L.Martin Jones

423/G

Stalag 9-B

Infantry Platoon Leader

My Experiences in World War II

L. Martin Jones

This account of my experiences in World War II is dedicated to my nine-year old twin granddaughters. One day they may read this account and better understand the horrors of war and the part their grandfather played in World War II.

Kyra L. Jones

Isla F. Jones

Lawrence, Kansas June, 2003

L. Martin Jones Three Years at the University of Kansas

I was seventeen years old when I graduated from Osage City, Kansas, High School in May of 1940 and enrolled at the University of Kansas (KU) in September. The war in Europe had been raging for a year, since German armies invaded Poland on September 1, 1939. There was much sentiment against going to war in Europe, and President Franklin D. Roosevelt had said he would never send American boys to fight on foreign soil. Nevertheless, my parents and I anticipated we would ultimately get involved in the conflict; therefore, I enrolled in the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) at KU. Hoping to avoid serving in the army infantry, I chose to enroll in the Anti-Aircraft Artillery (M) division of the Coast Artillery.

My ROTC class of fourteen men received excellent instruction in AA from Captain Baker for three years. At the beginning of our third year, we were given an ultimatum: either enlist, in which case we would be allowed to finish our junior year of college before being called to active duty, or be drafted immediately. My classmates and I enlisted on October 9, 1942, when I was nineteen.

Basic Training in Anti-Aircraft Artillery at Camp Wallace. Texas

At the end of our junior year of college in May of 1943, when I was twenty, the fourteen men in my ROTC class were called to active duty. We were processed through Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas, where our group scored so high on army exams, we were accused of cheating. We were sent by train to Camp Wallace, Texas, for basic training in Anti-Aircraft Artillery.

Camp Wallace was located between Galveston and Houston and constructed on a base of seashells that had been dredged from Galveston Bay. The summer was so hot and humid we did most of our hiking at night. We traveled by truck to the northern tip of Galveston Island to practice firing our 90-mm AA guns at sleeves (targets) pulled on cables trailing behind airplanes from nearby Ellington Field. One day our gunfire cut a cable a few feet behind an airplane, and the Air Force refused to pull targets for several days. After we dug in our guns on the sand beach of the island, we had difficulty keeping them from sinking into the very wet sand.

One day while I was on guard duty at Camp Wallace, a devastating hurricane struck the Texas coast at Galveston and roared inland past Houston. I had great difficulty walking against the 130-mile an hour winds, which were full of sand and debris. Because the camp was only a few inches above sea level, the buildings had been constructed on pilings about fifteen inches above the ground. After the violent storm dumped several inches of rain in a few hours, the camp was flooded with seven or eight inches of water, but the buildings were above the water.

We trainees were three miles from camp on our 25-mile overnight hike when the camp commander approached in his jeep and asked where our gas masks were. Our orders were to carry gas masks, but our battalion commander had directed us to leave them in camp. The camp commander directed us to go back to camp, get our gas masks, and begin our hike again. Our 25-mile hike was 31 miles long.

Awaiting Vacancies at Anti-Aircraft (AA) Officer Candidate School

After completing basic training I was sent with our group to Grinnell College in Iowa to await reassignment. In October we were sent to KU to await vacancies at AA Officer Candidate School in North Carolina.

For about three months at KU our group of fourteen men lived in the former Sigma Chi fraternity house on Tennessee Street and ate our meals in newly-completed Lindley Hall on campus. The fraternity, like most men's living places,

had closed temporarily because there were not enough men at KU to justify keeping it open. When completed, Lindley Hall was first used by the army and navy training units on campus.

We enrolled at KU after the fall semester started, and we were pulled out of school in mid January before the semester ended. We received partial credit for the courses in which we were enrolled. While on campus in the fall of 1943 we were veteran college students at a university where we knew our ways around. We thought we were BMOC (big men on campus).

Infantry Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning. Georgia

In mid January of 1944 I was promoted to Corporal and sent with our group of KU men to Fort Benning, Georgia, to Infantry Officer Candidate School (OCS). My hopes to avoid serving in the army infantry were shattered. Because my training to this time had been in Anti-Aircraft Artillery, when I arrived at Ft. Benning I had not seen a Browning Automatic Rifle or a mortar, two basic weapons of the infantry. Immediately after arriving at Ft. Benning, I visited on two occasions with my younger brother, Harold, who had completed basic training there and was being transferred.

The instruction and training I received at Ft. Benning were excellent. Instructors were knowledgeable and outstanding speakers. Some demonstrations and combat problems in which we engaged were impressive. My Tactical Officer, Lt. Huntsman, once told me to go into the woods at night and practice giving commands, as I had to become more vocal and aggressive in giving them. When I went into the woods to practice, I joined other officer candidates who were barking commands in the total darkness. I barely qualified as a marksman with the Garand M-1 rifle, but I scored high on a course where we ran along and shot from the hip as targets appeared unexpectedly along the course. I received high marks for a combat exercise in which I played the part of an infantry company commander.

After five months of training in the infantry, including leadership and tactics, we were commissioned Second Lieutenants on June 20, 1944, and assigned to various infantry units. Our group of men from the ROTC program at KU completed basic training and Infantry Officer Candidate School together. The general who spoke at our graduation and commissioning ceremony, impressing us with how serious our army jobs would be, said, 'In six months you will be overseas and in combat." In six months, with one day to spare, I was overseas, in combat, and a prisoner of war.

My Service With The 106th Infantry Division

After a brief visit at home in Osage City, I joined the 423rd Regiment of the 106th Infantry Division at Camp Atterbury, Indiana. I was twenty-one years old and a brand new Second Lieutenant. I was an infantry platoon leader in Company G, Second Battalion, where my platoon sergeant, John Parchinsky, had completed sixteen years of military service. When I joined the 106th Infantry Division, I had the least amount of infantry training of the forty men in my platoon, yet I was their leader. The division, which had completed Tennessee maneuvers while I was at Fort Benning, had been declared "combat ready." Of the six commissioned officers in Company G, two reported to the division at Camp Atterbury after I did.

In August the division suffered a severe blow. Most of the well-trained men who had been on maneuvers were shipped overseas as replacements in various infantry units. The five excellent sergeants, non-commissioned officers, in my platoon remained, but some 30-32 well-trained men were gone. From late August to late September we received replacements, most of whom had no training in the infantry. Many came from colleges where they had been in Advanced Student Training Programs. Suddenly I became one of the men with the most infantry training in my platoon. The sergeants in my platoon, Lee Darby, John Parchinsky, Jesse Bishop, Ivon York, and Billy Moore, were the

strength of our platoon, and I depended on them, probably more than I should have, but they were the only ones with any significant amount of infantry training.

With very young, inadequately-trained men whom I hardly knew, we left Camp Atterbury on October 9 and traveled by train to Camp Miles Standish near Boston. On October 13 I made a visit to Boston. Another train ride on October 16 took us to New York City. We boarded the Queen Elizabeth at Pier 88 in the Hudson River shortly after midnight on October 17 and sailed from New York City at 7:00 am, passing Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty as we sailed through the harbor to the Atlantic Ocean.

The Queen Elizabeth had been camouflaged by painting the exterior several shades of gray and white, but the interior was beautiful, as the ship was constructed as a luxury cruise liner. Like the other officers, I ate meals in the captain's large dining room. Almost 16,000 soldiers were on board for this voyage. Half the men were below decks and half on the several exterior decks for twelve hours. Then a

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complicated shift was made as the men traded places for the next twelve hours. The men below decks ate two meals during the twelve-hour period. Because the Queen Elizabeth was one of the fastest ships afloat, capable of doing 24 knots, we sailed a zigzag course without escort. To my knowledge we did not see another ship during the five-day crossing. My first ocean voyage was uneventful.

On October 22 we sailed into the Firth of Clyde and docked at Greenock, several miles west of Glasgow, Scotland. On October 24 we disembarked and boarded a train at Greenock. About 3:00 am on October 25 we arrived at Toddington Station in the Cotswolds (Sheep Hills) ten miles northeast of Cheltenham, England, where we bivouacked on the vast grounds of Toddington Manor until December 1.

While at Toddington Manor we conducted some training, did some hiking, fired our rifles once at a range, and I taught classes. I received a four-day pass and went to London where I visited St. Paul's Cathedral, Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum, Westminster Abbey, the Tower of London, Piccadilly Circus, and Trafalgar Square. I saw Buckingham Palace, Houses of Parliament, Tower Bridge, and other sights.

When I returned to camp from a training exercise on November 28, I was surprised to receive a message at company headquarters to call my older brother, Warren, who was in Cheltenham. His artillery outfit, attached to the 75th Infantry Division, had just arrived in England. On his way to the port where the division's equipment had arrived, he called the Red Cross to learn where I was stationed. He took a train to Cheltenham and called me. I checked out a Jeep from our motor pool and drove to Cheltenham where Warren was waiting in a pub. He accompanied me back to camp and stayed overnight. We had a wonderful visit, just as Harold and I had at Fort Benning ten months earlier. Warren had to leave the next morning.

On December 1 my outfit traveled by train from Toddinton Station to Southhampton and boarded a ship. On December 2, my 22 birthday, we crossed the English Channel and dropped anchor in the harbor at LeHavre, France. The next day we boarded landing craft and went ashore, marched inland nine miles in the rain, and pitched our tents in a muddy field at Camp J-56. Rain fell most of the five days we were in this cold and muddy camp.

