

My Tribute to the Golden Lion

Foreword:

The 106th Infantry Division was activated March 15, 1943 at Fort Jackson, Columbia, South Carolina. It was unique, special, and different by being the highest numbered and last Division organized in World War II. Also, at the same time that America's (Pride of family) 18 and 19 year old draftees entered the services (some even serving with their fathers). The 106th was named "*The Golden Lion*". The Lion is a beautiful, powerful animal. Their family is very close knit and the family is called "*a pride*". *They are the king of the jungles!!*

I am forever indebted and eternally grateful to the 106th Infantry Division. It was the vehicle that literally pushed many of America's finest young men over the threshold from boyhood to manhood. We faced the first real responsibilities of our lives and became soldiers; servants to all mankind and to each other. Our survival depended on our relationships with each other. Many times you stepped forward and by your words, deeds, and actions, you intervened to save my life and to save each other. Your attitudes encouraged me and gave me the strength to keep going and to survive. Your bodies surrounded me as we slept on the wet, icy, cold ground; some died; we survived. Out of our relationships, a bond of compassion and love emerged. No one has been able to fully describe our feelings toward each other. Only those who were there really know. Compassion has been defined as "your pain in my heart," to feel your pain I must walk in your shoes, experience your feelings, and touch your soul. We have compassion for each other borne out of our experiences, ordeals, and our adversities. "*When you see or hear the words of those that were there you will understand.-unk-*" Our relationship did not end at the time that we were captured. They only became stronger as we depended on each other and as we defended each other.

"The Golden Lion" in its embryonic stage was just a "cub" when I reported February 1, 1943. Our 423rd Medical Det. Cadre came from 318th Infantry Regiment, 80th Infantry Division to help form the 106th Infantry Division. My duty assignment was with the 2nd platoon, 423rd Medical Det. Our platoon served the 2nd BN of the 423rd Infantry Regiment. I was assigned to a barrack and overnight it was filled with 18 and 19-year-old young men. For some it was their first time away from home; for me it was my first fatherly experience! Thirty-two of America's finest young

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men were entrusted to my care. We grew and matured rapidly because of our responsibilities. Each member of the platoon was a special member of their immediate family and became a "very special" member of our platoon. They became a dedicated, devoted, and disciplined unit. Each knew their responsibilities and performed them well. The health, welfare, and morale of "the Lions" was our concern and responsibility; they served valiantly.

The 106th organization was the vehicle but you the "Lions" members were the living instruments that influenced and gave guidance to my life; also it gave meaning, purpose, and the fulfillment to a country boy's dreams. My ultimate dream was to play major league baseball (was playing class "D" when drafted). The 106th gave me the opportunity to "chase that dream." We the 106th played both with and against the major leagues best players for two seasons (1943-1944). These experiences prepared me for the future; it opened the doors of opportunity that allowed me to coach and to play with America's best ball players for sixteen years after World War II. But, you the members that I served with were the instruments that moved me from a boy to a man. Our relationships were closer than a brother; your commitment to duty was encouraging to me. We developed a bond of love that only those who were there can ever know. It was an honor and the great privilege of my life for the training, and experience that grew out of my relationships with you. Your influence and examples have shaped my life. We each in his own life have made a worthwhile contribution to society and to our great nation. We trained and have nurtured "The Golden Lion". I believe that in our heart of hearts, we have never, nor will ever give her up; she will always be our "pride" and joy. I shall always remain a loyal, devoted member of that great pride (family) of "Golden Lions."

December 19, 1944 was the darkest day of my life. First it was the defining moment of our lifetimes. It was a point in time when we stood before the enemy helpless, defenseless, and subject to his mercy. Hope was our only weapon and *it was dimly flickering*. Next, late in the same afternoon, I learned that my entire platoon of devoted soldiers and friends had been either killed or captured-my soul agonized!

Thank you-all the dedicated men who have spent your time, energy, and resources in order to perpetuate and maintain the history, the spirit, and the soul of The Golden Lion. We all are deeply indebted to you and to the outstanding job you have done and continue to do. Our tradition is great-"The Golden Lion" is a symbol of strength and beauty. The Bible says in Proverbs 26:13 KJV: "There is a lion in the way; a lion is in the streets." We were there; we contributed and we served with "pride".

I believe that there is a "defining moment" in our lives; a turning point, crossroad, or a time when our lives hangs in the balance. December 19, 1944 at the exact time when you and I were surrendered to the Germans was such a moment in our lives. A wounded German Sgt. was brought into the aid station on December 18th. He probably saved our

lives because a German soldier put a rifle through the window. The German Sgt. said don't shoot, they are "alles kaput" (finished). In my mind's eye that could have been the final chapter in our lives. Instead we survived and I have been "richly blessed"

I have been called lucky, but unfortunately luck plays out. Blessings are eternal. An unknown confederate soldier wrote this poem. It is a mirror of my life; of my dreams; of my prayers; and of the special blessings that I received but did not deserve nor earn. They were truly a gift of God's amazing grace.

"Richly Blessed"

I asked God for strength that I might achieve;
I was made weak,
that I might learn humbly to obey,
I asked for health, that I might do great things;
I was given infirmity,
that I might do better things.
I asked for riches, that I might be happy;
I was given poverty, that I might be wise.
I asked for power, that I might have the praise of men;
I was given weakness, that I might feel the need of God.
I asked for all things, that I might enjoy life;
I was given life, that I might enjoy all things.
I got nothing that I asked for--
but everything I had hoped for.
Almost despite myself,
my unspoken prayers were answered.
I am among all men,
most richly blessed.

My prayers for you are that you are being blessed as I have been blessed.

