Life In Stalag IX-B
Story of an American held in a German POW camp

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Stalag IX-B a prisoner of war camp in the Third Reich during World War II. First Americans arrived on Christmas Day in 1944. They were captured during the initial fighting of the Battle of the Bulge.

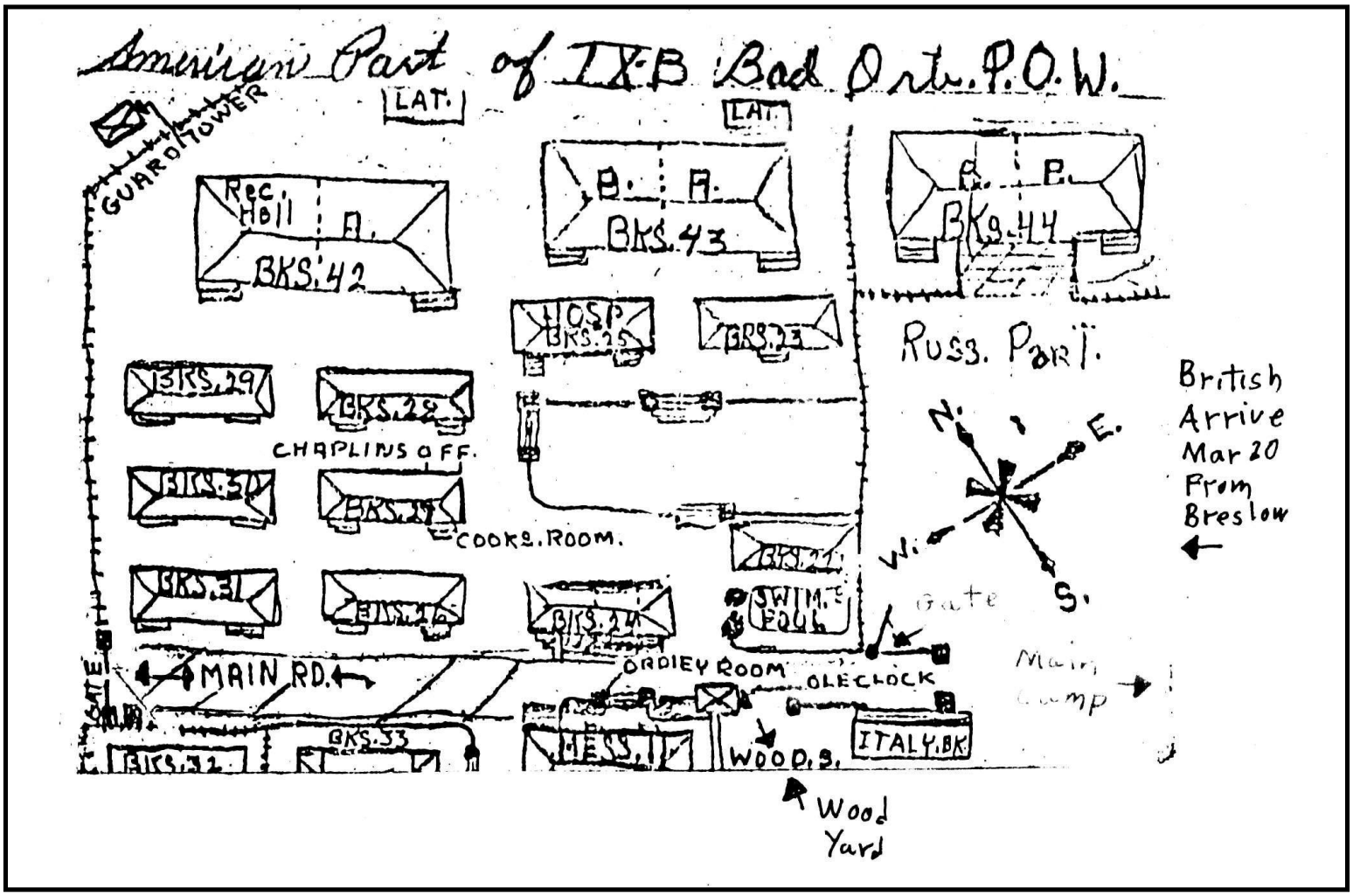
This battle was the largest land battle fought by the American Army from the Civil War to the present. Over 500,000 Americans were involved in the 40 day battle.

Almost 25% of the Americans captured during World War II were lost here.

Close to 20% of all Americans captured during World War I to the present time were taken during this battle.

The 106th Infantry Division was at the center of the German attack. The American high command ordered that the regiments remain in their original positions despite being isolated by the advancing enemy. Two of these regiments and their artillery were cut off and could not be re-supplied. After four days they were hopeless cut off without food, ammo, and medical supplies.

The Division lost over 7,000 men, almost 60% in the first four days. The 28th Infantry Division, on the right flank of the 106th, also suffered heavy causalities including their I10th Infantry Regiment and many ended up in IX-B.
The German Army plans were that Stalag IX B, near Bad Orb, would only be used to classify American POWS so they could be sent to permanent camps. Due to the large number of men captured and deteriorating conditions many of the privates and private first class were never moved. According to several International Red Cross Reports this camp was considered not acceptable.



Raymond Brown of Leeds Utah drew this map in the diary he kept while a POW. Brown was a gunner in Battery A, 590th FA, 106th Infantry Division when he was captured December 19th. At Stalag IX-B, his home was barracks 24, directly across from the kitchen. A couple of times the Germans provided the prisoners with used office forms to be used as toilet paper. A number of men made up dairies from this material. These diaries are the main source of reliable information about the camp. The American compound was on the top of the mountain. The rest of Stalag XIB was to the right and sloped down hill.

The gate to the left went outside the camp. On Sunday, January 28, we were lined up on the field above barracks 43. German combat troops manned machine guns on the other side of the barbed wire facing us. The GI's were kept standing at attention for hours in the snow. We waited for the Germans to start shooting us. This was when we learned about the German Soldier being attacked in the kitchen.

Pete House

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CAPTURE, DID IT REALLY HAPPEN?

The human mind sometimes plays strange and wondrous tricks on the owner. Two people may witness the same event and come up with two different interpretations. Also when the body is put under tremendous stress the mind often changes what we think we saw. To be a prisoner of war is incomprehensible unless one were to experience it first hand. Quite often the person has been under extreme stress even before the capture, often without sleep and food for days.

I was a member of the 106th Infantry Division. We were part of the US 1St Army assigned to guard some 20 miles in front of the German Army in the Ardennes the first of December, 1944. I was a 50 cal. machine gunner just before we left Camp Atterbury in Battery A, 590th Field Artillery Battalion. Have never fired a machine gun before or since.

The following is based upon my memory, the brief diary I kept, and the writings of others. Whenever information is derived from others it will be noted in footnotes. Over the past few years I have collected hundreds of biographical sketches, diaries, and official documents pertaining to Stalag IX B near Bad Orb, Germany. The plan is to organize this material and donate it to the Unites States Prisoner Of War Museum, Andersonville, Ga.

When first captured I had the feeling that war was over for me. No more cold, no more hunger, no more danger. This feeling was soon replaced with fear of the unknown, what terrible thing was going to happen next. The total helplessness, I no longer controlled my own destiny. Probably one of the worst of times was being locked up in freight cars at Limburg for three days and being bombed during the day by our own Air Force and at night by the British RAF. Fortunately the box car I was in did not receive a hit.

BACKGROUND

The Battle of the Bulge began at 6 AM on December 16, 1944. The German attacked along a ninety mile front guarded by three Infantry Divisions, 99 on the north, 106th in the middle, and 28th on the south. The gap between the 99th and 106th was guarded by the 14th Cavalry Group, an organization not designed to hold ground. My division , the 106th, took the brunt of the German attack from three Panzer Armies. The 28th Infantry Division lost most of their 110 Infantry Regiment. The 99th Infantry Division did not take the hit like the 28th and 106th. We were ordered to hold our ground. Meanwhile the Germans successfully cut us off from the rest of the Division. After four days of fighting we were out of ammunition, food, and medical supplies. There was no chance of being relieved or fighting back to our own lines.

SURRENDER

On the morning of December 19th I was driving a 3/4 ton weapons carrier towing a 105

mm howitzer. A 2.5 ton truck was supposed to be the prime mover, but, we only had three left. After daylight we pulled off the road and up a hill to the left and went into firing position. Only had three rounds in the battery. Took tremendous heavy fire from the Germans. The two Infantry regiments, 422 and 423, and two Field Artillery Battalions, 589 and 590 were forced to surrender.

After the shelling lifted Joe Krause came by and told me we were going to surrender. We decided not to become prisoners so started running through the woods. We came to a clearing where a number of officers were standing around including our battalion commander, Lt. CoP. Vaden Lackie.

With his permission about twenty of us (including 1st. Lt. El Creel) attempted to get back to our lines. We ran in a western direction for what seemed about an hour until we came over the crest of a hill where we came under direct fire from German antiaircraft 20 mm guns in position along a north-south road. Those of us that survived surrendered. I believe this was the road between Bleialf and Schonberg. This part of the Belgium German border was aptly called Schnee Eifel (Snow Mountains.) It was heavily mountainous area covered with evergreen forests.

