

Rishel White, T/5

*Reconnaissance Unit
106th Infantry Division*

My grandfather served with the 106th Division from March 1943 until after the end of World War Two. He fought in the Battle of the Bulge and was captured twice by German SS Troops and imprisoned in Stalag IV B near Muhlberg Germany.

I've attached two pictures of him onto this email. One is of my grandfather in uniform from that time period and the other is his POW Tag from Stalag IV B with his prisoner serial number.

His story is below.....

Thank you very much!

Matthew White

Hello, I'm Rishel White. I served with the [Reconnaissance unit of the 106th Golden Lion Division](#), with a rank of T/5. My unit was sent to the European Theater as part of the Allied invasion force. We landed at La Harve France in December 1944 and were transported across France and into Belgium near the town of St. Vith. Soon after on December 16th 1944, we would be in the center of the German attack, in what would be known as the Battle of the Bulge. I was twice captured by German SS Panzer troops in the mountains and hills of the Ardennes near the Siegfried Line. Marched two weeks in sub-zero weather, bombed and strafed by our own planes in unmarked boxcars, and suffering near starvation, I was imprisoned in Stalag IV B, near Dresden. After spending approx 4 months in the prison camp, we were liberated by the Russians, but given no food or medical attention, and still far from American lines, I made my way through still hostile Germany, to reach the American Troops across the Elbe River.

White says, "Any P.O.W. alive today is a survivor. I and the other prisoners made it by refusing to give up. I did what I had to do to survive and come home alive."

The following is his story:



I enlisted in the U.S. Army on Jan. 20, 1941 at Madison, West Virginia, and was sent to Fort Hayes, Columbus, Ohio for processing, then on to Fort Knox for basic training. While there, I was a member of the 1st Armored Division and assigned to drive a tank. In April of 1941, I was sent in a cadre to Pine Camp (now Fort Drum), N.Y. to help establish the 4th Armored Division. I arrived at camp very ill and diagnosed as having rheumatic fever. I was then sent on to Lowell General Hospital in Massachusetts where I spent the summer and early fall. I returned to my outfit, just in time for the northern New York winter. Fearing that I

might get the fever again by being out in the cold a lot, I took the opportunity to go to cooks and bakers school when it was offered. I did well and liked it. I was assigned to the Officer's Mess. In March 1943, I was again picked for a cadre to Fort Jackson, South Carolina, where the 106th (Golden Lion) Division was activated. I was assigned to the 106th Reconnaissance Troop, with whom I served in maneuvers in Tennessee, Camps Atterbury in Indiana, Miles Standish in Massachusetts, on to England, France, Germany, and was discharged from same.

In the fall of the year 1944, my unit was sent to the European Theater as part of the Allied Invasion force. We left Boston, Mass, on Nov. 10, 1944 on the U.S.S. Wakefield. There were 8,200 soldiers, 900 crew of coastguardsmen and a Marine guard on board. The ship had a displacement of 4,400 tons, 2-1500 hp diesel engines, and a maximum speed of 30 knots. The armament consisted of three 5" naval guns, 14 MM AA guns and 22 MM AA guns. We crossed alone going south, then west to the coast of Africa, then north, landing at Liverpool, England. We bivouacked in Stow-on-the-Wold and issued equipment we would need. Our small arms, covered with Cosmoline, had to be boiled clean in large kettles and oiled well. There was constant air activity overhead. All day the British planes were in and out and at night the American planes took over. Daily lectures were given to us on all aspects of war. English customs, food scarcity, German language basics, weapon handling, etc.

We left Stow-on-the-Wold December 1st and convoyed toward Portsmouth. The day was rainy and the staging area very muddy. Our supper consisted of hot C rations and the same for breakfast. If we could have known what was in store for us, we would have appreciated the meals a lot more. In Portsmouth, the Red Cross served us coffee and doughnuts. On December 2nd we were loaded on a L.S.T. 529 and chained down our vehicles. We slept below that night, three men to a bunk, and in shifts of eight hours. It was very cold and rainy. After a day's delay we arrived in the harbor of La Harve, France, around noon. It was such a rough crossing that we lost both anchors and had to return to England for new anchors and repairs. The Navy installed new anchors again on the

evening of the 6th. It was another rough crossing. Back at La Havre, I counted 42 large vessels waiting to go into port. The city itself was totally destroyed.