Written with deep love and compassion
To all "Golden Lions",

Bill Reyenga
Bill Reyenga
116 Hwy. 32 East
Hope, AR 71801
870-777-4516

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May 8, 1998

John Kline
11 Harold Drive
Burnsville, MN 55337

Dear John:

Thanks again for another great Cub. I look forward to each publication with much anticipation, knowing that I will find more answers to the deeply hidden experiences of those dark, dreary days of long ago (a lifetime ago) and bringing back memories of the past. For instance, the back cover of the Jan.-Feb.-Mar. 1994 issue of the Cub had pictures of the Dec. 23rd bombing of Limburg. I am positive that the bomb crater in the picture is the same 500 lb. bomb that demolished our boxcar. My recollection of the bombing raid is as follows: Several thousand American soldiers were in boxcars (French and Polish). The one that we were in was French; 40 men or 8 horses was written in French on the side. Each car had 60 or more men inside. Shortly after dark on December 23rd an American speaking German guard came to our car and asked if Sgt. Reyenga was inside -- his reason was that a wounded soldier was in another car and needed medical attention. I still had my medical aid kits. I was in a far corner of the car and had to climb over the other men to reach the door. At the exact moment that my feet hit the ground the entire rail center "lit" up (bright as day). The British pathfinders had dropped target flares to mark the target for the bombers. Ironically, these flares (Dec. 23rd) were called Christmans trees. The Guard grabbed my arm and said we were going to be bombed. I pulled the pin that locked the door and yelled to those inside telling them the door was open and the rail center would be bombed. The guard led me away as fast as we could run. We ran from the rail center until the bombs began to fall. We dived under the porch of a building. There was a basement in the building. We crawled inside, but it was filled with German men, women, and children. A German Soldier in the basement recognized me, he said "Americanish" and pointed his rifle at me but the guard stepped between and protected me. When we returned to the box car our car had been domolished. We could not have survived had we stayed inside because a bomb hit beside it. Fortunately, the men got away before the bomb hit. I think angels in disguise have protected me from harm way many times in my life. First, who was the angel that asked for me? Next, the guard was also an angel, twice by calling me from the car and again by protecting me in the basement of the building, by keeping me from being shot.

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As we ran from the rail center and as the bombs began to fall , I looked back and saw a house falling apart as a bomb hit it. The picture of the bombed house on page 8 of the Jan. '94 Cub looks like that house.

Then there were stories of those that were killed in the bombing raid (63 men-54 officers and 9 EM.). Lt. Louis Piazza DC, 423rd Med. Det. was a survivor of the bombing raid and was designated by the Germans to help identify the casualties. He gave this account to me at the Orlando reunion; Capt. Freis Hq. Co. 2nd BN., Capt. Weinburg M.C., Capt. Paul Kistner M.C. 423rd Med. Det., Capt. Pfiffer M.C., Collecting Co., 106th Div. were among the casualties. (Only the dog tags of Capt. Kistner were found.)

Finally, your story and pictures of the boxcar (Cub, Jan-Mar '98 helps me to finish the first phase of my POW experience in my book of memoirs, but it was only the beginning of my "Hell on Earth" (It only covers one week. The rest of the story will be later.)

Thanks to you and for the great works that you do in writing and publishing the Cub. I will be able to put all the pieces of the puzzle together some day. My prayers are that we the Golden Lions will always continue to encourage, support, and uplift each other; to never break our bonds of love and continue to empty and souls to each other. Only those with our experiences can know and understand.

John, I started this letter May 8, 1998, (my Liberation was May 8, 1945)—but due to a lack of free time set it aside until now.

I have been in a state of shock since learning of Dan's death. Millie wrote me and sent me tons of his works. I wrote and tried to call her several times. Dan and I never met face to face that we knew of, but we talked, wrote, and became great friends. We knew that our lives were closer to each other than we thought. Today (Jan. 25th) the Cub came and read his letter telling of our relationship. Again, thank you for your kindness.

John , I rewrote and made some corrections in "My Tribute to the Golden Lion". I am sending a new copy. I look forward to seeing you and all the Golden Lions in Indiana. May God bless you.

Written in Love,



Bill Reyenga
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PHOTO COURTESY
WRIGHT-PATTERSON
AFH MUSEUM

DIEZ/LIMBURG BOMBING 23 DEC 144

BOMB CRATER BESIDE CAR
WE WAS IN (SEE STORY CUE
P. 27 APR-MAY-JUNE 1995) XMAS
WE DID NOT CELEBRATE)

OUR BOY CAR WAS HERE
WE GOT OUT BEFORE THE BOMBING BEGAN



Vor 40 Jahren: Stadtrand von Diez und Limburg lag in Trümmern

Zufall bestimmte Bombenziele - „Christbäume“ trieben im Sturm westwärts
VON KLAUS-PETER MARTHMAN

identifying the remains of the 63 officers that were killed as a single bomb (probably a 500 pounder) hit a concrete block building in which they were housed, in Stalag 12-A, Limburg a.d. Lahn.

I quote from Jean Harris' letter and the parts of the DIEZ/LIMBURG Lahn-Zietung article as follows. ... John Kline, CUB editor...

“You have a copy of Phil's *“One Man's Story,”* where Mr. Astor immortalized him in *“Blood Dammed Tide.”* I was waiting for him to return from the German prison camps, wondering if I would ever be able to add

a wedding band to my engagement ring. Fortunately, all went well and we have had 46 years together and look forward to more.

“During the last 15 years I had an apartment in Germany with German friends and ended up just a few kilometers from Diez-Limburg, where Phil and many POWs were bombed on December 23, 1944, as they were parked in the railyards. I have enclosed a copy of the Diez/Limburg Lahn-Zeitung describing the bombings. The paper is dated on the 40th Anniversary of the bombing, 23 December 1984. It shows pictures of the damage to the railyard and to the surrounding villages and towns, with personal accounts by Germans who were in the “drop zone.” The tremendous damage done to the area has, of course, been totally restored.”

A translation of the article which was included in her letter came from her good friend Elisabeth, who lives near Diez.

“I found a whole page in our paper about today, 40 years ago, when bombs fell on Limburg and Diez, and especially killed American officers in the prison camp at Diez.

(Continued next page)



FROM RICHARDS SPARKS, 423/I&R: The 423rd I&R Platoon got-to-gether during the 1993 Columbia Reunion. A special evening was held at John Califf's home in Columbia during the reunion. Ivan Long missed the picture - he was late. We have accounted for all of the twenty-four men who went overseas with us. Seven are deceased and seventeen alive. Twelve were at Columbia, South Carolina in 1993. Gordon Zicker and Charles Sartori were members of the original platoon and both of them were present.

Left/Right: BACK ROW: John Califf, Doug Prater, Bob Hirst, John Johnson, Ted Slaby, Bob Brendlinger, Gordon Zicker, Al Shofitt. FRONT ROW: Dick Sparks, Bob Casenhiser, Bob Jones and John Sheehan. A pretty good turn-out after all these years.

Members of this platoon were authorized to wear the Presidential Unit Citation on an individual basis, that was awarded the 7th Armored for the fight in St. Vith on the 20-21st of December 1944.

