

# James Mills

*Company I, 3rd Battalion  
423rd Regiment  
106th Infantry Division*

Other persons included in this diary

[Henrico H. Pandolfi](#)

[Robert Widdicombe](#)

[Robert Holden](#)

[John Q. Blodgett](#)

THE SERVICE DIARY  
OF GERMAN WAR PRISONER #312447  
FORMERLY  
JAMES M. MILLS 37685038  
Army of the United States of America.  
Company I, 3rd Battalion, 423 Regiment  
106th Infantry Division  
Assistant BAR Gunner, Second Platoon, 3rd Squad Member  
106th Infantry Division Association  
American Ex-Prisoners of War  
Veterans of Foreign Wars  
August, 1991

A summary of my military service from January 28, 1944 through November 30, 1945.

James, M. Mills

18 years old

Army Serial Number; 37-685-038.

Home address at time of induction: 617 S.E. Hughes Des Moines, Iowa

Entered Active Service: 18 February 1944

Took Basic Training at Camp Fannin, Texas "IRTC" March\*1,1944

Assigned July 25, 1944 to [106th Infantry- Division, 423 Regiment, Company I, 2nd,KV Platoon, 3rd Squad](#) which was stationed at [Camp Atterbury](#), Indiana. I had training in the M1 rifle, Browning automatic rifle (BAR.), machine gun, bazooka, mortar, Bangalore torpedo, flame thrower, plastic explosive, hand and rifle grenade. Assigned as Assistant B.A.R. man.

Left [Camp Atterbury](#) October 9,1944 by train for Camp Myles Standish near Boston, Massachusetts. I arrived October 11, 1944, shipped over seas from New York aboard the Queen Elizabeth on October 16, 1944. I arrived at Gourrock, Scotland on October 22, 1944. I went to Cheltenham, England on November, 24, 1944, billeted at a steeple chase track. I crossed the English Channel on November 29; 1944 from South Hampton to-LeHarve, France. On November 31,1944, stayed in a mud field for a few days before arriving at St. Vith., Belgium.

On December 8, 1944, Company I, 423 Regiment of the 106<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division had moved up to the front lines in Belgium. Our division was deployed over a twenty-two (22) mile front, instead of the usual five (5) miles, in the Ardennes. We moved into the existing dugouts of the troops we were replacing. These dugouts were made of logs mostly underground and mounded over with dirt. Each dugout held several men with bunks for sleeping and a pot bellied heating unit. One corner of the dugout had gun or vision ports on both sides of the corner where we took turns all night keeping a look out for German patrols or whatever. There was a blanket hung behind the lookout to close out any light so we could see better and no light could escape, revealing our position.

We did not know at the time, but we were on top of the Schnee Eifel. (snow mountain) which was a small mountain range covered with fir trees. There was a valley in front of us and similar mountains across the valley facing us. There were the fire breaks through the pines on both mountains.

We were served hot meals from a chow line set up between two trees, fairly close to the fire break. We were green troops and the front in our area seemed quiet until men started to line up across the fire break to get chow.

About the second time this happened, a German tank pulled out into the fire break on the opposite mountain. A few well placed shots messed up our chow line and prevented any further careless crossing of the fire break.

Cans were strung out on wires well out in front of our dugout to pick up movements of German patrols trying to get through our lines. Too much shooting from any one dugout gave away its position in the dark and drew return fire.

Our dugout was the last dugout on the right hand (South) end of the 423 regiment. There was, I believe, a Calvary unit south of our position and the 424th regiment, although, I never saw anyone in that area. Occasionally a German V-1 Buzz Bomb would fly over our position, sounding like an airplane with a badly missing engine.

One night while I was on guard in the dugout, I could hear motor noises and see lights moving on the mountain top opposite our position and slightly to my right.

Our dugouts were wired with phones for communications. I called in my report. About the same time, somebody to the north of us in another regiment or division called in the same sighting.

We were each requested to estimate the distance and artillery fired by one shot. The artillery shell hit about half way up the opposite mountain side. We again gave an estimate and another round was fired. This time it was right on target. The area of the lights lit up with the glow of a fire. We reported this to Artillery and they threw in four or five more rounds and stopped. This was approximately the area where one of the main German attacks came from on the morning of December 16, 1944.

Captain Moe, who was the Commander of Company I, 423rd regiment, ordered 2nd Lieutenant Blodgett, 2nd Platoon leader, to take a patrol out to the German lines during daylight hours to see where the Germans were and see if we could obtain any other information.

The Patrol was made up of Lieutenant Blodgett, Sergeant Elmer Shipman, Private First Class Robert Widdicombe (See *Robert Widdicombe's account under Berge Prison Camp*) and myself. There was snow on the ground and we were in olive drab uniforms so we used tree cover as much as possible.

We got almost to the crest of the opposite mountain. There were mounds of dirt and straw with dummy poles stuck in the side to look like gun emplacements. As we got close to these dummy gun emplacements, we were spotted and drew small arms fire.

We immediately started to withdraw and Lieutenant Blodgett instructed us to get out of the woods. We went across the snow covered clearing to another woods, back deeper in no mans land. As we were crossing the clearing, mortar shells were coming down all over the woods we had just left.

We had to be careful. The woods we ran into were booby trapped. The lieutenant saw wires just under the snow and grenades tied to the trees on each side. We followed in his footsteps and returned to our lines. I was a guard in our dugout at 5:30 a.m. on the morning of December 16, 1944, when all hell broke loose. For a minute I thought the world was coming to an end.

There was a tremendous artillery barrage with eerie screaming sounds which went on for quite some time. (We were never told about the German Screaming Meemies).

The main concentration of this artillery fire, I assume, was to our south, approximately a mile about where the north edge of the 424th was located. It was still dark when the shelling started and the German flares would light up the whole front and stayed in the air for several minutes.

We were told to be ready for an attack from the right flank and dug, ourselves in accordingly.

I believe it was the 17th when volunteers were requested to go help fight the attack with other units. Widdicombe was one of those who volunteered.

Days and events sort of mixed together for a couple of days at this point in time.

That afternoon the mortar squad which was located to the rear of our dugout was strafed by a low flying German fighter plane. As the German flew by, we heard the thom-thom of cannon (only three shots). The German plane crashed and exploded just south of us and what I thought was a British Spitfire appeared very close over the tops of the fir trees, making a shallow turn directly over our position. You could see the pilot very clearly. He did not appear to have a helmet on. No smile - no wave, he just looked down at us.

Some of the men decided they would try and get to the downed plane. They went down the hill into no-mans land and came back up to the planes location.

They told us that the plane was so badly damaged they could not tell what it was, except they found a metal tag which said it was a Focke-Wulf 190. (Other 106th men have reported they saw a MEIO9 being shot down by a P47 - maybe you will be able to contact one of those who actually went over to the plane. I don't believe P47's had cannons, only 50 caliber, I thought.

They said the pilot looked like he was about 18. He was half way out of the cockpit with his chute strung out from the top of a nearby tree. A couple of us attempted to go directly south of our position to the plane, but we found the area booby trapped with trip wires and American hand grenades. After running into two or three of these booby traps, we worked our way back out of the area because it was not worth the risk involved.

What this did mean was that the unit next door had moved out leaving our right flank open. On the morning of the 18th, we were called together and told that we were going to have to go back to the rear and fight our way out. We were told to pile our duffle bags and other items in a common pile and not to take anything we didn't need. Most of us left our heavy overcoats and just wore field jackets because we could move better in the jackets.

We carried a couple of K-rations, ammo, grenades and some of us carried bazooka shells on our back. As we moved back, we saw several of our tanks knocked out in the open fields. Apparently, the Germans got most of the tanks supporting the area near us and much of our artillery the first couple of days. Most of the artillery heard was incoming from the Germans in our area at least.

As we were working our way back through the woods, Sammy Pate, our Physical Instructor, stepped out in a fire break and was shot in the head, right between the eyes, by a German. There was a volley of gun fire from our guys who were near Sammy. They all hit the German, so we were told. Sammy was the first combat casualty in our company that I was aware of.