On December 8th we were driving across France and into Belgium. Most of the countryside was in ruins. Destroyed German Vehicles lined both sides of the road and we spied a downed Spitfire in a field. As we traveled across Belgium, the people took us into their homes for coffee and to get warm. They also gave us cakes and apples to eat along the way. We met the balance of the division and set up bivouac in the woods. The weather stayed very wet and cold. Distant artillery could be heard and seemed to get stronger every day. By the 12th we were in convoy again and heading into Germany through St. Vith. We replaced the 2nd Division in their bunkers in a town called Grosslangenfeld. Our front had barbed wire with booby trap flares for night. This area was in the Eifel-Ardenne Mountains on the border of Germany and Belgium. In good visibility you could see in the distance the pillboxes, which made up the Siegfried Line. The weather remained miserable – very wet and cold. Reports later confirmed it to be the coldest winter in Europe for a quarter of a century. The Ardennes, a forested plateau between France, Belgium and Luxembourg, was the scene of bitter fighting in World War One. It was here my father-in-law Olin Weeden saw action.

They told us this was a ghost front, as everything was going to be quiet, nothing was going to happen. The Germans began shelling us, particularly at mealtimes and because of this we ate our meal by squads. We watched buzz bombs take off and our artillery counter shells swished over us in reply to the German shelling. On Dec. 14th the really heavy shelling around our bunker area began in earnest. We were in the middle of an artillery duel. During the night a shell hit the stone house where the kitchen was set up. It went through the wall over the spot where I was sitting and out the other end of the house, leaving a hole you could see the stars through. It was a dud and luckily I had my helmet over my head so falling debris did not cause me much damage.

In the early morning hours of December 16th, 1944 under cover of fog, 38 German divisions of the 5th SS Panzer army attacked all along a 50 mile front. The Germans launched their counter-offensive against the Allied Expeditionary forces and the famous "Battle of the Bulge" had begun, so called because the line of combat formed a large bulge deep into the American front line. It was the last major German counter-offensive of World War II. Our outfit came under heavy bombardment of

mortar, rocket and artillery fire, and concentrated ground attack from armored and infantry units.

The company ammo supply, kept in the basement of another stone house, took a direct hit and blew up, adding to the general noise and confusion. If anyone said they weren't scared, they were lying.

The German troops, in an effort to get closer and break into the town of Grosslangenfeld, actually got into the hedgerows outside the town and were mowed down all along the hedgerows for a distance of 50 to 75 yards. Later in the afternoon, our continued resistance was measured by the ammo the men and platoon, could get their hands on.

Four of us were sent for more ammo, taking some of the wounded in a half-track. Our vehicle took a hit in the front, sending it into a ditch where it overturned. The driver was killed and there were others who were wounded. The Germans then moved in and captured us. We were put in trucks full of wounded soldiers from both armies. Some hours later we were, recaptured by a company of American infantry. Early the next morning we moved out toward the German town of Bleialf. On the way we saw several buzz bombs. Later as we were climbing a hill, we again came under mortar and artillery fire. We took cover in the forest and dug in. A bone chilling wind whipped over the hills, freezing feet and fingers. It was especially bad on the suffering wounded. We got orders to destroy our weapons and vehicles as we were taking heavy casualties, and the Germans moved in to capture us again. They marched us past endless columns of German troops who took our watches, boots, and anything else they wanted. I had fallen out with a group of medics and for this reason in the general confusion, I was separated from most of the rest of my outfit. I was in hope that the medics might be exchanged according to the Geneva rules.

We were forced to go back on the hills and pick up wounded. We carried them to a building in town, which was being used as a field hospital. We stayed in a building near the hospital for several nights. Then one night we were marched to a barn outside of town and locked in. We feared they might set fire to it. It was very cold, even burrowing into the hay.

The next morning we started on a forced march that was to take five days on the road, 10 or 11 hours a day in the bitter cold and snow. A few hours into the first day we joined up with another big group of P.O.W.'s who were herded along with us. Food consisted of a few sugar beets dug out of the fields along the way or food begged from townsfolk as we came

through late at night. In some of the towns we passed through, the children and a few of the adult's, kicked and spat at us and hollered at us in German. The amount of food given to us was practically negligible, as they had very little themselves and were not about to give much to the enemy. (This fact was what made our plight so much worse, because the Germans were beginning to feel the pinch at home and so did not feel very generous towards the P.O.W.'s.)

At night we stayed in barns and ate snow to get drinking water. After five days of walking, we were herded into boxcars with no Red Cross markings. The European boxcar at that time was only about two-thirds the size of the American one. There were about 60 of us to a car with no way to sit down, no food or water. Many had dysentery and we all had to live in the abject filth, as there was no provision for disposing of bodily waste.

