Joseph J. Laux

106th INF DIV
423 INF/3 BN/L
Stalag II-A (2-A)

He was born on September 23, 1924 in Sebewaing, Michigan. Youngest of seven children, one surviving brother. Jeanne, the love of his life, passed away March 18, 2017. He leaves three children, Judy, Joe Jr. and Diane, seven grandchildren and 14 great grandchildren.

Our hero and loving patriot will be sorely missed by all!

The following was written by Mr. Laux at the bequest of his children:

I may as well start at the beginning. I was born on a farm near Sebewaing, Michigan, I was the youngest one of seven children in our family. I went to a one-room country school, one teacher for eight grades. I went to Owendale High School, about three and one-half miles from home. My neighbor and I rode to school in his Model T-Ford the first year, but when he graduated my Dad bought an old car for my brother Mike, and me, to drive to school. It was a 1929 Chevrolet. That year Mike graduated. Sooo, guess what? I got to drive the car myself. I made a deal with three of my friends that, for 25 cents a week for each person, they could ride to school with me, which gave me the grand sum of 75 cents a week spending money (great amount of money during 1940, the deepest part of the great depression).

I graduated from High School in 1941. I tried to go to college, but was unsuccessful because I didn't have enough credits. Therefore, at the ripe of age of 16, I found a job in in Detroit, Michigan. After a few months on the job, a High School buddy talked me into going to United Aircraft School in Kansas. We learned how to build airplanes in four months. After completing the schooling, I got a good job building airplanes at General Motor's Fisher Body Plant, located in Detroit, Michigan. All went well until a few months after my 19th birthday. Uncle Sam sent a Draft Notice to me, and off I went into the Army – an experience that changed my life.

Well, on a cold, stormy, and dreary morning, (March 11, 1943, to be exact), I had to appear at the downtown Detroit Train Station at 6:00 A.M., to begin my Army life. My sister Kay's husband, Bob Parkins, drove me to the Train Station. He saw me off, as well as what seemed like a few thousand other guys like me. We boarded the train and off we went to Fort Custer, Michigan, located in Battle Creek. My "indoctrination into Army life" began. With a duffle bag in hand we all got in line where uniforms were issued to us, everything from your skivvies on out. We were outfitted, got into the barracks, and the first thing we had to do was change into military uniforms and ship all of our civilian clothing home. That was the last time we wore civilian clothing (and for me that was the three years). Basic training was the beginning of a very rigorous period in my life. At that time, it was condensed into a six-week period and that got us ready for combat. But I'm getting ahead of my story!

First, we had to go through a million tests (such as: mental, physical, and aptitude) in order to determine where we were best suited in the service. And, if you were a good mechanic, chances are you would become a cook. Well, I had been a Clerk all of my working career, besides being a farm boy, so I was classified as a Clerk. After about two weeks of testing and orientation, along with routine Army life, we hopped the train. We didn't have any idea where we were being sent. After three or four days on the train, it

seemed to take forever to get to our destination because the train was constantly stopping, or parked for what seemed to be hours on end. After several days, we arrived in Columbia, South Carolina.

Well, I was overjoyed because I knew there was an Air Base there, but lo and behold, the train stopped and we all disembarked and there was a huge banner that said, "Welcome to the 106th Division." That was it. I was in the Infantry. Well, that started our six-week basic training which was, to say the least, very rigorous. After the first couple of weeks we had a routine. Every Friday we got up a 2:00 A.M., and went on a 25-mile hike; this was very strenuous for somebody that had a job sitting at a desk all day for approximately six to eight months. In about six weeks' time, it took me from being a 140 pound weakling to a 175 pound soldier. I was promoted to Corporal and a Squad Leader of a Machine Gun Squad, where I stayed.

Jeanne (hereinafter referred to as your Mom) decided to visit me (I believe it was early July, after she had graduated from High School). We were in love, so we decided that if I could get a furlough we would get married. She went back home and talked to my parents, and her parents, and started to prepare for our wedding. I didn't know if I would get a furlough, of if I would be shipped overseas. Fortunately, I got a furlough the last week in September. About two weeks before the furlough was definite, she got busy with my folks and planned the wedding. I got home for a seven-day furlough. It was a hectic seven days. We were married at the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a church I attended when I was growing up. We had a beautiful church ceremony, and a "great" reception and dinner at my Mother and Dad's Lodge Hall in Sebewaing. A chicken dinner was served along with lots of other good food. A band played for those who enjoyed dancing. We had a great time. It was a "rousing wedding." You know, on $30.00/month you can't save a heck of a lot. After the wedding, on September 29, I had only another day or two of the furlough left until I had to be back at Camp. So guess what? I took the train and went back to Ft. Jackson, South Carolina, and your Mother got to ride back with Aunt Eddie and Uncle Jack, because he was stationed about fifty miles from me. Believe it or not, that was our honeymoon. But, in the meantime, after I got back to camp, I scurried around for hours to find a place for us to live. With a buddy of mine (Chuck Henderson from Pontiac, Michigan, who also got married while on furlough), we found a house where the people would rent each of us a bedroom in their home. It served the purpose very well. We were much in love (as we still are) and we had a great time. I'd get up in the morning before daylight and go to camp, and come home after retreat in the evening. I had the weekends off, so we had a beautiful couple of months until just about Christmas time, December 1943, when the new chapter of my life began.

A buddy of mine talked me into going over to an Air Base on the other side of town to take a test in the hopes that we could get into the Air Force. We took the test. You see, at that time the Army and Air Corps was one in the same. It was Army Infantry or Army Air Corp. I took the tests and, lo and behold, I made it. I was transferred into the Air Force as a Cadet to go into flight training. The irony of it was that the buddy who talked me into taking the test didn't make it. He failed, so he stayed in the Infantry. I found out later that he skipped out and went over the hill (AWOL) and returned to his home in Detroit. He committed suicide! I was transferred into the Air Force after a few brief weeks and was shipped out to Miami Beach, Florida. Wow! After all this time in the Infantry, I got to live in a hotel on Miami Beach, where they began to give us every conceivable test that they could give. After classified as a Multi-Engine Pilot, which meant I would be flying bombers. I went through Air Force basic training which, after the Infantry, was a piece of cake. After that was completed (approximately three months), I was waiting to be shipped to OCS

Officers' Training in St. Louis, at which time approximately 60,000 in this Cadet Corp received the same letter from General Hap Arnold. This letter said, "You are needed in the Ground Forces." And, boom, back I went into the Infantry, back to my old unit which had been in Tennessee on maneuvers but now was in Camp Atterbury, Indiana, just outside of Indianapolis.

When I arrived at the Camp, my position as Machine Gun Squad Leader had already been taken. But, it turned out that the Company Clerk was called home on an emergency furlough and, my being a good friend of the First Sergeant, the Sergeant said to me: "Hey Joe, can you handle Company Clerk?" I said, "You bet." And so I was a Company Clerk for the next three and one-half to four months, which was great after being in a hotel in Miami Beach. This was a very good transition. In the meantime, your Mom left Detroit to stay with me. We found a little apartment outside of the town (called Edinburgh) and she found a job in the Hospital. It was an Army Hospital that handled all the burn cases which had come back from overseas (men who were badly burned in tanks and in airplane crashes, or whatever). She worked in the Hospital, I was Company Clerk, and we had, I would say, a very nice but busy three or four months.

First Sergeant J.P. Riley, and his wife May, also lived in the little town of Edinburgh, Indiana, and Supply Sargent Joe Kunkel lived in the next nearby town of Columbus. We entertained ourselves by spending the weekends tighter by playing cards, going to the movies, or just plain relaxing at home. None of us had any money, and these activities required little or no money. This was a very interesting three months. As the Company Clerk, I was kept busy with men leaving our outfit and being shipped to Europe. At this time (April and May of 1944) they were preparing for the coming invasion of France, which would be later be known as "D-Day." This was the greatest build-up of men and material in the history of the world, May of the boys in our Division were being sent into this build-up as replacements. Each day I was handed a list of what was needed; such as, five riflemen, two machine gunners, etc., and it became my sad duty to select these needed men. This was one of most difficult things I have ever had to do. I would pull out the files at random, without looking at the names, and I made up my list to post on the board at Company HQ. I would then leave, with a sad feeling in my heart. Now for every man that was shipped out, there was someone brought in to take their place. I was kept busy. We went to Camp at about 6:00 A.M. , in time for reveille and after the troops fell out for the day's training, J.P. Riley, Joe Kunkel, and I would go to the Mess Hall for breakfast. After that, I went to Regimental HQ for the day's work. I usually didn't get home until 7:00 P.M. or 8:00 P.M., and was always mentally and physically exhausted. The routine was the same each day. Well, this went on until about the first part of September. By then the war in Europe was in full swing. We got our orders to join in the Liberation of Europe. Now came the bad news for me. Because my Army MO was the Machine Gun Squad Leader and not Company Clerk, another man had the MO of Company Clerk. I was needed as a Machine Gun Squad Leader, and once again I was sent back to the Company. This was a very tough move for me to make, but that's the Army.

We soon boarded a troop train and headed East. A few days later we arrived in Providence, RI, at a place called Camp Miles Standish. We spent a week or two waiting for a troop ship. We boarded another troop train and went to New York Harbor where we boarded the Queen Elizabeth 1, the largest ship in the world and the most luxurious. However, it was well stripped down for us. In a cabin for two they hung six racks for us to sleep on. Just a wee bit crowded, I would say. And, of course, all the furniture and the ornate decorations were removed, so it was well stripped down. The ship carried about 15,000 men (the entire 106h Division, and part of the 87th Division). We had two meals a

day and, as you might guess, we stood in line about an hour for each meal. The food wasn't very good, but we had no choice but to eat it because that's all there was. They told us that if we didn't eat we would get sea sick. There was nothing else to do anyway – so I never missed a meal.

