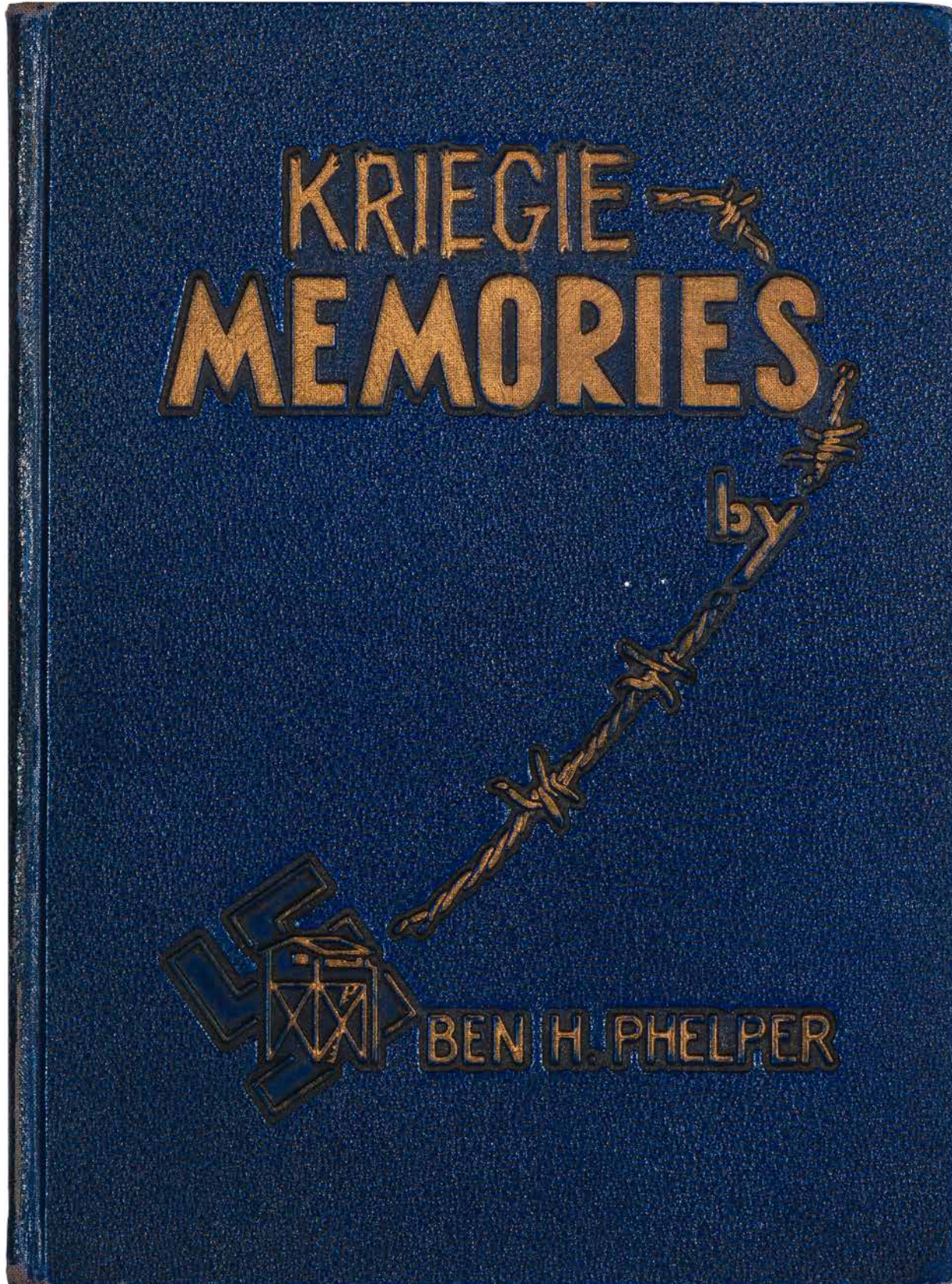


Ben H. Phelper

Kriegie Memories

Aurora, Illinois: Barker Printing Company 1946

\$1600



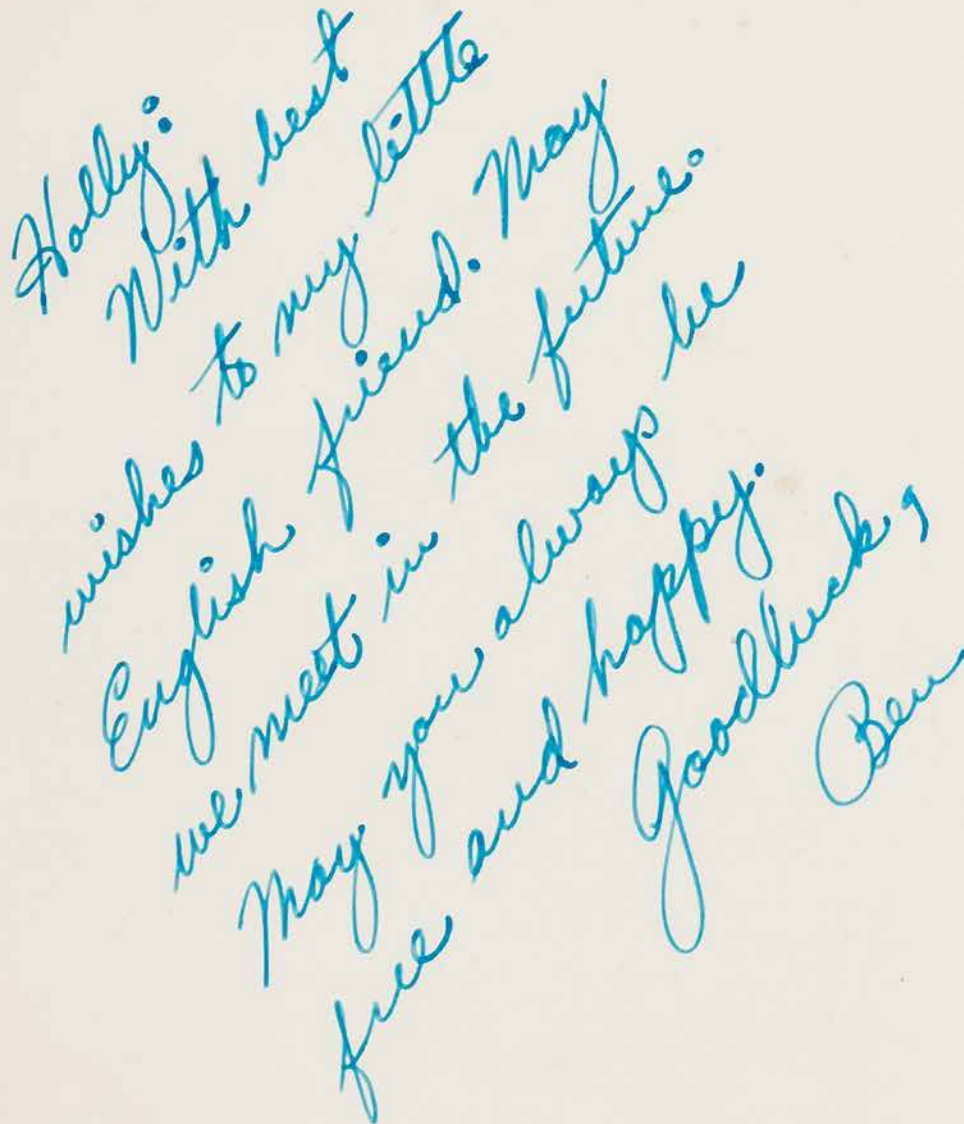
Solo edition. 286 images. Small quarto. Original blue pebble-grain cloth, gilt. [62pp.] Very good with rubbing and worn edges.

Presented to Holly "my little English friend" on the second preliminary. Printed in small numbers as a keepsake for friends, family, and fellow soldiers, one might expect that all copies were signed. A remarkable memento from the Second World War, dedicated to "all our buddies killed in action, by civilians or in the prison camps."

The photographs in this remarkable account were all taken while interred. Phelper must have gone to extraordinary lengths to conceal his camera (almost certainly a Box Brownie). The text remains lighthearted throughout and we learn of many of the pranks played on German guards, hiding British pilots, complaints about the food and laundry, an account of the "Cardboard Playhouse", the improvised theatre organized in camp. (Phelper notes in an aside that "some of the lads sure did look good when they made up as a girl. One had to look again to be sure they were in the right place.") As the war drew to a close the Germans allowed music to be played a couple of hours a day and in January 1945 screened a couple of films. More typical events are recorded such as roll call, Germans puncturing tins brought in with Red Cross parcels, funerals for dead