On December 8 we moved by truck through Amiens, Cambrai, and Valenciennes, France, and into Belgium. The next day, as much snow fell, we continued the trip through Dinant and Marche to some woods near St. Vith, Belgium. We had to clear six inches of snow before we could pitch our tents on frozen ground. After I assigned areas to my sergeant squad leaders, I pitched my tent and returned to see how my men were doing. I found four sergeants

somehow huddled in one tent with a bottle of brandy they had liberated." This was my introduction to the term liberated," a word I found useful on many occasions later. Possibly to keep me from reprimanding them, they offered me a taste of the brandy. I took a swig and returned to my tent for the cold night. St. Vith, an important crossroads town, was

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our division headquarters. Located in the Ardennes Forest, it was about ten miles behind the front lines, which ran along the German-Belgium border.

On December 10 the 106th Infantry Division, favored by snow and a low ceiling, moved to the front and relieved the 2nd Infantry Division, taking over their positions foxhole by foxhole. The 2nd Battalion of the 423rd Infantry, including Company G, was assigned to division reserve in Born and Medell, Belgium. Like the 28th American Infantry Division to the south of us, the 106th Division had approximately twenty-three miles of front to defend, almost five times the amount an infantry division should be expected to defend. For this reason the division had only one battalion, instead of the recommended three, in reserve.

My platoon was assigned to Born, Belgium, a village four miles north of St. Vith. My squad leaders and I assigned our men to homes in the village. The company mess hall and a make-shift shower facility were set up in a schoolhouse. A fellow company officer, Lt. Earl W. Browne, and I occupied a cold, unheated bedroom on the second floor of the Theissen home. However, we kept warm at night under several layers of blankets. Browne and I had access to a comfortable sitting room on the first floor of the Theissen home, but we did not have much time to use it. On several occasions, however, we used it to visit with twenty-six year old Johanna, who spoke no English. Johanna, her mother, and her brother occupied the home. I did not see another brother, who was AWOL from the German army and hiding in the woods earlier in the war. The family had operated a sawmill in the lower level of the home by diverting water from a nearby stream to provide power. They had turned the sawmill over to a platoon of U.S. engineers to prepare and stockpile timbers for future bridge-building activities when the Allied advance resumed.

From December 11 through December 15 we heard much talk about an impending attack from the German army. But American intelligence assured us there would be no attack because, they emphasized, the German army was incapable of mounting a serious attack. American intelligence officers in Paris refused to accept several reports that the Germans were amassing thousands of men and hundreds of tanks opposite our positions. These officers attributed the reports to exaggerations of "inexperienced troops.' On December 15 I took a shower and put on a new pair of combat boots. Though I did not know it, I ate the last good meal I would have for about six months. I slept soundly under several blankets.

The Battle of the Bulge. Please refer to maps on pages 8 and 9.

Following the June 6, 1944, invasion of France, after Allied troops broke out of Normandy and advanced across France and Belgium, Allied supply lines stretched longer and longer. In September frontline troops could no longer be supplied adequately by trucks of the "Red Ball Express' speeding from French ports to the front lines, and the advance came to a halt. Heavy fighting took place in several areas, but the front lines remained substantially unchanged until mid December.

At Hitler's direction Germany planned an attack along the German border with Luxembourg and Belgium and an advance to the North Sea to cut off British troops in Holland from their source of supplies, hoping this would divide the Allies and force them to surrender. Germany quietly amassed armored divisions and infantry divisions in preparation for attacking the weak point along the Allied defense line.

Top Allied generals, including Supreme Commander Eisenhower, made numerous mistakes which made possible the initial success of the German attack. The largest blunder was holding the strong conviction that Germany did not have enough men, tanks, and gasoline to mount a major attack. In the fall Eisenhower had made a bet the war would be over before Christmas. Eisenhower and his staff believed that even if Germany launched an attack, it would not come in the Ardennes area of Belgium because, the generals insisted, there were no major objectives in the area. But they forgot their history lessons. In both World War I and May, 1940, in World War II Germany's invading forces made their initial attacks in the Ardennes.

This egregious miscalculation of German strength and potential led U.S. generals to make other mistakes. The 28th Division had suffered heavy casualties in fierce fighting in the Hurtgen Forest in November, and men of the 106th Division were inadequately trained and experiencing our first combat. Consequently, the Ardennes front was defended by a badly-weakened division and a division with no combat experience. The two divisions were spread too thin along almost fifty miles of the front. In addition, all reserves were removed from behind the frontline troops, leaving only the pitifully thin line of defense stretched along the German border.

Allied intelligence officers ignored several reports, from both civilians and frontline soldiers, that Germany was amassing hundreds of tanks and thousands of men opposite the 28th and 106th Infantry positions in the Ardennes area. Furthermore, Allied intelligence had lost track of a German armored division, believing the division was near Berlin, when, in fact, it was part of the 420,000 men and 1,200 tanks poised to attack the front held by approximately 65,000 American infantrymen who had little tank support. Because the Allied Air Force was grounded in England by bad weather, the overwhelmed infantrymen had no air support in the first crucial week of the battle. For some unexplained reason, men of the 106th Infantry Division had not been issued winter clothing.

The German attack, began with a forty-five minute artillery barrage at 5:30 in the morning of December 16. Several hours later when frontline troops reported German advances at several points, Allied generals, still convinced that Germany did not have enough strength to make a major attack, and believing that no attack would come in the Ardennes Forest in any case, described the attack as a "mere skirmish," and they took no immediate action. Not until the second day of the battle, after the 422nd and 423rd regiments of the 106th Division had been surrounded while holding their positions, as ordered, did Allied generals commit more troops to the battle in an attempt to slow the German advance. But this was too late for men of

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the two beleaguered regiments on the Schnee Eifel (Snowy Mountains).

On December 16, the first day of the battle, we went by truck through St. Vith and Schonberg to near Andler. That evening Captain Murray ordered me to take my platoon across the ice-cold Our River and try to make contact with an outpost of the 14th Cavalry Division. I led my men across the waist-deep stream, made contact with a squad of 14th

Cavalry Division men, and began to dig in, as ordered. In the middle of the night I received orders to recross the Our River and rejoin the battalion which was moving to near Auw in an attempt to help stem the tide of German tanks and men moving rapidly west toward the road junction at Schonberg.

At daybreak on December 17 a German artillery barrage destroyed our ammunition truck, the only two American tanks I saw during the battle, and several of our bazookas (antitank weapons). The junction of German forces at Schonberg before noon on December 17 had surrounded the 422nd and 423rd Regiments of the 106th Division and cut off our escape route. On December 18 the 2nd Battalion rejoined the regiment near Radscheid and fought an unsuccessful battle trying to stem the tide of German forces moving north on the Bleialf-Schonberg road.

Early in the battle the commanders of the two regiments were told to hold their positions at all costs, and they were told that ammunition, medical supplies, food, and water would be supplied by air. However, because of bad weather, the Air Force was grounded in England and the promised supply drops were not made.

On December 18, after many of the soldiers of the two regiments had exhausted the meager supply of ammunition they had carried into battle, the commanders of the surrounded regiments received the following orders:

"Attack Schonberg, do maximum damage to enemy there; then attack toward St. Vith. This mission is of gravest importance to the nation. Good luck."

The regimental commanders were told the U.S. 7th Armored Division would move through St. Vith and meet us at Schonberg. However, German control of the roads around Schonberg was so complete that neither the infantry regiments nor the 7th Armored Division reached the rendezvous.

The December 18 order required the surrounded soldiers, most of whom had no ammunition, to attack back to the northwest toward Schonberg. However, without ammunition, we could attack nothing. We tried to sneak out of entrapment under cover of darkness during the night of December 18-19. We crossed the Ihrenbruck stream and reached a point just east of Hill 504. We were almost in sight of Schonberg when daylight came and a heavy German artillery barrage inflicted more casualties and halted our attempt to reach this road junction. Throughout the day of December 19 we were the target of several German artillery and mortar barrages.