There really wasn't anything to do on this cruise ship. I spent a good bit of my leisure time sitting on the stern of the ship just watching the waves, which were huge because we traveled North. The Queen Elizabeth 1 traveled alone. No escorts. It was too fast for any of the Navy ships. We just followed a zigzag course and plowed through the cold North Atlantic. We did have a movie at night, and in the movie we saw and listened to Bing Crosby singing "I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas," We arrived in Glasgow, Scotland on the eighth day. We got off the ship and boarded a train that traveled to Cheltenham England, which is a bit north of London. There we marched to our quarters, which was a horse race track. We slept in the stables, and it wasn't too bad. Each unit had a small pot belly stove, so it was warm and there were only two of us per stall. We didn't have a very hard work schedule (some long hikes through the English countryside, which I found quite pleasant and interesting when it wasn't raining). After about two weeks of that, we loaded up on trucks and rose to the Cots-Wolds (Shakespeare Country). We stopped at the little town of Stoe-On-The-Wold, a really neat little town. We were there to clean up an old Army Camp which was to be used as a German POW Camp.

The day after Thanksgiving, we knew the party was over because we boarded a train and headed for South Hampton, and later boarded a ship to cross the channel. We disembarked onto landing crafts and waded ashore at La Harve, France. We were not quite in combat, yet as the front was now in Belgian, we could hear the artillery. We spent the next three to four days walking through the countryside. This was not pleasant because it rained and then turned into snow. As we came closer to the front, we were heading into Ardennes mountains, a heavy forest with lots of snow and very cold. The small town of St. Vith was about five miles from where we replaced the 1st Division on the front lines. This was on the border of Belgium and Germany. The 1st Division had been there for several weeks, so they were well dug in. The gun emplacements for my two Machine Gun crews were each big enough for the crew of five to lie in and if you bent over you could sit up for a while. The Germans were dug in on the other side of a small valley, so we could see them and they could see us. We stayed in our holes most of the time. The artillery barrages would start up every now and then, so we didn't spend too much time on the latrine (a slit trench) either. About December 13, we began hearing a lot of movement coming from the Germans, which sounded like tank movements. As it turned out, that's just what it was. They also increased the heavy artillery firing, so we were well pinned down. On the morning of December 16, at daybreak the Germans came at us with their heavy tanks, called Panzers. We got orders to pull back, so we picked up our machine guns and ammunition and took off. Our orders were to reassemble in the town of St. Vith, which was only five miles away. But the Germans had us cut off. We would go in one direction and we'd run into them, and each time we lost some of our men in the fight. This went on for three days until the morning of December 19. We spent most of night in fox holes, which had about a foot of water in them. Every time we tried to get out of the fox holes, the artillery would start up. Back into the fox holes we would go. I sent word to the Company Commander: "Let's get out of here while it's still dark and then try to make a break for St. Vith." We figured it to be only about two miles away. But the Commander said, "No, let's wait until daylight." We knew the Germans were all around us because we could hear them talking.

Actually they were not all around us, because we were at the edge of the woods. In front

of us were open fields, and to our left open fields, and to our right were heavy woods. We were at the corner of a small gravel road, so we had Germans behind us and to our right. We knew they were there but we didn't know how many and what equipment they had, except for a few 88mm artillery pieces.

We had about one-half of an infantry Company, and my two machine guns had very little ammunition. The Commander gave orders for the first platoon to start out with my machine guns attached. The rifle platoon got well out into the field when all hell broke loose. The Germans, you might say, were laying in ambush. They opened up with everything they had, including the 88mm.

I gave orders for the two Machine Gunners to advance across the road to set up on the other ditch bank. It was only a small ditch, but I felt it would give us some protection and we could return fire. I grabbed some ammunition boxes and pulled the belt out of one of the guns. I put it around my neck (a big mistake) because I only ran about 10 feet when a bullet creased the belt and exploded three or four shells in the belt. The force knocked me flat on my face, and my helmet went rolling. The carbine flew out of my hand. It stunned me for a few seconds, and when I realized what had happened, I reached for my gun with my left hand and at the same instant an artillery shell hit the tree above me and sent shell fragments raining down on me. One shell fragment hit my left wrist and one hit my left leg. I could see what it did to my wrist, but I wasn't sure what it did to my leg. It felt like it was blown off. In a few seconds, another one hit, and this time there were quite a few that hit my back and it knocked the wind out of me. It also put my lights out! When I came to, someone was rolling me over on my back. It was a soldier from my Squad. He asked me if I could take the sulfa tablets we carried in our first aid kits. I said, "yes." I noticed he was holding one hand up in the air. Only there was no hand- it had been blown off at the wrist. But he used his remaining hand and took the eight sulfa tablets and put them in my mouth. He took my canteen, but it had no water in it. He then took a hand full of snow and put it in my mouth. After a good bit of gagging, I chewed them and got them down. This probably saved my life.

I drifted in and out of consciousness for the rest of the day. I saw a few of the guys get hit and wondered if this was "the end." I really thought it was. I noticed that the firing stopped, and I could hear voices. I realized that most of the talking was in German. The few American men that were still on their feet were rounded up and taken prisoner by the Germans. I guess I went back to "la la land" because the next voices I heard were German soldiers. One of the German soldiers was kneeling beside me to see if I was alive. He asked a question, and I answered him in German, which kind of startled him. He called to his buddy in German (of course), "Hey, this one is still alive – let's take him." They picked me up and put me into a trailer being pulled by a jeep (ours, at that). There were four of us in this trailer, sort of just tossed in. By now it was almost dusk, and very cold. The cold weather was probably another factor in saving my life, because all of my wounds were frozen and this prevented me from bleeding to death. The ride in the trailer was extremely painful and cold. My head was resting on the side of the trailer. The wheel was covering my face with mud, which was freezing on my face. We finally made a stop so that they could unload one of the guys who had died. We continued on, for I don't know how long, because it was now dark. We finally stopped and I was taken off the trailer. The next thing I remember was a Medic cutting off my clothes and a Priest was giving me the last rites. That was not too encouraging, but I was thankful to be off that steel trailer, to receive a little medical attention, and I felt blessed to have had a Priest pray for me. I again went back to "la la land."

Whatever was in the shot they gave me must have been strong. When I finally awoke, I heard singing and there at the foot of the bed were two angels singing Christmas carols. My first thought was, "Wow, I must be in heaven." But then I noticed the singing was in German, and reality hit me that I was alive and in a German Field Hospital. The angels were the German version of Santa Clause, which they call Christmas angels – a lady and a little girl wore white clothing and had wings on their back. It was Christmas Eve, and I now had been unconscious for three days. As I began to take notice of where I was, I realized I was in bed with two German soldiers that were also wounded.

The Christmas angels were handing out Christmas presents to all the German soldiers. The package contained a bottle of wine, and a bag of cookies. When they gave one to me, someone yelled, "No, no, he's an American." So, I didn't get a present. I was in a lot of pain and I was hungry, because I had nothing to eat for about five or six days.

I began to take stock of my injuries. My left arm was in a huge metal splint (looked like two snow shoes) and this was laying across my stomach. The rest of my body was completely wrapped (sort of like a mummy). I couldn't move my left leg, or my left arm, but my right arm was all right. The bandages were like crepe paper, which is what the Germans used.

The place we were cared for was formerly an Inn that had been converted to a Field Hosp0ital. The beds were mostly the old double beds, each with two or three men to a bed. It didn't look anything like a Hospital. Because I couldn't get up, I needed a urinal. Surprise! Guess what? They gave me a small can, the size of a can or peanuts. It served the purpose. Soon the lights went out and someone started singing Silent Night, in German. Slowly everyone was singing and I could hear a few English voices. I then realized I wasn't the only American in the Field Hospital; there must have been about five or six of us. They sang a few more German songs, when the man on my left handed me a cup of his wine. He said "schnell," which means "quick" and, I did. It was very good. A few minutes later, the guy on my right handed me his cup and said "schnell," and he also gave me a cookie. For the first time since my capture I felt a glimmer of hope.

Here I was lying between two of the men that we were shooting at a few hours earlier. What irony. But when the singing started, they became human beings, and were perhaps wishing (as I was) to be at home for Christmas. The only difference was that they got the wine and cookies, and I didn't. That brought me back to the real world. When the lights were turned off, I drifted back to sleep. The wine helped, thankfully.

The next day, Christmas day, I finally was given something to eat. It wasn't turkey and dressing, but it was food. By this time, all of my wounds were becoming very painful. There wasn't much they gave me for the pain – no shots every four hours – just some aspirin once in a while. That night we were treated to a bombing raid, and for about an hour it was terrifying. You could hear the bombs whistling through the air, and then a loud BOOM, and the beds would shake. All the while the Germans were cussing out those damn Americans, because the planes dropping the bombs were, of course, American. I had no idea of where we were, but I know it was near a large city, and they were bombing the city. Some of the bombs were dropped very close to us. Needless to say, this was a Christmas I will never forget.