We all ran into rifle fire off and on during the day, but the heaviest fighting seemed to be just over the crest of the hill which we were on. It was hard to stay together, due to the hilly terrain and the woods. A few of us were following a dry creek bed and as we started to round a sharp bend, we spotted a small group of Germans. They were laying on the creek bank, looking over the edge, expecting us to come from that direction. We stepped back quickly, to warn the others. We were spotted as we came back around the bend. The Germans were running down the creek bed in the opposite direction, leaving all their equipment, except their weapons.

We finally came out of the woods and on to a road heading back west. (I assume now that this was the Schonberg Bleialf Road). We were not on the road very long when 88 shells started to checker-board the road, exploding in the air and throwing shrapnel in all directions. We all hit the ground as the shrapnel tore through the air and into the ground next to us.

The artillery fire drove us off the road and up into the woods. Even in the woods, we received artillery tree bursts or timed bursts. It got dark very quickly. We tried to dig fox holes in the dark. I got about half of my hole dug and I ran into a tree root. I could not see the root and could not cut through it. Finally I gave up and went to sleep.

The next morning, December 19, 1944, we woke up. I started to open a K-ration and the artillery started exploding in the trees again. A quick decision was made to put my head in the hole and eat leaving my rear end exposed as I draped over the root. Better to be hit in the rear than in the head.

We were told we were going to have to take a town called Schoenberg further down the road. The Company was pretty much back together by now and we started advancing in a group through the woods in the direction of this town.

That afternoon I was walking on a ridge right along side the road. The rest of our Company group extended to my right through the woods and up over the top of a hill. All of a sudden, a fire fight started on the other side of the hill. In a few minutes, a fellow came running down the hill, clear to the edge of the road yelling about it getting pretty rough over on the other side. All of a sudden he yelled, "Heinies" and ran back up the hill to the other side.

A tank came up the road and pulled up to the opposite hill stopping just short of the Swale, about one hundred (100) yards away. Five (b) men appeared along side of the tank. They went over to the other side of the road and set something down. They came back by the tank and got into a huddle.

I aimed at the group and fired my M1. For some reason, I snapped on the safety and rolled back behind the tree to flip the safety off and the tank cut loose. The first shot hit the embankment in front of my tree. It exploded and tore out about a four foot square hunk of earth.

The second shot hit a telephone pole at the side of the road. It broke off at about four foot above grade and spun completely around the wires about two times. Another shot dug a trench right at the ground line between Henrico Pandolfi, another fellow to my right and myself. Pandolfi got some shrapnel in the right leg. He said the other fellow got some in the left elbow. On the other side of Pandolfi was Robert Widdicombe who was firing away at the tank with his B.A.R. Near Widdicombe was Ervin Szpek. He got a piece of shrapnel in a finger. The tank was panning the area with his cannon. The next time it passed over us, it shot off the top part of the tree I was behind and it fell down on top of us.

I knew if I stayed there much longer, I was going to get hit. When the cannon swung away, I ran down the swale and up the hill along side the tank. As I was running, I could see a 30 caliber machine gun firing towards me. I forgot all about the tank having a machine gun with that cannon shooting up everything. I could also hear my Squad Sergeant, "John Najarian", yelling at me, "What's the matter Mills, getting a little hot over there?"

No one had a bazooka; there was nothing to stop the tank with. I stuck my head over the ridge to see the tank and somebody shot at me from across the road with a rifle. The tank finally turned around and went back toward the town.

I went back over to my buddies. The tree that I had been behind had been hit at the base with a 30 caliber. It went clear through tearing out a big strip on the back, about the center of where my helmet would have been, where it exited.

Widdicombe and I went back over to where the tank had been. There was a jeep behind the tank. Widdicombe went over the embankment into the jeep and found two cans of Carnation condensed milk and a German machine gun.

He threw the cans of milk up to me and was handing me the machine gun when someone started shooting at him. I yanked him and the gun up over the embankment.

Our group moved just a little ways closer to the town and there was a break in the trees. As we looked across the clearing towards the road, we saw a few people moving the same direction below the road on the other side. One of our men yelled for them to identify themselves. They yelled back not to fire; they were American. They had been in the background of our tank fight, but below road level. They came up to join us. They had some wounded.

Very shortly word came over the hill that we were to destroy our guns and equipment. This was about 5:00 p.m. Before long Germans came through wanting to know of any dead or wounded Germans.

We were rounded up and marched through the German lines. They had lots of artillery guns and plenty of shells. They grouped us together and started marching us up the road. It was just starting to get dark. The Germans would come along and take things they wanted: coats, overshoes, watches, etc.

I was walking along side of a fellow, Bob Holden, who I did not know at the time. There was a stopped German tank along the edge of the road. As we started to pass it, a German checked out Bob and indicated he wanted Bob's wristwatch. Bob undid the watch and smashed it against the side of the tank.. Man was that German mad. Screaming and yelling, I thought he was going to shoot Bob. Another German came along and apparently told him to shut up and move on.

By this time, it was all but dark and the tank started up. Somebody yelled (Bob, I believe), "Let's push it in the ditch". The road was muddy from all the traffic and a whole bunch of us leaned up against it. We couldn't budge it until it started to move forward. As it did, we pushed it over into a real deep ditch.

At least we did a little something to help slow down the Germans.

We were marched until late that night and slept in an open field. We marched all day on the 20th. There was no food or water.

I still remember coming to a horseshoe bending in the road, which was clear of trees. There was an American tank just off the road at the bend with a burnt shell hole in the side of the turret. Just a short way in front of the tank was an American Army ambulance.

The rear doors of the ambulance were open. Just behind the ambulance were two Medics who had been carrying a stretcher with a wounded man. They had all been shot dead. There was a Medic at each end and the man was still on the stretcher. The Germans had taken their combat boots and socks.

As we marched, we passed a long wooded trestle which was used to launch a V1 Buzz Bomb. We also had a Messerschmitt 262 fly across our line of march. It was the first time I ever saw or hard of "a jet airplane and it-was alarming to see a plane so fast you couldn't hear it until it had passed.

We marched until almost dark and we were directed into a large fenced in barnyard where we slept for the evening; still no food or water. The next day we were marched to a railroad station, given some food for the first time.

A train pulled in and we were loaded into a box car. With so many of us, it was impossible to lay down without laying over somebody's legs.

We traveled some distance in the next couple of days and also spent a lot of time on siding.

We were sitting on a siding on Christmas Eve. (Others say it was the 23rd) . There was a large flat clearing to the left of our car. At the far side of the clearing was a hill side. I believe this was a loading area for the railroad yard.

I don't know the time, but it was dark outside when air raid sirens went off. Shortly thereafter we saw what looked like fireworks out in the clearing. For a moment, I thought maybe the war had ended and they were celebrating. Then bombs started going off out in the clearing. One must have hit almost straight out from our car. We all got down as low as we could. The car rocked on the rails and small rocks were going clear through both sides of the car, showering everybody with dust and dirt.

Somebody was running down the line of box cars unlocking the doors and told us there was a bomb shelter in the side of the hill across the clearing. The fellow closest to the door said, "Anybody who wants can try for the bomb shelter," but since they were missing the tracks he was going to stay. Everybody agreed and we stuck with our box car.

When the raid was over, you could hear moaning out in the clearing. One fellow was begging for somebody to "Please shoot me, I can't stand the pain." He kept screaming over and over. Finally, we heard no more.

Reports came back that about fifteen men were killed. The fellow who was screaming to be shot, we were told, had his legs and one arm blown off.

We spent four or five more days on this siding and received a little food and water. Somebody said that according to the Geneva Convention, ten (10) days was the most we were supposed to be kept in cars like this.

Some switching of box cars took place and finally we were moving again. The next day we stopped in the middle of a Turnip field. In the distance, we could see our destination -- Stalag IV-B.