At mid afternoon of December 19 the two regimental commanders discussed the

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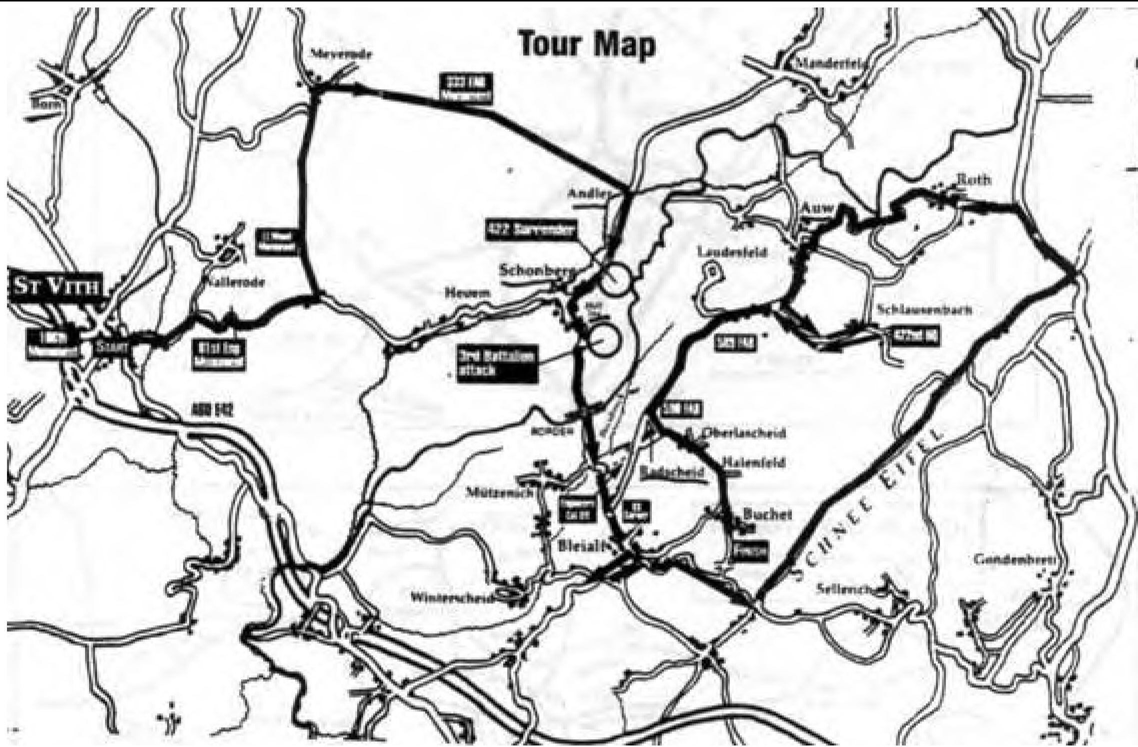
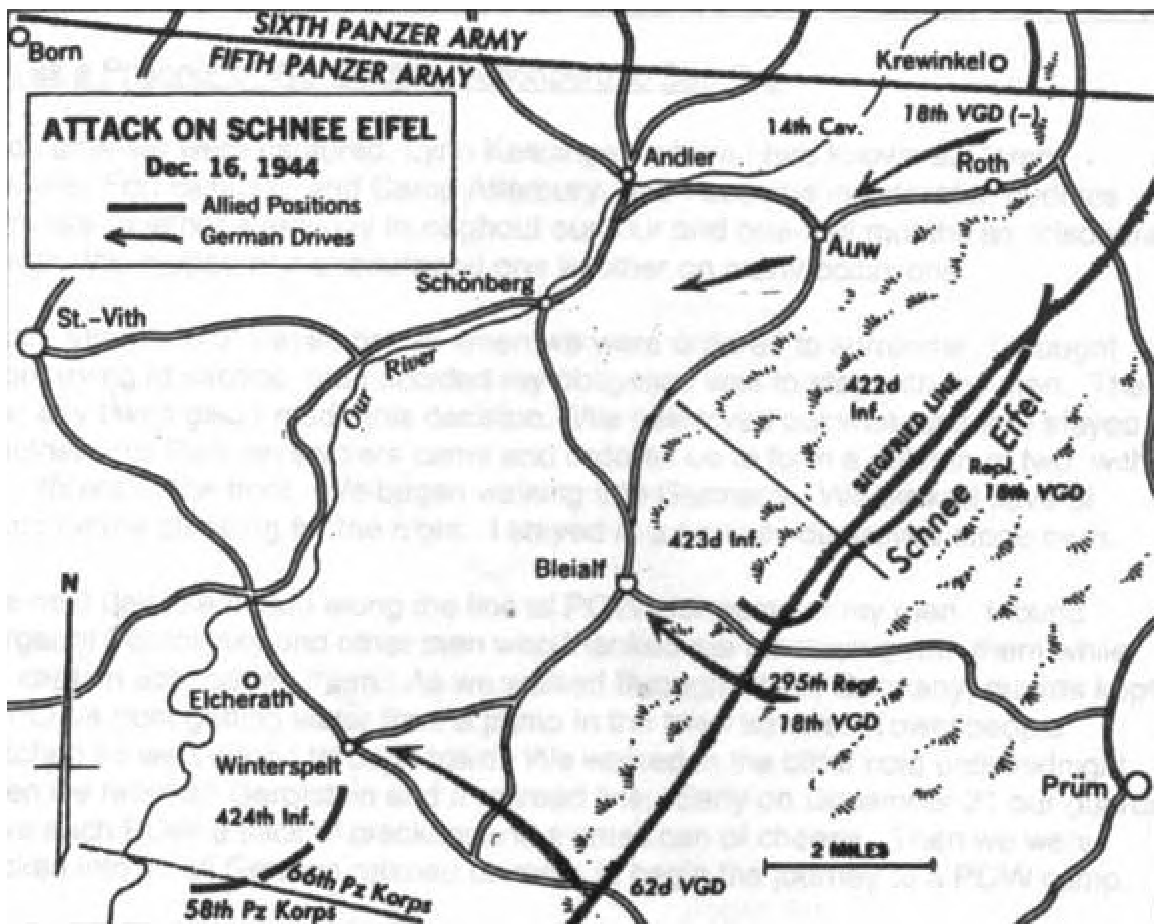
crisis. After failing to reach Schonberg, suffering some casualties, and being reluctant to suffer more casualties in a hopeless cause, they ordered the surrender of the soldiers who remained. Colonel Cavender of the 423rd Regiment said, in effect, "We have ceased to be an effective fighting unit. Most of our men have no ammunition, and I cannot sacrifice more men in a hopeless cause. We will surrender at 4:00. Order your men to destroy their weapons and remain in place." Almost 7,000 men of the 106th Division became prisoners of war on that fateful day.



Note the location of Born (upper left), St. Vith (left center), Schonberg (center), Andler (north of Schonberg), Auw (east of Andler), Radscheid (southwest of Auw), Bleialf (south of Radscheid), and Hill 504 (south of Schonberg). Auw, Radscheid, and Bleialf are in Germany.



SIXTH PANZER ARMY
FIFTH PANZER ARMY
Born
Krewinkel
ATTACK ON SCHNEE EIFEL
Dec. 16, 1944
Allied Positions
German Drives
14th Cav.
18th VGD (–)
Andler
Roth
Auw
Schönberg
St.-Vith
Our River
422d Inf.
Siegfried Line
Schnee Eifel
Repl. 18th VGD
423d Inf.
Bleialf
N
295th Regt.
18th VGD
Elcherath
Winterspelt
Prüm
424th Inf.
2 MILES
62d VGD
66th Pz Korps
58th Pz Korps

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Life as a Prisoner of War (POW). Schonberg to Bad Orb

Soon after we were captured, Lynn Kessinger, whom I had known at Camp Wallace, Fort Benning, and Camp Atterbury, and I become inseparable buddies. We were together every day throughout our four and one-half months as prisoners of war. We helped and encouraged one another on many occasions.

In late afternoon of December 19 when we were ordered to surrender, I thought about trying to escape, but I decided my obligation was to stay with my men. The next day I was glad I made this decision. We destroyed our weapons and stayed together until German soldiers came and ordered us to form a column of two, with the officers at the front. We began walking into Germany. We walked several hours before stopping for the night. I stayed in a partially destroyed stone barn.

The next day I searched along the line of POWs for some of my men. I found Sergeant Parchinsky and other men who thanked me for staying with them while the captain abandoned them. As we walked through Prum, Germany, guards kept us POWs from getting water from a pump in the town square. Townspeople watched as we trudged through town. We walked in the bitter cold until midnight when we reached Gerolstein and a railroad line. Early on December 21 our guards gave each POW a sack of crackers and a small can of cheese. Then we were packed into small German railroad boxcars to begin the journey to a POW camp.

We were locked in the boxcars without food or water for four days and nights in extremely cold weather. The train moved east to the Moselle River, down the meandering valley beside the river, and crossed the Rhine River just south

of Koblenz. Traveling another thirty miles, the train arrived in the large railroad yards at Diez, a suburb of Limburg-on-the-Lawn, in the late afternoon of December 23.

Because the weather was bad for a week, we had not received the promised airdrop of ammunition, medical supplies, food, and water when we were surrounded. However, during the night of December 22-23, the skies cleared, and the Allied Air Forces resumed bombing Germany with a vengeance.

Unfortunately for hundreds of American POWs locked in boxcars in the railroad yards at Diez and other POWs housed in a building near the railroad yards, the British Royal Air Force (RAF) bombed the rail yards a short time after the POW train arrived. The boxcar in which I was huddled with perhaps fifty cold, dirty, hungry, and discouraged POWs bounced on the tracks, but it remained upright. The door was blown off, but no one was injured. The scene in the railroad yards was one of mass confusion, as German guards ran about screaming orders. Some POWs who escaped from the boxcars were shot by guards or killed by "friendly" RAF bombs. Many of the men in a boxcar that took a direct hit were killed. More than eighty American POWs who were housed in the building next to the railroad tracks were killed. These men had been used to repair the tracks after Allied bombing raids.

During this air raid, while locked in a boxcar and exposed to the falling bombs, I suffered the most helpless feeling I experienced during my time as a POW.

An RAF after-the-battle report states that fifty-two Lancaster bombers took part in the Diez raid and dropped, among other bombs, twenty-five 2 1/2-ton bombs. A German newspaper dated Christmas Day reported that 142 German civilians were killed and 161 German homes were destroyed in this December 23 air raid.

Our POW train remained in the Diez railroad yards on December 24 while work crews repaired two tracks, one for east-bound traffic and one for west-bound traffic.

On Christmas morning our guards allowed us to leave the boxcars to relieve ourselves while German people watched from a distance of twenty-five yards. This was the first time we were out of the filthy boxcars in four days. As we were being packed again in boxcars, we received one British Red Cross food box for each group of six POWs. My group drew straws to determine the order in which we would select items from the box, which contained powdered milk, a small piece of cheese, a tin of canned meat, a small pack of cigarettes, a hard chocolate bar, a box of hard biscuits, a can of cocoa, and more.

