

# Harold Blalack

106th Infantry Division

**November 12, 2004 - Local celebration honors former prisoners of war**

**Veterans and their families craned their necks, searching the sky for airplanes they could hear before seeing. Fingers shot up, pointing as three World War II models came into view. Two more planes flew overhead, dropping four members of UF's Falling Gator's Parachute Club into the circling formation WWII aircrafts. Colored smoke filled the sky as the U.S. and Prisoner of War flags were flown to the ground by the skydivers, opening the Veterans Day celebration Thursday at the Kanapaha Veterans Memorial.**

**This year's celebration gave a special tribute to local former prisoners of war and soldiers missing in action. In his opening remarks, Jim Lynch, director of the Alachua County Office of Veterans Services, thanked the veterans and their families for their contributions in various U.S. wars.**

**"Your courage cannot be diminished with time," he said.**

**Beginning at 10:30 a.m., the celebration lasted 2 1/2 hours. According to Lynch, almost 3,000 people attended, 1,000 of them war veterans. The program featured music by the Ft. Clarke Middle School Symphonic Band, Swing Shift, the SFCC Show Choir and trumpet players from Buchholz High School as well as presentations by local Girl and Boy Scout troops and members of the UF Navy ROTC.**

**Judy Lambert, whose father served in WWII, said she enjoyed the ceremony and found it to be very moving. "Tears welled up in my eyes," she said. "I don't realize how patriotic I am 'til I get out here."**

**Former POW, 1st Lt. Junius Jones of Alachua, spoke of his experience in WWII. "I had a hankering to fly," and so he entered the Air Force, he said. He told his story of being shot down from 13,000 feet above Germany on March 25, 1945. He then spent time in a POW camp. Speaking directly to fellow POWs during the ceremony, he added, "Aren't we lucky - lucky to be here?"**

**Harold Blalack, a soldier in the [106th infantry division](#) of the U.S. Army in WWII, was one of 48 local POWs recognized by Lynch.**

**After being captured by German soldiers, Blalack was held eight days in a railroad boxcar before he was transported to the Bad Orb German POW camp. "I remember being given one slice of bread one time," he said, recalling his days in the boxcar.**

**In the four months following, Blalack suffered a 100-pound weight loss in Bad Orb, as German soldiers confiscated Red Cross packages containing food and clothing. It was the middle of winter, he said, and he had to survive freezing temperatures with few articles of clothing and no blankets.**

**Blalack described this year's ceremony as one of the best he has attended. "It was super," he said. (CHELSEA DONALDSON, *Independent Alligator Writer*)**

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