As we looked back, there were only a few box cars of the original train. We figured this was the 10th day. As we entered the fenced in buildings, we were instructed to throw our steel helmets into a pile along side the gate. We had to strip completely, line up to give our names, get our P.O.W. dog tags, a shot of some kind in the left breast and finally, we were given one set of clothing by the women and men running this operation. I was given a British uniform with a small red triangle, the P.O.W. symbol.

We were divided up among the various barracks. In ours, most were British soldiers.

They welcomed us almost like a party. They shared their food with us and were anxious for news about how the war was going.

We didn't know it at the time, but for them to share their food with us was a real sacrifice. We were only at Stalag IV-B a few days when some of us were given the job of peeling Turnip, which was okay because we could eat some as we peeled.

We were also allowed to write a postcard home, but told it would be censored and any reference about the war or similar items would result in the card not going through to the States. (I still have a postcard and my P.O.W. dog tags #312447).

Approximately one hundred (100) of us were then sent to Dresden, Germany on a work Kommando #557, where we were billeted in a slaughter house, later to be known as "Slaughter House V."

We were divided into two building which were surrounded by high brick walls. We had a pot belly stove, but no firewood or coal. One of our group could speak some German and he became our interpreter.

We were divided into several work groups. The size of the group, I assume, would vary according to the tasks. We were given instructions not to plunder or we would be shot.

We would get up at daybreak, be counted and given a cup of Ersatz coffee and then off to work. We would return at dusk and be given a typical meal of a piece of bread about one and a fourth inch thick, a bowl of very thin soup (more of a broth) and another cup of Ersatz coffee. Once in a while, you would get a little of something else.

Our group's first work assignment was to clear up the road way in a small area that had been bombed on Christmas 1944. This bombing blew off the side of a four or five story apartment building, a grocery store and some other buildings. Some of the rubble fell blocking the street.

In the process of cleaning up near the grocery store, you would find an occasional cookie or other item with dirt and/or glass all over it. A little cleaning made it edible, even if it did crunch some.

Somewhere they caught one of our group taking something he shouldn't have and started to yell for about ten (10) or twelve (12) of us to line up out in the center of the street. Some of us reluctantly would get in line then think it over and walk away. The best we could tell was that they were going to shoot several of us to prove they were serious about plundering.

Finally that cooled down, but when we got back our interpreter said that they really were intending to shoot us, but decided to give us another chance.

This work went on several days. Sometimes older women would come out and lay something on the rubble about half a block away. We found out they were leaving a sandwich or something to eat. One day when they laid something down and left, they were chased by some yelling German soldiers. I hope they got away!

There was one time when we were out working when the air raid sirens went off. The guard made us line up in the street. While he stood in the doorway of an air raid shelter, he covered us with his rifle. Luckily, the planes flew over.

Another time in mid January, the bombers flew over and dropped leaflets, warning the Germans to stop using the railroad lines for shipping of war supplies.

Then on the night of February 13, 1945, the air raid sirens went off at about 10:00 p.m. We got up and were marched into another part of the slaughter house complex. We went down a few flights of stairs into a sub basement, two or three levels below grade. We didn't have to wait long until the bombing started. Even in a bomb shelter you worry because you know a direct hit will get you. Of course, you can hear the explosions walking toward your shelter.

After the bombing was over, we went outside to get back to our building. We could see fires with a major part of the city really burning.

When we got back to our building, we found one of our guys had slept through the raid and the glass of every window in the place was blown out.

About 1:00 the next morning, the air raid sirens went off again, so the guards took us back to the shelters. This time we made sure we had everyone including Sleepy, who was no longer sleeping so well.

The bombing started again. This time, we really got shook. When it was over, we went upstairs. The top two or three steps had taken a direct hit, making it pretty tough to get out. The refrigerated rooms surrounding the bomb blast were torn open.

A lot of our guys were taking meat and hiding it inside their field jackets. The German officer and guards came up with a 4 wheel farm wagon. We loaded it with meat and then threw blankets and miscellaneous items on top to look

like we were moving our belongings. The guards couldn't get our guys to stop taking meat. They were afraid that someone would come and catch us and everyone would be shot for plundering. The officer had to fire his pistol into the air several times to gain control.

We got hold of this large wagon and pushed it through the burning streets of the town, over the fire hoses and everything. We then pushed it out to the edge of Dresden and up a real long hill, an a brick paved street, to "Gorbits", a South African prison camp at the edge of town on top of the hill.

The British South African prisoners were glad to see us and hear some new news from outside. They shared their barracks with us for a few days. Actually, the barracks were called "lager" by the Germans and our British friends.

The next morning, February 14, 1445, we had to go back into Dresden, where the houses were still burning. The German people lined both sides of the street near the burning building, but other than threats, very little happened. I guess I could understand how they were feeling.

The word came back down the line to us that our men at the head of the line were being sent into the burning buildings to get out furniture and other possessions, but that the smoke and heat was too much for them, so we headed back toward the Slaughter House.

The guards took us through an open park area. Wild animals were running around that had gotten out of the zoo during the bombing. The guard pointed at a llama and jokingly said, "Essen", German for eating. One guy called Cunningham thought it was a good idea and he chased it down and wrestled with it until he finally got it down. He sure was mad when the guard made him let it up.

As we were going through the city, we looked up and saw Vapor Trails. There were no air raid sirens this time; they had been knocked out by the other two raids.

We started running toward the "Elbe" river, which ran through Dresden, to try to get below the river bank for protection from the bombs explosions and flying debris. About two blocks from the river I could hear the falling bombs whistling on the way down. I looked up to see if I could spot the big ones, hoping to get out of their way, if at all possible, but I couldn't see them.

I could see incendiaries coming down in all over the sky. They came down in clusters. It appeared that they would drop until they gained too much speed, at which point they would tumble, that's when you could see them briefly.

I was running through a large garden at the time. As I ran, a large bomb went off about a half block in front of me. I turned around and started running back the way I had come and another bomb went off behind me. This time it blew me down on my stomach. I looked around to see how close it had been. I saw that one. of the incendiaries bombs was sticking in the ground between by legs near my knees. To this day, I don't know if it was a dud or had a time delay.

There was a concrete outhouse type toilet in this garden, so I ran for it. There was another P.O.W. and two.(2) German guards already in there. The guards talked to each other, but totally ignored us. When the raid was over, they went on their way.

I went to the road that ran along side the river where some other POW's had gathered. Although we were caught out in the open and bombs were raining down all around the area, none of us were killed. One of our fellows was hit in the side of the head with a granite block from the road, which left him deaf in one ear. Some others were injured, but none seriously. We went back to the Slaughter House and were immediately put to work taking meat out of a burning building. We would go in and grab a ham or two and take them outside. It was very hot inside because of a fire in the basement below the cold room where the meat was located.

As we grabbed hams, we tore off pieces to eat. This proved to be a mistake. We kept removing hams, even with the tar on the floor of the cold rooms bubbling because of the fire below. Finally it was determined that it was no longer safe to remove any more hams because the floor was ready to collapse.

The guards returned us to our lager where we were fed and locked in for the night. The next day., we were again marched back into Dresden. This time we went into a brick residential area. The buildings had been three or four stories in height and circled the black all connected together by tunnels in the basements.

These buildings had been mostly destroyed in the bombing. Our job was to dig our way through the bricks into the basement area which was done.

Then they sent us into the basement to remove bodies. I saw several removed before it was my turn. As I went down the ramp into the basement, I stepped on something that gave a little. I could see part of a shirt or dress in the debris. There was a body buried in the ramp which you would not notice unless you stepped on it.

I went down into the basement corridor and to my left, the corridor opened up into a larger room. The guards were all in there indicating what they wanted you to do.

As I entered, there was a card table set up which had some bottles of liquor on it. To the right was a whole pile of bodies. To my left was a corridor leading out to the next building. There was a body lying on the floor at that point, which had been hit right at the waist line with one of the incendiaries bombs. The body was almost burnt in half.