DIEZ/LIMBURG Bombing 23 December 1944 continued:

There were 60 Americans killed, but also French, Poles and Belgians who were still in a train. One German guard was killed in the building with the officers.

“Shortly after, a Swiss Red Cross delegation came to inspect and control the site. They demanded that to have a “Red Cross” installed on the barracks of the prison camp.

“There was also a cemetery for all the prisoners between Diez and Limburg. But,

after the war most of the dead were moved to cemeteries of the Allied Forces. Yet, there are still bones found in the forest.

“Near Limburg Station, 146 people were killed and 162 homes were destroyed. But, they were German civilians.

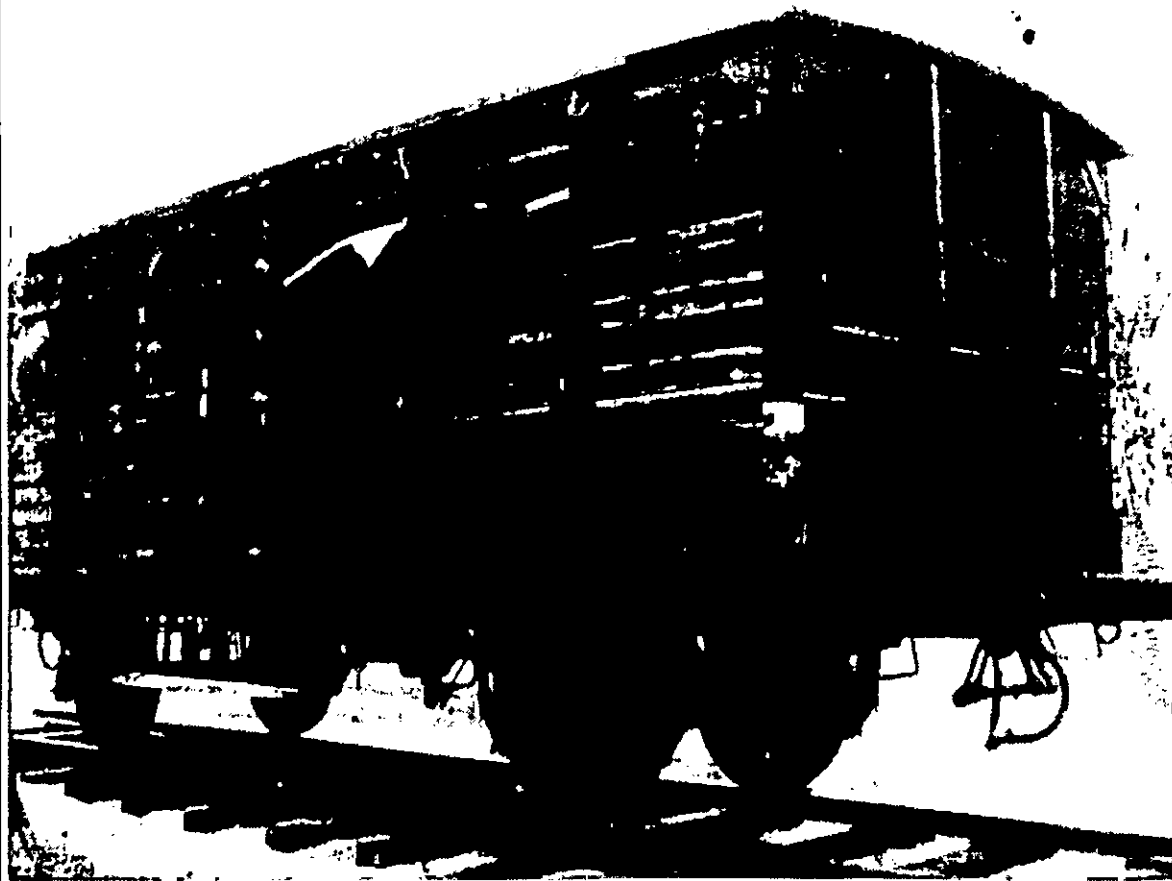
“The air-raid had been meant for Limburg-Station, but heavy winds from a storm moved the “pathfinder markers” (ironically called, “Christmas Trees”) toward Diez. So the bombers hit the wrong target. So 162 families lost their homes that night before Christmas Eve. This is a day of common mourning for Germans and Americans.” signed Elisabeth...

Credits for this story go to Philip Hannon, 81st ENG/A, and his wife Jean for the copy of the DIEZ/LIMBURG newspaper article that noted the 40th anniversary of DIEZ/LIMBURG railyard bombing that appeared in the (German news) Lahn-Zietung 22/23 December 1984 edition.

Credits for the photo of the railyards on the back cover of this CUB, goes to Jim Ochiltree, 423/G. He responding to my November CUB request asking for some person to obtain a copy of the photo which appeared in the Air Force Museum at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Columbus, Ohio. There were also copies of this photo being circulated at the Columbia Reunion, Sept 1993.

I recognize that a more comprehensive account of this incident should include some personal comments by those that participated (you men of the 106th). While many of you have mentioned being in the Diez/Limburg bombing, to give credit to all would take up much space.

I devoted one section to the bombing in *The CUB of the Golden Lion*; PASSES in REVIEW. Somewhere I have an account of an officer that was responsible for



Polish Box Car - Circa 1930

This box car located at the Holocaust Museum, St. Petersburg, FL is typical of those used to haul people to death and POW camps in World War II. Many of the Allied soldiers captured in the *Battle of the Bulge* spent days in them going to camps.

Called "40 & 8" (forty men or eight horses) from World War I, the boxcars were often loaded with 60 people and no toilet facilities.

One group of sixty 106th soldiers, captured in the Bulge, spent seven days locked in such a box car traveling from Stalag 12-A, Limburg, Germany to Stalag 4-B, Muhlberg, Germany from December 30, 1944 to January 6, 1945. Not enough room for all to lay down, a 5 gallon lard can for a waste facility.

Front & Center

WE RODE THESE CARS FROM GEROLSTEIN
TO LIMBURG - WAS BOMBED THERE DEC 23
8 P.M. - RODE CARS TO STALAG 4-B.
MUHLBERG, THEN WALKED TO 3-B FURSTENBURG
TO 3-A LUKENWALDE, THEN TO H.A. ALTEN-
GRABOW.

and surrounded our units. We were trapped in the valleys and were sitting like ducks on a pond. Our troops were being massacred. My Battalion commanding officer called the "Doc," Lt. Joshua P. Sutherland, M.C., and myself to BN. CP and asked for a casualty count. We had eight litter cases and 14 walking wounded. Col. Joseph Puett asked me to assign a Medic to stay with the wounded and surrender them to the Germans the next morning. Each member of my platoon had assigned jobs and responsibilities so I agreed to stay with them and so did "Doc" Sutherland, but Col. Puett said he needed the "Doc" with his BN. The BN left in the darkness.