The next day they took me, along with the other four or five Americans, and loaded us on a bus. We were all on stretchers which were made of some sort of woven straw. All in all, this entire ordeal was very, very painful, and it was very cold. When the bus finally came

to a stop, I regained consciousness and learned that I was now in a "real Hospital" with Nuns walking around. I had a Hospital bed all to myself. By this time, all of my bandages were soaked with blood and crusted, because they had not been changed since the first night. Cleaning and dressing our wounds was the first order of business for the Nuns, because the wounds were still wrapped in paper. The next morning they took me to the OR where they set and put on a plaster cast on my badly shattered left arm, which was a great improvement over the steel splint that had been on my arm. When I awoke, I was back in a room where they also had a very young boy about 15-16 years old. He was a German soldier, a Hitler youth, no less. They were the worst kind and as I found out, very anti-American. He kept harassing me until I rang for a Nun or Nurse. I told the Nurse to get him out of the room, because I was quite helpless and could not defend myself. I didn't trust him. Well, they gave him hell and moved him to another room. The Nurse told me he was mad because he got shot in the butt. I spent the next day there feeling somewhat more comfortable. I was clean and my arm felt better in the plaster cast. The cast was up to my shoulder and enclosed my hand. It had a hole in the top and in the bottom (where the hole in my arm was), and there was a piece of hose about one-half inch in diameter and about three inches long with a safety pin on top and one on the bottom, to keep it from coming out. This allowed drainage, which it did a lot. Well, my stay in this comfort spot was short-lived. The next day I was loaded back onto a stretcher and this time I was parked at the train station waiting for them to put me on board.

The train stations in Europe are a bit different than they are here in the United States. They are very large, because the trains go right through the building and you feel like you're outside. Well, that's where they parked me. All I had was one Army blanket covering me, and it was very cold. I must have been there for about a half-hour before they put me on a train car which had all of the wounded people who were on stretchers. Some were American, and some were German. Of course, I had no clue as to where I was going. At least it was somewhat warmer in the car. We were caught in a few bombing raids, and one strafing, but our car wasn't hit. We continued to move. We were on the train for a couple of days until we came to the city of Neubrandenburg, Germany. Neubrandenburg is in the northeast corner of Germany, not far from the Polish border, and not far from the Baltic Sea. Stalag 2-A was my destination, which was to be my home for the rest of the war. They took me and four other GIs off the train (all of us on stretchers) and put us on a horse-drawn wagon with steel wheels. We started moving down a gravel road. It was freezing cold and the jiggling of the wagon made the pain more unbearable. I guess I must have moaned a lot, because after a few miles they took me off the wagon. Four German soldiers carried my stretcher on their shoulders. I was very grateful for this and I thanked them in German, which pleased them. They were older men assigned to guard duty at the Prison Camp. They were too old for combat duty. We got to the camp with its barbed wire fence enclosure, and the guard towers with machine guns mounted in them, and the rows of barracks on one end of the Camp was the "Hospital-part of the Camp," and the buildings were the same as the rest, except for the dispensary. There were two Doctors, both from Warsaw, Poland, and they both had been prisoners for five years. The one was a Polish Navy Officer, and the younger one was a young resident at the Warsaw University (his name was Dr. Grabowski). They took me right to the dispensary as they knew I wasn't in very good condition. The doctor put me beside a heater. I was freezing slowly but surely. After I was no longer an icicle, he treated all of my wounds, which by now were infected with gangrene. He did the best he could – all he had was sulfa powder to aply on the wounds. After a while they put me in my room in the barracks.

The room was very small, just big enough for two bunks. The bunks were made of two by

fours, about two feet high, and approximately three feet wide. There were five slats upon which they laid a "mattress" on. The mattress was a burlap bag filled with straw.

The room had bare walls made of what you would call barn lumber. It had a small window, and my head was next to it. I couldn't see out of the window, and I also got the cold draft from it. But, this was home for the next three months, and we all tried to make the best of it. Immediately after being placed in my bunk, the delousing crew came in and cut off my hair, and doused me with powder. Lice was a big problem and therefore this was a normal routine for them. I was visited by Dr. Grabowski the next day, and he had some cheery news for me. He said the gangrene in my arm was so bad that he was going to have to amputate it just below the elbow. Well, I was so sick at the time, I didn't much care what he did so long as it made me feel better. The next few days were a blank. I was out of it. I had pneumonia. The only thing I remembered is being placed in a sitting position by a few men, and feeling something jabbing me in the back. I would pass out again. What they were doing was sticking a syringe into my lungs to drain off the fluid, and also injecting sulfa powder. They said I was out for three or four days. When I regained consciousness, I noticed that I still had my arm, and all the Doctor would tell me was that he decided to wait a little longer. So, I just accepted what he said. After I began feeling a little better (about a month later) he told me the real reason was that he wasn't sure I would live through the pneumonia and there wasn't any point in performing the operation. I pulled through both the pneumonia and the infection. I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT THIS WAS A MIRACLE.

The days' conditions were not too bad, once you got used to the straw bed and the cold. The food? Well, that was another matter. Our menu was quite simple. Breakfast was a portion of coffee, made with roasted barley (they didn't have real coffee). Lunch was a portion of soup, and it was mostly made with green stuff, which looked and tasted like grass. Sometimes the soup had a little barley in it, and that was a special treat. For dinner we got a slice of black bread made mostly with saw dust and flour and, of course, it was dry. That was it. We received one Red Cross parcel per week. It was supposed to be one parcel per man per week, but the Germans only gave us one parcel per ten men a week and they kept the rest. It was divided up by making soup with the can of beans in it, and the lemonade powder was used to make a very weak drink, and so on. But it did help a lot and we were very grateful for it. Our only eating utensils were small cans about the size of a Planter's peanut can - this was our breakfast cup, our lunch soup bowl, and we didn't have spoons and forks (they didn't have any, and there wasn't a need for them).

While I was in the little room, I had several roommates. One was only there for two days before he died. Another roommate was there about a week and he was moved into the big room, where most of the ambulatories lived. The small rooms were set aside for the very sick, and the higher ranked Officers.

As soon as the sick felt somewhat stronger, they were moved into the big room. Anyway, the next one to be moved into my room was an English man who had been a prisoner for five years, and he had been forced to work in a factory in Poland. But the Russian Army came close to the town where he was and the Germans made all of the prisoners walk to our Camp, which was about 100 miles. One morning some of the men were shot because they didn't move fast enough for the Germans. My roommate was brought in by truck, with a bullet in the back, but he was lucky because it passed right through and didn't hit any vital organs. When they brought him in the room, I figured, "well, he won't last long." But he was tough and after a few days he was feeling much better.

He had some very interesting stories to tell, and it was nice to have someone to talk to once in a while. He had worked in the same factory for several years, alongside mostly Polish people, so he learned the language. He tried to teach me the language, but it was very difficult. After only a few days, they moved him into the barracks with the other English men. They had us segregated by the Country we were from. There were five buildings in all, in the so-called hospital compound, and the dispensary. There was a small shed where the dead were put until burial, which was about every other day. This was a depressing sight because, as you can imagine, there were no funerals. They would just haul the bodies out and dump them in a mass grave. That was it!

Back to life as a POW. As you can imagine, for those of us that were bedridden, it was not very comfortable. There were no sheets – just the Army blankets. One blanket to lie on and one to cover you. I still had no clothing issued to me. One day I asked a friend (his name was George Wunderlich, who had helped take care of me when I was in a bad way) if I could get something to wear. I was hoping to soon be able to get to the bathroom on my own power. So George said he would see what he could find and he brought me a pair of long johns (also known as long underwear). I didn't ask where he found them because I was too grateful to have them. You see, we had one so-called bathroom across the hall from my room, with a few stools, and one wall for a urinal. And, there were no bed pans. I had to get a couple men to carry me into the bathroom. I was very determined to try to walk, but with one arm in a cast, it wasn't easy. One day George brought me what passed as a crutch (about a four-foot stick with a Y on the top). I tried to stand, but my left leg didn't want to work. I kept trying, and finally I was able to get myself across the hall to the bathroom. Oh, that was a great day.

Well, boredom was setting in and became one of our biggest problems. There was nothing to do. Nothing to read. No radios. I was anxious to get out of my little cell so that I would at least have someone to talk to. One day I asked the Doctor if I could be moved. He agreed that perhaps it was time. They moved me into the big room, which was about one-half of the barracks and had about 30 beds in it. Some patients were bedridden, some were able to get around, and there were many with frozen feet that had one or both legs cut off or toes missing, and some were like me who were wounded in battle.

There were men from the Air Force. The Ground Forces were also well represented, due to the Battle of the Bulge. There were about 5000 men in the main compound, and about 50 in the hospital compound. I call it a Hospital, although it was no different from the regular barracks, and there was no medical equipment of any kind, no nurses, no nurses' aids, no one except the two Doctors. A Doctor would come into the room once a day to see how we were and to change dressings. The medicine consisted of sulfa powder, aspirin, and paper bandages. How any of us were able to recover even a little was by the grace of God, and by the skill and patience of the two Doctors.

At around the first part of April, we had an influx of new people coming into the Camp. Almost all of them had frozen feet, because the Camps they were in were being closed, and they were forced to walk for days at a time. The Russians were closing in from the east, and the Americans from the west. Some of these men had been in good health up to that point, but now they lost one or both feet because of frost bite. This was very sad.

We had no way of knowing what was happening on the outside, as we received no mail. We were not allowed to write except for the one short note we had permission to write when we first arrived at the Camp to let our loved ones know we were alive. That was it, until we were liberated. The only news about the fighting that we ever received was from

the German guards, and we could not believe any of what they told us. They kept telling us it would not be long until the Americans would be pushed back into the sea. We tried hard not to believe them. On one of the routine checkups of the small cells, one of the guards learned that I could speak German. He would visit me for a little while whenever he could. However, he was very careful about what he told me. I got to the point where I could read between the lines, and I could tell the war was not going as well as they wanted us to believe. The one thing he told me that was more truth than not was when he said, "You Americans will be sorry you aligned yourself with Russia." Boy, how true was that!