ON THE ROAD

After capture we were assembled by the side of the road. Krause shared a "K" ration[1] with me. While waiting the Germans prepared their AA Weapons for transport. A German officer told one of the Americans to help. He said it was against the Geneva Convention. The German said "Ya Geneva Convention" and shot him.

After they had several hundred Americans we started walking to Germany. We had to carry our wounded the best we could until we arrived in a town where we were told to leave them.. I believe this was Bleialf. The road east through the mountains was crowded with German men and equipment moving into battle. What surprised me were the number of horses used to move men and equipment. Their armored infantry were riding bicycles. The kitchens were a two wheeled cart that looked like a roofers tar cooker pulled by a horse.

The roads that day were packed with tanks, artillery, and other gear. This was a very tiring march as we had to continuously climb sides of the road around the German equipment. I had new combat boots and rough wool socks. This caused a blister on my left heal that broke and bled.

We were under the command of a German warrant officer who was riding in what looked like a Volkswagen. As soon as he could get by the equipment on the road he would come speeding through our column blowing his horn. Then he would be stopped for more tanks and trucks. I was a very tired 20 year old who finally was too stubborn to move out of his way. This upset him so he got out of his vehicle, pulled his pistol and aimed it at my head. I heard a click. The German in the turret of a tank along side of the road had cocked his machine gun, aimed it at the warrant officer and yelled something in German. The warrant officer put his pistol back in the holster and got back in his vehicle. This German tank commander who saved my life wore the Silver Skull of the SS.

Arrived in Prum after dark. The city was badly damaged as it had been fought through twice. We were put up for the night in a shelled college building. Had to sleep on a stone

floor in a room with the windows broken out. Nothing to eat or drink. The floor was too cold for me to sleep. This room must have been a science lecture room as a lab was connected to it. The next morning I found a screwdriver and roll of copper wire that I borrowed. This room became our latrine.

Well after daylight we were again lined up in columns. All the time I was a POW we were always arraigned in groups of 100 men, 5 lines of 20 men. My guess was they only taught their guards how to count up to twenty. It sometimes was quite comical as the guard slowly walked along counting in German 1, 2, 3, etc. when they would forget and have to start over. We continued walking towards the east. This time the road was mostly level.

We stopped once in a small village where we could get water from a pump. Other times we would grab a handful of snow to eat or water from a ditch. The guards didn't allow this but it happened. Once I grabbed a turnip from a pile along the road to eat. The guards only stopped to relieve themselves. When one would get hungry he would produce a piece of bread, sausage, cheese, etc. from his pocket or pack and eat, never slowing down.

On the road it was very evident that the German transport was in critical shape. Almost every truck was towing another truck due to fuel shortage. Many busses and trucks had a device that heated wood to force the gas out. The gas was piped to the carburetor to fuel the engine. Every 50 - 100 miles the vehicle would have to stop. Fresh wood was placed in the sealed tank on top. The older wood had become a sort of charcoal and was put into the firebox and rekindled and the vehicle moved again.

We arrived in Gerolstein after dark. They gave us some hot liquid which I learned later was the infamous ersatz coffee[2]. I was put on the second floor of a wire basket factory. I was lucky, the room was warm. Many had to sleep outside in the snow or mud.

The next day, the 21st, as we wandered out of the factory the Germans gave a can of what looked like corned beef to each four men. I joined three others. They used my pocket knife to open the can and broke off the point. Out on the road there were thousands of Americans lined up in groups of 100 just standing around. The good citizens of Geroldstein were walking around talking and watching us. The best show in town - members of the beaten American Army. Next to us was a small park that became our personal latrine (abet public).

Was able to move up and down the line until I located almost 50 men from my battery. We all got together. One of them, Corpurio Rusutio[3], got sick so I took him back to the factory to try to get help. When I returned they counted men and would not let me get in line so had to move to the rear of the column. The column slowly moved through town to the train station. German troops and horses were being unloaded from box cars

While waiting on the station platform a German full colonel of infantry stopped me and asked in American dialect how the 106th Infantry Division was doing. What a surprise as there was no insignia on my uniform. I said I was doing OK.

64 of us were loaded into my box car (actually it wasn't mine as it belong to the Germans.). The only way we could all sit down was to sit front to back in rows. Think what we were sitting in -- the previous occupants hand been horses. There was no possibility of lying down. During World War I this size box car was designated to hold either 40 men or 8 horses.

106th DIVISION FIRST ACROSS THE RHINE

The train left Geroldstein and crossed the Rhine River at Koblenz and stopped at Limburg where we stayed for three days. It seems to me that we should get some sort of ribbon as the very first American unit across the Rhine River. Apparently the tracks were so heavily bombed we could not be moved. Here we had great seats to the allied bombers, as the RAF bombed us at night and the USAAF took over during the day. Actually they were bombing the close by factories and maybe railroad yards in general. Again lucky me as our box car was not hit. During bombing raids the guards would run to the nearby shelters. We were kept locked in the box cars. During one daylight raid, I climbed out the window and opened the door as the guards were returning. Thought sure I was going to be shot. On the 23rd they let us out of the box car to relieve ourselves along the tracks.

All the rails that I saw were heavily damaged due to bombing and strafing. As the train moved through railroad yards we moved back and forth around the bomb craters. All along the right of way were burned and damaged engines and cars. Up to 200 yards along the tracks were thousands of bomb craters.

On the 24th an elderly German civilian brought two buckets of water to each box car, (for our 64 men.) Don't know if this was a nice German or part of the procedure but it was needed. After dark several candles were lit and we sang some Christmas Songs and gave prayers, after all it was Christmas Eve. Then we settled down for another night of bombing, The Germans opened the box car door and gave us some of their famous ersatz coffee. Then they provided us with bread, margarine, and something they called marmalade[4]. What a feast. Again more songs and prayers. It happened, the trained started moving away from Limburg! No more bombing.

And it got cold. When it became daylight on Christmas Day we could see about one inch of frost on the bolts on the inside of the box car.

From the 17th on I had almost nothing to eat until Christmas Eve when the Germans gave us some bread, margarine, and ersatz coffee in the box car while at Limburg. We were confined to the box car from December 22 until Christmas Day when we arrived at Bad Orb. No water, no heat, no toilets, in fact there was not enough room to lie down!

ARRIVAL AT BAD ORB

On Christmas morning the train backed up to the small mountain village of Bad Orb which is about 55 km ENE of Frankfort am Main at latitude 51.9 North. This is the latitude about 140 miles north of the state of Maine.. We were ordered out of the box cars and lined up in the usual groups of 100 men. The train left. We stood there in the bitter cold mountain air. 1 didn't have my drivers mackinaw, gloves, scarf or wool cap. There was timber stacked along side the tracks as if it was to be shipped out. It was interesting to see a large Coca Cola sign on a building. Bad Orb seemed to be a tourist and timber center. Some time later another train backed up to the town and more Americans were unloaded. There were 985 of us[5] that arrived at Stalag IX B on Christmas Day in 1944.

We were the first Americans. There were already Serbs, Russians, and black British Empire troops from Johannesburg, South Africa.

The German guards at the railroad and who brought us to the camp were mostly foresters wearing knickers and alpine hats. As we were marched through the village of Bad Orb many of the citizens were walking around. Mostly older people and children. Must have been right after Christmas Church Services. I noticed one lady hand out some bread and water to the Americans as they walked by her home.

It was a long hard march up the mountain. Remember, we had eaten very little the past week. Must have been 5 km and mostly up!

STALAG IX B

Stalag IX B was located on the top of a mountain. The German headquarters was at the lower level. Further up the hill was the Russian compound. The American compound was on the very top where the large masonry barrack, 42 and 43 were located. The wooden barracks were in rows down the south-west side of the mountain. A road ran from the main gate up through the Russian compound, through the American compound and through a gate out the camp.

FINALLY - PRISON CAMP

Every since becoming prisoners of war our guards kept telling us that as soon as we were registered in a POW camp we would receive food, medical help, and clothing. Here we were in a camp. No more walking, no more being bombed in locked box cars. Warm food and clothing at last. The war was over for us. Tennis, ping pong, reading, etc. After all, that was the way we treated their POWS. Another big surprise.

INTERROGATION

After entering camp several of us were moved to a building to be interrogated. There was a man in an American uniform that told me my colonel had told them everything. It didn't sound right. How did he know who my colonel was? A German corporal interrogated me. He was a mean SOB. He was very upset when all I gave him was my name, rank, and serial number. He asked my religion. I refused. He asked how they would know what type of service to provide if I died. This seemed reasonable at the time so I said Protestant. When I refused any further information he put me outside in the cold in a barb wire compound with several others. Don't think we would have lasted long under these conditions. By mistake someone opened another door and said to leave. We were moved to the top of the camp with the other Americans.

There we were again lined up and searched. Put everything in my helmet. German wanted my Tonette[6], a small plastic flute like instrument. Argued with him. Had a roll of copper wire and small screwdriver that I found in Prum. Planned on making a crystal radio with George Hill. George and I roomed together before the Battle of the Bulge started and we had a crystal radio. When the guard tried to take these away I ran over to the rest of the Americans. He seemed confused and let me go.

