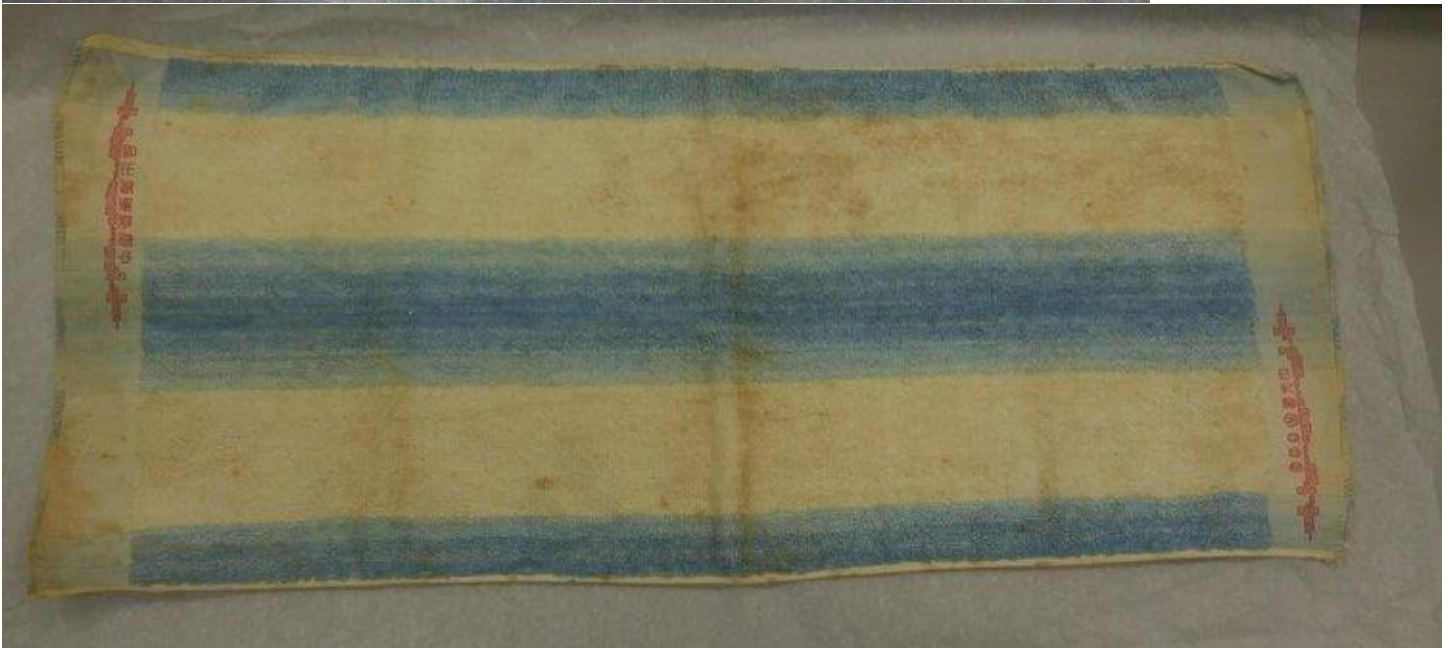


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Milton Native Serves 22 Months as POW During Korean War

(PA Military Museum, J. Gleim, Museum Curator)



John Thomas Strine used these objects while interned in a Chinese prisoner of war camp during the Korean War.



Strine, a native of Milton, Pennsylvania enlisted in the US Army Reserve in 1943. He joined the Army Aviation Cadet program for pilot training but failed to pass his pilot's test. Instead, Strine trained as an airborne radio operation and was assigned to be a B-17 radio operation. He went overseas in January 1945 as a member of the 527th Bomb Squad, 279th Bomb Group and participated in 21 bombing missions over Germany. He was discharged in November 1945 having achieved the rank of Technical Sergeant E-6.

TSG Strine re-enlisted in 1948 as Cold War tensions in Korea were coming to a head. Strine entered the Air Force as a Sergeant, serving as a Radio Operator Mechanic for the Berlin Airlift, then as a Radio Operator in Reconnaissance and Air Refueling squadrons until May 1951 when he was assigned to the 307th Bomb Wing in Okinawa, flying combat missions over Korea.

On his 25th mission, October 23, 1951, Strine was shot down. He and his surviving crew members were taken prisoner and transported by the Chinese to a prisoner of war camp along the Yalu River in Korea. They remained there a brief time before being taken to Camp 2, a specialized POW compound for officers and aviators.

At Camp 2, prisoners received clothing and equipment including the spoon, tin cup, and small towel seen here. The prisoners, who hailed from the United States, Australia, Great Britain, South Africa, Turkey, and Ireland, were assigned chores, and went to anti-US propaganda classes. A British prisoner, who was a preacher, conducted a small religious service every Sunday. The Chinese sent a doctor through twice during Strine's stay at Camp 2. Most prisoners passed time making wood carvings out of scraps, playing with homemade decks of cards, or playing baseball with homemade equipment.

In December of 1951 a POW list was published and it included Strine's name. He recalls that once the list came out, their treatment in camp improved. Eventually more of Strine's crew showed up at Camp 2 after having been interred at a specialized interrogation camp known as "Pak's Palace". When peace talks began, more improvements to the camp came in forms of sports equipment, new clothing, and supplies. Once the peace agreement was signed the prisoners were loaded onto trucks and rail cars and transported to a repatriation camp at Munsan-ni, Korea. In total, Strine was imprisoned from October 23, 1951 until August 31, 1953.

When he returned home to the US, Strine's hometown of Milton greeted him with a parade. He remained on active duty with the US Air Force until 1966. John Thomas Strine died in 2015 and is buried in Stone County, Missouri.