Early the next morning (0730-Dec. 19), I surrendered to the German Army with 22 wounded soldiers, seven other soldiers and one wounded German Sgt. As I look back in time, these events became imbedded in my soul and have been hidden from my conscious mind for more than 50 years. Only recently have I been able to recall them and face their realities. As I read the history of other POWs' letters from my friends and talk with others, I find that we all came out of the war with deep emotional scars. Like Paul in the Bible, we have "a thorn in our sides." In my case it's like "a cocklebur buried deep in my soul." This was caused by inhumane acts and treatment, malnutrition, filthy living conditions, diseases, mental and emotional treatment, and physical exertion by unending road marches with little or no rest, in snow, ice, and rain. This was without adequate clothing and equipment. The cocklebur was a constant source of pain for many years. It was manifested by various problems. For example, psychosomatic shock, doctors thought it was a heart attack (I was 25 years old), anxiety, stress, nightmares, fears, weakness, sleepless nights and feelings of helplessness. These symptoms led me to visit doctors, psychiatrists, and psychoanalysts (1945-1952). The problems were not solved; no one had the answers. You must learn to live with your problem that was the only advice. My last doctor was an analyst. I asked him, "Who am I?" "What is my purpose for being?" "Is there a God?" His answer was, "What do you think?" He left me with the responsibility to choose, to make a choice, and when I made that choice in 1968 at First Baptist Church in Hope, Arkansas, and said yes to God (!), I found the answer to all of life's problems. Since then, I can enjoy "a peace that passeth all understanding," and a love that gives fruits without limitations!!

In order to survive after the war, it was necessary for the POW to stay busy, keep his mind fully occupied at all times, § otherwise the "cockleburs" began to cause pain.

These adversities in my life have been great blessings and I am proud they happened. It is because of them that many great lessons of life have been taught to me. I am the luckiest man in the world, because of all my blessings.

I am deeply indebted to you, the people around the world that have touched and influenced my life. My "college degree" is from the University of Hard Knocks. Winston Churchill said, "Never before have so many owed so much to so few." I can say, "never before has one owed so much to so many." You have been my "angels in disguise," and for the love you have given to all my family, and me I can say with a truly humble heart, thank you and may God's richest blessings permeate and fill your soul.

Bill Reyenga



A COCKLEBUR IN MY SOUL

I was born in Hope, Arkansas, raised on a cotton farm six miles east of there. One of cotton's worst pests is a plant that looks like a cotton plant and is called the "cocklebur." It produces hundreds of small, prickly burs, the size of an acorn on the top portion of the plant. Each bur has thousands of prickly lines covering its body. In the fall, the burs die and fall off. Our mules would come in contact with these plants and the burs would become imbedded in the mule's hair, especially the tail and mane hairs. Once buried in the mule's hair, they remained until removed with a currycomb or by cutting them out with scissors. They were very difficult to remove.

My father was born in Holland and came to America when he was three years old. His father was a ship's Captain, a strict disciplinarian and a dedicated religious person. He was my most unforgettable character.

This period of my life began with my high school graduation. On that day, May 12, 1939, my father died leaving mother and a family of nine children. I was the oldest. I attended three years of college at the University of Arkansas. I was drafted in 1942; I was 21 years old at that time.

World War II began December 7, 1941 and on the 21st day of July 1942, I was selected to serve in the U.S. Army. My first assignment was to the 80th Inf. Division at Camp Forrest, Tennessee. Six months later I was sent on a cadre, as a med. Sgt. in charge of the aid station, 2nd BN., 423rd Inf., 106th Division to form a new Division, the 106th Inf. Division at Fort Jackson, Columbia, SC. In February of 1943, I inherited a platoon of 32 young, fine, strong men, 18 - 19 years of age. We soon became like a family, a very close knit unit filled with mutual love and respect for each other. Our training was intense and included all phases needed in order to be combat qualified. Our psychological warfare training taught us to win at all costs, even to sacrifice our lives, if necessary. To never surrender, never ever give up!!! "Lay your life on the line for your comrades and for your country." This message was buried deep within the minds and souls of each of us.

On June 6, 1944, "D-Day" was staged on the beaches of France; millions of soldiers were needed in order for this landing to be successful. The Department of Army drew thousands of replacement troops from our 106th Division. Shortly after "D-Day," our Division began preparing for overseas duty. Men that had been an ASTP student in colleges across the U.S. Air Force Cadets that the USAF didn't need for their program, and other men from service corp units replaced our ready-trained replacements. None of these soldiers were trained for infantry combat duty. We continued our movement to Camp Atterbury, Indiana, Camp Shanks, NY, Great Britain, France, Belgium and the German front in the Ardennes. There was no training time for the replacement. Also, many of the original men were not replaced.

We settled in the snow-covered mountains of Belgium (St. Vith was Div. Hqs.) On or about December 10, 1944. Our outfit replaced the 2nd Inf. Division and they told us that "there are no German soldiers in this area." Their personnel (2nd Inf. Div.) said we were lucky and would sit out the war while their units would go and attack on another front.

Our Division was placed in position on a 27 mile wide front (5-7 miles were a normal front for one Division). On the morning of December 16, 1944, the German Army mounted a full-scale attack, broke through our lines, destroyed our artillery and all our support weapons, cut our supply lines, cut our lines of communications,

/MAS 1/6

July 3, 1997

William T. Reyenga
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870-777-4516

American Ex Prisoner of War
6508 Widmer
Shawnee, KS 66216

Attn: Sue Langseth,
Editor

Dear Ms. Langseth,

I was a POW in III B Furstenberg, III A Lukenwalde, IV Muhlberg (6 days), XI A Alten Grabow and at Ludwigsfelde (?) and have enjoyed reading all of your articles about those camps. Recently, I found an article in an ex POW bulletin (Dec. of 1992, page 23). It had a picture of Edward Murphy praying in the Chapel at IIIB at Christmas time. The picture brought back memories of the past (see attached sheets).