After a day or so we came to a railroad yard and stopped. In a few minutes we were under attack from British Spitfires. Since we had no markings, they had no way of knowing we were in the cars. One could hear the approaching planes going into their screaming dives, the rattle of cannon and machine gun fire and we experienced the helpless feeling of being locked in the cars like sitting ducks and being killed by our own people. Many were wounded or killed. Finally some of the men managed to push out the small barbed wire window at the top corner of a boxcar and crawl out. Then they opened the ice-encrusted doors of the cars and we got out and formed a U.S. P.O.W. in the snow. The skies were clear and very blue and filled with American and British fighters and bombers with heavy German ack-ack gunfire. I myself saw several bombers hit and a few parachutes drift down. Later the dead and wounded were placed on the station platform and we were again put in the blood-spattered boxcars. This was our Christmas Eve in 1944. Every year as the holiday season approaches one cannot help but remember and relive the miserable hunger and cold and fear of that time. It is indelibly stamped in my memory.

Three more days and nights and then we stopped at another railroad station on the edge of a town. Just as we were getting out of the boxcars, the planes came again and started bombing the yards we had just left. We scrambled and ran to take cover in ditches or any place that could be found.

As we lay there, we could look back and see the bombs hitting the yards we had just left. We could feel the ground tremble and see the

boxcars rising in the air in slow motion as in a dream sequence. Later as we were marched back through the yards I was surprised to see that aside from some large craters and a few boxcars, the bombing had done very little vital damage. The Germans had made caves in the mountains and run the important engines into them where they were safe. We marched a few more days until we finally arrived at [Stalag IV-B](#) near Mahlberg on the Elbe River; this was our happy New Year's Eve 1944. Sad, cold, lonely, and very, very hungry as we were marched by a German officer who spoke English, he told us to grab a can from a pile on the ground and get in line for soup. This can was to be the only eating utensil for the duration. The soup was good old rutabaga, also called "Swedish turnip" and used as food and livestock feed. The guards kept saying no seconds, but I did get in line a second time, and got away with it. Even though we were prisoners only a few months, the treatment and lack of food given to us made our condition as bad as if we were there a much longer time.

Conditions at the camp were not too much better than on the road. We were placed in rudely built barracks, with wooden floors and sides with cracks you could see through. We slept on wooden bunks with no mattresses and only a thin worn blanket for cover. We slept three up and three down and changed positions each night so that everyone had a shot at the middle, as that was the warmest spot. Vermin of all kinds (rats, mice, lice, bedbugs and fleas) were prevalent throughout the camp. I cannot forget the constant battle with lice day and night.

There were no cleaning materials for either the barracks, the clothing, or person of the P.O.W.'s. There were no medical supplies (not even aspirin), nor any kind of medical treatment, and malnutrition, dysentery and exposure to the elements took a heavy toll.

Hunger was constant and food dominated everyone's thoughts. No matter how poor the meal was food was the high point of every prisoner's day. The food usually consisted of rutabaga soup (watered down), a loaf of bread (dark brown, mostly wood fill fiber and heavy enough to club somebody with); four cull potatoes, and a thumbnail size piece of cheese. The bread was divided between 12 to 15 men and the size of the piece you got was determined by the cut of the cards. Since the cards were old and others had been in the camp some time longer than I had, they knew the markings on the cards and could get the biggest pieces. The German rations to P.O.W.'s, was less than required for basic metabolism and would lead to loss of weight and eventually death by starvation. Under the unhygienic and unhealthy conditions even the healthiest were susceptible to any disease. I go so weak that standing up

from a sitting position would almost make you faint away. We also ate grass that we could reach. At the time of my capture, I weighed approximately 195 pounds, and when I was liberated I was down to about 120 pounds, having lost over 38 percent of my body weight.

Toilet facilities consisted of one open latrine outside the barracks. There was no heat or lights. My clothing consisted of pants and shirt, field jacket, socks and boots which I wore all the time I was a prisoner. It was May before I got a change of cloths, when I was sent into the hospital.

The compound I was in consisted of mostly British soldiers who had been there for some time, and so were more or less in charge of everything and answered only to the Germans. The rest of my camp had many Russian, French and Serbs, some of who were wooden shoes. The Russians seemed to be treated worse than everyone else. Having less food given to them, they were desperate, and would run out and try to grab potatoes from the wagons that came into camp. I observed many being shot down by the guards and every day they removed several corpses from the Russian compound.

