, Sagan, East Germany, April 1943]

Brown 54:50 – I had been in Stalag Luft III for about month, 5 weeks, and I get a letter. And boy I was excited to get my first letter from home. And it was from a girl who was a few years ahead of me in high school named Lucille Chance. She had married a fellow by the name of Siegel. And she – it was addressed “Divernon” and talked about the big elm trees in the park and some of the folks around there and...

Interviewer 55:24 – Would this have to be addressed to you at Sagan?

Brown 55:28 – Yes, as a captain with my serial number.

Interviewer 55:30 – How could that have happened?

Brown 55:32 – Well, he was with intelligence in Washington. Her husband was – I found this out later, see? [memoir includes this description: “he was one of our top intelligence men in Washington”]

Interviewer 55:40 – How is that last name spelled?

Brown 55:41 – S-I-E-G-E-L, Fred. Lucille was his wife. She was the one that signed the letter, Lucille Chance Siegel. It was written like it was written in Divernon, but it was a coded letter, and I didn't know that. So here after I received the letter... I only had it 15-20 minutes and [Colonel Clark, top American POW] says, "You'll have to come with me, Captain Brown." ...The German had told me I was a captain, and I didn't tell anybody else. And it was official then, see. ...I had to go with him to give them my coded number so they could break the code. And they told me what was in the letter – it was information that parts of a radio were coming in with the next shipment of Red Cross parcels. And at that time, if those had been intercepted by the Germans it would have been death, you know. I didn't receive any more, and I was just as happy I didn't. In a few more weeks I started getting a letter a month or so from my family.

[The story continues that this information and those radio parts were what enabled the prisoners to get information from the BBC. Eventually this led to the March 1944 escape attempt that was dramatized later in the movie “The Great Escape.”]