Life as a Prisoner of War at Stalag IX-B, Bad Orb

On Christmas Day we were again locked in the boxcars, this time for three days and nights, arriving in Bad Orb, Germany, on December 28. We walked from the railroad station to Stalag IX-B, a badly overcrowded camp with no conveniences. The Germans were unprepared to care for the thousands of men in this camp. I was in an unheated room with dozens of men. There was only one toilet in the room and, because it did not operate properly, the floor around it was flooded most of the time. We had to assemble outside each day for the guards to conduct a count of POWs. Unfortunately, they could never get the count right, so we POWs stood outside in bitter cold for hours while the guards took turns counting.

My feet were badly frostbitten by the time I reached Bad Orb. The problem undoubtedly started on December 16 when I waded across the ice-cold Our River twice and had no opportunity to dry or warm my feet. Medical doctors

(POWs) told me to keep my feet as warm as possible. I sat cross-legged on my wooden bunk trying to get my feet warm.

We had to take our steel helmets to a central kitchen to get our daily food ration, which usually consisted of a slice of bread, about the size of two normal slices of bread, and a small bowl of "green homer soup. We POWs called the soup "green homer because it was a dark green color and it raced through our digestive systems in a short time. The very thin soup was made of dehydrated vegetables that had gotten wormy. At first we were a little concerned about the small white worms in the soup, but later we hardly noticed them, commenting that we were

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getting some protein in our diet. According to an official German Food Ministry directive, the black bread, which was heavy and coarse, was made of 50% bruised (pulverized) rye grain, 20% sliced sugar beets, 20% tree flour (sawdust), and 10% minced leaves and straw. On several occasions Kessinger took my helmet and obtained my food ration for me, while I tried unsuccessfully to get my feet warm.

Life as a Prisoner of War at Oflag XIII-B, Hammelburq

On January 10, after thirteen cold, miserable days at Bad Orb, the commissioned officers were packed in boxcars again for an overnight train ride to Hammelburg, Germany. As we walked several miles from the railroad station up a long hill, I felt as if I were walking on stilts, as I had no feeling in my feet. Even when I stomped on one foot with the other, I felt nothing. I was concerned about my frostbitten feet and the possibility they might have to be amputated if gangrene set in. Just beyond the crest of the hill, we entered Oflag XIII-B (Offizier Lager, Officer Camp) in which some 4,300 Serbs and Yugoslays had been imprisoned for more than four years. I was in the first group of American POWs to arrive at this camp on January 11.

Conditions at Oflag XIII-B were somewhat better than at Bad Orb. I was in a room with fifty men. We had double-deck wooden bunk beds with very thin straw mattresses and one-half a blanket for each man. Our daily food ration was the same as we had at Bad Orb, except that the soup occasionally had potato peelings and marble-sized potatoes in it, and two or three times we had a thick barley soup. Our black bread came from Wurzburg, some twenty-five miles to the southeast. Many days we had no bread because, our guards told us, "Nichts brot; Wurzburg boom, boom," to inform us that Wurzburg and the bakery had been bombed by Allied airmen. Because the ersatz (substitute) coffee we received was hot, or could be heated, we frequently used it for shaving.

We had to walk about two blocks to our latrine, but we could not go to the latrine while an air raid alert was in effect. We had a small metal stove in the middle of the room, and we received 7-8 small charcoal brickettes each day to provide heat. We debated whether it was better to burn all brickettes at one time, in which case the stove got warm for a few minutes, or bum them one at a time, in which case the stove never put out any heat, as what little heat the stove generated was absorbed by the stove itself. Because Kessinger was able to coax more heat from the stove than others, he was assigned to manage our stove as he saw fit.

We POWs had several major concerns. Fear of being shot by guards was a constant worry. On January 21 Lt. George Varium (Vaream) was killed by a guard during an air raid alert. On March 21, as Lt. Charles L. Weeks was returning to our barracks from the latrine, I saw a guard shoot him in the back and kill him, apparently because Weeks was not moving fast enough to get inside our room when the air raid siren sounded. We POWs protested to the camp commandant,

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but nothing was done about these killings. Every few days the Serbs on the burial detail told us they had buried one of the American POWs who had died from injuries, illness or possibly starvation.

Losing our freedom to come and go as we pleased was a terrible shock to us. We could go outdoors only when guards told us we could go, and we had to return to our barracks when they told us to return. We ate our meager daily ration of soup, bread, and coffee when it was brought to our barracks. Under threat of being shot, we lined up outdoors to be counted whenever we were told to do so, which was not often at Oflag XIII-B. We were forbidden to visit the compound in which the Serbs and Yugoslays were imprisoned, though we occasionally cut the barbed wire fences separating the compounds and sneaked into their compound under cover of darkness. It is true that until a person has his freedoms taken from him, he does not truly value the many freedoms we normally take for granted.

Boredom was another problem. POWs did various things to keep busy. Because we were always hungry, food was by far the most popular topic of discussion. Many men talked about nothing but their favorite foods, the foods they wanted to eat for their first meals after getting back home, and the best places to eat in different parts of the United States. New Yorkers, for example, said Lindy's served the best cheesecake in the country. Like many POWs, Kessinger made lists of the best places to eat in different U.S. cities. I participated in a Bible study group conducted by one of our POW chaplains and did some walking in the compound.

Most POWs lost 30-50 pounds and became very weak during the first two or three months of captivity. Though some men worried about living until we were liberated, I never worried much about this until later when an incident occurred on March 27-28. Some men who were injured or sick understandably worried about living until we were liberated, and, in fact, some men died in prison camp of injuries or illness. The Serbs operated a poorly-equipped and poorly-staffed hospital in the camp, but POWs who were badly injured or became seriously ill frequently died.

While I was a POW I had no tub baths and only one shower. Once at Hammelburg the German guards led us to a small room with one shower head in the center of the room. They packed the room with naked POWs, turned on the water one minute for us to get wet, turned off the water for one minute as we soaped up, and turned on the water for a minute for us to rinse. When we removed our clothing to shower, I was shocked that other men were very thin. I realized that I looked the same as they did, with bones protruding everywhere. In the room in which we removed our clothing there was a scale graduated in British stones. I weighed 81A stones, or approximately 120 pounds, down from the 155 pounds I weighed when the Battle of the Bulge started. Most men lost more weight than I did.

Having been bombed by the Royal Air Force while locked in a boxcar at Diez (Limburg) on December 23, we feared the Allied air forces might again bomb us by

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mistake in the prison camp. We always feared that we might be caught in no-man's-land when the Allied armies reached us and liberated us. We learned that Hitler had given an order late in the war to kill all POWs rather than let them be liberated, but the order was not carried out.

When we arrived at Hammelburg on January 11, the weather was very cold, so I spent most of the time in my barracks trying to keep my feet warm. As temperatures moderated in March, I went outdoors for walks in the compound, always making sure I ran back to my barracks, as ordered, when the camp air raid siren sounded.

On two occasions a guard brought to our room one toothbrush for fifty men. I was the lucky winner of the second toothbrush, which I used until I returned to the United States. Perhaps this explains why I had fewer problems with teeth after the war than many former POWs.

Shortly after we arrived at Hammelburg, Kessinger and I visited with Serb and Yugoslav POWs across an open area of about ten yards between the two barbed wire fences, with manned guard towers spaced along the fences. We could not speak their language and they could not speak English, but we managed to communicate. They were pleased to learn that Allied armies had reached the western German border and that we thought the war would not last much longer. Frequently we saw Allied planes in the sky above us. Two Serbs with whom Kessinger and I visited invited us to their barracks for a party. They had saved supplies from Red Cross food parcels and food parcels they had received from home in earlier years. They said they would make a cake for the party.

On the night of the party, Kessinger and I took a great risk and sneaked through holes in both barbed wire fences. Our new friends met us and led us to their barracks, which was filled with Serb and Yugoslav POWs. We ate the cake, which was more like pudding than cake, but it tasted very good. While we were partying, two German guards entered the room. Kessinger and I knelt down back of a group of our new friends. One guard took several steps forward as he looked carefully around the room. Then he turned and walked out with his comrade. Two or three hours later Kessinger and I sneaked back through the two fences and the open space between them to our barracks.

U.S. prisoners slipped through the fences to the other compound quite frequently. Many mornings our guards were angry because someone had cut holes in their barbed wire fences. Our guards repaired the fences frequently.

Liberation. Recapture and Walking Across Bavaria in the Spring Time

About 4:15 in the afternoon of March 27 we heard small arms fire and saw red streaks left by tracer bullets outside our windows. A U.S. tank force attacked Oflag XIII-B and drove off the guards. When the tanks came through the barbed wire fences, we POWs shouted and jumped with joy because we were liberated. We did not know that our freedom would last only a few hours.

Task Force Baum, named for its commander, Captain Abraham Baum, had fifty-four tanks, armored vehicles, and jeeps and about 300 men when it left its assembly area south of Aschaffenburg at 10:30 pm on March 26. The plan was to arrive at Hammelburg early the next morning and rescue some 300 American prisoners, including General Patton's son-in-law, Lt. Colonel John K. Waters. The task force engaged in heavy fighting on the way to Hammelburg. Furthermore, as the lead tanks started to cross a bridge over the Saale River at Gemunden at 11:00 am on March 27, German troops blew up the bridge, forcing the task force to detour to the north to find a bridge over which the tanks could cross the river. The task force successfully attacked a road block in Hammelburg and moved up the hill to the prison camp. They drove off the guards and rolled into the camp late in the afternoon, some eleven hours later than planned. They had less than half their vehicles and about 240 men when they liberated almost 1,400 American POWs. Most of the 4,300 Serbs and Yugoslays stayed in their compound.