In early April, the city of Neubrandenburg was bombed day and night by the allied Air Force. And guess what? They knocked out the power plant and the water. We had no lights and no water for the bathroom. The last bit of creature comfort was gone. They brought some of the men from the regular compound to dig slit trenches for us, and that was our bathroom from then on. No water to wash our face. It was bad enough before with only cold water, but cold water was better than no water. They did, however, give us water to drink.

I was healing quite well by this time (early April), and the Doctor took the cast off my arm, which was a big relief. But, it was totally useless and very painful. I had nothing else to do but to give myself therapy. I tried to exercise as best I could. I had another problem – the latrine was outside. I had no shoes, so I asked some of the guys if they could find something to put on my feet. Well, they came up with some slippers. I don't know from where, but they worked and I could go out and use the latrine.

As the war seemed to be getting closer and closer to us, our rations began to diminish slowly. We could see all was not well with the mighty Third Reich. But we also were nearing starvation, and wondering how much longer the war would last, and if we could hold out.

One of the items contained in the Red Cross parcel was a small pack of eight cigarettes, which were parceled out each week. This was our money. Nobody smoked the cigarettes, as they were valuable to trade to the German guards for whatever they brought (or I should say, sneaked into Camp). Food items were the most valuable. They would sneak in food such as turnips, cabbage, etc., and we would trade our cigarettes for these food items. These items were cut up and were made a part of our soup, which helped a lot. Once in a while they would bring a rabbit, all skinned and ready to cook. It would be tossed into the soup. A funny thing about those rabbits, they had long legs and tails. Oh well, they did put a little protein into our diets, and helped to keep us alive.

One day, about the end of April, we heard some planes overhead. This was a common thing, as they made a lot of bombing runs over us. But this particular day, the planes seemed awfully low, and as they passed over us a shower of leaflets came fluttering down. They were dropped by our planes, and they had a simple message on them telling us to hang on, that the war would soon be over. And, they were signed by President Harry Truman. That was our first indication that President Franklin D. Roosevelt had died. But, it also gave us a big lift, because up until then, we had no knowledge of how the war was progressing.

We knew the Russian Army was closing in from the east because of all the American prisoners coming into our Camp. You see, Germany was now about half as big as it had been because the Russians were pushing in from the east and the American and British

from the west. As this happened, the prisoners were moved to the middle of the country, walking, of course, and that's why so many men had frozen feet.

On April 28, we began hearing the sound of artillery fire in the distance to the east. We knew this was the Russian Army coming. When the battle got closer, the barrack Commander had the able-bodied men dig trenches alongside the barracks for protection. That night the battle was closer and the shelling was very heavy. We spent most of the night in the trenches, freezing cold, but we did not have any direct hits. A lot of near misses! We had a lot of German guards, but the next morning they were gone.

The camp had two barbed wire fences about four feet apart, all around the camp, with a machine gun tower about every fifty feet, and men with rifles and dogs patrolling outside the fence. Well, there wasn't a soul to be seen. But in the distance, came the rumble of tanks. The Russians were coming with tanks, riflemen, and men on horseback with sabers. We looked on with amazement. On the front of some of the tanks sat a Russian with a concertina, playing and singing, as if he were in a bar room. We felt they had their ration of vodka early that day. The men on a horseback were, as we later found out, Cossacks. The sabers were used very effectively. We also noticed all of their equipment, tanks, trucks, jeeps, and fighter planes were from America. They painted the white star with red paint. This was all the equipment we gave them on our "lend-lease" program over the years, since about 1939.

We felt that now the war was over and we would be going home. But, the Russians took over the German guards' positions and nothing changed for us, with one difference – they forgot to feed us. A few of our higher-ranking Officers got together and went to the officer of the Guard at the gate and asked for food. The said, "sure," and proceeded to round up a cow and drove it into camp, shot it, and said, "here you are." It was skinned and cut up and dropped into the soup kettle along with some potatoes. The next day we had the first meat meal in six months. The next day everyone was sick with dysentery, deathly sick for those of us able to get out, and we spent the next day and night on the slit trenches. The poor guys that were still bedridden – well, let's just say there were not enough pans and buckets to handle the situation. When we were able to go inside, we chose not to, because we could not stand the smell. Thank God it was now the first week of May and it was no longer as cold as it had been. It took about a week to get over this illness, and several men died of it. Needless to say, no more beef stew!

The waiting seemed worse now, because we could not understand why the Russians were not contacting our lines (Our Army) to come for us. They did not tell us the war was over on May 7, and we were still there until the middle of May. They ignored our Officers, who kept bugging them to contact our lines to come and get us. Nothing worked. We still didn't know the war had ended.

One day they came in with a few trucks and told us they were taking us to more comfortable quarters. That kind of scared us, because the rumors were flying that we were going to Russia. And, the fact that we had no say so in the matter, they just loaded us onto the trucks and took us to what was a German Air Force Camp. The quarters seemed to be much better – brick buildings with Army cots, a big improvement over the wooden racks with the straw sacks on them. The food also improved (just a little bit). We were kept there another couple of weeks until; finally, they allowed a Catholic Army Chaplin, from the main compound, to get a driver for a jeep to take the Captain to contact the U.S. Army about our whereabouts.

This gave us some hope that our captivity would soon come to an end.

I referred to our captives as the Russians. Actually, they were troops from all of the USSR, which were many countries besides the Russians. Some were a bit unsavory, and hard to figure out. They kept bugging us for cigarettes, which we did not have, because the Red Cross parcels stopped coming when the Soviets took over. Anything we had saved from the Germans (such as, watches, rings, or anything like that) the Ruskies took from us. They kept interrogating us. They would get upset when we would not tell them anything (just like when the Germans questioned us, we'd only give them our "name, rank, and serial number"). They did give us some lighter moments, though, such as every evening at retreat they would lower their flag, and would march in close ranks about eight or ten abreast around the compound, which was like in a circle with a parade ground in the center. And, while marching, they would sing some rousing songs which were very beautiful to hear. When they were through and broke ranks, they would bring out a few concertinas and sing, as well as dance their special dance. I found this quite enjoyable. It would, for the moment, make me (and I'm sure the others) forget where I was.

Every once in awhile one of the Ruskies that had a bit too much vodka, would let go with a burst of his submachine gun. We would all hit the deck. The Ruskies thought this was funny. We did pick up a few Russian words, though, such as, whenever they came in and bugged us for American cigarettes – we learned how to say "we have no cigarettes." We would always tack onto the sentence (in English), "you SOB" and, of course, smile. Lucky we never had anyone that understood English.

The biggest part of the day was spent looking out of the windows toward the west, searching for any sign of American trucks coming to get us. Finally, one morning around the first of June (I don't remember the exact day, but it was about a week after the Chaplin left), some loud screams were heard from some of the guys looking out the windows. They spotted some trucks and other vehicles coming from the west. When the trucks got close enough so we could see the white star, we knew they were American. I think – NO I KNOW, everyone in the building let out the biggest and longest cheer that you could imagine. This was it. We were finally liberated. AT LAST!

After six and one-half months, we were no longer prisoners, and no longer under the control of a foreign country. The emotions and feelings we had cannot be described; you had to have been there. To be locked up is one thing, but to be locked up by your country's enemy, is quite another thing. We could not wait to get into the trucks. Those of us that were sick or wounded were put into ambulances. The rest of the men were loaded on the trucks. What a "rag tag bunch" we were. I still had dirty, unwashed, tattered, long johns on, which I had been wearing for more than three months. Everyone was in the same shape, but not all in long johns.

We left the Camp and headed for a small air strip, about a half-hour drive. On the way we passed by one of the famous Concentration Camps with the gas furnaces. You see, up until that moment, we had no idea this was going on, which was a very good thing. When we arrived at the air strip, we were put on a DC3, which was a small transport plane. The plane landed in Paris, where another ambulance took us to an American Army Hospital. On the way, the driver asked me if I had ever been to Paris. When I answered, "no," he took the scenic route down the Champs-Elysees through the Arch de Triomphe and, of course, the Eiffel Tower, down Pigalle where all the famous Paris night clubs are (sorry, we didn't stop). We went past the famous Notre-Dame Cathedral, and finally to the Hospital.

The Hospital was considered Paris' best medical facility, which was turned over to the American Army. It was very nice. The first thing they did was give me and the others a bath (where I soaked myself good). They burned my long johns. Feeding us was their next priority. They gave us milk; however, all they were able to give us to eat were a few bites of soft food, but we drank lots of milk (as a matter of fact, I couldn't get enough of it). They weighed me. I weighed 98 pounds (I weighed 180 when we left England). That's a diet I would not recommend to anyone. I was given a fairly good checkup, and the Doctors put me on a diet of about six meals a day. Actually, they were just snacks. The diet was to try to get my digestive system working again. After about a week of that, we were taken to the airport at Orley Field, where thirteen of us boarded a DC9 cargo plane, a little bigger plane than the DC3 that took us to Paris. The plane held only thirteen passengers. Space was limited because the passengers were on stretchers. There were no windows, or seats, just the bare walls with hangers for our stretchers.

DC9s were used for transporting the wounded back to the United States. We were given priority because we were all ex-prisoners of war, and all were wounded. However, we all were able to get around with crutches. We were dressed in hospital pajamas and robes. They were not very flattering (but better than the long johns I had been wearing). We had no uniforms or for that matter, no other possessions of any kind.