We stayed (existed) in old barracks (14B?); some windows were missing; we slept in triple decked wooden bunks, two men per bunk; one blanket; almost no heat; very poor lights. The food was wormy, watery, and hard to swallow. We had soup once a day. Six to ten men shared a loaf of sawdust bread daily, most days.

Entertainment or recreation was unheard of in our area. We were kept busy searching for lice on each other. Food was the favorite subject, and occupied most everyone's spare moments. Two men in our room had a cribbage board. We heard "fifteen two, fifteen four and a pair is six" until we almost lost our sanity. Only one book ever came through our room. It was the story of the Donner party and their gruesome journey from mid-America through snow covered mountains to California by wagon train. Five thousand men, women, and children started the journey only a few (4 or 5) survived. They froze to death, starved to death, and killed each other in order to survive. The strong killed and ate the weak. The title of the book was "Ordeal by Hunger", I think. I have always believed that the book was planted in our midst by the Germans to lower our morale. Many POW's became poets like Finley Petit of Charleston, West Virginia. He wrote a poem titled "Thoughts". Ed Murphy, pictured in the EX-POW, wrote a poem titled "To My Mother". The poems were given to me to copy. The only paper

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in my possession was a small scrap of paper with an address on it. Somehow the German interrogator (IVB) failed to take it from me. They did take my Bible, watch, knife, and other items, but they missed a horseshoe shaped cameo ring that was hidden beneath my belt buckle. It was a "good luck token" given to me by a friend in Indiana. Yes, someone touched Heaven for me.

For recreation, I copied the two poems and listed the names and addresses of the members of my platoon on the scratch paper. The poems survived the war. I saw the pictures and decided to write. I would like to know if the members of my platoon survived the war, except those marked deceased. I would like to hear from them.

We stayed in 3B until the allied armies began to get close in February of 1944. The Germans began moving us and kept us ahead of the oncoming forces. We went to 3A Lukenwalde to 11A Alten Grabow. We were at Ludwigsfelde for a very short time. Most of our time was spent marching in circles to a void being captured. We were told daily that the next camp was only 17 kilometers away. They sure were long kilometers, it took days and or weeks to reach the next camp.

I was liberated May 8, 1944, the guards left our camp early in the morning. We were instructed to stay in the camp. Rumors were that a British major paratrooper had parachuted into our camp with those instructions. Since my diary was kept in my head, it might not be totally correct. I would like to hear from those that were there with me. Was it camp Alten Grabow 11A, 3A Lukenwalde, or elsewhere that we were liberated? Was the date May 8, 1945?

Thank you,

William T. Reyenga
Med. Det. 423rd Inf.
106th Inf. Division
2nd BN Aid Station

P.S.

I wish to locate ^{VERNON} ~~WIDE~~ Trowman, E. Co. 423rd Regt. and Capt. Frederick Vastine, D.C., 423rd Inf. through your locator system. Both ARE DECEASED. MAY THEY REST IN PEACE.

XMAS 3/16

Christmas Reverie in a German Prison

Stalag Luft IV — 1944

Silvery moonbeams infiltrate
The boarded windows of my prison room,
Falling gently across the faces
Of my slumbering comrades,
Like ghostly fingers of an Omnipresent God
Splashing His love and benediction
Across the barrer walls
And into each sad and hurting heart.

The freshly fallen snow
Lies softly on the ground,
Reflecting the watch tower lights,
And muffling the distant sound
Of Russian guns.

The night is dark; the cold intense,
And interspersed between the cannon fire,
The soundless silence is profound.

On such a night as this, O God,
Thy Almighty Word leapt down
From heaven's height
And made Himself, for us, a Royal Pawn.
Tonight we celebrate His wondrous birth,
(Though little celebrating there will be.)

I sit and shiver in my dismal room
And think about my family — worlds away,
And how I miss not being there tonight.

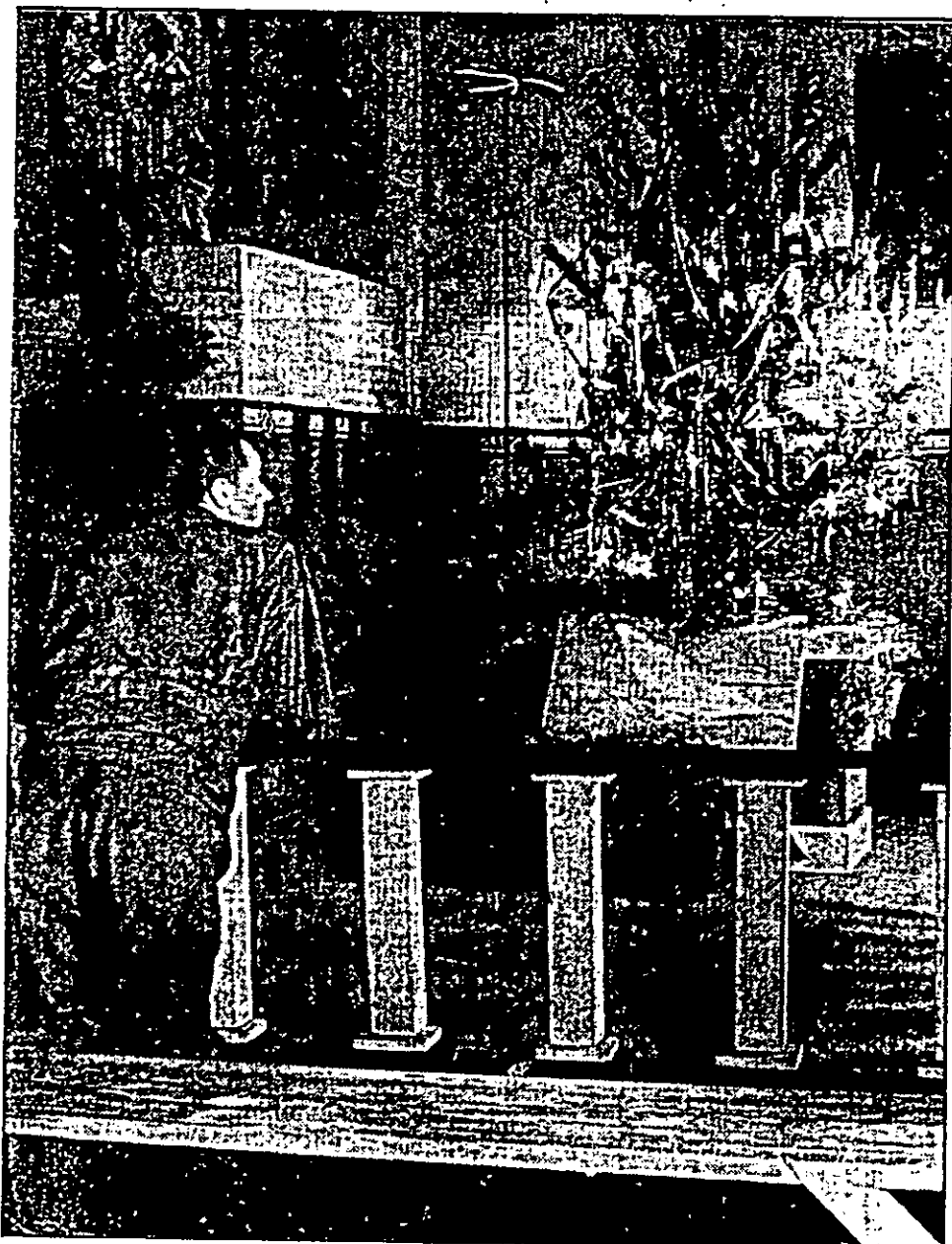
I think about a stable cold and damp
Where long ago a Mother birthed her Son,
Then suddenly I feel a flood of warmth,
A glow that emanates from deep within,
And I am filled with love and heavenly peace,
The love and peace that only He can give.