Kessinger and I were among some 900 men who followed the tankers for a short distance out of the camp. Captain Baum stopped the procession and announced that we were almost sixty miles from the U.S. frontline troops. He said

only a few of the POWs could continue with the tankers as they tried to fight back to the American lines. He said the rest of us were on our own. Many POWs, including most of the sick and injured, returned to camp. These men were set free about April 10 when U.S. troops again liberated the camp. A large group of men was recaptured, marched to the railroad station, and shipped to a camp in Nurmberg.

The task force reorganized and prepared to move out at first light on March 28. But by morning the Germans had encircled the task force with Tiger tanks, 88mm anti-tank guns, and infantry. At daybreak when the task force started to move, a fierce, but short, battle took place. Every vehicle of the task force was destroyed. Except for three or four men who sneaked some fifty miles to American lines, all U.S. soldiers were killed, wounded, captured, or recaptured. Task force Baum was gone forever. Many reports have been written about Task Force Baum and its unsuccessful attempt to liberate American POWs at Hammelburg and return them to American lines. Captain Baum wrote about the attack in a book titled "Raid."

Kessinger and I tried to distance ourselves from the vicinity of the camp. But we had not gone far when, about two or three o'clock in the morning of March 28, we

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were recaptured by German troops and forced to start walking to the southeast, away from the camp and the nearest Allied lines. After a short time there were about 160 recaptured POWs in our group. We walked from about three o'clock in the morning until noon. After resting for two hours, we walked until about six o'clock in the evening before stopping for the night in a large barn. Because we were emaciated and very weak, this first day's walk was extremely difficult. When I dropped onto some hay in the barn, I thought I might not be able to get up again. I thought this might be as far as I could go. This moment was the most hopeless moment I experienced during my POW days. I prayed for strength to keep going, knowing we might be liberated before long. I was weary and my whole body ached, but I fell asleep quickly. Early in the morning of March 29 our guards awakened us and we started walking again. I was surprised that I could get up and walk.

From March 28 to May 2 we walked almost every day, taking only a few days off. As we walked across the German countryside, we found we could steal, or "liberate," potatoes almost every day, and occasionally we could liberate' large loaves of bread. Once in a while we could get sugar beets from fields near the roads. German farmers grew these large beets to feed cattle, but we found they provided some moisture which we needed badly. As we walked each day, I got stronger physically, and my mental attitude improved. After a few days I was making the daily springtime hikes with less difficulty than I experienced at first.

Our guards led us across country, avoiding cities and possible encounters with German SS troops, whom they disliked almost as much as we American POWs disliked them. We walked narrow back roads with a file on either side of the road. A team of horses pulled a wagon at the end of our column. The guards put their packs on the wagon which they took turns riding. Occasionally they let a sick or injured POW ride the wagon for several hours.

I kept a list of many of the villages through which we walked and in which we stayed overnight. I wrote the names on paper and hid the paper with the draw-strings around the waist of my field jacket. On March 30 we walked through Herlheim. On April 1 our Easter Sunday services were interrupted by U.S. P-47 fighter planes flying low overhead and strafing several nearby villages. We carried white cloths which we placed on the ground to form the letters "POW to tell the fighter pilots who we were. Our message was received because two planes flew low overhead and "dipped" their wings to tell us they received our message, and no planes strafed our group. When I returned home in June, I learned that my college roommate, Bob Coleman, who was a P-47 fighter pilot, was shot down and killed that Easter

Sunday very near the place where we POWs saw the planes. I wrote an account, I Will Always Wonder," about this experience.

We stayed overnight near Oberlenbach on April 2, near Vach on April 3, and in Furth, a suburb west of Nurmberg, on April 4.

On the morning of April 5 we walked through the southwest suburbs of Nurmberg, where work continued in badly-damaged buildings. We stopped to rest before noon, just as U.S. airplanes started bombing the city. Huge columns of black smoke rose to the sky, and we told our guards that Nurmberg would be "caput" (destroyed). This was the last 1,000-plane air raid of the war.

As we watched the bombs fall, they started falling closer and closer to our group of American POWs and a dozen German guards resting beside a road. Then we lay flat on the ground as bombs fell upon us. While lying on the ground, I turned my head a little from side to side, trying to determine by the bombs' screaming sounds whether they would fall to one side or the other of me. The ground shook violently as each bomb exploded, and we were covered with dirt and debris. There was very little shouting or crying out from the men.

When the bombing stopped, I brushed off dirt and determined that I was uninjured. Most of the men near me, including Kessinger, were killed or injured. The right side of Kessinger's head was a mass of flesh, blood, and bone fragments. He took a swipe at his head with his hand and was horrified, thinking he had been badly injured. I'll never forget the look on his face. I cleaned Kessinger's head and found that he had a bad cut above his right ear. Blood was flowing profusely, so I made a pad of cloth for him to hold to his head. Several men near us were killed, and one man lying next to us had both legs severed just above his knees. He was in shock as he calmly smoked a cigarette for a few moments before he died. Kessinger and I did what we could to help and comfort several badly-injured men.

Approximately twenty-five POWs, a German guard, and the two horses that pulled the guards' wagon were killed. Other POWs were injured, some badly. One group of injured men, including Kessinger, walked to a nearby hospital. A group of five POWs and a guard were assigned to bury the dead. The remaining POWs, about one hundred men, continued walking the rest of the day. During the night I was awakened by Kessinger, who, with other walking wounded, rejoined our group. They received no help at the hospital, so the men who could walk decided to catch up with our group, bringing our number to about one hundred and fifteen.

On April 6 we walked to Feucht, southeast of Nurmberg. Some of the wounded men were taken to a nearby hospital. We received one Red Cross food parcel for every two men. Kessinger and I shared the contents of one box.

Most days we ate food we could liberate." On some days, our guards provided a loaf of bread for eight men. Father Cavanaugh and Captain Madden cut the bread and gave pieces to our group of eight men. Though our diet consisted almost entirely of potatoes and bread, we ate more than we were given in the POW camps.

Kessinger and I developed a plan that we followed at the end of our walk each day. We managed to be near the front of our column when we stopped. He searched

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the farmyards for food, and, because I spoke a little German, I begged for food from the German housewives. Infrequently they gave me potatoes or bread. Kessinger and I would meet to share whatever food we had obtained by hook or crook.

One evening Kessinger, a farmer from Illinois, returned with his helmet full of something that could not be identified. When I asked him where he got it, he said, "Let's eat it first, and then I'll tell you." After we ate the mystery concoction, he told me that when the German housewife slopped the hogs and returned to the house, he pushed the hogs aside and scooped up a helmet full of the slop. The only things we could identify were marble-size potatoes and potato peelings. But the slop filled our stomachs and, we hoped, gave us some energy to keep going.

On April 9 we walked through Seligenporten. Our walking tour brought us to Evasbach on April 10, Kevenhull on April 12, and Zell on Friday thel3th.

I remember Zell because the tall, narrow church steeple appeared to be covered with gold leaf. From Zell we walked along a narrow, one-lane road to Schafshill.

After noon on April 17 we came to the Danube River opposite Weltenburg, a small monastery town. We crossed the river on a raft-like ferry. The current moved the raft from one bank to the other, depending on how the operator set his large rudder. The raft did not float downstream because it was linked by a cable to a triangular-shaped piece of metal with two pulley wheels attached. This metal piece moved on the pulley wheels back and forth on a stationary cable which was anchored to the mountainside on the east bank of the river and to a high tower on the west bank.

We enjoyed a slow, smooth, peaceful crossing of the Danube River and stayed near Weltenburg that night.

We visited Helchhenbach on April 18 and Boganhausen on April 21. Because Kessinger and I were at the front of our column when we stopped for the night of April 22 at Margarethenried, we were among a group of perhaps eighty men who stayed in a beautiful Catholic Church. The tiny church did not hold all of us POWs, so some men spent the night on the church grounds in a cold spring rain.

About April 25 we walked not far from Moosburg, the site of a huge POW camp. We talked our guards into sending a small group of men to the camp in an effort to get some Red Cross food boxes. When the men rejoined our group with no food boxes, they reported the camp was badly overcrowded. Though they got no food, they thought we were better off fending for ourselves on the road than being imprisoned in that camp. A day or two later the Moosburg prison camp was liberated, but by that time we had walked to Untermachensburg on April 27, Inning on April 29, and Velden on April 30. A light snow fell as we walked through Obertaufkirchen on May 1.

Intermittently for several days we had heard the sounds of artillery shells exploding not far from us. Consequently, we knew the Allied advance continued and it would

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not be many more days before we were liberated. We had always wondered what would happen to us when the Allied advance reached us and overtook us. Would we be shot by our guards, German troops, or German civilians? Would we be unintentionally bombed again by the U.S. Air Force? Would we be caught in another artillery barrage? Would we be caught in cross fire in no-mans land?

May 2, 1945, was a joyful day. Shortly before noon we approached Gars-am-Inn, a small town on the west bank of the Inn River thirty miles east of Munich. As we looked down on the town from high ground west of it, we saw red crosses painted on the roofs of some buildings. We saw the Inn River and a large metal bridge across it. As we watched from a distance of less than half a mile, retreating German troops blew up the center section of the bridge, dropping this section into the river. We felt almost as if our guards had led us to the best spot from which to see the action before us.