The guard pointed at him and indicated that was the body I was to remove. He indicated that I was to take a belt off of another body and put it around the one I was to remove. It's surprising how much could be communicated by hand motions.

Well, I put a belt around the neck of this body and started to drag it towards the ramp, but it broke in half. That was a bit too much for me; I sort of lost it for a bit.

I tried to get out of there, but they wouldn't let me. They got me quieted down and pointed to one of the bottles on the table and insisted I have a few swallows. That's the first time I ever had any liquor of any kind.

The guards made me pick up the top half of the body and put it on a stretcher at the base of the ramp. They made another one of our men pick up the bottom half. He didn't like it any better than I did and told me so. We carried the body out and put it in the street along with several other bodies already removed.

We then got back at the end of the line. As we got near the head of the line, we would slip out of the line and go to the rear of the line again, trying to prolong going back into the basement. Finally, the guards caught us and put us at the head of the line.

We went down in the cellar again. This time I thought I would be smart. I picked a fellow who had on a gas mask. I thought all I would have to do is drag him by the mask to the stretcher. But, when I grabbed hold of the mask and pulled, it popped off his head. His eyes looked like they were almost out of their sockets, his mouth was wide open and the whole face and mouth was covered with blood.

Well, I lost my cool again and the guards had me drinking more liquor. I remember taking the body out to the pile, but the rest of this day is no longer in my memory.

From there on this was our daily job. We cleaned up the rubble and removed any bodies found. This went on the rest of February, March and into April.

Believe me, after a month when you find a body, its a mess. If you found a body crushed under fallen bricks as you were trying to clean a path through a street blockage, you would just move further down the street. Pretty soon the guard would see a wide clearing between workers and pick someone and walk him over to this space and he would stay there. Needless to say, the guy he picked would have to dig out the body.

At the end of a days work, everybody washed their hands in a bucket of lime water and went back to the lager. By this time, the British P.O.W.'s wanted the crazy Americans put in separate lagers from them, so we were moved into two lagers.

Most of the British POW's had been captured in places like "El-Alamein" and "Tobruk". They had been POW's for about four years. Many could speak German by the time we came to their camp. They had been assigned to jobs working in Post Offices and similar type work. They considered us careless and were afraid we would mess up some of the plans for escape they had in progress, so they wanted nothing to do with us. They were sure we would get into trouble with the German SS.

There was so many of us in the two lagers that we had to sleep four men to a bunk bed; two (2) on top and two (2) on the bottom. We slept back to back and there was no room to turn over. There were no pillows, mattresses or blankets. You slept right on the wood board bottom.

We were locked in for the night. Our toilet was a large metal barrel with a wood slat to sit on. By this time, many of us had developed severe diarrhea, either from eating the ham or the unsanitary conditions we lived and worked under. Needless to say, our lager stunk.

Our schedule was to get up at sunrise at which time we were lined up and counted to make sure no one was missing. We soon found out if we could screw up the count, the guards would keep on counting until they got it right. We could sometimes kill almost an hour, by stepping into a line already counted; the guard would come up short. We could step backward after already being counted; the guard would come up with an excess. Finally, they would put a guard at the end of each line to make sure nobody moved and get a proper count.

Some of the guards were sympathetic to our problems. We were on a starvation diet and you had to steal food when ever you got a chance. Usually, if you could find your way into a cellar, you could find potatoes. If you were caught plundering (stealing), you could be shot. We had been so warned, but I didn't think I would make it back and if I didn't, I might as well get as much food as I could find without being too careless.

If we found potatoes, we would slip them into the fire that the guards always had going in order to keep warm. One day I found some potatoes and put them in the edge of the hot coals, but when I went to get them out, the guard pushed them back in. When they were all burnt up and charred, he made me eat them.

I told our interpreter that it looked like the one guard was getting mean and told him the story. He said he knew that guard pretty well and would see if something was upsetting him. Later, the interpreter told me that the guard knew I had a bad case of Diarrhea and thought the charred potatoes would help.

The sole on my combat boot came loose and I was given a pair of high top shoes with hobnail soles. You absolutely could not walk anywhere quietly. I thought I would starve to death for sure if I could not find additional food, but in a couple of weeks, I got my boots back.

One day, I had found a cellar with canned tomatoes and pickled small onions. I don't like either one, but took the onions. About that time, one of the other POW's stuck his head in the basement window and said that if anybody was in there the SS was coming up the street and checking the building ruins.

I decided it was too late to go out to my group, so I went over the rubble and ran into a guard with another group of our fellows. He could see the onion jar bulge under my field jacket and so indicated by chucking me there. Then he took me with his group of prisoners and immediately left the area.

At about the time I was warned, the SS entered the building on the other side of the street and caught one of our guys. The SS turned the P.O.W. into one of our guards who then had to make a report. The P.O.W. caught was Michael D. Palaia from Company I, 423rd regiment, 106th division. It was only a day or two when two of our men had to go to his trial. One of these two men was Joseph Topicz of Cincinnati. We were told that these two men had to dig his grave. He had a very short trial and was shot by a firing squad. Needless to say, everybody was very careful for a couple of days.

We finally were assigned a job of peeling Turnip in a building that also baked fresh bread, Needless to say, we ate all of the turnip we could as we peeled.

The toilet room was located on the landing between floors. By doing a little snooping, we discovered a pile of old, hard bread on the floor above and it was not guarded.

There was a large scale in the factory where we were working and I weighed in at 125 pounds. I had lost 40 pounds already; not surprising because I could see all my ribs.

The smell of fresh bread was just too much. As I made one of my trips past the fresh bread, I took a loaf and stuck it under my field jacket and headed down the stairs. I had just passed the landing when a man coming up the stairs stopped me and found the bread, (the smell, I guess). I got a lecture in German, but he didn't take the bread. I knew that meant trouble, so I went back up to the toilet located on the landing level and ate the whole loaf.

When we lined up to leave, here came the man who caught me with the bread. He was with two other men and I knew I was in real trouble for plundering. He spoke to our interpreter who turned to us and said that the owner of the factory had caught one of the prisoners stealing a loaf of bread. If this should happen again, he would have everyone of us shot.

Every prisoner in that line up was looking for the stupid jerk who took the loaf of bread, in the only place we had been where we had food to eat, including myself.

One day another prisoner and I were put behind a residential area clearing out a garage which had been blown apart in the bombing. Our Job was to put the stone and brick debris in a wheel barrow and, by going over a large wood plank used for a ramp, take it out into the field behind the building. Needless to say, we moved in slow motion. The loads were heavy and we took turns. Our guards could see us, but they stayed out in the field.

They got engrossed in conversation after we had been working for sometime. We wondered why we were wasting our time cleaning out an old garage when we discovered machine gun parts in the debris. They were either making the parts or assembling parts there.

A little more snooping on my part revealed a cellar door. I went down, not realizing I had discovered a wine cellar. I sampled a few bottles, but didn't like the taste. I found a large bottle with gold tin foil on top. It tasted like 7-Up, so I drank about half of it and went back up and told my friend about what I had discovered.

He took his turn to check out the cellar. He came back up shortly and asked me if the bottle I had been drinking out of was the large bottle with the gold top. I told him it was and he told me that it was Champaign, not 7-Up, and that I had better get busy working because I was going to get drunk.

Our slow motion suddenly turned. I started loading and actually running across the plank with the loaded wheel barrow and returning on a run.

We started giggling and loading as fast as we could and off I went again with the load. I got to weaving pretty badly as I crossed the plank and the guards thought the sudden activity was funny also and joined us in laughing at the crazy Americans. They never came over and checked out the building.

I have heard stories about one of our prisoners who was hauled back to the lager in a wheel barrow drunk, while all the other prisoners formed around to conceal the load. I don't know who this guy was, but this was the second time after drinking liquor that I don't remember the trip back to camp.

One day I was stopped by another prisoner who said, "Man, you look yellow. Even the whites of your eyes are yellow." He called a guard and the next thing I knew, they took me to a German hospital, where they told me I had Yellow Jaundice. I was given a bottle of something called "Maltsfabric", which tasted and looked like "Le Pages Glue". The hospital was a large warehouse with beds.