I make my way back to my lonely bed
And realize that Christmas is not "things"
Not tinsel, toys or trinkets we can buy,
It is a spirit and an attitude of love.

His Love became the primal stone
Cast into the sea of human love,
And we are ripples
Going outward endlessly.

Nor all the tyrant's hate
And deeds of war
Can stop this gentle force,
Nor take away or change
What I believe.
Though I have naught — yet I have all,
His Love this Christmas Eve.

- Robert A. Grimes



Photograph taken secretly at great risk by
Angelo M. Spinelli while a POW at
Stalag III-B, 1944-45. POW Ed Murphy,
pictured praying in the chapel at Christ-
mas time, produced many of the shows at III-

XMAS 4/6

ROSTER OF MY PLATOON - XMAS 4/6

To My Mother
Here in the Stalag as the days pass by
I've got time to pause to think to sigh
I remember the days when I used to cry
And to have arms to fly

I remember too when just a lad
How many times I made you sad
I remember all this but still I'm glad
Because you're the sweetest mother a
Guy ever had

In the heat of battle I had no guide
My friends my buddies either wounded or died
You never taught me to run and hide
So I fought it out with you by my side

The day is near when home I'll go
To those I knew so long ago
I've learned so much from friends & foe
Yes now I know why I love you
So!!!

Ed Murphy
P.O. # 145

- Harold Silvers Bronx, N.Y.
- David Vaint - ...
- Ray Devaty - ...
- Ed Piasochi - ...
- George ...
- Ben Schiffman - ...
- Frank Glaeser - ...
- Ronald Walden - ...
- Bill Zeno - ...
- Bill Kocks - ...
- Ken ...
- Steve ...
- Hugh ...
- Bob Love - Memphis, Tenn
- Dick Hayes - Kansas City, Mo.
- JAVANE KERSEY - ...
- Jimmy ...
- Andrew Greco - ...
- Gene ...
- ... Chicago ...
- Dick Whitney - ...
- Ted Williams - ...
- Hal Clotworthy - ...
- Bill Devaney - ...
- Wayne Thrasher - ...
- Ted Williams - ...
- Bill Lundin - ...
- Luther Freneg Lacrosse, W.
- ANTONE COSTA
- LAWRENCE COSTA

- MEMBERS OF
- MED DET.
- 423 INF REGT
- 2nd PLATOON
- (2nd BN)
- 12 AID MEN
- 12 LITTER
- BEARERS
- 2 JEEP
- DRIVERS
- 6 AID STA.
- MEN

WRITTEN IN STALAG 3 B FURSTENBERG, GER '45.
POEMS WERE GIVEN ME BY ED MURPHY and
FINLEY PETIT - WRITTEN ON THE ONLY PAPER
that I had.

William T. REYENKA
MED DET 423 INF REGT.
106th INF DIV.



XMAS 5/6

TO MY MOTHER

**HERE IN THE STALAG AS DAYS PASS BY
I'VE GOT TIME TO PAUSE, TO THINK, TO SIGH
I REMEMBER THE DAYS WHEN I USED TO CRY
AND TO YOUR ARMS I WOULD FLY**