POWs, air raids, and as Allied gains continued, we learn of the constant fears of retaliation by the Germans. The camp was evacuated on 8 April, and prisoners were led through the Danube valley until the 25th when they established another camp at the fork of the Innes and Salzach rivers and stayed there until they were liberated a week later on May 2nd.

Phelper enlisted in September 1942 and rose to the rank of Staff Sergeant. His capture was first reported by the Red Cross on August 17, 1943 when he was listed among POW's at Stalag 17B near Kerms, Austria. He spent nearly two years at the camp before liberation. He published two other memoirs of Stalag 17B, "Shot Down" (1947) and "The Sweat Box" (1961). *Kriegie Memories* precedes both and is the scarcest of his works.

[BTC#412819]



Holly:
With best
wishes to my little
English friend. May
we meet in the future.
May you always be
free and happy.
Goodluck,
Ben



I dedicate these pictures to all our buddies killed in action, by civilians or in the prison camps.

Many of my pictures did not come out good due to sea water, length of time before developing and poor wrapping. In fact—those taken inside the barracks did not come out at all. I have drawn a few illustrations of the bunks so you can show your friends what they were like.

The above picture is of myself and my private nook in barrack 37A, Stalag 17B where I ate, slept, spent my time drawing and carried on as prisoner or should I say "Luftgangster No. 113204."