My first evening in the hospital was a bummer. One of our guys was so weak he couldn't even urinate by himself, so three (3) or four (4) of us helped him. He died of malnutrition during the night.

We were only at the hospital two (2) days when a guard who was in charge of a group "Serbs" came in very early and got his charges and a couple of us Americans. Somehow, he got the word that there would be another bombing of Dresden this morning.

As we got out to the edge of the city, the air raid started. We could hear and see the anti-aircraft fire. Strips of tin foil were floating down all over the place. I found out later, our bombers dropped this to mess up the German radar control of anti-aircraft guns.

We saw two (2) B17's shot down during the raid. One bomber came down not too far from us. The plane came down in a slow, flat spin and we only saw two (2) men parachute from the plane.

I suddenly remembered that we had sat out a few other bombings in bomb shelters or in a bomb crater, the same as the people in town were now doing. Somehow after the three (3) very large raids of February, I had a tendency to forget about the smaller raids.

The Serb guard took us to a nearby, small village. We took the sleeping quarters of the home guard, who had left to go defend Dresden.

The Serb guard treated the Serbs and us like a father. He made arrangements for us to get a haircut at the local barber shop, but he got complaints from the local Germans, so we were put under closer guard.

Some guards came and took us back to our original Slaughter House V. Comrades who had also left the South African prison camp were moved to a small village of Helensdorf into a city building which looked more like a small wood church.

We were in Helensdorf almost two weeks. We could hear artillery to the east, so we assumed the Russians were getting close.

In addition to our one (1) meal a day, when we were allowed out into the fields, we dug up dandelions and thistle to cook for food. After about one week our food began to improve.

This was all the more indication that the Russians were getting close.

It was about May 7, 1945, when our guards took us out on the road. The artillery was really getting close now. The roads were lined with Germans fleeing away from the direction of the artillery fire with their possessions on their backs.

A horse drawn wagon with a man, his family and all their possessions came tearing down the road and overturned right in front of our building. He was trying to make a small curve. The horses might have been running away.

We started walking down the road heading for "Chemnitz", which was about 35 kilometers to the southeast. The guards indicated they had heard that the Americans had taken the town and they wanted to surrender to the Americans, not the Russians.

Now there were German civilians, soldiers and P.O.W.'s all on the roads together.

We followed the road. Sometimes we stayed on it and other times along side off of it. It was our chance to search for food, which was always on your mind.

We had gone about 5 kilometers when a flight of twelve (12) or fifteen (15) Russian planes headed our way. That's when I got about 100 or 200 yards off the road. As I watched, they peeled off three (3) planes at a time. Then the three (3) planes separated and each started strafing.

One of these planes peeled off to the left and headed directly for me. I was in a field near a large farm barn. It had an earth ramp with wooden boards from the ramp to the hay loft. I ran as hard as I could to get behind this earth ramp.

I just got to the edge of the bank when the plane started firing its 50 caliber guns. Shells were hitting the ground all around me, then up the side of the barn. The plane, still firing, banked right and hit a cow in the hind end out on the road. The cow started bellowing, trying to keep standing up.

I took a fast pass through the barn looking for food and came out the other side. The farmer and his family were coming out of the rear door of his home, but they were more interested in the cow than in me.

Further on down the road, we heard another plane coming and it went into a dive. We left the road and got down into a small stream, more like a ditch, running along side the road. On the other side of the stream was a high embankment of dirt with trees growing on top.

The screaming of the plane got louder and louder and there was no doubt than it was heading straight for us. When the bomb was released and the screaming and whistling noises got even louder, we knew it was coming down right on top of us.

It hit and exploded directly to our right, but just on the other side of the embankment. It tore up the trees above us and showered us with small rocks and dirt.

It was surprising that they would go for such a small group. There was a woman with a child, a German soldier and two (2) POW's in our group. We were all in the water getting as low as was absolutely possible.

We got almost to "Chemnitz" when word came back that the Russians were there, not the Americans. We seldom saw our guards during the day's activities, but they were long gone after this news.

As we were trying to decide what to do, a German officer came up to us and a group of British POW's whose officer in charge had not left. He demanded that the 4-wheel farm wagon they had, be turned over to him. There was a lot of loud arguing and yelling between the two (2) officers. Suddenly, that was the final straw for the officer in charge of the British. He pulled out his pistol and stuck it directly in the face of the officer who wanted the wagon.

All of a sudden, he was begging for his life. Finally, the officer took the pistol out of the other mans face and he took off as fast as he could go. The British P.O.W.'s officer then yelled for his POW's to get out of the woods and back onto the road. He got very little response until he fired several rounds into the woods, not into the air. At this point, he got plenty of action. The British P.O.W.'s promptly got in line.

We took off and started to head back to Helensdorf. I was with a fellow we called "Frenchy" as we walked across an open field. There were two (2) German soldiers playing around with a Panzerfaust, which is a German equal to a bazooka, but the shell for this thing must be two (2) or three (3) foot long and the war head must be four (4) inches in diameter. It was obvious they had been drinking. They were laughing and cutting up and then they pointed this thing at us and fired it.

The shell was so large, we could easily see it coming in a wobbling trajectory. We just stepped out of the way and let it go on by. It hit at such a low angle, it never even exploded.

We finally got back to the outskirts of Helensdorf and heard a rumor that the war was going to end at midnight.

We found a barn and decided to spend the night there. So did a few other POW's from our group. We were so tired, it didn't make any difference what was going to happen.

The next morning, we got up and started into town, then went south. Soon the Russian planes came. We got off the road, but didn't run and sure enough they didn't come after anybody.

As we kept walking South, we ran into several convoys of Russian trucks, each carrying troops pulling an artillery gun. It seemed like every truck had an accordion player sitting on the tail gate.

We came to a fairly large town called "Aussig" in Czechoslovakia. We found a stadium running track with a lot of truck and other vehicles. None were in running condition. We fooled with one truck for a couple of hours and finally got it running, but it didn't have enough power to get up the ramp leading out to the road. By then, the Russians came up and took the barrels of gas stacked at the track.

We gave up on the truck and went on down the street toward town. A trolley car came along and we got on. There were about five (5) of us. The conductor tried to collect from us, but we made it plain we didn't have any money, but we were going to stay on the trolley. He finally gave up. A couple of our guys were British who spoke German!

When we got into town, we saw Russians carrying buckets of beer in each hand. The Russian soldiers we met indicated that if we wanted anything to just take it. That's what they were doing.

There were reports of one young girl being caught by several Russians who raped her all night. She was reported to be a bloody mess when taken in for treatment.

I know of one building where one woman took her child and leaped out of a 5 story window rather than stay in the building by herself.

Women would stop you on the street and want two (2) fellows to spend the night. The Russians would not bother them if a fellow was present.

We found a French hospital. They told us where we could find a five (5) story building that had been bombed in which several POW's were staying.

We went looking for this building and found it shortly. All the roads around the building appeared to be where the military had abandoned all of their equipment. There was truck after truck, very large mobile guns on trailers, machine guns, rifles,, etc. Everything but a pistol.

We went up to the top floor on this bombed out building. Some of the risers were missing from the stairs making it a little difficult to get to the top. That's where the other P.O.W.'s were located.

All the windows had been blown out, but it was a good shelter. Even several of our South African friends were there. The next a.m., another fellow and I went down and tried to get a truck radio to work, but the batteries were down. We took several out and hooked them in series until we got enough power to run a radio.

Most of the talking was in German, but every once in a while somebody came on and explained that Americans in Russian held territory would have to find their way to the American held areas.

That wasn't a whole lot of help because we didn't have a map and didn't know where the American held areas were and they didn't tell us. We knew that we must go find them. Even though the war was over, it was still dangerous,, The slave laborers were up on the hill near our building having a good old time with German machine guns they picked up. There was firing off and on all day.