We were soon airborne and heading for the Azores' Islands, which was our first stop for fuel and food. We left about noon and arrived at the Azores about midnight, a long and tiring flight. I was too excited to sleep, and the plane was very noisy. I spent most of the time talking to the man next to me who was a Lieutenant in the Air Force and a bombardier. He had one leg taken off at the knee by anti-aircraft shells. We had something in common. When we got to the Azores, I happened to be in the cockpit to have a smoke (that was the only place we could smoke because of the gas fumes in the back), and the Pilot was kind enough to allow us to take turns to sit on the board between him and the copilot. This gave me a very good view out the windows, and, as I mentioned earlier, there were no windows in the rest of the plane. As we approached the Islands, the Captain said, "Hey Sargent, look straight ahead – that's where we are going to land." All I could see was a very small cluster of lights in the blackness, which was the ocean. I said, "You have got to be kidding." But land we did. We were over water until about a second before the wheels hit the runway. It was awesome. Well, we had a nice meal while the plane was being refueled, and then we took off again. The next leg of our journey was to Bermuda. This time I did get some sleep. We arrived in Bermuda approximately midmorning. We had another meal, gassed up, and off we went. We headed for New York. Bermuda was a very beautiful place, and I was glad it was daylight so I could enjoy the view. It also was a tiny speck in the middle of the ocean. The plane had no facilities of any kind. No bathrooms. But, it was equipped with relief tubes (small funnels with a hose attached that went outside). If you had to go No. 2 (bowel movement), there was a bucket in the tail end of the plane – not very comfy, so you made sure you relieved yourself while on the stops on the Islands. The next stop was New York. We arrived in the evening, tired but very happy to be back in the "good old United States." We were taken to an Army Hospital in New York City, where we were bathed, fed, and assigned to our respective bed, totally exhausted.

The next day after breakfast, we were given a chance to call home; the first chance to communicate with our loved ones since leaving for Europe in September of the year before. When I left the country, your Mom was living with her sister Evelyn, so that's where I tried calling. But, no one was at home. I then called my sister, Kay, in Detroit, but she was no longer at this address. Kay had moved to California. The Red Cross would only

allow us two calls, so I was out of luck. I wasted my phone calls and could not locate anyone.

Well, things started to happen. The thirteen of us that came home on the plane were told that we were to be the guests of the 13th War Loan Drive, and because we were prisoners of war we would be treated to a big celebration. So, there we to in Hospital PJs and robes, and on crutches or canes, with Medics and Nurses' Aids, accompanying us to help us board the bus. Off we went. They gave us a tour of New York, which was very nice. We went to the New York Yacht Club for lunch – a very elaborate affair. The lunch was beautiful and delicious, with members of the Club waiting on us. They started serving us champagne, and ended up serving us a beautiful dessert. After lunch they took us out on one of the big yachts for a ride. It was exciting and beautiful. As I recall, it was about a 45 or 50-foot boat, and very beautiful. It belonged to a wealthy couple (can't remember their name). After that, we were taken to Radio City Music Hall to see a radio show that was being broadcast. It was the show "Evening in Paris, " which was very big at the time with Jim Ameche and Francis Langford. Both were big stars at that time. Of course, this was before the days of television. This was exciting stuff for us. Pretty show girls and the Rockette dancers, and the big bands. Wow. From there we went to the Zanzibar Club for dinner and their show. Cab Callaway's band played and they were also very famous at that time. Our waiters were the big comedy team of Olson & Johnson. THE MEAL AGAIN WAS VERY SPECIAL. Remember we were still in those ugly PJs and robes! And, of course we were continually being introduced as guests of the 13th War Loan Drive. I guess seeing us was supposed to make people dig deeper in their pockets and buy more War Bonds. But no matter, we sure enjoyed it. After the evening at the Club, we went back to the Hospital tired, but happier than we had been in a very long time.
Our day as guests of honor was over and we returned to finish our preparations to be shipped out to a hospital close to home.
The next day I was put onto another DC-3 and flew to Battle Creek, Michigan, to the Percy Jones Army Hospital, which was to be my home for the next eight months. As soon as I got there, I again called to see if I could locate Jeanne. I called Aunt Honey this time and, lo and behold, there was my bride. At long last I got to talk to her. It sure was great to hear her voice after so long a separation. And, of course, she got word to my folks that I was back and all in one piece. On the weekend Aunt Honey drove Jeanne to see me at the hospital. All I could think of was what she would think when she saw the skinny beat-up guy I was. Well, I worried for nothing, because she didn't seem to notice. If she did, she didn't
Well. I was given a very good going over by the Doctors and they laid out some things I needed done. But the President had given an order that all returning prisoners of war were to be given a 30-day furlough immediately upon our arrival, so surgery has to be delayed except dental. The next day I was hustled down to the dental office because my teeth were in bad shape and they would not let me go home that way. My leave was set for the next day, so guess what? I was in the dentist's chair nearly all day. An experience I would never forget. But the job was done and I was ready to go but for one thing. I had no clothes. I had to be outfitted with a uniform from top to bottom. I guess I looked pretty bad, so as soon as I got home I went to a tailor to have my uniform fitted. I still have the jacket hanging in my closet. Of course, it would never fit, but it is still there.
After four fantastic weeks at home, I returned to the hospital. The first thing they did was operate on my arm to try to restore the severed nerve and tendons. However, they told me it could only be partially restored because it had been too long since the injury. Well, they were right. At least they tried. After the surgery they put me in a body cast from the waist to my neck, and all that was out was my right arm (this took place about the first of August, and the cast had to be on for eight to ten weeks). Not fun, but I got along. I was

allowed a weekend pass every weekend, so I would get out there with my cast and my cane, and hitched-hiked to Detroit. And on Sunday evening, I hitched-hiked back to Battle Creek. I never had any trouble getting rides, I did this for about a month, A friend of Jeanne's at her office said her Dad had a car we might be interested in. It was a 1935 Chrysler Imperial (a BIG car but a good one). It hadn't been driven all through the war because it burned too much gas. However, the rationing was over. So that wasn't a problem. We bought the car for $400.00 and had to put four tires on it, and it was good to go. Well, from then on I had it made. I cruised back and forth in style, with one arm and one working leg. I managed the clutch and brake with my right foot and the floor shift with my right hand. I did just fine. Of course, in today's traffic that would never work.

I enjoyed my trips to Detroit on Fridays, and back to the hospital on Sunday afternoons. This went on all summer until I got my cast off and driving got a lot easier. I went through a lot of rehab at the hospital on my leg and arm, trying to get them both to work again. This went on until January of 1946. They called me before the Review Board of Doctors, and they informed me there was nothing more they could do for me, and I would be getting a medical discharge soon. They reviewed my injuries and said I could regain partial use of my left hand and my left leg if I kept working at it. As far as the six or seven pieces of scrap metal I carried in my body, they would have to stay because it would do too much damage to try and take them out. So that was it. I was discharged on February 7, 1946. At that time I was very happy to have that chapter of my life closed.

I was now free. I had no more weekend passes to worry about. Army life was over! I went home to Detroit to our apartment and enjoyed a short vacation and settled down to married life. But now it was time to earn a living. Jeanne was now our bread-winner and our sole support, because my Army pay was coming to an end and my disability pension was a whopping $35.00 per month. Well, not to worry. The government had a law which stated that all veterans were to get their jobs back, which they held when entering service. And, as I had had a very good job with General Motors, I felt I had no worries. Oh, what a surprise I was in for! I went to see my olf boss at General Motors and said, "Well, I'm ready to come back to work." He took one look at me and said, "I don't think so." I said, "But, Louie, the law states that all veterans must get their old jobs back." And he came back with, "Yes, but only if you are in the same physical condition." Well, of course, I was far from it. I weighed in at about 120 pounds, walked with a cane, and my left arm was nearly useless. I was no picture of health. This was thee first of many blows I received to my ego and to my self-esteem. Everywhere I went it was the same story, until about five or six months went by. Something had to be done because Jeanne was now expecting our first child and soon would have to quit working. We bought a small camping trailer and took it out to my folk's farm and that was our home and we ate our meals with my Mother and Father. Great for a temporary arrangement while I continued job hunting, but with no luck. Well, the sugar beet harvest was about to begin and my brothers (John and Frank) purchased a sugar beet harvester. My Dad said, "Here, take my truck and haul the beets to the factory in Sebewaing." You see, all I had to do was drive-I didn't have to do any loading or unloading. This was great! Long hours, but I finally could earn some money and, MOST IMPORTANTLY, I felt useful again. And, with a new baby, we were badly in need of the money. This lasted until early December and the harvest was over.

The weather was getting colder and we were living in that little trailer and were about to freeze. Of course, we only slept in the trailer and lived in the house with my folks during the day. Anyway, I had to make some decisions as to what to do to make a living for my little family, and I decided that Jeanne had to have better living conditions. It so happened that Uncle Jack and Aunt Eddie also decided to make a change, so we packed up and

headed for California. We took my Dad along, as my Mom had already gone out with my sister Eva and her family. Jeanne, Judy who was only four month's old, my Dad, Uncle Jack and Aunt Eddie with their daughters Donna and Margie, and I, all slept in our little 18-foot trailer. I had made enough money hauling sugar beets to buy a new car and to make the trip, so I bought a new Ford convertible and pulled the house trailer. Uncle Jack had a small trailer with all their belongings on it. So off we went. We had a terrible snow storm when we left, and were very glad to leave Michigan. We finally arrived in Long Beach, where my brother Mike and his wife Dolores lived. We parked our little camper in their yard. Jeanne, Judy and I lived with Mike and Dolores while the others lived in the camper. We knew this was only a temporary arrangement until I could get a job. But I had no luck with that, so I decided to go to College to further my education, as the government gave ex-GI's an allowance while going to school. I enrolled in Long Beach City College. At the end of the first term, the course I was in consisted in part-time work as part of the course. Well here I was again, I could not get a job because my physical condition kept interfering. Well I finally decided to go back to Michigan to try my luck there again. That summer we headed back and I sold my new convertible and bought a 1941 Ford to make the trip back. The car was six year's old but was in good condition, and I needed the money for the trip back.