I volunteered for a potato digging detail, hoping to get some extra for myself, but they searched each one as they came back into camp and soon had a pile almost as big as what we had dug for the camp, so much for that. I also volunteered for a wood detail to see what chance there might be to escape. We had arrived at night, so I had not been able to see much of the surrounding countryside. Due to the miserable weather, not knowing any German, and the lay of the land, I soon gave up that notion. The guards had police dogs to track down escapees, too.

Being a prisoner of war is to know hunger. I am talking about hunger from the lack of solid food for weeks and months. It gnaws at your innards and strips the flesh from your bones. It's hunger that forces you to eat anything and everything available. Black stale bread made from sawdust, watery soup infested with worms and made from frozen garbage, rotten potatoes, turnips and rutabagas. Standing in line in freezing weather, pelted by sleet, feet numb and fingers nearly frozen. You are sick and your body racks by uncontrollable shivering and your mind is a mask of pain. Dysentery knots your stomach, adding to the misery. There is also the terrible fear of catching one of the many diseases that run rampant, throughout the camp and no medicine or strength to fight back. The fear that you might never again be free, the anger and deep depression knowing your enemy counterparts imprisoned

in the U.S.A. are well fed and clothed. Thoughts of family and home lock your mind in bottomless depression; this is perhaps the cruelest torture of all. You begin to wonder if death is very far away, but it never comes, it just teases you.

And so it goes until later in April 1945 when word races through the camp that the Russians are coming and a ray of hope appears. Soon after the German guards took off in headlong flight and we were told to stay put as the Russian Army would be there to free us the next morning. The Germans were so afraid of the Russians that they were desperate to get away. My friend in camp (who I only knew as "Georgia") and I slipped out and went into a town nearby. We went to a German house and asked for some food. There were three women and a couple of kids and they were very frightened of us. "Georgia" could speak a little German and told them what we wanted. All they had was some potatoes and a little rabbit meat frying in a pan. We felt sorry for them, so we took some cooked potatoes and left them the meat. On the way back to camp we went into a big nightclub decorated with beautiful mirrors, steins and glassware. The Germans had left everything including all kinds of uniforms and clothing, even jewelry. We didn't know if they booby-trapped things or what we might run into back at camp so we didn't take anything.

We came back to camp and spent another night and with the new day we could see that things weren't going to be much better, so we decided to strike out on our own and try to get back to the American lines as best we could. We headed out by foot and stayed all night in a small house in a small village. We were upstairs and could see a Russian soldier patrolling the neighborhood on horseback during the night.

We didn't quite trust the Russians either, as they were pretty wild – one of the reasons we left camp. They had got hold of a lot of vodka and had a big fire going and were barbecuing a big hog they had killed. There was lots of yelling and hollering and wild shooting and one could get killed accidentally or even on purpose, as we didn't know how they felt about us. They certainly didn't try to help us or feed us after they took over the camp.

The next morning we left early on foot and soon came to a small farm. We were looking for something to ride on, and discovered a horse in one of the sheds. We fashioned a bridle for his mouth and "Georgia" and I climbed on his back. He gave a couple of shivering motions and we fell off with "Georgia" landing on top of me. I thought he broke my ribs. I was so sore for a number of days. We checked the horse and found he had been

bayoneted in the muscle of one hind leg. We moved on and came upon a column of people who had been trying to escape the Russians. They had all been killed and their pitiful belongings looted and scattered over the ground. We found one man alive yet, but so badly wounded there was nothing we could do for him. I found a nice leather bag, which I filled up with some oats, some canned milk and some clean socks. About that time a Russian soldier rode up and using his bayonet yanked the bag out of my hand and dumping the contents in the road, took off with the bag.

We got out of that area as fast as we could and came to another small town by evening. We spotted a couple of bicycles, which we confiscated, and rode off to a little grove of trees where we stayed all night. The next day we continued on till we came to the Elbe River. Two German men were running a small cable type ferry. We indicated that we wanted to cross and they ferried us with the bicycles to the other side. We went into a town nearby and not seeing any German soldiers around we bravely went up to a house where two women lived. Using the little German that "Georgia" knew we got them to cook up our oats and they gave us some bread and jelly. They were very frightened of us of course. We left there and kept heading west and slept in the woods again that night. The next day we rode on till afternoon. Looking to one side we saw about a 100 Austrian soldiers in a field. We slowed down and tried very hard to act as natural as possible, all the while watching out of the corner of our eyes. They were all watching us too. It was pretty tense for us, as they had fought with the Germans and we didn't know if they would shoot or not. A little further down the road we took a left hand turn off that road. We had just got around a bend when we heard the sound of vehicles coming fast. We threw ourselves with the bicycles in the ditch and ducked down just as a number of German military vehicles filled with troops went racing by. We decided to go back to the other road, as we didn't want to go where they were going. We rode till dusk and hid out in the woods again that night.