OUR FIRST HOT MEAL - GRASS SOUP

We were led by a door where we received eating pots. I was lucky as I received a nice cooking pot, about 1 quart size, with a bail. Next we went by a small building with serving windows where we received a ladle of soup. Next they took us to a barracks. Somewhere along the line they gave me half of a very worn blanket. This was about all the material we received from the Germans during our 94 days in Stalag IX B.

It was now dusk and we were locked in for the night. I found a lower bunk near the door and ate all the soup. No spoon or fork, only fingers. The soup seemed to be mostly some green stuff that looked like partly dried carrot tops. It seemed great at the time. We named this stuff grass soup. A man nearby couldn't eat all his ~up so finished his as well. Not such a good idea as it turned out to be a great intestinal cleanser!

THE BARRACKS

My first barracks was 43A [7], one of three large masonry barracks. It had two large rooms each of which held about 250 men. The two rooms were separated by what appeared to be a wash room. There was a small room by the outside door that had a hole in the floor over a cess pool.. This was the nighttime toilet for 250 men. That night a few of us came down with diarrhea, many more than the one holler would handle. What a mess for the first night in a POW camp. The Germans got very upset the next morning because some of us could not wait for the single potty. They detailed several others to clean up the mess. No mops, buckets, just their handkerchiefs, hands, and helmets. By the third day most of the men had diarrhea.

Most of the barracks had triple deck bunks. Some were metal with three boards to sleep on. Many were made entirely out of wood. They had a burlap sack for a mattress. These were stuffed with excelsior and weeds, usually very little stuffing. Most of the men used this stuffing for toilet paper.

MY FINAL HOME

The second day the commissioned officers were moved into 43A and I was moved to barracks 24. Except for 42 and 43, all the barracks were wooden structures. They had two large rooms that held about 80 men each. These two rooms were separated by a wash room. There was a small cadre room at each end of the building. The Chief American Man of Confidence lived in the room at the right, while our American cooks were on the left.

The floors were wood except for the wash room which was concrete. You could see daylight between the cracks in the boards. The glass in some of the windows was missing and the holes covered with cardboard or rags. Each of the two main rooms had a large wood burning space heater.

In our wash room was a closet size room with a hole in the floor. Under the floor was a cesspool with an outside opening. This was the toilet for 160 men. The wash room had a large wash basin on one wall. It had a cold water faucet. And it was cold. The wash basin did not have a drain so the water fell to the floor and flowed across the room to a drain that led to the main street. This drain became our urinal.

LATRINE FACILITIES

Most of the barracks had a room with a hole in the floor about 10 inches in diameter for a toilet. Under was a cess pool with an outside opening to clean it out. There was at least one separate latrine building that could be used during the day. Just outside barracks 43A was a large pit with several poles that you could sit on. On at least one occasion the poles gave way dumping the occupant into the mess.

Work details were assigned to empty the cess pools. They used a German helmet nailed to a poll for a dipper and had what looked like one of the small European milk carts to hail the stuff away. Remember none of us had more that the cloths on our backs and there were no real shower or other wash facilities available to us.

AMERICAN COMPOUND HEADQUARTERS

Barracks 24 became headquarters for the Americans at Stalag IX B. The Germans selected our Chief American Man of Confidence[8]. In German POW camps this was the person they dealt with. He and several assistants lived in the cadre room on the right. I often felt that he might be a German plant.

Directly across the street was the American compound kitchen. Just to the south-east of the kitchen was the clock tower. Next was the fire wood yard. The American compound hospital was behind barracks 24 (north-east).

WORK IN CAMP

Stalag IX B was not considered a work camp by the Germans. Therefore we received the least food of anyone in the Third Reich. Those on work details normally did not receive extra food. These details included breaking up rocks into gravel, carrying large logs from the forest for fire wood, copping fire wood, digging graves, dipping out cess pools under the barracks, digging bomb shelters (trenches), repair work around camp, and at the end, hauling water.

CAMP WATER SYSTEM

Water was pumped up the mountain by electricity for cooking and personal use. In March the power lines were knocked out by our Air Force. The Germans had auxiliary pumps but they soon ran out of fuel.

The only way to get water to our camp was to carry it in 55 gallon barrels from the German Officers quarters below the stalag. Four men could hardly handle one of these barrels. This water was strictly for the kitchen. No water for washing or drinking. There was a concrete lined pond or pool near our gate. We began drinking from this. The gL1~d~ ~id i~~t to as it was polluted. It is doubtful if we could have survived through April without water.

WHO WAS THERE

At first IX B held everyone from colonel to private, doctors, chaplains, dentists. Most were from the 28th and 106th Infantry Divisions. Through the rest of the war Americans continued to arrive. We represented just about every ground force unit in Europe except

Italy. On January 25 the camp reached its peak of 4070 Americans[9].

The officers included Col. C. C. Cavender, CO of 423 Infantry Regiment, and Lt Col. Vaden Lackie, CO of 590 FA Bn, and 1st. LtAlan Jones, son of the 106th Commanding General. On January 10th the commissioned officers were moved to 13 B at Hammelburg. This is the camp that General George Patton sent elements of the 4th Armored Division on March 27th. to release his son in law, Lt. Col. John Knight Waters. Unfortunately there was an SS Division in the vicinity. Col. Waters was severely wounded and did not escape. In fact most were recaptured.[1°] The surviving officers were marched to XIII D, Nuremberg, and finally VII A Moosburg. My former battery commander, Edward L. Luzzie lost his leg on the march due to bombing.

Left behind at IX B to take care of the enlisted men were Capt. 0. C. Buxton 28 Div. and 1st Lt. Josh P. Sutherland 424 Infantry, Medical Corps, Captain M. A. Eder, Dental Corps, 1st. Lt. S. R. Neel 422 Inf. and 1st. Lt. (Father) E. J. Hurle~', Chaplain[11].

On January 25 the 127512 non-commissioned officers were shipped some 80 km north to Stalag IX A at Zigenhein where they stayed until liberated March 30. That left only privates and privates first class except for the officers listed and several medics.

On 28 February 1000 privates were marched from Stalag XII A at Limburg to IX B.[13] There was a constant flow of Americans into the camp up to April 1.

OTHER NATIONALS AT IX B

Our first contact with other POWS were the Russians. They did our cooking and seemed to run the camp. After we started to do our own cooking they just seemed to me to disappear. Just not conscious of them after that. The sergeant in charge of the South Africans told me that IX B was a base for the Russians working on the farms in the valleys below. When they screwed up or the German farmers were dissatisfied with them they were returned to camp and disappeared.

Based upon what I saw and heard the Germans must have gassed the Russians and buried them in the beautiful cemetery outside the camp.

This same sergeant told me that his battalion was from Johannesburg and was captured in the North African fighting. Their prison ship was sunk in the Mediterranean. Those that survived were bombed in their prison camp in France and again on the way to Germany.

He now only had about 30 men and they were in charge of food distribution in camp. I met him one day as they were delivering food to our kitchen. He was the only one who could speak English. Having lived in Hong Kong, Shanghai, Tsingtao, the Philippines, it was easy for me to communicate with him, and we talked many times.

There were a number of Serbs, I don't know how many.

On March 20 about 2,047 British non-corns arrived.[14] Many had been captured in 1940 at Dunkirk. They had been worked in a mine in Poland where they received regular Red Cross packages. While in Poland the Brits were able to trade their extra German issue food to the other prisoners for money, jewelry, and watches, thus were well off. They were placed in the compound next to us where the Russians had been and at first we

had free access to them.

It amazed me on my first visit to see three Brits with a little device with a crank and fan. One of them turned the crank and through system of pulleys it turned a fan forcing air through a fireplace. They fed bits of excelsior, dried grass, and wood chips to boil water for their tea. It was made from the cans in their Red Cross packages. They made a soldering iron, using solder from the tin cans and orange juice for the acid. Prisoners for four years, they had their twice daily cup of tea complete with Carnation milk and sugar, and we were starving! In just a few days the Germans closed the gate and gave orders that anyone talking to them through the fence would be shot by the tower guards.

Near the end a group of French women and children arrived. Some of the children were new-born. There was one very old Frenchman, but I guess he wasn't too old because of all the babies. I believe they were being transported somewhere else and the German transportation was collapsing.

OUR OWN HOLOCAUST

Some time in late January or early February the Germans ordered all the American Jews to move to a separate barracks. Maybe it was barracks 32 or 33. They said that this was proper under the Geneva Convention because it was done in Germany. After all didn't we separate blacks from whites in our own Army? Again sounded reasonable. This changed the whole compound organization as most of our interpreters were Jews. I visited with these men several times.

Suddenly they were no longer in camp. On February 8 the Germans moved 350 men to Berga am Elster. There were 120 -200 Jews[15] and the rest, of course, were not Jews. They called this Stalag IX C although they already had a IX C[16]. I believe this was done to hide the fact that Berga was actually a slave labor camp.