As we walked down a curving hill into Gars, we saw that the red crosses were painted on the roofs of buildings in a monastery or convent. We learned later the place was being used as a German military hospital. We continued walking to the town square, which was only a short distance from the Inn River and the impassable bridge.

We spent some time in the town square while our guards and the ranking American POW, a colonel, discussed what we should do. The guards wanted to walk several miles downstream where we could cross the Inn River single file on a dam. They promised us a good, hot meal on the east side of the river that night. Our guards had promised us good, hot meals several times, but we had never gotten one. After a short discussion our colonel told our guards that we were staying in Gars and not walking any farther. The colonel told our guards quite bluntly that this town, with red crosses painted on the roofs of some buildings, was the safest place we had seen in months. The plainly-visible red crosses gave us some assurance the town would not be bombed by either the German or the Allied Air Force. The village of Garsam-Inn was probably the largest place we had seen since we left Nurmberg.

The colonel told us POWs to spread out all over town. He said if he gave an order to assemble, we should ignore it, because we were staying in Gars. Kessinger and I walked a short distance and knocked on the door of a home. When the housewife opened the door, we asked for food. She invited us in and led us to her kitchen. She provided warm water for us to use in washing, and she gave us some bread and jelly. What a joy that was to wash and eat bread and jelly!!! Kessinger and I returned to the town square in late afternoon and learned that our guards had disappeared. We surmised they had thrown their rifles away and started their homeward treks.

At dusk we heard the wonderful sound of American tanks coming down the hill into Gars. Tanks of General George Patton's 14th Armored Division moved into town

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without firing a shot, for which we were exceedingly thankful. The tankers said they had planned to stop on the high ground west of the village for the night, but when they saw red crosses on the roofs of buildings and much activity in Gars, they sent a patrol into town to investigate. The patrolmen found dozens of American POWs, so they decided to move into town that night. We POWs celebrated our second, and final, liberation !!!

My Military Service After I Was Liberated

The tankers threw off boxes of K-rations and C-rations. We were almost deliriously happy as we ate army food again. But because we were so hungry, we did not use good sense. We ate too much and found that we could not keep food in our stomachs. On this occasion, and for several days to come, we could eat very little without vomiting. The tankers set up outposts around town, and we felt the safest we had felt in months as we lay down for the night, our first night as ex-POWs.

On May 3 we former POWs practically "took over the town. Kessinger and I took some army rations and cooked them in the kitchen of a German home. About noon a column of trucks rolled into town. I wrote a short letter to my parents to tell them I had been liberated. I gave it to a tanker and asked him to mail it for me. This note, which my parents

received about the twentieth of May, was the first notification they received that I had been liberated. In the afternoon we boarded army trucks and were taken to the large prison camp at Moosburg, which had been liberated about April 27. The camp was still crowded, and there was little food, though I did get some white bread which tasted like cake. I slept outdoors.

I was at Moosburg four days. I was sick some of the time, because I could not keep much food down. We received Red Cross food parcels and cans of insecticide powder for body-crawling insects. I got rid of some of the lice that had been with me for several months. I mailed another letter, the second since I was liberated, to my parents.

On May 7 we were taken by truck from Moosburg to an airfield at Ingolstadt. The war in Europe ended while we were there, but we did not know it at the time. Fifteen C-47 cargo airplanes landed and took off with ex-POWs, but I was not one of them. Kessinger and I slept in a German warehouse where some men picked up souvenirs. On May 8 C-47s flew overhead all day long, but only one landed at Ingolstadt. Kessinger and I slept on the airfield our last night in Germany.

Many C-47s landed at Ingolstadt on May 9. I boarded a plane named "Ready Teddy" and we were airborne before noon. We landed at Rheims for refueling.

For our benefit the pilot flew low over Paris and circled the Eiffel Tower. This made several men sick to their stomachs and they vomited. When we landed at LeHavre, the American Red Cross greeted us with coffee and doughnuts. We traveled by truck about 45 miles northeast of LeHavre to Camp Lucky Strike. I took only the

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second shower I had in almost five months, after which I was issued new clothing, for I had thrown my grimy lice-infested clothing into a bonfire. My first meal was a small serving of creamed chicken. I removed my clothing to go to bed for the first time since December 15, and the G.I. cot was comfortable.

Camp Lucky Strike was a RAMP Camp (for Recovered Allied Military Personnel). Other camps were named for other brands of cigarettes. During the eight days I spent at Camp Lucky Strike, I sent a cablegram to my parents, was interrogated by Military Intelligence about my captivity, and was interviewed by an officer from the Adjutant General's Department. We ate six small meals a day, getting our stomachs accustomed to food again. After getting some injections and passing a rather superficial physical examination, I was declared able to make the trip home. Men who were unable to travel were either detained at Camp Lucky Strike or sent to hospitals in England, depending on the severity of their illnesses and injuries.

On May 17 we traveled by truck to a camp near LeHavre, and the next day we heard rumors that "the convoy sails tomorrow." On May 19 we traveled by truck to the harbor at LeHavre and boarded the U.S.S. General William H. Gordon, a navy transport ship commissioned in August, 1944. We sailed from LeHavre at mid afternoon and joined a convoy in the English Channel. We were told we expected to arrive in New York on June 3. On May 20 we saw Land's End, England, off the starboard bow and said goodbye to Europe.

Much to my surprise, as we neared New York the General Gordon changed course, sailed south, and after another day or so, entered the beautiful blue Caribbean Ocean. On May 29 we sailed into the harbor at Port of Spain, Trinidad, to unload a group of Air Force men (not POWs) and their equipment. The unloading continued all day on May 30. On May 31 we sailed from Port of Spain and were told the next port would be New York City. On June 1 we sailed into the Atlantic Ocean about one hundred miles east of Puerto Rico.

June 4, 1945, though misty and cloudy, was a wonderful day. A Women's Army Corps band sailed into Lower New York Bay and played for us as we approached New York. Because of the fog and clouds, we could not see the Statue of Liberty welcoming us until we were quite close. Like others, I wiped tears from my eyes. After we passed Ellis Island, we could see the tops of the New York skyscrapers disappear in the fog and clouds. Fire ships sprayed water high in the air as we sailed past Lower Manhattan Island. A Coast Guard band played "Sidewalks of New York" and military marches as the General Gordon docked at Pier 88 beside the Queen Elizabeth, on which I had sailed to Scotland in October, and her sister ship, the Queen Mary. Pier 88 was the pier at which the Queen Elizabeth was docked when I boarded for the voyage to Scotland eight months earlier.

We disembarked, crossed the Hudson River on ferryboats, and took a train to Camp Shanks, New York, arriving in time for dinner. The menu for my first meal back in

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the U.S. was steak, French fries, green beans, peas, lettuce, celery, hot rolls and butter, cake and ice cream, and coffee or milk. This was the best and most complete meal I had in many months. I sent a telegram to myparents.

I spent the morning of June 5 being processed, receiving new uniforms and receiving some back pay. At noon I left for New York City. I remembered the New York POWs had said Lindy's served the best cheesecake in the U.S. Consequently I went immediately to Lindy's to eat this delicacy for the first time.

In the evening I went to the Paramount Theatre on Times Square for 'A Salute to Major Glenn Miller" extravaganza. Miller, a popular big band leader, had disappeared on a flight from England to France on December 15, the day before the Battle of the Bulge started. The program featured many well known orchestras, including Charlie Spivak, Louis Prima, Count Basie, Sammy Kaye, Fred Waring, and Benny Goodman. Vocalists included Tex Beneke, Jo Stafford, Perry Como, Kate Smith, Eddie Cantor, Allan Jones, Diana Lynn, Cab Calloway, Pearl Bailey, and The Modemaires. Other performers included drummer Gene Krupa, comedian Milton Berle, tap dancer Bill Robinson, and an Air Force band. After the show I returned to Camp Shanks.

In the late afternoon of June 6 I boarded a troop train for Ft. Leavenworth. During a stop at Union Station in Kansas City on June 8, I called home. With many other soldiers I arrived at Ft. Leavenworth about 6:30 in the morning on June 9. After waiting for two hours, I received the rest of my back pay and completed necessary processing by eleven o'clock. I received sixty-three days leave and four days travel time before I had to report on August 15 to the Park Hotel in Hot Springs, Arkansas. I headed for Osage City via Kansas City, arriving home on June 10.

A day or two after I returned home, my mother asked me to drive her to Phyllis Grigsby's home. Mother wanted to return a negative she had borrowed to make prints of a snapshot Phyllis had taken of my parents. On this visit my mother introduced me to my future wife. Phyllis was teaching music at Osage City High School and conducting a town band for the summer. We had some dates during the summer. Marie Larson's family owned a cabin on the Marais des Cygnes River fourteen miles south of Osage City. One day we enjoyed a picnic at the cabin and a swim in the river with Marie and Willis Tompkins, my friend from Templin Hall days at KU and Marie's future husband. Phyllis and I attended several movies, and we went to Meadow Acres Ballroom in Topeka to dance. When we spent a weekend in Kansas City, Phyllis was impressed with the way I knew my way around the city.

In August I went to Wichita to take an examination for an Internal Revenue Service job, though I planned to return to school when I was discharged from the army. While I was in Wichita, the war with Japan ended. I reported to the Park

Hotel in Hot springs on August 15. During the several days I lived in the hotel on bathhouse row, I had physical examinations, had some needed dental work done, brought my

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army service records up to date, and enjoyed a hot bath or two.