As Grandma DuMonthier was taking Gary Laux back to live with them, we took the two of them with us as we had lots of room in the car. We decided to make a nice trip out of it and we drove up the coast highway from Los Angeles to Portland, Oregon, and then straight east so that we could stop at Uncle Bernard's house in Montana. As I had never met Bernard or Della, or their children, it was a very nice visit. Well, back in Michigan the job hunting started all over again. We found an old house to rent for $15.00 per month. It was out on a farm and was very old and run-down. No inside plumbing, no bath room, just a roof over our heads. When I look back, I wonder how Jeanne stood it, but she was great. She made the best of it with very little complaint, and she made a home out of the shack we called home.

I finally found a job at the Gagetown Elevator to work in the office for Frank Lenhard, for the huge sum of $75.00 per MONTH! It was a start, and a new chapter in our lives began. That December, Joey came along and, to keep from freezing, we went to Cass City and stayed with my Mom and Dad until we could buy a small house in Gagetown. This was our first home and it was a big improvement over everything we had up until then.

Things were going quite well, except for my physical condition. I had a constant pain in my left side which kept getting worse and after many visits to the doctors and with no luck, I finally went to the Veterans' Hospital in Detroit. After a week of testing, the Doctor found I had a kidney stone in the upper part of my left kidney, so I had surgery to have it removed. It was a big one as it had been there since 1944, when I took all the sulfa tables without water. Well, that took care of that.

That Fall, Diane came along, and things went quite well. Our family was complete. The next Spring Mr. Gruber came to see me and offered me a job at the Reese Elevator Company. And there we stayed for 16 HAPPY years.

You know the rest of the story.

I feel that I have been blessed with a wonderful life. Thanks to a loving, understanding and wonderful wife, and three great kids, for which I thank God every day.

After three long years he was home! He was starting a new phase in his life. It was difficult for him to find a job because of his physical disabilities. Dad's first job, finally, after many months of recuperation from his extensive injuries was at a grain elevator in the little town of Reese, Michigan. With hard work, he was gradually promoted to the point of becoming General Manager over the whole operation, grain, lumber and coal.

During his years in Reese, dad enjoyed both deer and pheasant hunting with his friends, the closest of whom were from the American Legion. They had parties almost every weekend. Dad was a Commander of the Reese branch and went to many state conventions. Their group of friends enjoyed many vacation trips together, both in the United States and especially to Europe.

Dad was in the men's club at St. Elizabeth Catholic Church and was a great supporter in fund raising to help the church and others.

During his time in Reese he had the three of us, two girls and a boy. Reese was a small town, with no stop lights, but it did have railroad tracks, running through the middle of town, in order to bring lumber and coal and take away the grain the farmers had harvested. They were great times, everyone in town knew everyone else.

We had a comfortable life. He worked hard to save enough to send all three of us to boarding schools when it was time for high school. The cold weather caused him pain from his military injuries so he decided to move the family to a warmer climate and chose Phoenix, Arizona. Our lives were going to change when we left Reese.

He had a few jobs that didn't seem to satisfy him until he started in the food brokerage business. After a few years, he and two partners decided to start their own company called Canyon State Sales. They had an extremely successful business. During this time the three of us, his children got married and started families of our own. He loved when we came over and he could spend time with the grandchildren. One of his favorite things to do was give them rides in his golf cart. All the grandkids loved those rides and so did he. Dad and mom were avid golfers and went out on the courses as often as they could. Dad even made a "hole in one," which he was very proud of.

He ended up selling his interest in the food brokerage business he had started with his partners and went to work for his son and son-in-law. His experience and knowledge made an important impact on their success.

They joined the golf club in Sun City West and enjoyed having dinner on a regular basis with their special friends. They traveled extensively, cruising all over the world with some special friends they had for many years. They visited almost every country you could imagine.

Written for a wonderful husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather.

He was our hero, a man with great honor, dignity and selflessness!

He will be in our hearts forever!

His Beloved Family!

I was drafted

I was drafted, trained, supplied, unloaded, then waded ashore at Le Havre, France. We walked a few days through rain and snow, into the Ardennes Mountains. The small town of St. Vith was about five miles from where we replaced the 1st Division on the front lines, on the border between Belgium and Germany. They had been there for several weeks and were well dug in. The gun emplacements for my two Machine Gun crews were each big enough for the crew of five to lie in. If you bent over you could sit up.

The Germans were dug in on the other side of a small valley. We could see them and they could see us. We stayed in our holes most of the time. The artillery barrages would start up every now and then so we didn't spend too much time on the latrine. About December 13, we began hearing a lot of movement from the Germans, sounding like tank movements. As it turned out, that's what it was. They also increased the heavy artillery shelling, so we were pinned down.

On the morning of December 16, at daybreak, the Germans came at us with their heavy tanks, called Panzers. We got orders to pull back. We picked up our machine guns and ammunition and took off. Our orders were to reassemble in the town of St. Vith, but the Germans had us cut off. We would go in one direction and we'd run into them. Each time we lost some of our men in the fight. This went on for three days until the morning of December 19. We had spent most of the night in foxholes, which had about a foot of water in them. Every time we tried to get out the artillery would start up.

I sent word to the Company Commander, telling him, *"Let's get out of here while it's still dark and try to make a break for St. Vith."* The commander said back, *"No, let's wait until daylight."* We knew the Germans were all around us because we could hear them talking. Actually, they weren't all around us because we were at the edge of the woods. In front of us were open fields and to the left open fields. To our right were heavy woods. We were at the corner of a small gravel road, so we had Germans behind us at to our right. We knew they were there but we didn't know how many and what equipment they had, except for a few artillery pieces.

We had about one-half of an Infantry Company, but my two machine guns had very little ammunition. The Commander gave orders for the first platoon to start out with my machine guns attached. The rifle platoon got well out into the field when all hell broke loose. The Germans were laying in ambush. They opened up with everything they had, including an 88mm.

I gave orders for the two Machine Gunners to advance across the road to set up on the other ditch bank. It was only a small ditch, but I felt it would give us some protection from where we could return fire. I grabbed some ammunition boxes and pulled the belt out of one of the guns. I put it around my neck (a big mistake) because I only ran about ten feet when a bullet creased the belt and exploded three or four rounds in the belt. The force knocked me flat on my face and my helmet went rolling. The carbine flew out of my hand. It stunned me for a few seconds. When I realized what had happened, I reached for my gun with my left hand at the same instant an artillery shell hit the tree above me and sent shell fragments raining down on me, one hitting my left

wrist and another my left leg. I could see what it had done to my wrist but I couldn't see what it had done to my leg. I felt like it was blown off.

In a few seconds another shell landed and this time quite a few fragments tore into my back, knocking the wind out of me. It also put my lights out. When I came to, someone was rolling me over on my back. It was a soldier from my squad. He asked if I could take the sulfa tablets we had in our first aid kits. I told him, *"Yes."* I noticed he was holding one hand up in the air, only there was no hand, it had been blown off at the wrist. He used his remaining hand and took the eight sulfa tablets and put them in my mouth. He took out my canteen, but it was empty. He then took a handful of snow and put it in my mouth. After a good bit of gagging, I chewed them and got them down, which probably saved my life.

I drifted in and out of consciousness for the rest of the day. I saw a few of the guys get hit, wondering if this was *"the end"* thinking it really was. I noticed the firing stopped and I could hear voices. I realized most of the talking was in German. The few American men still on their feet were rounded up and taken prisoner. I guess I went back to *"la la land"* because the next voices I heard were German soldiers. One was kneeling beside me to see if I was alive. He asked a question, which I answered in German, which startled him. He called to his buddy in German, *"Hey, this one is still alive, let's take him."* They picked me up and put me into a trailer being pulled by a jeep, ours at that. There were four of us in the trailer, just tossed in. By now it was almost dusk and very cold. The cold weather was probably another factor in saving my life. My wounds were frozen, preventing me from bleeding. The ride in the trailer was extremely painful and cold. My head was resting on the side of the trailer, the wheel covering my face with mud, freezing on my face.

They made a stop to unload one of the guys who had died. We continued on for I don't know how long because it was dark. We finally stopped and I was taken off the trailer. The next thing I remember was a Medic cutting off my clothes and a Priest was giving me the last rites. That was not too encouraging, but I was glad to get off that steel trailer to receive a little medical attention. I felt blessed to have a Priest pray for me. I again went back to *"la la land."*

Whatever was in the shot they gave me must have been strong. When I awoke I heard singing and at the foot of my bed were two angels singing Christmas carols. My first thought was, *"Wow, I must be in heaven."* Then I noticed the singing was in German. Reality hit me that I was alive and in a German Field Hospital. The Angels were the German version of Santa Claus, which they call Christmas Angels. A lady and a little girl wore white clothing and had wings on their back. It was Christmas Eve and I now had been unconscious for three days. As I began to take notice of where I was, I realized I was in bed with two German soldiers that were also wounded.