Berga am Elster was near the Czech border and part of the Buchanwald concentration camp complex These 350 American POWS weit~ thgging a cave compk"A f4 manufacturing heavy water for the German Atomic Weapons project. They worked with slave laborers under the control of the SS. They worked 10 hours a day 7 days a week with jack hammers, shovels, and picks. Many did not survive.[17]

After I returned home and heard about the death-camps I figured the Germans killed all the Jews shipped from IX B. Finely at the 106 Infantry Division Association 1989 Reunion in Chicago I heard that some survived. Now have the names and current addresses of 46 men who were sent to Berga and have communicated with many of them.'[18]

RAW RECRUITS

One day, probably in February, I met three young men dressed in new style winter gear (I was now a two year veteran) near the kitchen. They had just arrived in camp. We asked them what division they were with. They didn't know. In fact they didn't even know what company, platoon, or squad. They had about ten weeks in Infantry Replacement Training Center when they were given complete gear and flown to Europe. As soon as they landed they were moved by trucks to a point where a sergeant took them to foxholes. This was at night. He told them in which direction the Germans were

and left. The next thing they knew they were captured by Germans from another direction!

CONDITIONS IN CAMP

The worst things about being a POW was the continuous cold, lack of food, and boredom. We arrived in the camp starved and did not receive even a maintenance diet. The constant cold burned up many calories. Some suggest that it takes 1800 calories just to maintain the body. This does not count the additional calories needed to keep warm. Most of the men simply stayed in the bunks all day trying to keep warm. The daily routine was wake up for the ersatz coffee and roll call, wait for the noon soup, evening bread and ersatz tea, and roll call, then back to bed.

FOOD AT STALAG IX B

Our kitchen was located in a small building on the main camp road directly across from my barracks (24). It had three large pots built into masonry bases. The cooks used wood for fuel. This is where the ersatz coffee and tea was prepared and the daily soup cooked. There were three serving windows facing the street where some barracks could get their soup. On the outside wall of the kitchen was a black board where the German mess sergeant would list the ingredients each day.

When we arrived at Stalag IX B Russian POWS did the cooking. It was awful. Eventually we were able to put Americans in the kitchen and the soup improved. We talked the Germans into providing some sort of cereal for the soup instead of the greens. This reduced the terrible diarrhea rate. There was almost no meat or fat in the soup. On the blackboard the German mess sergeant would write down how much fat was in the soup per person.

Sometimes it got up to 20 grams. But, could you trust the Germans?

One time my soup contained the jawbone of a pig, another time an ear. Once a dead horse was brought in on a wagon. That must have provided meat in the soup for days.

In the evening we received a loaf of bread for six men. This was a very poor quality black bread, maybe a pound. Sometimes it was covered with what looked like saw dust. Sometime, probably after January, many of us felt that the Germans used sawdust as a filler. Quite often it was very sour.

In my barracks we organized into six man sections. Each section took care of slicing their loaf of bread. Your share of a loaf of bread was about two inches thick. We soon rotated who cut the bread each day. The cutter then had the last choice. The next night he had first choice and so on. You have to remember that the Germans did not give us knives to cut the bread. I had a nice Case pen knife that our section used. The point was broken off. Other sections broke off part of a metal bunk, sharpening it on the concrete latrine floor. Some of the men would slice their bread thin and toast it by sticking it to the hot side of the stove. They insisted it was more healthy.

At first we each received a small pat of margarine and either cheese, sausage, or marmalade with our daily bread. Gradually this was reduced until all we got was bread. Towards the end we had to share a loaf with seven then eight men. The last few weeks

the bread ran out and we had two or three boiled potatoes each about I to 1 1/2 inches in diameter. We figured we were receiving 1000 calories a day when we arrived and it dropped down to 500 calories towards the end.

One time while on a work detail in the main camp I was able to collect a pocket full of acorns. These were roasted on the space heater and eaten. Several of the men found some tubers growing along the road that looked like potatoes. We were told by our guards they would kill you. I don't think anyone actually died.

COFFEE AND TEA

I don't remember which one they served in the morning. We received the other in the evening. It was pretty bad. However it had two redeeming features--it was hot and sometimes it had sugar. Our ever efficient German mess sergeant would write on the blackboard the number of grams of sugar in each portion. When it said 20 or more grams I drank it. Less that 20 grams I used it to soak my frozen feet.

The stuff was a great diuretic. All night long you could hear the men going to the latrine. Most of us had combat boots. The cuff on the top strapped closed with two buckles. We usually walked in the barracks with out buckling them. As we walked they sounded like spurs. Reminded me of the song "I've got spurs that jingle jangle jingle."

SERVING THE FOOD

We had large barrels, about 50 gallon size, with handles to bring the coffee, tea, and soup to the barracks. My barracks and one or two others went to the kitchen serving windows where the soup was ladled directly into our pots or other containers.

Every one wanted all the solids in the soup so the chant to the servers was to dig deep into the barrel. And sometimes due to the ice on the road someone would slip and drop his soup. Unless he was able to recover it from the road he was out of luck that day.

EATING UTENSILS

Most of the Americans were given some sort of a pot or pan to hold their coffee or soup. I saw one poor fellow who had a flower pot for his soup. He had to cover the hole in the bottom of the pot. Remember the soup was very hot. It was almost funny to see him try to change hands under the hole and not spill a drop. Some had to use their helmets if they still had them. Others used helmet liners after tearing out the straps.

As far as spoons and forks we were on our own. I was able to break a hunk of wood out of the bunk and carve a wooden spoon with my broken Case knife. Most used their fingers. At one time we were given a few combination fork and spoons made out of aluminum[19]. We had a drawing in my barracks and I won one. It was soon stolen.

TOILET PAPER

We take this item for granted. The Germans apparently didn't consider it important and did not provide any. Some used their handkerchiefs, many utilized the wood excelsior or weeds in the mattresses. I guess many did without.

I was lucky. While on the train another soldier finished reading a pocket book and gave it to me. Somehow the ending pages became lost. This book was to be my personal toilet paper! To make it last, I finally began using pieces about 2 by 2 inches in size. One day the Germans provided us with used paper forms, probably old records from the train station.

DIARIES

A number of men kept diaries while in IX B. Some have shared them with me. Mine was made from the paper they gave us to use as toilet paper. Fortunately the paper was only printed and written on one side. Made a cover from a margarine cardboard box. Reused the staples used to hold the box together.

My diary consists mostly of the food we talked about. There are some weird things such as candy bars baked in pie dough. Raymond Brown has some neat sketches of the camp in the diary he kept.

DOG TAGS

Many of us were issued German Dog Tags. They were steel and could be broken into two parts upon your death. Each part had IX B and your German number hand stamped on it. My number was 23824. Late arrivals received cardboard dog tags.

HAIR CUTS AND SHAVING

There was no provision for getting your hair cut. In my barracks was an American-Mexican who said he could cut hair and had scissors. I gave him two cigarettes and he cut my hair several times.

Bought a small double edge razor for a cigarette and a new blade for another cigarette. Thus I was able to shave while in camp. Again most POWS didn't shave. I grew a mustache and waxed the ends with German boot black.

OTHER TOILET ARTICLES

Once we received a few small bars of soap and I got one. It was not very good, but it helped.

Another time we received several cans of what looked like black boot black (polish). No one else seemed to want them. I used the stuff to protect my boots. No telling how much longer they would last. I didn't thing the Germans would provide anything when they wore out. It also worked great as mustache wax.

For a tooth brush I chewed the end of a twig and rubbed my teeth with it.

CIGARETTES AND TRADING

Cigarettes and other tobacco products were not provided. My share of one Red Cross

Package was 25 cigarettes. Another time the Germans gave us some French cigarettes, I believe it was a pack per person. These helped me survive as I quit smoking. Used two cigarettes to buy a hood for my field jacket, two more to purchase my razor and blade, and several to have my hair cut. Some were stolen.

A great deal of trading went on in camp. Some guys traded with the guards and prisoners in other compounds. Some could not give up smoking. One friend traded half his bread ration each day for half a cigarette. Pens, rings, cigarette lighters, and clothing all could be traded for food and cigarettes.

A friend named Richhart[20] became a great trader. Soon he was wearing the latest in American winter gear. He sometimes wore a Russian Army fur hat. He once showed me inside his foot locker. Of course none of the other POWS had foot lockers or anything to put in one. Inside were cartons of cigarettes, fresh eggs, French bread, and jars of honey! He even paid the American Mexican to press his trousers and shirts. Unfortunately, after liberation, he got into a poker game and lost everything. He loaned me $10 just before liberation which I returned after I got home.
With my cigarettes I tried to be a trader but only seemed to make bad deals.

American cigarettes seemed to be the standard. They usually sold for $2 each. French or German cigarettes were worth half an American cigarette. The daily bread ration was worth one American cigarette. Watches went for about two American cigarettes. Parker pens were worth 2 American cigarettes.

RED CROSS PACKAGES

The typical Red Cross package weighed four pounds and would keep you healthy for a week. Each allied prisoner was supposed to get one package a week. There was never any regular distribution of Red Cross packages at IX B. On Jan. 31 received one package per four men. I think we received one package per 17 men later on. That was it.
According to my diary here is what was in our first Red Cross Package. Four of us shared it. The things I remember rare I received 25 cigarettes and had never heard of M & M's but thought they were great. I am actually eating some M & M's at this time!

5 packs Chesterfield cigarettes

4 oz. chocolate bar, Walter Baker & Co.