We heard that one of our P . O . W . 's was shot and killed as he walked down the road. A small child reached down and picked up a rifle laying at the edge of the road. It went off hitting the P.O.W. in the back.

I was out in front of our building one evening at dusk, looking in a covered truck bed for pieces of dehydrated potato for supper. A soldier stuck a rifle in the tail end of the truck and started yelling at me. I came out and he was pointing rifle at my chest still yelling. I was doing a bit of yelling myself.

He was a local soldier doing his job. Marshall Law. He was under orders to shoot anyone on the street. The yelling brought some others that explained to him that we were former P.O.W.'s, didn't know their language and did not know Marshall Law We sure knew after that and stayed inside at night.

Some of the British POW's went into town and came back with arrangements for a steam engine, two (2) passenger cars and several box cars. Just that morning, some of the fellows broke open a steel door on the ground floor of our bombed out building and found a room filled with food stuff.

We were lining up outside to go to the train when an old women came up to me and started begging for food. I went back into the building and brought out a bag of flour and gave it to her. She was thankful, I guess. She could make bread using it. I felt good because I remember the older women laying food out for us when we were first put to work as prisoners, even though I never got any of what was put out.

We went down to the train and the British and Americans took the two (2) passenger cars. All of the rest of the cars in the train filled up with former slave laborers and their girl friends.

People were riding everywhere they could find room. I believe we set off heading south. I don't know where we were being taken.

The train got stopped on a siding. We were told we could go no farther because of a hold out in "Prague". So, we sat.

We needed food. There was a house not too far from the tracks that had a barn with a chicken coop along side, completely sealed off with a high fence.

I was elected to go over the fence and get a chicken because, I guess, I was one of the smaller men. They boosted me over the fence and all the chickens ran up a little board into their coop. There was only a small opening into the coop, so I reached in and grabbed a chicken by the legs and it started squawking. Every chicken, but the one I grabbed, got past me and I pretty much filled the opening. I ran back to the fence and gave the chicken to the other guys. They gave it to a guy called Smitty. He wrung the chicken's neck.

About that time, a person in the house hearing all the racket stuck his head out of the second floor window and started yelling.

There was a dump behind the barn and Smitty grabbed an old bucket and stuck the chicken underneath while I got back over the fence.

All of a sudden, the bucket flew up in the air and the chicken came flopping out all over the place. We grabbed it and took off back to the train where the other fellows plucked and cooked it. I got the eggs for going over the fence.

Then it got pretty serious. The townspeople armed themselves and were coming to even the score. About the time they got to our train, a Russian came up and settled them down. He gave them some kind of IOU or payment for their losses and arranged to get some larger animals to feed the train load of people.

Our group was given a bull. One of our people had a pistol and shot the bull five times in the head. It got real mad, but finally staggered and fell. In a couple of minutes, the bull was cut up and shared with everybody in our cars. The meat was still warm when we got our piece.

The next morning, a group of us decided it was foolish to stay with the train and started walking. We consisted of three (3) Americans and five (5) British.

We walked through several small villages and that afternoon we came upon a farm that a Russian artillery company had taken over. The farmer and his wife were sitting in the loft of the barn watching everything.

The Russians came out to the road and insisted we come in. They had a short discussion with the British fellows and then we were told to take off our packs or whatever gear we had.

A Russian pumped the well while we washed our face and hands. We were then taken inside and set down at a very large farm table.

There was one Russian for every two of us. The table was filled with food and the Russians served and waited on us until we could eat no more.

While we ate, the British men talked in German to a Russian officer seated at the head of the table. They discussed where we had been and where we were trying to go. The Russians gave us some directions and we set off down the road.

Somewhere along the way, we separated from the others. Another fellow and I came upon an American M.P in, I believe, Pilsen. I told him we had been POW's and we were trying to find the American authorities.

He said British fellows had to be handled by the British military. I had to convince him that I was an American, but that the Germans had taken our clothes and gave us British uniforms with the red prisoner triangle to wear.

He told us to hop a train and go back to another town, not too far away.

We found the American troops and were directed to a building where they had a wash tub full of hot "C" rations and man did they ever taste good.

The next morning we were put on a DC-3 and flown to Camp Lucky Strike in France where our clothes were discarded. We had a hot shower and were deloused and given new clothing.

We slept in tents and were given meal tickets for our meals. When you have been starved for sometime, you can eat until you are stuffed, but in 15 minutes you are starving again. I believe you can actually at yourself to death.

We found out that there was always one cook tent in the place that did not require a card. News traveled pretty fast when it came to food. Even then, we had such a desire for food that we would go to the rear of the food tents and scrape the jelly cans and get enough sugar to make a form of candy.

One day, a German P.O.W. stole a one pound container of butter. A black American guard caught him and with a little cheering from us, made him eat the whole pound of butter right there. I bet he never stole a pound of butter again.

There was an aircraft runway between our tents and the Red Cross tents with a roped off space between the tents and the air strip. P-51's used to take off and land on the air strip. It was a long way to the end of the runway, so another fellow and I decided to take a short cut across the roped off area and runway to the Red Cross tents.

We crossed the roped off area and when we got on the runway side, there were signs "Achtung Heinen" which meant we had just crossed a German minefield that had been roped off for later clearance. Needless to say, we took the long way back.

Sometime in early June, 1945, we were put on the "Admiral Benson" for the boat ride home. A few of the POW's were put to work. (They should have known better.) One of our men was assigned to the ships galley. Boy, the officers on that ship were sure upset when they found out all of their ice cream was missing.

When we got back to the United States of America, we were questioned and given a few weeks of leave with orders to be in Fort Sam Houston in mid August, 1945.

We were on the train in August, 1945, almost to Texas, when we heard the Japanese had surrendered and the war was over.

Several years after the war was over, stories were being told about the "Great Bombing Raids" over Germany, by Allied Air Forces, against places like: Schweinfurt, Ploesti, etc.

My wife at that time asked me why, if the bombing raid I was in and was always talking about was so bad, how come it was never mentioned?

I had to reply that I didn't know why because I knew for a fact that it was very destructive.

In 1954, a book was published about the "Destruction of Dresden" by David Irving, a British military historian, who spent three (3) years researching to get his story.

On the nights of February 13 and 14, 1945, and again at noon on the 14th, Dresden was the target of 1,200 plus fully loaded bombers.

The first raid was at 10:10 p.m. and consisted of 244 Lancaster bombers dropping incendiaries to set the city on fire. It created an unmistakable target for the second attack by 529 Lancaster's, some three hours later.

These two groups of bombers dropped nearly 650,000 incendiaries bombs and many hundreds of 4,000 pound and 8,000 pound explosives.

At 12:12 p.m. the afternoon of the 14th, a flight of 450 B-17's unloaded their bombs and incendiaries, which rained down for 11 minutes into Dresden's new town area.

This all resulted in creating the most horrible fire storm of World War II,, the heat of which could be felt by the flyers at 20,000 feet and could be seen for 200 miles.

Dresden was the ultimate test for the "Fire Storm," a bombing technique devised during World War II. It was the most terrifying demonstration of air power during all of World War II.

A fire storm is a gigantic wave of fire sweeping over everything in its path. The oxygen rushing in, to feed the fire, creates a man made tornado, which reaches 1,000 degrees at the center. As the flames swirl and leap higher and higher, it rips giant trees out of the ground like twigs, seizes hundreds of people and items and draws them into the inferno. It spewed furniture high over the city and ripped roofs off of houses.

The bomber pilots estimated that a sea of fire covered approximately 40 square miles. The fire burned for seven days and eight nights.