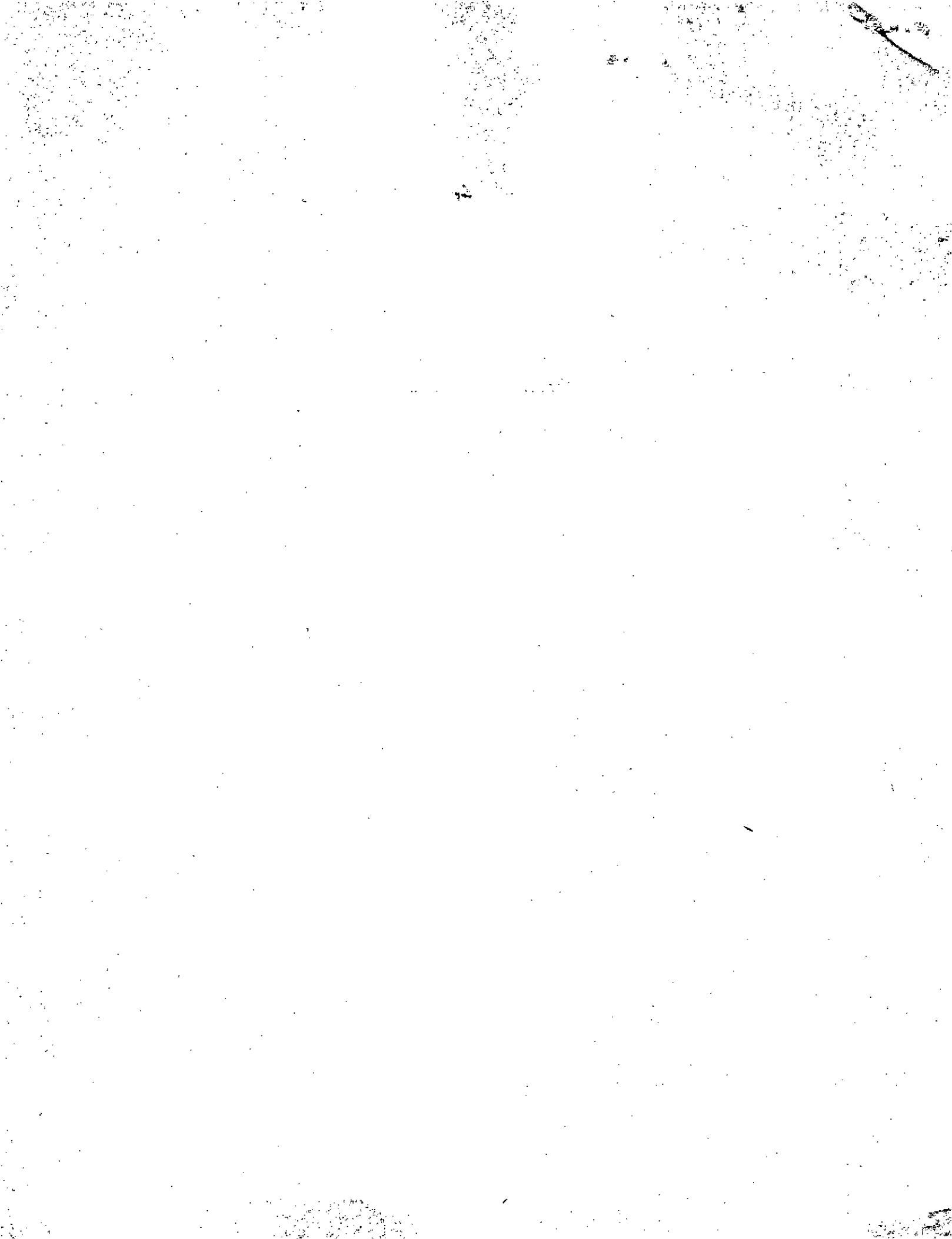
**I REMEMBER BACK WHEN JUST A LAD
HOW MANY TIMES, I MADE YOU SAD
I REMEMBER ALL THIS BUT STILL I'M GLAD
BECAUSE YOU'RE THE SWELLEST MOTHER A GUY EVER HAD**

**IN THE HEAT OF BATTLE I HAD NO GUIDE
MY FRIENDS, MY BUDDIES EITHER WOUNDED OR DIED
YOU NEVER TAUGHT ME TO RUN AND HIDE
SO I FOUGHT IT OUT WITH YOU BY MY SIDE**

**THE DAY IS NEAR WHEN HOME I'LL GO
TO THOSE I KNEW SO LONG AGO
I'VE LEARNED SO MUCH FROM FRIEND AND FOE
YES NOW I KNOW WHY I LOVE YOU SO!!!**

**EDWARD MURPHY
1P.O.W.**

¹We were POWS in the same camp, same barracks (3B?), Furstenberg.



THOUGHTS

**YOU ARE EVER IN MY THOUGHTS
THOUGH PARTED WE MAY BE
SIDE BY SIDE WE WALK ALONG
THE PATH OF MEMORY**

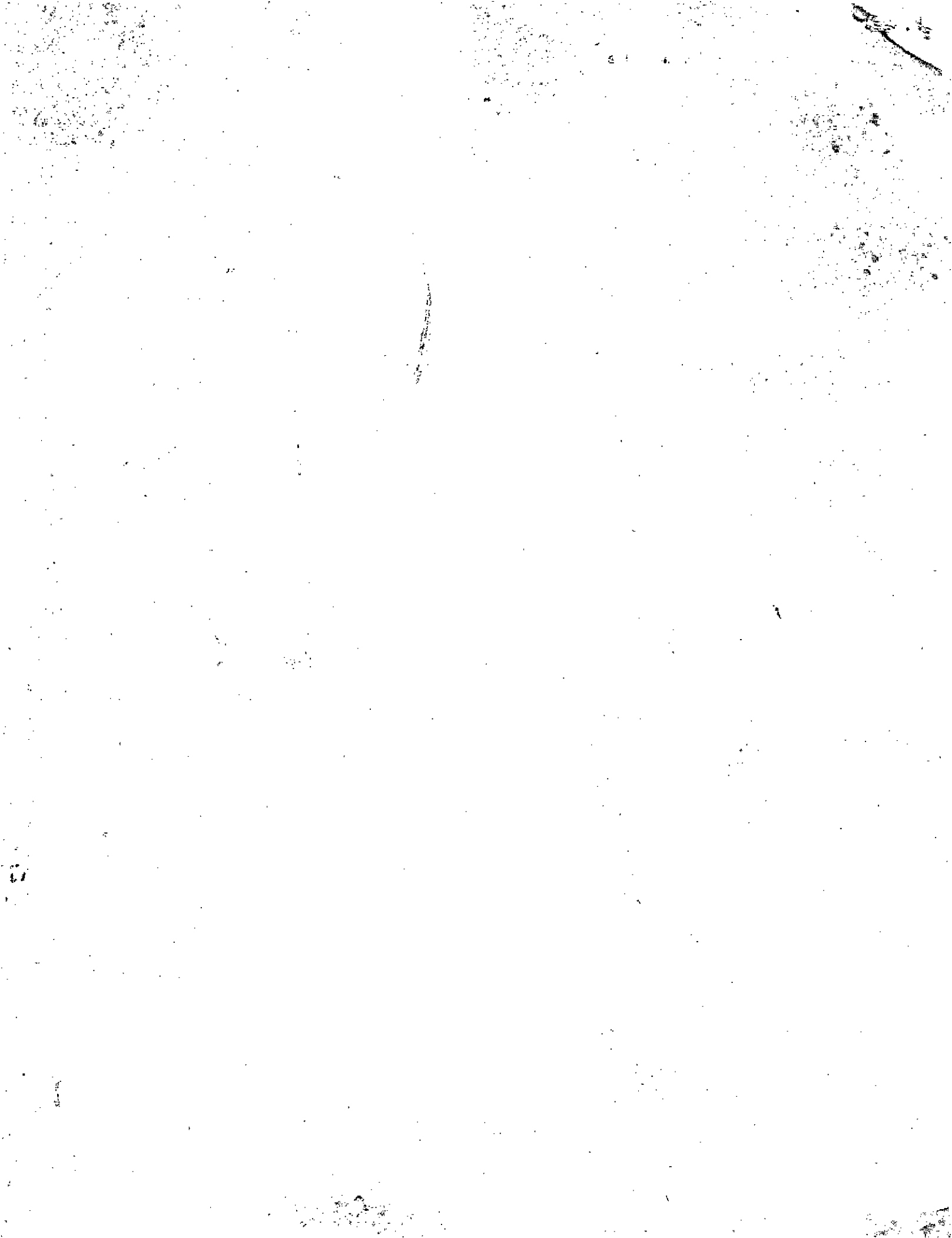
**IN THE LANDS OF HEARTS DESIRE
WE LIVE, LAUGH, AND LOVE
THE FUTURE BRIGHT BEFORE US
AND A CLOUDLESS SKY ABOVE**