My next assignment was as a company commander in the 80th Infantry Training Regiment at Camp Robinson, Arkansas. Because I was the fourth company commander the trainees had in their first six weeks, discipline was a problem. I was promoted to the rank of First Lieutenant on October 9. One weekend I accepted a ride with Virginia and Lynn Kessinger to St. Louis to meet Phyllis. At this time we decided to get married after I completed military service.

I received orders that I would be discharged from service on January 8, 1946, and I would be on final leave from December 1 to January 8. I was extremely relieved when my successor as company commander signed for the company equipment, because an inventory would probably have shown that some of the equipment was missing, just as it was missing when I signed for it three months earlier. I believe the company supply sergeants had a way of passing equipment from company to company whenever an inventory was to be taken.

I arrived home on December 2, my 23`d birthday. Phyllis and I made plans to be married on December 28, though I had no idea who would serve as my best man, because most men were still in military service. A week or ten days before Christmas my brother, Warren, called from New York. Mother told him, "Hung and get home because Martin is getting married.' Warren gasped, "Martin? Who is he marrying?' Though his outfit was quarantined, Warren was able to get home for Christmas with his wife and our wedding.

Phyllis and I were married on December 28, 1945, by Reverend Clower in the First Methodist Church in Osage City. Lavona Walden (Dunworth), a teacher friend of Phyllis, was bridesmaid. Two of Phyllis' high school students sang "My Hero" from The Chocolate Soldier and Irving Berlin's "Always." Warren, a captain in the Field Artillery, was resplendent in his uniform. Because I was still in the army, I wore my uniform for our wedding and our honeymoon in Kansas City and St. Louis.

On January 8, 1946, my honorable discharge became effective. In a few days

I returned to Lawrence and enrolled for the spring semester at KU, knowing that Phyllis would join me in Lawrence when her school year ended.

My enlisted man serial number was 17082968. My officer's serial number was 0-551459. My POW number was 25330. My military occupational specialty was #1542, infantry unit commander. The highest rank I achieved was First Lieutenant. My military awards were Combat Infantryman Badge, World War II Victory Medal, American Theater ribbon, European Theater of Operations ribbon with three bronze battle stars (Ardennes, Rhineland, and Central Europe), the Prisoner of War Medal, and the Good Conduct Medal. In the army I was required to use my first name, middle initial, and last name; therefore, I was Lloyd M. Jones.

Some Additional Thoughts

My service in the army in World War II, including my capture and imprisonment, was a never-to-be-forgotten experience, "a defining moment," but one I would not want to repeat. Nor would I want others to experience what I did. I was young, resilient, and morally strong. At the time I was captured, I was in good physical condition. I learned to be mentally tough. I learned that a human being can suffer inhumane treatment and become stronger because of the experience.

When people ask me how I could experience what I did and not be bitter, I cite my youth, my excellent family background, my faith, my youthful years in Osage City, my excellent education in Osage City and at the University of Kansas, my sound military training, the support I received from fellow soldiers, and my desire to see what would happen in the next sixty years. The assistance we POWs gave one another was significant. The support I received almost daily from my buddy, Lynn Kessinger, was a tremendous help, as we encouraged one another to hold on and keep going. He was one tough soldier, and from him I learned to be tough. I was fortunate to have him as my friend and cohort.

My fellow commissioned officers in Company G were Captain Edward H. Murray, First Lieutenants Wilbur H. King and Earl W. Browne, and Second Lieutenants David R. Millice and Moms L. Patrizi. Murray suffered a severe injury to his face and head, King was shot in his neck, and Patrizi was shot in his side and captured a day or two after he and Browne tried to escape in the Battle of the Bulge. Browne and Millice were in the same prison camp near Berlin where Millice died of pneumonia. Murray, King, Browne, and I returned to the United States. Neither Browne nor I have ever known what happened to Patrizi after he was captured.

About 1995 Phyllis and I drove to Chattanooga, Tennessee, and enjoyed a two-day visit with Gladys and !von York, Elaine and Lee Darby, Maxine and Billy Moore, Lois and John Forsyth, Louis V. Nardone, and Walter S. Adams and his wife. Darby, York, and Moore were my squad leaders. Nardone, Forsyth, and Adams served in Company G, but not in my platoon. Since then Moore, York, and Adams died. My platoon guide, Sergeant Jesse Bishop, also died. My platoon sergeant, John Parchinsky, was captured with the rest of us, but the Company G veterans listed above and I do not know what happened to him after that. The last time I saw Parchinsky was December 20, 1944.

The war years were difficult years for my parents, especially my mother, who was not out among people every day, as my dad was. Their three sons were in the army and in combat in Europe. Harold, a sergeant in the infantry, was wounded and awarded the Purple Heart. Warren, a forward observer in the Field Artillery, received two bronze stars for heroism in combat. Fortunately, we all returned home, were happily married, have wonderful children, and lived productive lives.

Epilogue

On two occasions in the 1980s, Phyllis and I retraced most of the route I had taken through Belgium and Germany in World War II. In 1983 we rented a car and toured the area in which I fought in the Battle of the Bulge, including Born, St. Vith, Schonberg, Andler, Auw, Radscheid, Bleialf, and the approximate spot where I was captured. By car we traced my POW walking route from near Schonberg through Prum to Gerolstein. We then drove to the Moselle River and followed the Moselle River Valley to the Rhine River, past Koblenz to Diez and Limburg-on-the Lahn.

We drove to Hammelburg and stopped in the town square to ask directions to the site of the former POW camp. None of the older men in a pub seemed to know anything about a former POW camp, but a young man said to Phyllis, "Kommen, Mama," and he pointed to the road we should take to reach the site. We drove up the long curving road that I had walked with frostbitten feet on January 11, 1945. We checked our cameras and passports at the entrance gate and visited the infantry training center, which was on the site of the former prison camp. As a German officer and his driver followed us, we drove our car around the training center and saw several old buildings in which prisoners were housed in 1945. Because we were nervous without our passports, we did not stay long. We claimed our cameras and passports at the entrance guardhouse and drove to Camberg where we had reservations at a bed and breakfast.

On this trip we found the former home of the Theissen family in Born, Belgium. The building, which was used to store building materials, still had a trickle of water running under the house to the basement where the sawmill had been. A French-speaking lady drew a rough map for us so we could find the home of Johanna's nephew who was now operating an all-electric sawmill near Recht, a nearby village. We enjoyed coffee and a visit with Karl-Joseph and his wife, Nicole, in their home.

On a 1989 visit to Germany we traveled by car and traced my walking route from Feucht to Gar-am-Inn, including visits to many of the towns through which I had walked. The raft-like ferry was still in operation at Weltenburg, and one morning we drove our car onto the ferry and enjoyed a smooth, quiet crossing of the Danube River. A gentleman eating his Sunday dinner at a restaurant in Pfeffenhausen left his wife and son to get in his car and lead us five kilometers to Boganhausen.

We found the beautiful, small church in Margarethenried just where I told Phyllis we would find it. We enjoyed a meaningful visit inside and in the adjoining graveyard where German soldiers who were killed in World Wars I and II are buried. The only commercial establishment in the village was a beer hall, so we stayed overnight in a nearby town. In Moosburg we found a large park and play fields where the prison camp had been in 1945.

In Gars-am-Inn we saw the monastery, visited the town square, and drove across the Inn River bridge which replaced the one I saw destroyed by German troops on May 2, 1945. In a small apothecary shop we visited with a man who was eleven years old and living in Gars when he saw the bridge destroyed. He said he remembered seeing the POWs walk to the town square a short time after the bridge was blown up. I told him I was one of those POWs. He told us his ten-year old daughter wanted to go to Florida.

On two visits to Belgium we visited Johanna Theissen-Serexhe in her home in Fleron, near Liege. On both occasions we stayed in the home of Daisy and Harry Poels in Brunssum, Holland, and enjoyed their hospitality. In 1983 I drove and Johanna directed us to Spa, Belgium, where we enjoyed a delicious meal in a French restaurant in a casino. We returned to Johanna's home for a short visit before driving to Antwerp. On this visit Johanna cried and was unable to tell us much about her sister, Gertrude, who was shot and killed by German soldiers on the morning of May 10, 1940, the day Germany invaded Belgium, Holland, and France. Later Johanna told us Gertrude was the first Belgium civilian killed by German soldiers when they invaded.

In 1987 we visited friends in the south Limburg part of The Netherlands. Margaret and Harold had introduced us to their friends, Daisy (LeRoux) and Harry Poels, Emma and Matt LeRoux, and Tos (LeRoux) and Gerard Durlinger. Harold had stayed in the LeRoux home for a few days in 1945. After visiting in the Poels' home in Brunssum, Daisy, Harry, Emma, Matt, Phyllis, and I drove in two cars to Johanna's home in Fleron for coffee and a visit.

With Johanna driving her car, we had a three-car caravan as we drove to Chaufontaine for lunch. Johanna led us on a tour which included the beautiful American Cemetery high on a hill near Henri Chappelle, Belgium, where some men from Martin's Division are buried. Johanna got us through the check point at the German border and we visited Monschau in a light rain. We drove to a trout restaurant on a small stream near Hofen, Germany. The restaurant was operated by Johanna's cousin, Otto Theissen, with whom she did not speak for many years after the war because they were on different sides in the conflict. However, after a delicious trout dinner, Johanna, her cousin and his wife, and our four Dutch friends had no difficulty speaking with great animation in Dutch, German, and a little French. Phyllis and I enjoyed listening to them and watching them.