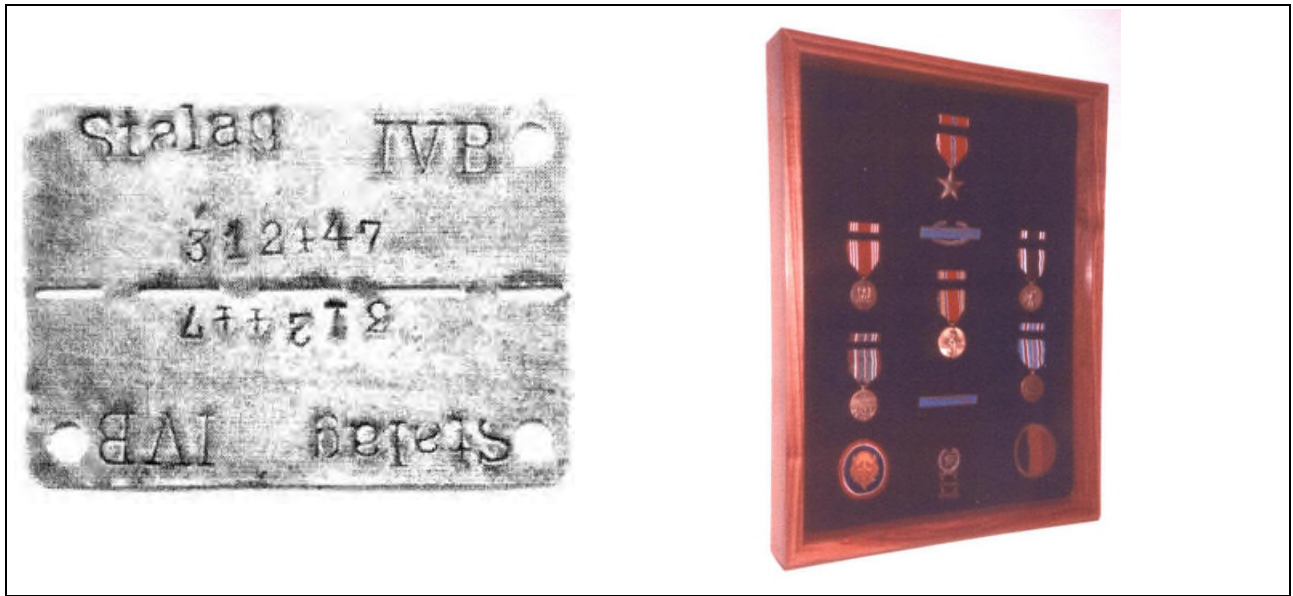
The German official in charge of final statistics conservatively estimated that 135,000 people were killed. A Berlin official in charge of statistics estimated between 120,000 and 150,000. The Russians estimated 250,000 and some even estimated as low as 30,000. The casualties were so great that there were not enough survivors left to even bury the dead.

Stacks of bodies were bulldozed into mass graves. Finally, they cremated large stacks of bodies.

I finally had the answer as to why nobody ever talked about the bombing of Dresden.

The bombing was denounced as an "Allied Atrocity" after the war in Britain. Nobody wanted the responsibility. The town was never a military target and had little defense. It was estimated there were approximately one million people in Dresden at the time of the raids. Dresden was a town about the size of Dayton, Ohio, with around 450,000 people.





Letters From some who were there.

**Henrico H. Pandolfi**

Unknown Unit and Prison Camp (?)

In a letter to James Mills, December 29, 1983

Hi Mills,

I'm sending you a couple of pictures of myself from 1944. Do you remember me ? I was in the woods when this tank fired on us with 88. I got hit in the right leg, the guy on my left got hit in the elbow. It happened so fast. Hell did break loose.

Do you remember a Francis Powers ? He's the only guy I keep in touch with because he doesn't live to far from me, about 20 miles. I lost touch of all the other guys.

I'm retired now. I'm going on 67, feeling pretty good until yesterday. I slipped on steps on my back and fractured a rib. Very bad weather down here.

So long for now. Hope to hear from you again. Send me a picture of yourself. Hope you had a Merry Christmas and have a very Happy New Year. Keep in touch.

**Robert Widdicombe**

July 5, 1988

Dear Jim, It was really a joy to receive your phone call last week. I've thought many times about you and others that were in the company although I must confess that many-many names escape me.

Of course I couldn't forget you because of the things we did together, especially that last couple of weeks after we went on the line and I can't forget you and that guitar and the hours you spent trying to learn how to play. How could I forget that you burned it - that should have been a day of celebration.

Seriously, Jim, I'm so glad you made it and that things are and have been going well for you. I'm looking forward to the day we can get together. I can't for the life of me remember Chipman or Shipman. I did get a letter from John "Mouse" Hoag in December of 1945. He did say that Duff (Duffy) was ok and that Wilkens (He was one of our Sgts ?) had married "that little gal he had in England." And that Hoster was his best man. As far as the officers were concerned, he said that he saw Collins at Lucky Strike and that he was ok. But said that Captain Moe was bad off, and that Blodgett and Sellars were ok.

I got a letter from Delphos Howard in Lima, Ohio, who said he remembers me as the BAR man. I sure can't place him. Does that name hit home with you ?

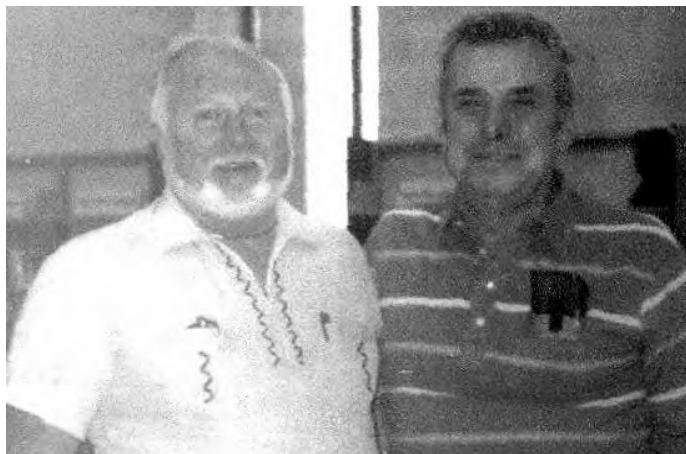
You remember that I mentioned the 106<sup>th</sup> Division Association. I joined today and am enclosing a copy for the letter and application that I received. Maybe you will want to join too.

Well, Jim, keep in touch. If you hear anything new, keep me posted. I'll do the same, and let's not wait too long to get together.

Sincerely,

your friend always.

Bob (Robert Widdicombe)



**Robert Holden**

Greetings and a Happy New Year

Wow. That's what I call a quick response. I'm glad you are back among the living. The flue isn't good any time of the year but in the winter we seem to suffer from it more.

You ask me where to send your Diary. It will get to me a little quicker if you send it to me in California. All of our mail is forwarded to us there but there is about a three day delay. That's pretty for our good of United States Postal Service.

I'm like you when you said you wish someone would remember when we pushed the tank off the road onto its side, When I write some of these things I don't believe I really these dumb things. .I wish I could fine someone that remembers at some portion of these things too. Funny what you do when you are young.

Anyway. Why not send it to me in CA:

Bob Holden

Good to hear from you. God bless.

Your friend Bob Holden

I was really happy to receive your e-mail a away back in July. I happened to be at a time when I was in the hospital having surgery for cancer. By now everything seems to be pretty good. No more signs, no therapy of any kind so things are looking better. I can't complain for I'm still alive and the prognoses is good.

I never throw anything away but for the life of me I can't fine your diary. You mentioned you may have another copy. If you do I would appreciate one. One thing I remember that I too remember is the scout Car (M8 I think) that was knocked out of action and the occupants and the medics were dead and frozen in place with a crew and the medics dead and still almost like frozen animation. If I ever get this in any kind of order, and before I have it printed I'll send you a copy to- review.

This note is getting a little longer than I had planned but I did want  
February 1, .1991 Dear Jim:

Well hello again. I'll bet you think I crawled under a rock and died. Wrong...I Just as not the best correspondent in the world. Even though I haven't been writing I do think of you and other old friends often.