4 oz. M & M's

15 oz. Raisins, Sugar Drop Brand, Calif. Packing Co.

1 lb. KIem powered milk, Borden Co.

2 oz. Instant all coffee, John L. Kellogg & Co.

6 oz. Rose Mill liver pate

6 oz. Schimmel pineapple jam

1 lb. Oleomargarine, Miami Margarine Co., Cincinnati

12 oz. meat and beans

2 bars Swan soap

12 oz Swift Premium chopped ham

I oz. salt and pepper mixture

8 oz. American Cheddar processed Cheese, Swift & Co.

7 tablets Ascorbic Acid 50 mg, Beacon Lab.

7 oz. C ration crackers, J. B. Carr Co.

The troop commander of the assault guns of the 106 Recon (not related to the 106 Division) that broke down our gate on April 2 told me recently that they found many Red Cross packages in the town of Bad Orb. I suspect they could be found throughout Germany by people who had connections with transportation and the Stalags.

TRYING TO KEEP WARM

The large masonry barracks had two tile stoves in each room. The smaller wooden barracks had an iron space heater in each of the two rooms. We were allowed as much fire wood for each stove each day as one man could carry on one arm. This burned for about an hour, leaving the barracks cold the other twenty-three. The wooden barracks were extremely cold. Heat went through the cracks in the walls and floors, and the missing panes of glass.

Our firewood was green and cut in the nearby forests. We were not allowed to have an ax (this is a dangerous weapon) so used a piece of metal from one of the bunks to cut the firewood. Because the wood was green and the stoves large we had to build a large fire. Eventually we were able to build a smaller fire and save some of the wood for a fire in the morning - two half hour fires a day.

Three of us could go to the wood lot, but only one could carry the wood. He only had to make it through the gate. The others would load his arm and as soon as we got through the gate would help carry the wood home. If the Germans caught you taking extra wood they might not let you have any firewood that day. I became very good at holding the most fire wood. Don't know what my M0S[21] would be.

There must have been thousands of acres of trees around the camp but we couldn't cut them for fire wood. The national foresters were still protecting the woods by selective cutting so we couldn't cut all the wood that was needed to keep us warm.. One of the most dreaded work parties was to bring fire wood into camp. This meant a hike of several miles to where the forester said trees could be harvested. The men then had to carry heavy logs on their shoulders several miles back to camp over mountain roads that

were sometimes icy. These work parties must have taken at least a year off your life.

OUR BUNKS

When we first arrived in camp we doubled up in the bunks to keep warm. As more POWS arrived it became necessary to double up. The blankets were very worn, many full of holes. They were about the size of a baby receiving blanket. Many men did not have overcoats including myself. If you recall from your geography books middle Germany is the same latitude as Canada above Maine. And, Stalag IX B was Latitude 51.9 degree, on top of a mountain!

I bunked with Lewis Eggleton[22] of Syracuse, NY, while in barracks 24. He had been on a gun crew in my battery. Lew had an overcoat. We developed a pattern to keep warm.. One field jacket was under our heads and shoulders. The other wrapped around our feet. The two blankets on top. His overcoat went over the blankets. About every hour we turned over to warm our other side.

Most days Lew and I went up to the large masonry barrack 43A. It was much warmer. A bunch of us from Battery A would sit on the top bunk and talk - mostly about food of course.

We removed the bunks from one of the large barracks room for our recreation area. Late arrivals had to sleep on the floor.

THE GUARDS

The German guards were in two distinct groups, those who worked inside the camp and those on the towers. Due to the needs of combat troops most of the inside guards were old men or people not really suited to the military. I remember going on a work detail outside of camp. Our three guards could hardly walk, let alone carry their very long rifles. They didn't have to worry about escapes. We were in the mountains without warm clothing, extremely hungry, and no food.

Our barracks guard was Private Schultz. He must have been 40-50 years old. He had been a clerk in a bank in Frankfort. He went on leave to visit his family in Frankfort. He returned in a couple of days. He said the bank, his neighborhood, home, and family had been destroyed by bombs. Nobody he knew was left, so he came back to the only thing left, the army.

Another guard, a sergeant, had a son who was a POW in the States. His son had written about how well they were treated by the American Army. This sergeant was very kind to us. The only really vindictive German I met in camp was the Corporal who interrogated me the first day. He was unpleasant every time I saw him.

The German practice of medicine at this time seemed to be a cross between our own Civil War and World War I. If is was anything more than a simple fracture they cut it off. There was a German Army hospital on the road down to Bad Orb. Its main function was to heal men who had lost a limb. This was the source of our tower guards. It was something to see a man with one leg or one arm climbing the tower ladder with his rifle.

THE MAP

It is against the Geneva Convention[23] for POWS to have maps and compasses. They might be used for escape. In our barracks was a man by the name of Dunn. I believe he had been a newspaper reporter in Chicago. Most days we were allowed to send a man down to the commandant's office to listen to the news on German Radio. Dunn and others easily interpreted this into what was really happening. This gave us more accurate war news than the average Germans were receiving.

Somehow we had a map of Europe. A copy was drawn on a large piece of brown paper and posted in the entrance to the recreation room. As the war progressed Dunn and the others updated this map.

I remember seeing three of the German non-corns looking at the map and discussing what was happening. The map was never removed by the Germans despite it being against the Geneva Convention.

INTRA-CAMP NEWS

Normal information that needed to be broadcast was handled by runners who were part of the Chief American Man of Confidence's staff. If it was important enough or it needed to be sold to the prisoners the Chaplain usually did the job. In our barracks it usually was 1 St. Lt. Sam Neel[24] of the 422 Infantry. He seemed to be highly respected by the POWS.

RECREATION

One of the men mentioned in his story of IX B that the biggest single problem was boredom. Nothing to do all day long. Shortly after arriving at IX B we started planning recreational activities. The commandant said he would provide musical instruments although I never saw them. We were given Barracks 42B as a recreational hail. I still had my footlocker Master Padlock which was going to be the rec hall lock. Due to my theater and special service experience I was the stage manager.

We took down the bunks in 42B and stored them in the main camp and brought up some benches. Although cold it made a nice place to play the record player and Monopoly game. It was used on Sunday for services by our two Chaplains.

The British Hospital at Bad Soden[25] sent us the following materials: Wind-up record player, Glen Millers Chattanooga Choo Choo record, several decks of playing cards, a British Monopoly game, and some pocket books. May have been more.

Recently received word from a man who said he was in charge of distributing this material. It seems we had the Monopoly game for a week in my barracks and I must have played it the whole time. This is where I read "A Tree Grows In Brooklyn." Had a deck of cards for a very long time. Got so I was able to beat the bank in Solitaire.

As more POWS arrived they were berthed in our recreation hall. These poor guys had to sleep on the bare floor as nothing was done about returning the bunks. Was this the responsibility of the Chief American Man of Confidence, German commandant, American Doctors and Chaplains, or who? That ended all organized recreational activities at IX B.

The principal way of passing time was to get together in small groups and just talk. It was mostly about foods. Never about sex or women. I always went to the large barracks because they were warmer. Some talk centered around our capture and what would happen when we got home. Many of us figured that when we returned to the States we would go to camps in the western United States to be retrained to fight the Japanese.

SICKNESS AND HEALTH

In any group of 2000 to 4000 men there is bound to be some illness. When you take into consideration the starvation diet and the cold there are bound to problems. Fortunately the Germans allowed two American Doctors and one dentist to stay with the privates at Stalag IX B. They also allowed several aid men to stay and man the hospital. A German "doctor' made regular visits. I believe he was a sergeant.

About the only equipment was what our medical personal had when they were captured. I think the Germans provided underarm thermometers, paper bandages, and a chalky stuff for diarrhea.

It was my feeling in March that as the weather warmed up disease would spread throughout the camp. I just didn't think in our weakened condition we would survive the summer due to the very primitive sanitation.

COLLECTING MEDICAL SUPPLIES

Chaplain Neel talked to us in the barracks one day about turning in any material we had that might be useful in the hospital. It is unreal the stuff some of the men had. Vitamins, aspirin, you name it. American soldiers were issued 8 sulfa pills to carry ~n our bandage kit on the pistol or cartridge belt. Some men still had them. The army also issued a chemical propolathic kit that consisted of two different types of ointment in tubes. Several of these were collected. We had no use for them. This was all put to great use by our doctors.

VERMIN

Our constant companions were body lice and fleas. They were in the beds and mattresses when we arrived and were with us when we left. They seemed to be the worst when we tried to sleep. Lew and I laid one of our field jackets on top of the mattress under our shoulders and head. This seemed to reduce the fleas from jumping around our heads and arms while sleeping.

One day we were taken down to the main camp to be deloused. This was in a large basement. We took off all our clothes and put them into some sort of oven. I thought it might be used to bake bread but there wasn't anything else in the room. Could this have been used to burn bodies? Then we were moved into a room through a door like might be used on a freezer (could it have been gas tight?) In the room were shower fixtures at a normal height. There were also shower fixtures high in the ceiling. Could these have been used to gas the Russian POWS? Although I wondered at the time about these fixtures I didn't know of the death camps.

After the shower our clothes were very hot, in fact some of it was burned.