**I CANNOT HEAR YOUR VOICE
OR TAKE YOUR HAND IN MINE
BUT NONE CAN ROB ME OF MY DREAMS
OR TAKE MY HOPES AWAY**

**OUR LIVES ONCE LINKED TOGETHER
NOW LIE SO FAR APART
YET YOU ARE EVER IN MY THOUGHTS
AND ALWAYS IN MY HEART**

**FINLEY PETTIT
CHAS. W. VA
1P.O.W. -1945**

¹We were POWS in the same camp, same barracks (3B?), Furstenberg.



I WAS A PRISONER OF WAR

The German Army captured me in the Battle of the Bulge on December 19, 1944, 7:30 a.m. My duty assignment was with the 2nd Battalion aid station, 423rd infantry regiment, 106th Infantry Division. A segment of our aid station was left behind on orders by the BN Co. Colonel Puett. Twenty-two American casualties, one German casualty, a five-man machine gun squad, a group of 1st BN soldiers, and myself were left behind with the casualties of the Battalion. Suddenly our freedom was gone and a period of "Hell on earth" began.

We marched for two days and nights without food, water or rest. Then we were put in boxcars (60 or more men per car). The boxcars were small French boxcars (see attached pictures) that the Germans had stolen from France. They were designed for 40 men or 8 horses. On December 23, 1944 at 8 p.m., we were bombed by our own British bombers in the rail center at Limburg, Germany (see picture). Sixty-three of our American soldiers were killed in the attack. Three were my friends, medical doctors from our Medical Det. We went by train from Limburg 12A to Muhlberg Stalag 4B where we were interrogated and stripped of all of our personal items. Six days later we marched to Furstenburg Stalag 3B. Two months later we marched to Lukenwalde 3A. Finally, we walked to Alten Grabow 11A and on May 8th were freed, the war had ended. We ^{had} marched back and forth between the American troops advancing from the west to the Russian troops advancing from the east.

Living conditions were terrible in all of the camps. Food, water, clothing, heat, and medical supplies were almost non-existent. We wore the same clothing items continually. Diarrhea, dysentery, disease, lice, and insects were rampant in all camps. Most of the buildings were without windows. We depended on each other for body heat and other necessities in order to just survive!

We witnessed the inhumane treatment of the Germans to our American comrades and to the Russians, Czechs, Polish, and especially to the Jews.

I was liberated at the end of the war. I was sent to Camp Lucky Strike. In France I was hospitalized with a stomach disorder for a few days, then sent home on the U.S. Sea Robin. I reached home in June of 1945. I married my High School sweetheart and was sent to Ft. Lawton, Washington. I was discharged in January of 1946 and returned to the farm.

Immediately after I came home, I began to have unexplainable medical problems. I had *nightmares, night sweats, heart palpitations, tachardia, fears, and phobias of various sorts, such as crowds, high altitudes, and other phobias.* My imagination was out of control. I was extremely nervous and felt as if something terrible was about to happen. I was having *anxiety and panic attacks, guilt feelings, and*

seemed to have no control in my life. I avoided people and was afraid that I would be embarrassed. Then one day, in the Spring of 1946, at noontime, I suddenly felt as if something terrible was going to happen. I had a strange eerie feeling. My feet, legs, hands, and arms became numb. They were totally without feelings. My heart rate was very fast and pounding or palpitating in the middle of my stomach. Local doctors thought it was a heart condition and treated it as such. Dr. McKenzie sent me to Kennedy General Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee. After a complete physical I was told that my spell was *psycosomatic shock* and later was diagnosed as *cardiac neurosis*. All of these problems forced me to finally seek counseling and psychiatric treatment. There was a stigma attached to the thought of seeing a psychiatrist, but I went anyway. In those times in history only crazy people visited psychiatrists. I was desperate and had to have help and for several years was treated by many counselors, analysts, and psychiatrists.

Finally I went to see a Dr. Parcels, an analyst. He helped me more than the other doctors. I asked Dr. Parcels these questions. Who am I? What is the purpose and meaning for my life? Is there a God? His answer after a long deliberation of silence was: What do you think? My first reaction was one of extreme anger. I left his office in an unhappy state of mind. *Then I began looking to myself for answers and not to depend on others for my attitudes, my words, my deeds, or actions, or my choices!*

My greatest healing came from my job assignment in the army. It allowed me to pursue the dreams of my life. Sports, recreation, and entertainment was my dream and it was given to me like manna from heaven. The job required more time and effort on my part than other jobs. The only regret I have is that of being away from my family. *My dear wife and lovely children missed seeing me as much as they needed or would have liked, and I missed them too.* I worked in what amounted to three jobs. My regular job was in special services from 7:30 to 4:30. Coaching and working with entertainment (USO shows, etc.), maintaining and supervising the operation of all special service facilities required extra hours. I considered myself a servant to all personnel on each army post that I served at and this helped me to overcome the ordeals and scars that I had suffered as a prisoner of war. It was a slow healing process.

The Germans captured the physical body of this soldier and through out history I will be classified as a prisoner of war. On the other hand, this soldier chose to believe in God. I prayed and my prayers were answered. Today I enjoy peace, happiness, contentment, and a knowledge that my soul will never die. Nor can any enemy capture or destroy it. I placed my faith in a risen saviour Jesus and gave him all my problems. His life is sufficient and today I can enjoy *"a peace that I cannot understand"*. My prayers are that all who read this will receive and enjoy these same blessings and that ~~each~~ ^{every} of you will understand

3 or 2
P.O.W.

me and love me. The key to a happy, peaceful contented life lies not in what you get, but in what you give!! Love is life's most important "thing". It cannot be given away. The more you love the more you will receive in return. God is love.

Written with love and compassion,

Bill Reyenga

**Bill Reyenga
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Hope, AR 71801
1-870-777-4516**