The Christmas Angels were handing out Christmas presents to all the German soldiers. The package contained a bottle of wine and a bag of cookies. When they gave one to me, someone yelled, *"No, no, he's an American."* So I didn't get a present. I was in a lot of pain and I was hungry because I had nothing to eat for about five or six days.

I began to take stock of my injuries. My left arm was in a huge metal splint (looked like two snow shoes) and this was lying across my stomach. The rest of my body was completely wrapped (sort of like a mummy). I couldn't move my left leg or my left arm, but my right arm was all right. The bandages were like crepe paper, which is what the Germans used.

The place we were cared for was formerly an Inn that had been converted to a Field Hospital. The beds were mostly the old double beds, each with two or three men to a bed. It didn't look anything like a hospital. Because I couldn't get up they gave me a urinal. Surprise! Guess what? They gave me a small can, the size of a can of peanuts. It served the purpose. Soon the lights went out and someone started singing Silent Night in German. Slowly, everyone was singing and I could hear a few English voices. I realized I wasn't the only American in the Field Hospital. There must have been five or six of us. They sang a few more German songs when the man on my left handed me a cup of his wine. He said, *"Schnell,"* which meant *"quick"* and, I did. It was very good. A few minutes later, the guy on my right handed me his cup and said, *"Schnell,"* and he also gave me a cookie. For the first time since my capture, I felt a glimmer of hope.

Here I was, lying between two of the men that we were shooting at a few hours earlier. What irony, but when the singing started, they became human beings and were perhaps wishing, as I was, to be at home for Christmas. The only difference was that they got the wine and cookies and I didn't. That brought me back to the real world. When the lights were turned off, I drifted back to sleep, the wine helped, thankfully.

The next day, Christmas day, I finally was given something to eat. It wasn't turkey and dressing, but it was food. By this time, all my wounds were becoming very painful. There wasn't much they gave me for pain, no shots every four hours, just some aspirin once in a while. That night we were treated to a bombing raid and for about an hour is was terrifying. You could hear the bombs whistling through the air, and then a loud BOOM and the beds would shake. All the while the German guys were cussing out those damn Americans, because the planes dropping the bombs were of course, American. I had no idea where we were, but I know it was near a large city, and they were bombing the city. Some of the bombs were dropped very close to us. Needless to say, this was a Christmas I'll never forget.

The next day, they took me, along with the other four or five Americans and loaded us on a bus. We were all on stretchers, which were made of some sort of woven straw. All in all, this entire ordeal was very, very painful, and it was very cold. When the bus came to a stop, I regained consciousness and learned I was now in a *"real hospital"* with Nuns walking around. I had a hospital bed all to myself. By this time, all of my bandages were soaked with blood and crusted, because they had not been changed since the first night. Cleaning and dressing our wounds was the first order of business for the Nuns, because our wounds were still wrapped in paper. The next morning they took me to the OR where they set and put a plaster cast on my badly shattered left arm. It was a great improvement over the steel splint that had been on my arm.

When I awoke I was back in a room where they also had a very young boy, about 15 or 16. He was a German soldier, a Hitler youth no less. They were the worst kind and as I

found out, very anti- American. He kept harassing me until I ran for a Nun or nurse. I told them to get him out of the room, because I was quite helpless and could not defend myself. I didn't trust him. They gave him hell and moved him to another room. The nurse told me he was mad because he got shot in the butt. I spent the next day there feeling somewhat more comfortable.

I was clean and my arm felt better in the plaster cast. The cast was up to my shoulder and enclosed my hand. It had a hole in the top and bottom and there was a hose about one-half inch in diameter and about three inches long with a safety pin on top and one on the bottom to keep it from coming out. This allowed drainage, which it did a lot. My stay in this comfortable spot was short-lived. The next day I was loaded back into a stretcher and this time I was parked at the train station waiting for them to put me on board.

The train stations in Europe are a bit different than here. They are very large, because the trains go right through the building and you feel like you're outside. That's where they parked me. All I had was one Army blanket covering me and it was very cold. I must have been there for about a half hour before they put me on a train car where all the wounded were on stretchers. Some were American and some were German. I had no clue as to where I was going. At least it was somewhat warmer in the car. We were caught in a few bombing raids and one strafing, but our car wasn't hit. We were on the train for a couple of days until we came to the city of Neubrandenburg, Germany. It's in the northeast corner of the country, not far from the Polish border and not far from the Baltic Sea. **Stalag 2-A** was my destination, which was to be my home for the rest of the war. They took me and four other GI's off the train, all of us on stretchers and put us on a horse drawn wagon with steel wheels. We started moving down a gravel road. It was freezing cold and the jiggling of the wagon made the pain more unbearable. I guess I must have moaned a lot because after a few miles they took me off the wagon. Four German soldiers carried my stretcher on their shoulders. I was very grateful for this and I thanked them in German, which pleased them. They were older men assigned to guard duty at the Prison Camp. They were too old for combat duty.

We got to the camp with its barbed wire enclosure and guard towers with machine guns mounted in them, rows of barracks, on one end of the Camp was the *"Hospital-part of the Camp",* and the buildings were the same as the rest, except for the dispensary. There were two doctors, both from Warsaw, Poland; they had both been prisoners for five years. One was a Polish Navy Officer and the younger one was a young resident at the Warsaw University, Dr. Grabowski. They took me right to the dispensary, as they knew I wasn't in very good condition. The doctor put me beside a heater to thaw me out. He treated my wounds, which by now were infected with gangrene. He did the best he could with the sulfa powder he had to treat me.

After a while they put me in a room in the barracks. The room was small, just big enough for two bunks, about two feet wide and three feet wide, five slats with a mattress filled with straw. The room had bare walls made of *"barn wood"*, with a small window I couldn't see out of, but I did get a cold draft from. This was home for the next three months and we all tried to make the best of it. After being put in my bunk, the delousing crew came in, cut off my hair and doused me with powder. Lice were a big problem and this was a normal routine for them. Dr. Grabowski visited me the next day with some good news. He said the gangrene in my arm was so bad he was going to have to

amputate it just below the elbow. I was so sick at the time; I didn't much care what he did so long as it made me feel better. The next few days were a blank. I was out of it with pneumonia. The only thing I remember was being placed in a sitting position by a few men and feeling something jabbing me in the back. I passed out again. They were sticking a syringe into my lungs to drain off the fluid and injecting sulfa powder. They said I was out for three or four days. When I regained consciousness, I noticed I still had my arm and the doctor said he decided to wait a little while longer so I accepted what he said. He told me later the real reason was that he didn't think I would live through the pneumonia so there wasn't any point in performing the operation. I pulled through both the pneumonia and the infection. I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT WAS A MIRACLE.

The conditions weren't too bad once you got used to the straw bed and the cold. The food? Well, that was another matter. Our menu was quite simple. Breakfast was a portion of coffee; made with roasted barley (they didn't have real coffee). Lunch was a portion of soup, and it was mostly made with green stuff, which looked and tasted like grass. Sometimes the soup had a little barley in it and that was a special treat. For dinner we got a slice of black bread made mostly with sawdust and flour and of course, it was dry. We received one Red Cross parcel per week. It was supposed to be one parcel per man per week, but the Germans only gave us one parcel per ten men a week and they kept the rest. It was divided up by making soup with the can of beans in it and the lemonade powder was used to make a very weak drink and so on. It did help a lot and we were very grateful for it. Our only eating utensils were small cans about the size of a Planter's peanut can, which we used for our breakfast cup and our lunch soup bowl. We didn't have forks or spoons and there wasn't a need for them.

While I was in the little room I had several roommates. One was only there for two days before he died. Another was there about a week and was moved to the big room where most of the ambulatories lived. The small rooms were set aside for the very sick and the higher ranked officers. As soon as the sick felt somewhat stronger, they were moved into the big room. The next one to be moved into my room was an Englishman who had been a prisoner for five years. He had been forced to work in a factory in Poland. The Russian Army came close to the town where he was and the Germans made all of the prisoners walk to our Camp, which was about 100 miles. One morning, some of the men were shot because they didn't move fast enough for the Germans. My roommate was brought in by truck with a bullet in the back. He was lucky because it passed through him and didn't hit any vital organs. When they brought him in the room I figured, *"well, he won't last long."* He was tough and after a few days he was feeling much better.

He had some interesting stories to tell and it was nice to have someone to talk to once in a while. He had worked in the same factory for several years, alongside mostly Polish people so he learned the language. He tried to teach me the language, but it was difficult. After only a few days he was moved into the barracks with the other Englishmen. They had us segregated by the Country we were from. There were five buildings in all, in the so-called hospital compound and the dispensary. There was a small shed where the dead were put until burial, which was about every other day. This was a depressing sight because, as you can imagine, there were no funerals. They would just haul the bodies out and dump them in a mass grave.

As you can imagine, for those of us that were bedridden, it was not very comfortable. There were not sheets, just Army blankets. One to lie on and one to cover you. I still had no clothing issued to me. One day I asked a friend (his name was George Wunderlich) who had taken care of me when I was in a bad way, if I could get something to wear. I was hoping to soon be able to get to the bathroom on my own power. George said he would see what he could find and he brought me a pair of long johns (long underwear). I didn't ask where he found them because I was too grateful to have them. We had one so-called bathroom across the hall from my room, with a few stools and one wall for a urinal. There were no bed pans. I had to get a couple of men to carry me to the bathroom. I was very determined to try to walk, but with one arm in a cast, it wasn't easy. One day, George brought me what passed as a crutch, about a four foot stick with a Y on the top. I tried to stand, but my left leg didn't want to work. I kept trying and finally was able to get myself across the hall to the bathroom. That was a great day.