We were deloused another time in the basement of one of the big barracks in our compound. This time our clothes were put in a room or container where sulfur was burned. \gain this shower room had additional "shower' heads high in the ceiling.

Although it was great to get rid of the body lice and fleas we moved right back into the infested barracks. After being taken from IX B after liberation I had a shower in an Army shower unit. I saw that my hips were nothing but scar tissue and scabs from all the bites. No feeling in them.

SMOKE GETS IN YOUR EYES

Gordon Sorley liked to toast his bread. Gordon was from my battery and in my section in barracks 24. He developed a way to toast it on the inside surface of the stove. Of course there was a lot of smoke. Pretty soon he couldn't see so he went to the hospital. Remember the chemical pro kits that were collected. The doctor injected the ointment from one of the tubes into Gordon's eyes. I guess if it worked on VD it should work on the eyes!

MY HOSPITAL STAY

I became very sick, it hurt to walk, became almost too nauseous to eat, stomach very sore, and both my eyes and urine became very yellow. The doctor said I had yellow jaundice. I now know that jaundice means yellow. They entered me into the hospital. However, they had no treatment. But it was warm. At last I was warm all the time. We received the same rations as the barracks. I noticed that the medics only dipped the soup from the top of the barrel so after a couple of days I went back to the barracks as I needed all the food I could get to survive.

When they checked me into the hospital the only record was a bound register. As I recall it had only five columns: date, German serial number, name, illness, and date of death. I often wonder what happened to that roster and if the final column was filled out on me.

FROZEN FEET

Most of the men had feet that had been damaged by the cold. There was almost no way to take care of them. All you had on your feet was what you arrived with in camp. Sometimes during capture or marching to the camps the Germans would take some of your clothes and shoes for them selves.

Spent the ten days in England pumping gas for our new vehicles. The pump area was a big mud puddle. Working every day in wet shoes surely hurt my feet. Just before leaving England received a new pair of combat boots and two pair English wool socks. And the time walking and riding in the box cars didn't help.

After we were held in the field when the German mess sergeant was beaten they really began to hurt. The German "doctor' said my toes would have to come off. I said no. He said it was my funeral. I said they were my feet. I kept them.

I guess what really helped my feet was I saved the hot coffee every morning in my helmet and soaked and messaged my feet in it. I didn't see anyone else do this.

MY OTHER ILLNESSES

My body functions slowed down after capture and while in the box cars. I guess it was due to the lack of food, and after entering the box cars, lack of exercise. This changed when we arrived in the camp and received the terrible green soup. That first night at IX B I developed a bad case of diarrhea. It lasted for several days then I became totally constipated. This must have lasted at least a week. When I finely did go some of my guts protruded but was able to push them back.

Towards the end after we lost our water service I was on a detail hauling water up to the kitchen. I collapsed while carrying a water barrel near the main gate. The Germans put me inside the guard shelter until I was able to walk back up the hill to my barracks.

After we took over the camp my stomach became bloated and I could hardly walk. More about this later.

THOUGHTS OF SUICIDE

A couple of times I thought of climbing the fence. This way the guard would end it all with a bullet. I guess I was a coward and never actually went through with it.

DEATHS

From what I know the cause of death was listed mostly as TB and pneumonia. The real cause, lack of food and sanitation was never mentioned.

The first three men who died were listed as TB. The next two were killed when the camp was accidentally strafed by a P-38 chasing a German fighter. This was February 6. According to Raymond Brown's diary 34 Americans were buried at IX B. He lists the dates. This is during the 96 days we were held in IX B by the Germans.

BURIALS AT CAMP

The Germans established a cemetery several kilometers outside the camp. It was on a mountain side with a beautiful view of the opposite mountain and valley below. After the first five men died a detail went out to dig the grave. They were not able to finish it in one day so a second detail of 20 men were sent. I was one of them. It was extremely cold. The guards would not let us build a fire. The ground was mostly shale so had to be broken with a pick. We were digging a hole 5' x 5' x 20' long. The picks and shovels were so badly worn that they were only about 3 inches long. The grave was on the side of a hill and we were required to throw the dirt to the high side. There was only room for half of us to work at a time.

Once, time when not digging, we discovered a long trench about the height and width of the grave we were digging. It appeared to be much longer and partially filled. It is my guess it was a mass grave for the last Russian POWS in camp.

We didn't get the job done so another crew had to complete it the next day.

After liberation one of the liberating forces chaplain took some 16 mm film[26] of the funeral of John Thompson, H Company, 423 infantry, 106 Division. Other members of his company were in the funeral procession. They were Emor Pretty, Ray Johnson, Walt Peterson. John Swett, Bill Lawson, Paul Trost and Lloyd Diehl. These men are members of the 106th Infantry Division Association and attended the 1992 Reunion in Pittsburgh.

MENINGITIS OUTBREAKS

Twice we had an outbreak of meningitis at IX-B. At the time the Germans did not have any effective medicines. Each time we were quarantined. No POWS or guards moved into or out of our compound for a week. When the African POWS rolled the cart with food to the gate, the German guard unlocked the gate and Americans rolled the cart to the kitchen, unloaded it, and returned it to the gate.

During the first outbreak we were given shovels, brooms, buckets, and lye to clean the floors. They probably hadn't been cleaned in years. Even in the cold we had to keep all the windows and doors open.

We were told that the sulfa tablets (wound tablets) we turned over to the medics prevented deaths from meningitis among the Americans. The Germans apparently didn't have sulfa or know we had any.

After the second outbreak our barracks guards were locked in the compound with us. It seemed fun to have our guards prisoners just like us. I am sure that they got better food and their quarters were warm. They walked around in undress uniforms and no weapons.

OTHER EVENTS AT BAD ORB

RELIGIOUS SERVICES

Both Chaplain Samuel R. Neel (1st Lt.) and Father E. J. (1st Lt) Hurley conducted services on a regular basis. After we cleared a room for a recreation hall Chaplain Neel had regular Sunday services. I attended every week. As we didn't have any hymnals he was teaching us several hymns. The one I remember best was "In The Garden." A number of times Father Hurley conducted Catholic serviced in my barracks.

We looked forward to Easter Services on Sunday, April 1. Unfortunately, we took over the camp the night before, so I missed the service.

GERMAN MESS SERGEANT BEATEN

About midnight on Saturday, January 28, I was in our latrine by the window relieving myself. There was a soft snow falling. A platoon size group (about 30) of Germans marched by from the main camp towards the outside gate. They weie wearing helmets, gas masks, and had potato mashers (German hand grenades) in their belts. These were obviously not our own guards. I guessed that it was a combat patrol taking a short cut through the camp.

Usually about 2 AM we could hear the guard getting the cooks up to start the coffee. It never happened. About 6 AM they normally got the rest of the cooks up to prepare the noon soup. Nothing happened. Schultz did not get us up for the usual head count and coffee at 8 AM.

Around 10 AM he came in very excited yelling "roust", "roust". This was a hell of a way to begin a Sunday. I told the guys around me to grab all their gear. I made a cape of my blanket with a piece of my copper wire. After the count we were marched to a field on the top of the mountain. Just outside the barbed wire were two machine guns aimed at us. Something was wrong. We fully expected to be shot then and there.

There was about four inches of fresh snow on the ground. They kept us there for what seemed like hours. Finally the chaplain (I think it was Sam Neel) gave us the "story". The evening before the German mess sergeant went to the kitchen. He was attacked by two or three men. They must have hit him with a hatchet 20 or 30 times. This ticked the Germans off no end. We were told we would stand in the cold until these men confessed or were turned in. Nothing happened except we got colder and colder.

Some time later the chaplain told us that we could return to our barracks were we would be locked in. If any one was seen washing blood from their clothes they were to be turned in. These men had violated U. S. Army regulations as well as German. No food, no coffee, no firewood until the guilty Americans were turned in.

Shortly before dusk the chaplain came by to say the men had been turned in to the Germans and we would immediate get fire wood and bread which was done. After dark we sent some men to the kitchen to get our soup. I understand the German survived. Have no idea what happened to the Americans - maybe they were sent to Berga am Elster February 8.

CAMP STRAFED BY OUR AIR FORCE

On February 6 a P-38 (or was it a P-47) was chasing a German fighter. Some of his 20 mm cannon shots hit my barracks. At the time I was with my friends in 43. Two American POWS were killed.

After returning to the army I was supply sergeant at the Separation Center at Camp Blanding. One of my clerks had been in the Air Force in England. He said he remembered when this happened and an investigation was made. The pilot was intent on his target and didn't even know he was over our camp when he shot. The known camps were marked on their maps. I guess this doesn't make it any easier on the relatives.

B-17'S OVERHEAD

Shortly after arriving at IX B we were standing outside when our bombers were flying high overhead. We cheered. The Germans got very angry and ordered us into the barracks.

The B-17's flying overhead became a daily event. Sometimes so high that all you could see were the contrails (vapor streams). The sky was filled with planes as far as you could see. All this was accompanied by the dull roar of the thousands of engines. To me it was an awesome sight, and made me very proud of our Army Air Force.

In the afternoon it was sad to see the openings in their formations where planes had been shot down. Sometimes we could see planes flying back at lower altitudes singly or in small groups. Maybe an engine not running. As we now know many bombers never returned.