I probably wouldn't be writing now except I received a packet from the 106th Infantry Association about the reunion next September, and I would guess that you did too. I am not so self centered as to think that-I could have any impact on your decision making process but I wanted to let you know that I have made reservations for myself and Shirley. I do hope that you can see your way clear to attend. It has been a long, long time since we had our experiences. Now that we are engaged in another war it seem to cause those time to become a little more real. Even after 45 plus years. I guess my interest is that I didn't know where anyone was for so many years. After all, call it what you may but we were a close knit family. Seldom do friends really depend upon friends in real life threatening situations as they do in a time of war. Even with what happened to us we were really lucky.

Enough of that. I am enclosing a copy of my registration form for your information. There is no reason to return it. ..Just through it away. I am sure that we will have an excellent time.

Sincerely;

Dear Jim and Jan:

I've been wanting to write you a note ever since I received your "Service Diary".

Mr. Mills I am impressed. After reading the accounts of your experiences after you left Stalag IV-B I realized that I was spending the remainder of that war in a country club. I remember a lot of the things that you talked about but in some instances it is from a completely different point of view. For example, when Dresden was being bombed.. we could hear it, see the light from the fires in the sky, and even feel the concussion from the big bombs. In fact some of them would blow the shutters..of the barracks open. As you have said those bombings were in February and with no heat in the barracks it made it all the worst. We Complained. Big Deal. You were there where the bombs were going off and then you had to do some to the nasty clean up afterwards. No...I,didn't have it hard at all. Some confrontations with the German guards and some time in solitary confinement. Pretty soft I'd say now.

To start with you remember a lot of things, and people that are new to me. One of my problems was that I never made any close friends in the POW camp.. Remember in our training we were told that if we were captured that we shouldn't talk to anyone even after we were in the prison camp for the Germans plant spies in there to find out what you know. I did Just that...hell...if I would have known anything I wouldn't have been there. Anyway I became a loaner. I must go but I wanted to tell you that I think your accounting of your captivity is outstanding. A very good work. I'm sorry I won't be at the convention this year but don't fret.. sooner or later we will get together again. Oh, by the way...Jim Bard wrote me the other day saying he and his wife Mary were going to be there. He was in the machine gun section with me. Really a nice guy. You and Jan have a good time in Huntsville and we will be thinking of you.

Sincerely,

Bob and Shirley

Greetings From the Great State of Iowa.

I haven't sent you a message for some time and think I had better catch up.

I received your message some time ago when I Changed Internet Servers and my new address. It was good to hear from you. You mentioned you would probably go to St. Louis to the 106th Convention. That, my friend, sounds great. have been thinking very seriously about it too. The only thing that could throw a wrench into that plan is we are in the planning stages of a trip to England. If the dates don't conflict we will no doubt be there. Especially since you will be there. I don't want to go if there is no "I" Company people there.

Something else. I have your Diary lying on top of my desk and read it quite often. I was in a country club compared to you and the things you went through. I don't know if I ever mentioned it to you before but several years ago I wrote a biography on my Father. He had a very unique life and most of our family had never had the opportunity to hear his stories. Our family really appreciated it. As a little piece of information, he entered the Army as a private and retired as a Brigadier General. I told Dick Peterson (Company "I") about it while in San Diego a couple of years ago and he made a suggestion. He gave me the address of the Army's Historical Repository at Carlyle Barracks in PA (I think). I offered them a copy of my dad's book and they jumped at it. In fact they ask if I could send two copies. Now I tell you this for I think you should get in contact with them and furnish them a copy of your Diary. I think your Diary it is outstanding.

Wow... this note had gotten out of hand. Sorry. Your Friend B. Holden

**John Q. Blodgett**

December 15, 1993

Dear Jim and Jan:

Getting your card, and the 49 year old reminder of World War II action on this date, was little short of a miracle. That action was one of the very few in our week on the line and you filled in a blank that has bothered me for half a century. I now know for the first time that I was accompanied by Shipman, Widdicombe, and Mills. We didn't change the unfortunate events that occurred a few days later, but we were out there trying. I would love to meet with you

and Widdicombe, and with Shipman if he is still alive. I will call you in January to set up a visit to Vandalia, where I hope Widdicombe can join us. We have a lot to talk about.

I most certainly remember that deer and the Siegfried Line pillbox you missed with your rifle grenade. That deer running around in no-mans-land symbolized, I suppose, the revolt of nature against the violence of men. I remember thinking that we brought back a boot hanging in the tree over the Fock Wulf crash.

Hang loose. I hope to see you early next year.

against such an animal.

You were not the only one to respond to my Cub story. I had a good letter from our company radio operator John Hoag and from Pete House of our stalag association and a phone call from Dick Peterson in California, who reminded me that we brought back a boot hanging in the tree over the Pock Wulfa crash.

I am now writing a piece about my two escapes and will send you a copy when it is finished.

Hang loose. I hope to see you early next year.

Sincerely, John

Dear Pete:

Thanks for your letter of January ,1 and the enclosed piece on Task. Force Baum. I assume I am now a member of your association and will see you all at the April 28-Mq 1 reunion here in Arlington. I have talked on the phone to Robert van Houten and will do what I can to help at the reunion.

Aside from minor points (Frankfurt, for example, was misspelled), the Task . Force Baum article looked pretty good. I would comment only that Col. Waters was one of several prisoners who came to Hammelburg from Poland in early March and that the Task Force had some -waterborne jeeps (peeps?). Years ago I latched onto a 29 page article on Task Force Baum, apparently Chapter 17 in a larger book, and can send you a xerox if you don't already have it. Obviously, my escape at that time saved me from, that long march south covered by El Creel.

I received a phone call from Dick Peterson in California after my letter to the 106th Division Association was published in the last Cub He reminded me that I had brought home the pilot's boot from the Focke Wuif crash we visited In no-man's-land. I hope to meet with him in April. I also had a Christmas card from Jim Mills of Company I, who wrote up the story of our 4-man patrol on page 21 of the book "A Blood-Dimmed Tide" published in 1992 by 'Gerald Astor. It was nice to see my name in a history book, given the frustration of our military input in that tragic battle.

See you in April.

April 2, 1994

Dear Jim:

I arrived home on Tuesday, tired but triumphant, after spending Monday night with my daughter and her family in Export, Pennsylvania. My total trip covered 2,988 miles. On Wednesday morning, the car wouldn't start. The gas pump was kaput. Thank the lord that it didn't happen while I was on the road.

\_Thanks to you and the Mrs. for my eventful stay in Vanddliia. The Air Force Museum was a great idea, the dinner was delightful, and our afternoon and evening of reminiscences were unforgettable. I am reading the two books you lent me and will return them soon.

Attached is the booklet I just published on Korea. I am afraid that it poses more questions than it answers, but that is the name of the Korean game at this delicate point. I also enclose a copy of my recent letter to American History Illustrated.

Just before I mailed this I got your letter with the xeroxed troop lists. Thanks very much. I will apply for my bronze star.

We may not meet in Rapid City, S.D., but we will meet again somewhere. You can bet on that.

Sincerely, John

John Q. Blodgett was a 2nd Lt. in Company I, 423rd Regiment, 106th Division, 2nd Platoon leader. He was born 16 October, 1923 and died 22 January 2001. He was captured during the Battle of the Bulge and escaped two different times. As a career foreign service officer for 32 years, John specialized in economic and political-military affairs at nine overseas posts in Europe, Asia and Africa. His Washington assignments included tours as deputy director of plans and policy, U. S. Air Force Staff and as director of private sector programs, United States Information Agency. John was educated at Georgetown University, where he pursued graduate studies in geopolitics and international economics. He wrote several studies on U. S. - South Korean security cooperation. He was an adjunct fellow at The Center for Strategic & International Studies, Washington, D. C. John retired from the service and visited some of his old war buddies. He attended the 106th reunion at Rapid City. It is reported in the Jul-Aug-Sept 2001 issue of the CUB that John spent the last part of his life in a nursing home and that he died and was cremated. John was buried June 8th, 2001 at Arlington National Cemetery. (supplied by James Mills)

*Holden and Pandolfi were in 4B the whole time they were POW's. Blodgett was in 3 different camps due to his escape try's.*



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