Later the following day, as we were riding along, we were stopped by shouts from two German soldiers who were pointing rifles at us as they came running up. Again, thanks to "Georgia's" limited German, he was able to make out what they wanted. They marched us down the road pushing our bicycles about 100 yards where there were about 15 to 20 more soldiers and civilians armed with rifles. One German soldier took us on down the road to a village that had been hidden from view. I suggested to "Georgia" that we kill him and try to make a run for it, but he said no, the others might hear us or find us and kill us. When we got to the village we came to a large stone house with a stockade type fence

around it and we were taken inside where another conference was held. Finally one soldier went away and soon came back with an officer who looked straight out of a war movie. He was about 6' 5" tall in full uniform and with a monocle in his eye and very erect and military in his bearing. He questioned us for about 15 minutes and "Georgia" answered the best he could without getting us in too deep. We showed him our P.O.W. tags (which I still have) and told him we were a work detail from one of the villages. He let us go and we took off. A ways down the road we came to an oversized culvert and we got inside and spent the night there. We hit the road very early next morning and as we were riding along two shots were fired at us. Figuring we better lay low for a while we turned off from the road we were on and stopped at the first house we came to.

It turned out to belong to a Chinese man who spoke English, because he belonged to a circus. However, he didn't want any part of us, as he said if we were all caught together the Germans would kill us all. I begged and pleaded with him and he finally let us in. I told him we were starving to death and he cooked up a big dish of noodles, which was all we had, as he didn't have anything much himself. He offered us a gun, which we refused because we didn't want to get caught with one on us and he insisted that we leave.

We rode on till dusk and then ahead we saw a German soldier standing in the road. So we stopped and off to the side of the road there were two women and a baby in a baby carriage. "Georgia" said the soldier wanted to turn himself in to the Americans. He said he had a place for us to stay the night. We went to a small two-room camp in the woods, with no electricity. Inside, were two more men in civilian clothes, but with German Army boots on their feet. We figured they were deserters, so I told "Georgia" I didn't want to stay there, and he told them we would go on down the road and look for some kind of vehicle and come back and get them. We rode out of there and a few hours later we ran into an American patrol who questioned us thoroughly and then gave us something to eat. We were sent to a German house to spend the night and told to report back next morning. I didn't want to monkey around there, so we started walking and hitchhiking and finally caught a convoy, which took us about 100 miles behind the lines and to safety.

We fell in with another army unit who had other P.O.W.'s. They got more information from us and then sent us to a large wooden building where we had to sleep in the straw and were given C rations three times a day.

I told "Georgia" we could do better than that, so we started looking around. We found a place marked "off limits" but we broke in anyway. It had everything, hot water, electricity, stoves and beds all ready. We had C rations at first, but I said we could do better so we went to a couple of different army units and talked to some mess sergeants who gave us supplies, which we took back to the building and cooked ourselves. One nice thing about being a cook!

We had been watching a chicken yard up the hill for a few days and thought how good a baked chicken would taste. So one day I climbed the hill and went over the fence and grabbed a chicken. The German lady came out and yelled and cussed at me, but I took the chicken back and fixed and baked it, and nothing tasted any better to us, and no regrets either!

We spent about two weeks there and then I became ill and went on sick call, and they put me in the hospital in Germany. Later they put me on a C-47, and flew me back to England to a hospital, and so I lost track of "Georgia". I was in England about a month, and then on a hospital ship back to the States. Back home, the resort of White Sulphur Springs had been turned into a recuperation hospital for returning veterans and so I went there. A big surprise was to find my brother Mondell. I had not seen him since 1940. He had been a prisoner of war of the Japanese, having survived the Bataan Death March, a boat sinking, and work in the coalmines of Japan. What a reunion!

I was discharged about 10 months after my hospitalization in Germany. It was great to be home again, to see my family and a son born while I was away, but there is a down side to coming home too. There is the frustration of trying to cope and fit into a society that at times seems foreign and unable to relate to your experiences. It is resentment you feel for those who have never seen or felt what you have. It is recurring nightmares that will plague you for the rest of your days. It is the nagging question-what what it all for? What good did it do? Who cares? Perhaps there was a purpose, but I wonder...

