

Richard B Campbell

Company F
422nd Regiment
106th Infantry Division



On January 12th 1944, my father, Richard B. Campbell was ordered to report for induction into the United States Army. Like so many other young men, he left his family, wife and his 11 month-old son and reported to Camp Blanding in Florida. He was 26 years old.

During his stay at Camp Blanding, he earned the grade of marksman, not so much for his accuracy, but because some of his fellow soldiers were gracious enough to shoot at his target, in the hope that they might not be called to serve in the war raging in Europe. After the completion of Basic Training, he was assigned to **F Company of the 106th division, 422nd regiment U.S. Infantry known as the Golden Lion.**

On October 21st, 1944, he traveled by ship from New York City to Glasgow, Scotland arriving on October 30th. The 106th stayed in the United Kingdom until their orders to join the fight came. After crossing the English Channel on December first, they proceeded from France and on to Belgium on December 9, 1945 and were stationed in the "quiet zone" on the Belgium/German border on the Siegfried line in the town of Saint Vith.

On the 16th of December at 6:45 am the German forces, under Field Marshal Karl Von Rundstedt, mounted their attack, shelling relentlessly. After 48 hours of fighting, and trying to halt the Germans spearheaded attack, the 106th suffered some of the worst casualties in the Battle of the Bulge. On December 18th radio contact was lost. Over 7000 soldiers were reported missing in action.

On the 19th of December, my father was captured and was forced to march without food and water for over 24 hours to a train depot, where he and his fellow Prisoners of War were transferred to box cars crammed with their fellow soldiers in Gerolstein, Germany surviving on only the melted snow.

Two days into their train travel, Allied planes, resulting in over 100 deaths, strafed their train. On Christmas Day, he arrived in Bad Orb, Germany where he was assigned to **barracks # 44 in Stalag 9B.** PFC Richard B. Campbell, wearing the uniform of a master sergeant that he had taken from a dead soldier in Saint Vith, to fight the cold was appointed the Barracken Fuhrer, head of the barracks, because he was able to speak German.

Back in the States, my mother followed as best as he could the progress of the war not knowing the fate of her husband. On January 11th, 1945 the front door bell rang and she was presented a telegram, bearing 2 purple stars. It wasnt until weeks later that she would learn the significance of the two stars. The two stars signified that her husband had not been confirmed as killed in action.

With such uncertainty as to my father's fate, my grandfather tried every avenue he

could to learn of his whereabouts. He had written to Brigadier General Paul Hawley, at Headquarters, European Theater of Operations, who had married my grandfather's cousin. In a letter dated January 22nd, 1945, General Hawley provided the first news of the 106th division. Over a month later, my mother received her second telegram.

While in prison camp my father was given the opportunity to write letters home. The Germans reviewed all mail from POWs and the horrible conditions, in which they lived, weren't known until after the War.

On April 2nd, 1945 at 6:15 am Kommandant Stammlage surrendered, as U.S. tanks appeared at the entrance to Stalag 9B. Later that day my father, thirty pounds lighter and still wearing the master sergeants uniform, along with some of his fellow soldiers were photographed in the back of an U.S. Army truck. Shortly thereafter my mother received her third telegram. During his time as a prisoner of war, my father used any scraps of paper he could find.

He had made a calendar, so that he could keep track of the days, and down wrote the names of some of his fellow POWs Stanley Tracy, Robert Doyle, Joseph Waveris, Caswell Williams, Floyd Bailey and Martin Lawlor.

These were his Band of Brothers.

On May 1st my father landed in Southhampton, England awaiting his return home. On May 14th my mother received her 4th Telegram.

The battle at Saint Vith, despite the high number of deaths and prisoners taken, has been regarded as an important part of the containment of the German offensive in the Battle of the Bulge. Like many veterans my father never talked about the battles and horrors he witnessed during World War II.

After returning from the war, my father served out the rest of his time in the Army and retired as a Sergeant.

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