Occasionally we could see the anti-aircraft fire over Frankfort as the bombers passed.

EXPLODING STOVE

Gordon Sorley used to hang an army canteen full of water in near the top of the stove to get hot water. One night he forgot and tightened the lid and left it in the heater too long. It exploded and destroyed the stove. This upset the Germans. I guess they had no sense of humor. No one was hurt. He was from my battery and was in my section. Lucky for us he was using the stove in the other room.

The results were Gordon receive 5 days in solitary confinement and it took the longest time to get another stove for the other room.

PICTURE TAKEN

One day we were told to go to another barracks where our picture would bt~ taken. Lew and I went over there. The photographer seemed to be a civilian. Our German serial numbers were hung around our necks and our picture was taken together. Don't know what ever happened to the photos.

MAIL

As I remember we were given two post cards each week and two letter forms each month to mail home. Some of it did get back to the states. I have some of both the post cards and letters.

They must have been printed for French POWS as they were in French and German. Was told that many were found undelivered in the camp office after the camp was liberated. If Germany had broken down so much that they were not able to get us water than it stands to reason that some of the mail was ignored.

Did not receive any incoming mail. After I arrived home a package my folks sent me was returned as non-deliverable.

OUR OWN MILITARY POLICE

At first the German guards led the work details. They didn't speak English and we didn't speak German. Also the Guards were not the swiftest people in the world. Lots of problems. Finely it was decided to set up an MP unit in our barracks who would actually lead each detail in the American compound. This worked rather well. The tallest men who had overcoats and helmets in my barrack were selected. The Germans even provided white paint and a brush to mark the helmets. Being 5'8" and no overcoat I did not qualify.

We had trouble at the gate with Americans trying to trade with guards. The Germans threatened to shoot any American near the gate. So more PM's were added and we kept an American along with the German at the gate while the barracks were open.

After the British nom-coms arrived the German guards were ordered to shoot any Americans talking with the Brits. More work for the MP's so more were added.

Near the end we were in contact with the French underground. In the event the German commandant turned the camp over to us we needed more MP's. Now I became an MP.

STEALING AND OTHER CRIMES

The combination of nothing to do, starvation, and the barter system, caused many to stealing to get something to smoke or eat. One of the guys from my own battery stole cigarettes from me. And we had gone on leave together in the States!

I heard that someone stole Chaplain Neel's shoes. The German's had a jail in the main camp where they sent people who were caught breaking the law. The guy who stole from me ended up there.

These people were also assigned to the honey bucket detail. They filled a small tank on four wheels with human waste from the cess pools and hauled it outside the camp for burial. I saw the guy who stole from me on this detail. He was using a German helmet secured to a pole to dip the material into the cart. Is it possible that these guys were sent to Berga am Elster along with the Jews?

WE TAKE OVER THE CAMP

For days we had heard the rumble of gunfire both to the north and south. We figured the Americans were moving towards the east on the Autobaums (like our Interstates) both to the north and south of us. Some time during the last week in March we heard from the French underground the American Army was in the vicinity.

On April 1 the German commandant turned the camp over to us. His troops were given the choice of continuing to fight, surrendering to us, or disappearing. About half became our prisoners. I, as an MP, immediately went on guard duty with some Brits at the gate between the British compound and the main camp. When I went off duty that night they gave me a cup of tea. Not being used to the stuff I burned my mouth.

Then went to the German barracks to sleep. There was a tub of margarine and some very small potatoes. Had one of the Germans bake the potatoes in the heater and ate them with margarine. This turned out to be one of my biggest mistakes. Still have problems with my stomach.

The next day on April 2 four armored assault guns from Troop E, 106th Reconnaissance Squadron (not connected with the 106th Infantry Division) broke down the gate and drove up to the American Compound, turned around and left the camp. I met their troop commander, Capt. Scotty Pegues, in Waco in 1990.

IN AMERICAN HANDS, ALMOST

The following day American troops arrived. The camp was turned over to a British Officer and two sergeants. Was told that this was due to IX B being in the British Zone. What a bummer.

They brought in truck loads of American "C" rations for us. You simply helped yourself.

What a great thing to give starving men, rich concentrated food, heavy on fats. What planning?

The same people must have done the planning that led to the massive captures during the Battle Of The Bulge.

American doctors and medics arrived to take care of all the POWS. The decision was made (by the British?) to remove the British POWS first. Actually there was some logic in this as they had been held POW since 1940.

I was getting sicker and sicker. Finally on April 7 I went to the hospital. The American Doctor told me that he was evacuating every American who came to the hospital. That was me. Didn't even have a chance to visit my bunk buddy or section members. Immediately loaded into an ambulance and left IX B forever.

This was a German ambulance. It was sealed air tight. Don't know if this was for protection against a poison gas attack or a way of feeding the people inside with carbon monoxide (the final solution).

MY FUN TRIP

It turned out that I was the only American in the ambulance. The others were Serbs. We couldn't communicate. Was very nauseous. On of the Serbs gave me a piece of lime candy from a "C" ration, It made me feel better.

After riding for a while the ambulance stopped and an American voice asked if there were any Americans inside. Before I could answer the door shut and we drove off. This happened again but I was prepared and answered "yes". Again the door shut and we moved on. Don't have any idea how long this trip took.

The ambulance again stopped and an American asked me to get out. I was by myself at an Army portable shower unit. Apparently they weren't prepared for RAMPS.[27] Took off all my clothing and went inside the tent. There were Hindu's taking a shower in the corner. I was the only American.

Found a piece of soap under the duckboards and started to shower. Boy it was great! Warm! The dead skin rolled off in hunks. But, I looked at my sides. All the ribs sticking out. Was this my mama's little boy? And saw the terrible scar tissue and scabs on my hips from the lice and flea bites.

Dried off the best I could. No towel. Then the DDT and talc spray, everywhere[28]. The GI's gave me issue cotton underwear, wool shirt and trousers, cotton socks, and GI shoes several sizes too large. They then told me to report to the evacuation hospital up the hill. I asked how they expected me to get there. They said walk.

Went out to the road and started hiking. Although it was a sunny day I was very cold. Remember, I didn't have any fat and little clothing. Don't think I could have made it if an American chaplain hadn't driven by in a jeep and he took me to the hospital. Must have been at least 5 miles.

THE EVACUATION HOSPITAL

I walked up to the main tent and told them I had just been released from a POW camp. They gave me a very brief check, put a tag on me and assigned a bed (stretcher with a blanket) to me. Just about the time I got warm they got me up to eat lunch. We went outside where I received a hot cup of black coffee (very bad), dehydrated beets (not bad), corned beef and potatoes (very bad). The food didn't stay down long. I lost it all then went back to my bed.

They woke me up some time later and put me on the wrong plane. It was a worn out C-47 that had just hauled gas into Germany rather than an air ambulance. The plane ,didn't have radios or navigation equipment. Rivets had pooped out and there were bullet holes in the skin. Nor was it fitted out for evacuation - neither medics nor medical supplies. The crew took pity on me and loaned me a flight jacket to keep warm. They put me in the radio operators compartment. Two of these worn out C-47's flew with a regular plane to guide them.

We landed in Paris to refuel. After landing a Red Cross Jeep came by with a foot locker full of donuts. The other guys climbed out and brought back hands full of donuts. We took off for Le Havre. Many of the guys in back became sick from the donuts.

When our three planes arrived at Le Havre we were greeted by several officers. A Navy Admiral put a white Navy blanket over my shoulders and told me I was a hero and thanked me. I couldn't believe it. The first real kindness. Then we were put in open cattle trucks for the cold ride to Camp Lucky Strike. Remember it was still April 7 and very cold.

CAMP LUCKY STRIKE, FRANCE

Camp Lucky Strike was built to be a large recreation camp. The Engineers were still working on it when we arrived April 7, 1944. There seemed to be miles of squad tents in rows. The streets were made of metal landing ramps.

At Lucky we were given a barracks bag, mess kit, canteen cup, canvas water bucket, and two army blankets. Next we were assigned to a canvas folding cot in a squad tent. No lights, no heat. At the end of the row of tents was a large tent with a large box full of holes, our latrine. No water or lights.

Then taken to a field kitchen for dinner. There were no chairs. We stood to eat, then went through the wash line to clean our mess kits.

After dinner we went to the Red Cross tent where they had the usual terrible coffee and donuts. I think I ate one donut and went back to my tent to sleep. We heard the next day that several of the EX POWS ate quite a few donuts and ended up in the hospital. The rumor was that they found the remains of 21 donuts in one body. That ended donuts for

POWS.

I remember breakfast the next morning. They had French civilians serving. We had corn flakes. One civilian gave me a serving spoon full of corn flakes, the next gave a serving spoon full of sugar, and the next a serving spoon full of milk. It was so bad that the civilians were replaced with our Army quartermaster people.

That day I received a so called physical. I think they looked at my tongue and checked my pulse. Then we were debriefed by some people who didn't seem to know anything. This whole process seemed like a joke.