My experiences were not unique for a P.O.W. This is just my own individual story. There were a number of others from this area (Adams, NY), each with their own story. Those that I am most familiar with were the late Barrett Hayes, Donald McIntosh and John Kellogg. I'm sure their ordeals shortened their lives. They were all good men...

"Any P.O.W. alive today is a survivor. I, and the other prisoners made it by refusing to give up. I did what I had to do to survive and come home alive..." Rishel White

Rishel White received the distinguished P.O.W. medal for being a German Prisoner in World War II. He also received the Bronze Star, the conspicuous service cross from New York State, and several other medals. He retired after 25 years as a civilian employee at Fort Drum, New York and lives with his wife Shirley, this year of 2003 being their 60th anniversary together, in Adams, New York, USA. White has two sons & three grandchildren.



October 08, 2005 - [Adams native makes movie on grandfather's life at home, war](#)

Matthew A. White's grandfather inspires him. And he believes that with the release of his documentary "Coming Home Alive," others will be inspired too.

Adams resident Rishel White was captured twice in two days in World War II by German troops during the 1944 Battle of the Bulge, which took place in the Ardennes forest on the borders of France and Germany.

Matthew White calls his grandfather's story a journey of life, family and war.

"It's a documentary that doesn't just capture the war experience," said Matthew White, 24, a 1999 graduate of South Jefferson Central School, Adams, who resides in Syracuse. He and his father, R. David White, operate 4th Coast Productions based at Sackets Harbor. They both work for News 10 Now. Matthew White is based in Syracuse and his father works out of the station's Watertown bureau.

"Coming Home Alive" is the company's first feature-length film.

"This is my baby," said Matthew White.

The approximately 11/2-hour film will premiere at 2:30 p.m. Sunday at the Palace Theatre, 2384 James St., Syracuse.

Rishel White joined the Army in 1941 and was a member of the [106th Infantry Division \(the "Golden Lions"\)](#). He was first captured Dec. 16, 1944. After an artillery barrage by German troops in a village near the Belgium-Germany border, he and fellow soldiers boarded a halftrack vehicle.

"They drove right into a village loaded with German troops," said Matthew White.

The halftrack was hit by an antitank round and its driver was killed. Rishel White lost consciousness, and when he came to he was being ordered around by German troops, Matthew White said.

The captured troops were put on vehicles by the Germans. Those vehicles were stopped by Americans and Rishel White was freed. But the next day, as the American unit retreated, it was ambushed by Germans. Following a firefight, the Americans dropped their weapons and were captured.

Matthew White said his grandfather and others underwent a two-week forced march to [Stalag 4B](#), near Dresden, Germany.

Rishel White spent four months as a prisoner of war. As the German guards fled in April 1945 in advance of oncoming Russian troops, he and others walked away. Matthew White said they went to a nearby town, acquired bicycles and made their way back to American lines.

"It makes people think of their own families," Matthew White said about the film. "People find the personal connection to it. They can relate that maybe it's their father or grandfather."

Rishel White retired in 1984 after 26 years as a civilian employee at Fort Drum.

"Being in combat, seeing your fellow soldiers being killed, knowing what starvation is like as a prisoner of war, makes you appreciate the more domestic things in life, like having a family, a job and the freedom of doing what you want," Rishel White said.

Rishel White grew up in a coal mining town in West Virginia in a very poor family. "That helped him when he was a prisoner," Matthew White said. "He didn't give up. You just keep pushing. You just keep going."

In 2000, 4th Coast productions created "The Quest of Carmen D'Avino," which documented the filmmaker's career. He was a pioneer in animated short films and was nominated for two Academy Awards. Several of his animated short films appeared on PBS's "Sesame Street" and "The Electric Company" in the 1970s. He also did work for "20/20" on ABC. He moved from New York City to Hammond in 1990. He died in 2004.

"The Quest" premiered at the New York Independent Film Festival in New York City and in Los Angeles and is distributed by the Cinema Guild of New York City.

"Coming Home Alive" is distributed by 4th Coast Productions.

"We're trying to get right to the networks," Matthew White said. He said he has developed some connections at HBO and Showtime networks.

"It is possible," Matthew White said. "It's just a matter of making some connections."

The Sunday premiere, he said, is a way to spread the word about the documentary, and the admission charge of \$5 will cover the cost of renting the theater. Chris Brock, Watertown Daily Times (subscription) - Watertown, NY, USA



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James D. West

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