

Frank Bates
424/CN & 422/L
Stalag IV-B (4-B)

May 7, 2005 - [Retiree reminisces of time as teenage POW](#)

Frank Bates was grateful to have returned to the United States several weeks before V-E Day. But a lot less of Bates returned to the States than had left.

Bates, who dropped out of Woodward High School at 18 to join the Army, found himself in a POW camp around the time that he should have been preparing to graduate.

Only three days after his 106th Infantry Division hit the front lines in the Battle of the Bulge in southern Belgium, the war's largest land battle, Bates was among thousands of Americans captured by the Germans on Dec. 16, 1944.

"It happened so fast, and we were so darn scared, we didn't know if we were pitching or catching," said Bates, a 79-year-old retired Kroger store manager who lives near Fairfield.

During a forced two-week, 100-mile march to a POW camp in Dresden, Bates was wounded when one of his German guards - "some young punk who got out of hand" - thrust his bayonet into his buttocks.

On other occasions, he and his fellow prisoners were transported by rail in so-called "40-by-8" boxcars, built to hold either 40 men or eight horses. Often, nearly twice that many men were crammed into the cars. "You were shoved in shoulder to shoulder, chest to back, standing - it was impossible to sit down," he said. The excruciating discomfort almost made walking at the tip of a bayonet seem a privilege, he said.

At the camp, Bates and his fellow prisoners endured horrific conditions and meals barely capable of sustaining life. Their two daily meals consisted of a piece of board-stiff bread for breakfast and "something they called soup" - turnips in water - for dinner. As Allied troops closed in during the European war's final weeks, Bates' captors "started getting pretty rough," leading him and other POWs to worry that the Germans might decide to "liquidate" their prisoners.

"You didn't know what the heck was going to happen tomorrow, or even if there would be a tomorrow," Bates said.

By the time his camp was liberated by Gen. George S. Patton's troops on April 23, 1945, the 5-foot-9 Bates' weight had plummeted from 245 pounds to only 96. A 30-day furlough "at home with Mom's cooking" helped start Bates on the long road to regaining some of his lost weight.

As he reflects back on V-E Day, Bates, moved by the "Band of Brothers" sentiment common among soldiers, recalls that his overwhelming emotion was a sense that excessive jubilation seemed inappropriate so long as hundreds of thousands of American troops remained in harm's way.

"We still had the other side of the world to worry about," he said. "The job was only half finished. When that was finally wrapped up, then it was time to really celebrate."

(Barry M. Horstman ,Cincinnati Post - OH,USA)

August 7, 2004 - 'All gave some; some gave all' From the Revolutionary War to Iraq, the Purple Heart story is a Cincinnati story.

It reaches from the Revolutionary War patriot who rests beneath a 200-year-old headstone near the banks of the Ohio to a young Navy Corpsman from Delhi Township wounded in Iraq just weeks ago.

"There's a long line of us. And, sadly, there will be more to come," said Frank Bates of Fairfield Township. Nearly 60 years ago, as a 19-year-old foot soldier, Bates was among the 7,000 men of his [106th Infantry Division](#) taken prisoner by the Nazis. On Friday, Bates came to Fountain Square for the annual ceremony honoring combat-wounded veterans of all wars. He was joined by dozens of fellow Purple Heart recipients.

(By Howard Wilkinson, Cincinnati Enquirer staff writer)



Page last revised

James D. West

www.IndianaMilitary.org