The next day went to the quartermaster tent where I received a complete uniform including an Ike jacket and combat boots. They even had one cap with red braid that fit me! No insi9,nia. Also received a toilet kit provided by a Red Cross group in New Jersey and $20 partial pay.[29] The camp did not have a post exchange. Went by the Red Cross tent and asked one of the ladies if she could get me a cake. I would be 21 on Thursday. Gave her my $20. The following day found out I would be shipping out on Thursday and she gave me back my money.

Near the kitchen was a large canvas water tank. This was our source of water. As more prisoners arrived during the week they couldn't keep it full. German POWS were brought in to dig a ditch for a water pipe. Some of the American POWS stood on the edge of the ditch and watered the Germans with warm yellow fluid. Can you blame them?

During this time at Camp Lucky Strike I was getting sicker and sicker. The camp was filling with thousands of POWS. The field kitchen lines reached a point that as soon as you finished a meal you got in line for the next. I couldn't stand that long. One evening I walked to another part of the camp to find a less crowded mess. I found one and while there ran into Lew Kai Ming. Lew was one of my best friends in Battery A, but he was sent to a different stalag. We had a long talk. Haven't seen him since although we corresponded for several years.

The authorities were certainly not prepared for the thousands of POWS who were liberated and flooded Camp Lucky Strike. Later men were given food more suited to their physical conditions and real medical attention.

THE JOHN ERICKSEN

On Friday the 13th I became 21 and boarded the merchant marine transport ship John Ericksen[30]. President Franklin Roosevelt had just died. They weighed me when I came on board. My weight was just under 100 pounds! There were some bed patients, some men on rotation who took care of all the work details and us POWS, around 100. But, mostly, there was empty space. We were the first American POWS to return from Europe.

The food was good but there were no baked goods, cakes or cookies. Plenty of quart cartons of frozen milk. The only POST EXCHANGE items were cigarettes and candy bars by the carton.

There was a 16 mm motion picture projector in the ball room with plenty of feature films. This I ran most days to entertain myself and the others[31]. Nothing else to do. Never saw a medic. Almost like Stalag IX B except we were fed and it was warm.

THE UNITED STATES AT LAST

Arrived Staten Island April 28. Went by train to Camp Kilmer. When we got off the train at Kilmer an officer took our barracks bags and told us they would be by a certain number in front of the barracks. We then walked to the base theater. There were newsreel lights all over the inside so I knew it was going to be something big. A general stumbled through a speech. In it he said that we would be receiving a 60 day delay in route to a rest camp. Up to this time thought I would be lucky to get a five day delay in route to a training camp on the West Coast to go to the Pacific. I don't thing he planned it but that became the end of the meeting.

Our guide took us to the dispensary or hospital for a physical. It consisted of looking at our tongue and chest. Then to the barracks and lunch. I couldn't believe it - the bunks were already made up - for me, a PFC. Then to lunch.

That afternoon they checked my records[32], issued me $20 more dollars, special orders, and my train ticket to Fort McPherson in Atlanta. Then I had a shave and hair cut at the POST EXCHANGE. Bought some shoe polish for my boots and after shave tonic.

That night after dinner went by the POST EXCHANGE. It was a panic. Everything had been sold -- suitcases, pillows that said "Mother', insignia, toilet articles, everything. They had trucks loaded with stuff from other PX's and were selling direct from the trucks. It was a buying frenzy. Then another surprise. My bunk covers were turned down - but no chocolate.

After breakfast the next morning we boarded Pullman cars. I shared a compartment with two Air Force officers on rotation. It seemed strange, me a skinny guy with no insignia and two highly decorated flyers.

Arrived Ft. McPherson on April 30. The war is still going on in Europe. POWS are still being released and here I am in Atlanta, GA. It took a couple of days to finish processing me. Received complete uniforms, and got $100 with $200 more to be sent home to me.

Left Ft. McPherson on May 2 to catch the train to Jacksonville. While in downtown Atlanta the MP's picked me up for being in the wrong uniform. And outside of the red braid on my cap did not have any insignia. Seems that Ike jackets and combat boots were not allowed in the US, the only uniform that I had. Meanwhile my train left the station. Somehow the MP's were able to stop the train and put me on board. Arrived in Jacksonville that night. Caught the bus to my parents home and rang the door bell about 11 PM.

So much for ticker tape parades.

HOME IS THE SOLDIER

I just didn't know how sick I was. My dad took me to the dispensary at Jacksonville Naval Air Station. They stuck me with needles, X-rayed every inch of my body, brought all sorts of people in to look at me and gave me huge pills to take every day. For the next month I reported there three times a week for them to take more blood and give me more pills. I developed a bad case of asthma and got badly sunburned twice at the

beach.

Reported to the Army Ground/Service Forces Redistribution Center in Miami Beach on July 4. My records were lost from being MIA. They had to reconstruct my service record, take the AGCT[33] test, and create my physical profile. Also took classes on how to salute and other valuable soldier skills. Mostly we did quality tests on the local bars and clubs. Many didn't pass so had to be retested several times.

After this rough duty was assigned to Camp Blanding July 14. Became supply clerk at the Separation Center Headquarters Detachment. We had about 35 men working in the Separation Center. Soon became supply sergeant. Detachment grew to 1200 men. Was in the hospital twice at Blanding. Received Medical Discharge ~ ~ January 4, 1946.

POW. DOC 3/9/93 rev. 5/2/93

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1 Emergency ration that tasted like a chocolate bar. Supposed to have the energy of one meal.

2 The Germans gave us this black liquid that they either called coffee or tea. I believe there was some difference between the two. Its main advantage was it was hot and were were cold!

3 Not sure of his name. He was a gunner from my battery and from downtown Los Angeles.

4 Think this was a form of molasses with tomatoes for flavor and color. Received the stuff several times at 9B.

5 According to a Military Intelligence Report of 1 November 1945.

6 A small plastic flute issued by Special Services. My son still has it.

7 Raymond Brown of Leeds UT drew a sketch in the diary he kept at IXB that showed the locations of the various buildings in the American compound. His chary also helped me with some of the correct dates and happenings. Ray was from my battery.

8 According to the document American Prisoners of War iii Germany prepared by Military Intelligence on I November *45*, Pfc. Kesten was Chief American Man of Confidence assisted by Pvt. Edmund Pfannenstiel. When Kesten was sent on a kommando working party Pfannenstiel succeeded him. He was then assisted by Pfc Benn F. Dodge. Could the kommando working party be when the American Jews and others were sent to Berga am Elster?

9 Military Intelligence Service report 1 November 1945.

10 This data is from Lyle J. buck, Jr. of the 99th Infantry Envision. They were holding the ground north of the 106th Infantry Division when he was captured.

11 Dr. Samuel R. Neel, Jr. . Autobiographical sketch.

12 Military Intelligence Service report 1 November 1945.

13 Military Intelligence Service report 1 November 1945

14 lnternational Red Cross Report April 1, 1945 to the US Secretary of State lists this number.

15 According to John (Jack) McGrath's Autobiographical Sketch.

16 The Germans had a hospital or Lazarett for prisoners of war at Meiningen numbered IXC. Many Air Force people were treated here.

17 Dr. Michael G. Bard, Ph.D., has done extensive research about. Americans in the Ilolocaust for a book. His address is: 440 First St. NW, Suite 607, Washington, DC 20001

18 Alvin Abrams. Morton Brooks, Andrew J. Dowdell, Anthony 1)raco, Joseph Guigno (deceased), Costas Katimaris, Sanford Lubinsky, John E. (Jack) McGrath, Winfield Rosenberg, Daniel Steckler, Jay E. Stone, Myron Swack, and Gerald Zimand.

19 This was probably the result of an International Red Cross Inspection where the Germans were severely criticized for the lack of eating utensils.

20 I think that was his name. He was from Indianapolis and was in the 590th Field Artillery Battalion.

21 Army Military Occupation Specialty. Every job in the army was assigned a specific number.

22 Although we slept together in camp I never got his address until just recently. Lew passed away 10 years ago Have since written to his widow.

23 The Geneva Convention was an agreement first adopted by an international congress in 1864 dealing with the more humane treatment of wounded soldiers and prisoners of way. The last. convention was signed in Geneva in 1929.

24 After the war Dr. Ned founded a community college in South Florida where he still lives.

25 Although for British POWS the more serious sick or wounded from our camp were sent. there. Twin brothers Williard and Wilber Diefenthaler were at IX B. Wilber became sick and was sent to Bad Soden where he died. Williard was sent to Stalag IX A. Bad

Soden was about 9 km north of Bad Orb. Bad Soden may have been Lazaret IX B.

26 I believe Ray Johnson got the film and provided me a copy. Bill Larson provided me with some of the details.

27 Retrieved Allied Military Personal was to be our classification. (not bad).

28 Because of typhus and other diseases carried by lice and fleas everyone was sprayed with DDT and talc. The Army set up roadblocks and sprayed everyone who passed. They sprayed all harry parts of the body, men, women, and children.

29 At Stalag IX B the Germans took all our money. I received a hand written receipt. The Army made it good after I arrived in Miami Beach.

30 Picture of the John Ericksen on display at the Camp Blanding Military Museum.

31 Had completed Projection School at Fort Jackson in 1941

32 Actually the only records were those created at. Camp Lucky Strike after leaving Germany.

Army General Classification Test, a form of intelligence test every soldier had to take.

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