The boredom was setting in and became one of our biggest problems. There was nothing to do. Nothing to read, no radios. I was anxious to get out of my little cell so I would at least have someone to talk to. One day I asked the Doctor if I could be moved. He agreed that perhaps it was time. They moved me into the big room, which was about half of the barracks and had about 30 beds in it. Some patients were bedridden, some were able to get around and there were many with frozen feet that had one or both legs cut off or toes missing. Some were like me, wounded in battle.

There were men from the Air Force. The Ground Forces were well represented due to the Battle of the Bulge. There were about 5000 men in the main compound and about 50 in the hospital compound. I call it a hospital although it was no different from the regular barracks and there was no medical equipment of any kind, no nurse's aids, no one except the two doctors. A doctor would come into the room once a day to see how we were and to change dressings. The medicine consisted of sulfa powder, aspirin and paper bandages. How any of us were able to recover even a little was by the grace of God and by the skill and patience of the two Doctors.

In early April, we had an influx of new guys coming into the Camp. Almost all of them had frozen feet. The camps they had been in were being closed and they were forced to walk for days at a time. The Russians were closing in from the East and the Americans from the West. Some of the men had been in good health until the long march, which caused them to lose one or both feet due to frost bite. It was sad.

We had no way of knowing what was happening on the outside as we received no mail. We were not allowed to write, except for one short note we could write when we first arrived at the camp to let our loved ones know we were still alive. That was it until we were liberated. The only news we ever received was from the German guards and we didn't believe anything they told us. They told us it wouldn't be long until the Americans would be pushed back into the sea. We tried hard not to believe them. On one of the routine checkups of the small cells, one of the guards learned I could speak German. He would visit me for a little while whenever he could. However, he was very careful about what he told me. I got to the point where I could read between the lines and I could tell the war was not going as well as they wanted us to believe. The one thing he told me

that was more truth than not was when he said, *"You Americans will be sorry you aligned yourself with Russia."* Boy, how true that was.

In early April, the city of Neubrandenburg was bombed day and night by the Allied Air Force. They knocked out the power plant and the water. We had no lights and no water for the bathroom. The last bit of creature comfort was gone. They brought some of the men from the regular compound to dig slit trenches for us. That was our bathroom from then on. There was no water to wash our face. It was bad enough before with cold water, but cold water was better than no water. They did give us water to drink.

I was healing quite well by early April and the doctor took my cast off. It was a big relief, but my arm was totally useless and very painful. I had nothing else to do but to give myself therapy. I tried to exercise as best I could. I had another problem, the latrine was outside and I didn't have shoes. I asked some of the guys if they could find something to put on my feet. They came up with some slippers. They worked so I could go out to the latrine.

As the war seemed to be getting closer and closer to us our rations began to diminish slowly. We could see all was not well with the mighty Third Reich. We were also nearing starvation, wondering how much longer the war would last and if we could hold out.

One of the items contained in the Red Cross parcel was a small pack of eight cigarettes, which were parceled out each week. It was our money. Nobody smoked the cigarettes as they were valuable to trade the guards for whatever they brought (sneaked) into camp. Food items were the most valuable. They would sneak in food such as turnips, cabbage and other stuff and we would trade them our cigarettes for the food items. It was cut up and made a part of our soup, which helped a lot. Once in a while they would bring a rabbit, all skinned and ready to cook. It would be tossed into the soup. A funny thing about those rabbits, they had long legs and tails. Oh well, they did put a little protein into our diets and helped keep us alive.

One day, about the end of April, we heard some planes overhead. This was a common thing, as they made a lot of bombing runs over us. This particular day, the planes seemed especially low and as they passed over us a shower of leaflets came fluttering down. They were dropped by our planes and the simple message told us to hang on, that the war would soon be over. They were signed by President Harry Truman. That was our first indication that President Franklin D Roosevelt had died. It also gave us a big lift. Until then, we had no knowledge of how the war was progressing.

We knew the Russian Army was closing in from the East because of all the prisoners coming into our camp. Germany was now only about half as big as it had been because the Russians were pushing in from one side and the Americans and British from the other.

On April 28, we began hearing the sound of artillery fire in the distance, from the East. We knew this meant the Russian Army was coming. When the battle got closer, the barracks Commander had the able-bodied men dig trenches alongside the barracks

for protection. That night the battle was closer and the shelling was very heavy. We spent most of the night in the trenches, freezing cold. We didn't have any direct hits, but a lot of near misses. The next morning, all of the German guards were gone.

The camp had two barbed wire fences about four feet apart, all around the camp with a machine gun tower about every fifty feet and guards with rifles and dogs patrolling outside the fence. When we woke up they were all gone. In the distance came the rumble of tanks. The Russians came with tanks, riflemen and men on horseback with sabers. We looked on with amazement. On the front of some of the tanks would be a Russian playing a Concertina and singing as if he were in a bar room. We figured they had already had their ration of Vodka for the day. We later found out the men on horseback were Cossacks. Their sabers were used very effectively. We noticed all of their equipment, tanks, trucks, jeeps, and airplanes were from America. They painted the white stars red. This was the equipment we gave them on our *"lend-lease"* program over the years, since about 1939.

We felt that now that the war was over we would be going home. However, the Russians took over the German guards' positions and nothing changed for us, with one difference, they forgot to feed us. A few of our higher-ranking officers got together and went to the Officer of the Guard at the gate and asked for food. They said, *"Sure,"* and proceeded to round up a cow, drove it into the camp and shot it. They said, *"Here you are."* It was skinned, cut up and dropped into the soup kettle along with some potatoes. The next day, we had the first meat meal in six months. Everyone was sick with dysentery. We spent the next day and night on the slit trenches. The poor guys that were still bedridden, well, let's just say there weren't enough pans or buckets to handle the situation. When we were able to go inside, we chose not to because we couldn't stand the smell. Thank God it was the first week of May and was no longer as cold as it had been. It took about a week to get over the dysentery and several men died from it. Needless to say, no more beef stew.

The waiting seemed worse now, because we could not understand why the Russians were not contacting our lines to come for us. They didn't tell us the war was over on May 7, and we were still there until the middle of May. They ignored our Officers, who kept bugging them to contact our lines to come and get us. Nothing worked. We still didn't even know the war had ended.

One day they came in with a few trucks and told us they were taking us to more comfortable quarters. That scared us, because the rumors were flying that we were going to Russia. The fact that we had no say in the matter, they just loaded us up onto the trucks and took us to what was a German Air Force Camp. The quarters seemed to be much better, brick buildings with Army cots, a big improvement over the wooden racks with the straw sacks on them. The food was also improved, a little. We were kept there another couple of weeks until; they allowed a Catholic Army Chaplin, from the main compound, to get a driver for a jeep to take the Captain to contact the U.S. Army about our whereabouts. This gave us some hope that our captivity would soon come to an end.

I referred to our captives as the Russians. Actually, they were troops from all over the USSR, which were many countries besides the Russians. Some were a bit unsavory, and

hard to figure out. They kept bugging us for cigarettes, which we didn't have, because the Red Cross parcels stopped coming when the Soviets took over. Anything we had saved from the Germans, such as watches, rings or anything else of value the Ruskies took from us. They kept interrogating us. They would get upset when we wouldn't tell them anything besides our name, rank and serial number, as we did with the Germans.

They did give us some lighter moments, though, such as every evening at retreat they would lower their flag and march in close ranks about eight or ten abreast around the compound. It was like a circle with a parade ground in the center. While marching they would sing some rousing songs which were very beautiful to hear. When they were through and broke ranks, they would bring out a few concertinas and sing, as well as dance their special dance. I found this quite enjoyable. It would for the moment, make me and the others forget where we were.

Every once in a while one of the Ruskies that had a bit too much Vodka would let go with a burst of his submachine gun. We would all hit the deck. The Ruskies thought that was funny. We did pick up a few Russian words such as, when they bugged us for American we had cigarettes, we learned how to say, *"We have no cigarettes."* We would always tack onto the sentence, in English, *"you SOB"* and of course, smile. Lucky we never had anyone that understood English.

The biggest part of the day was spent looking out of the windows toward the West, searching for any sign of American trucks coming to get us. Finally, one morning around the first of June some loud screams were heard from the guys looking out the windows. They spotted some trucks and other vehicles coming from the West. When the trucks got close enough we could see the white star, we knew they were American. Everyone in the building let out the biggest and longest cheer that you could imagine. This was it. We were finally liberated.

After six and a half months, we were no longer prisoners and no longer under the control of a foreign country. The emotions and feelings we had cannot be described; you had to have been there. To be locked up is one thing, but to be locked up by your country's enemy is quite another thing. We couldn't wait to get into the trucks. Those of us that were sick or wounded were put into ambulances. The rest of the men were loaded on the trucks. What a *"rag-tag"* bunch we were. I still had dirty, unwashed, tattered, long-johns on, which I had been wearing for more than three months.

We left the camp and headed for a small air strip about a half hour away. On the way we passed by one of the famous Concentration Camps with the gas furnaces. Up until that moment we had no idea this was going on. We arrived at the air strip and were put on DC3's and flown to Paris and driven to the hospital considered Paris' best medical facility. It had been turned over to the American Army for its soldiers.

Source: Battle of the Bulge website 2015
http://www.battleofthebulgememories.be/stories26/us-army25/937-i-was-drafted.html
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