On two occasions we visited Johanna when she was in the United States, once in Michigan and once in Washington, D.C. We still communicate with her.

We have communicated with, and exchanged home visits with, Lynn Kessinger and Earl Browne and their wives since World War II. We still communicate with them and with Elaine and Lee Darby, Maxine Moore, and Gladys York.

Here are some quotations from "A War to Be Won: Fighting The Second World War," by Williamson Murray and Allan R. Millett (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England, 2000).

Page 471: 'The defeat of the Germans in the Battle of the Bulge was a victory for the U.S. soldier. He stood the test of everything the Wehrmacht could throw at him, particularly early in the battle, when he was outnumbered and unprotected by air cover. It was not, however, a victory for the American high command. At the start, the strength and ferocity of the Nazi attack caught the American generals completely by surprise, despite plenty of indications that a massive buildup was under way."

Page 465: "For the most part, American units responded with skill, courage, and determination and when outflanked, fought until they were out of ammunition."

Page 467: "By their courageous resistance, American troops, most of whom either had little combat experience or were badly battered by the fall fighting and were spread across the length of the Ardennes, robbed the Germans of the tactical and operational fruits of strategic surprise. It was a soldier's victory.

Page 471: "U.S. casualties suggest the battle's toll. Over a month and a half, American units suffered 81,000 casualties, 19,000 of them killed, 15,000 captured (more than half from the 106"' Infantry Division), and 47,000 wounded. The Germans suffered approximately 100,000 casualties, but the loss of over 800 tanks and vast amounts of other military equipment hurt the Wehrmacht more than the loss of manpower."

These quotations are used with permission of co-author Allan R. Millett, Professor of Military History at The Ohio State University.

1999, The Best of Presbyterian Manors, Reminiscence Category

GRAND PRIZE
"I Will Always Wonder"

By L. Martin Jones
Lawrence Presbyterian Manor
Written at age 76

In the spring of 1943 Bob Coleman and I began active military service. For the preceding 2 1/2 years Bob, a personable and intelligent Junction City native, and I roomed together at the University of Kansas (KU). Bob entered the U. S. Air Force, achieved his goal of becoming a fighter pilot, and was sent to Europe where he flew missions in support of Allied ground forces.

I had completed three years of the Reserve Officer Training Corps program at KU and was sent to basic training in the Anti-Aircraft Artillery segment of the Coast Artillery Corps. Then, with no training in the infantry, I was sent to Infantry Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning, Georgia. Soon after being commissioned a Second Lieutenant, I joined the 106th Infantry Division in July, 1944, and went to Europe as an infantry platoon leader. Most of the men in the division had little or no training in the infantry. In fact, most of the men joined the division less than two months before we sailed to Europe on October 1 aboard the Queen Elizabeth. Soon we arrived at the front line along the border between Belgium and Germany.

On December 16, 1944, Hitler threw three German armies against half an American army in a desperate, but unsuccessful, effort to turn the tide of World War II. The 106th Infantry Division and another infantry division were the first units to bear the brunt of the massive German tank and infantry attack, which came to be known by Allied Forces as the Battle of the Bulge. Most of the regiment of which I was a part was overwhelmed, overrun, and surrounded on the second day of the battle. After being surrounded without food or water for three days in bitter cold weather and snow, and without ammunition for the last twenty-four hours, the regimental commander declared that the unit was no longer an effective fighting unit, and he ordered what was left of the regiment, approximately three thousand men, to surrender.

As a prisoner of war I spent ten days walking along snow-covered roads and locked in a crowded railroad boxcar before arriving at a badly-overcrowded prisoner of war camp near Bad Orb, Germany. After two weeks in this camp, where many men were sick or injured and suffering from severe frostbite and dysentery, I was among a group of American officers who were again locked in boxcars and taken by train to another camp near Hammelburg. We were in this camp until March 27, 1945, when the German guards moved the Ameri-can prisoners of war out of the camp. Under guard we were forced to march each day to the southeast, away from approaching American armies.

On Easter Sunday, April 1, we prisoners of war were forced to walk for several hours before stopping to rest on the outskirts of a small village approximately thirty miles northwest of Nurmburg. While we rested beside the road just outside the village, American fighter planes began to strafe nearby villages. Immediately we prisoners of war placed white cloths, which we carried for this purpose, on the ground to form the letters "POW," a sign to fighter pilots that prisoners of war were located at this place. The pilots strafed nearby villages for some time, but the village near which we prisoners of war rested was not attacked. Several planes flew low overhead and "dipped" their wings, rolling from side to side, a signal that the pilots received our "POW' message. After the fighter planes disappeared over the horizon, we American prisoners of war continued walking each day until we were liberated on May 2 by the 14th Armored Division thirty miles east of Munich on the Inn River.

When I returned to my home in Osage City, Kansas, in the summer of 1945, my parents informed me that Bob Coleman had been killed in action. Several days later I went to Junction City to visit his parents, Judge and Mrs. James P. Coleman. Tearfully, they told me that Bob was shot down on Easter Sunday just five weeks before the war in Europe ended. He was killed when his plane crashed about thirty miles north of Nurmburg, not far from the village

where, as a prisoner of war, I had witnessed the strafing of several villages by American fighter planes on that Easter Sunday.

Bob is one of 276 University of Kansas students who lost their lives serving our country in World War II. The University campanile and carillon were constructed and dedicated to the memory of these students. When-ever I hear the bells of the carillon ring out across the campus, I wonder if Bob might have been the first pilot to see our "POW" sign on Easter Sunday, 1945. Did he radio his fellow pilots that they should not strafe the one village because prisoners of war were near it? Though I will never know, I will always wonder. Did Bob Coleman save my life on the day he lost his own?

CAN YOU FIND THE TALL, BLOND, AMERICAN OFFICER ?

At 5:30 in the morning on Saturday, December 16, 1944, I was rudely awakened in Born, Belgium, by the sound of heavy artillery fire several miles to the east along Belgium's border with Germany. The World War II Battle of the Bulge had started with a massive German artillery barrage along a front of sixty-five miles.

I was a platoon leader in Company G, 423rd Regiment, 106th Infantry Division. Because my platoon was in reserve, my men and I were assigned to homes in the village of Born. I had a very cold second-floor bedroom in the home of the Theissen family where twenty-six year old Johanna, her brothers Charles and Bernard, and their mother shared their home with American soldiers. The family had diverted water from a nearby stream to provide power for the operation of a sawmill in their basement. In November, 1944, the family had turned over operation of the sawmill to a United States Engineering unit that was stockpiling timbers for use in bridging streams when the Allied advance into Germany resumed.

When the surprise attack began on the over-extended front line positions of the 106th and 28th Infantry Divisions in the Schnee Eifel (Snow Mountains), I assembled my men and moved by truck to the front lines near Auw, Germany. Several days later, after being surrounded for three days without food, water, ammunition, or medical supplies, the remaining men of two regiments of the 106th Division were ordered to surrender. Along with almost 7,000 other American soldiers, I became a prisoner of war. We walked in freezing temperature along snow-covered roads for two days before being locked in railroad boxcars for a week and transported to prison camps in Germany. I survived forced marches, starvation diets, and Allied air raids before returning home in June of 1945.

The Theissen family was known to be anti-Nazi. On May 10, 1940, the day Germany invaded Belgium, Johanna's newly-married sister, Gertrude, was shot and killed by a German sniper when she went to the railroad station to board a train for Brussels, where her husband was a policeman. Johanna, Charles, and their mother were on a list of Belgium civilians scheduled to be sent to concentration camps in Poland. During the fifty-two-month German occupation of Belgium, Charles was forced to join the German army, from which he deserted. On many occasions Charles hid in the woods to avoid being captured by German soldiers. Johanna often took food to him. Because the family had turned their sawmill over to the United States Army, Johanna and her brothers knew they would likely be killed if they were captured by German troops.

Abandoning their home when the Battle of the Bulge started, Johanna's mother stayed with relatives in Recht while Johanna and her brothers jumped on their bicycles and fled west along dangerously-slick roads. They managed to stay barely ahead of the rampaging German tank and infantry columns.

After riding and pushing their bicycles for more than fifty miles in a week, Johanna, Charles, and Bernard crawled on the ground under fire from German and U.S. tanks near Dinant to reach American lines. Because Germany had caused great confusion among American troops by infiltrating American lines with Germans who spoke English fluently, American soldiers were suspicious of all "strangers." After what Johanna described as a "nasty interrogation," the troops were about to throw Johanna and her brothers back into no man's land between American and German tanks. Suddenly the tall U.S. engineer officer whose men had operated the Theissen sawmill in November "appeared like an angel." He vouched for Johanna and her brothers, who were sent to Brussels where they received care from the Red Cross on December 24.

In 1988, forty-four years after these life-threatening incidents took place, Johanna asked me, "Can you find the tall, blond, American officer who saved my life and my brothers' lives." During the years since these frightful experiences occurred, she had forgotten his name. She desperately wanted to contact him and "give him a thousand thanks" for saving their lives.

The fact that I was seeking a "tall, blond American officer" was not much on which to start my search. However, I knew that he and his men had operated the Theissen sawmill in Born in November, 1944. My brother placed a notice in The Veterans of Foreign Wars Magazine: "Need to contact U.S. engineer officer who operated Theissen sawmill in Born, Belgium, in November, 1944."

Several weeks later I received a letter from E. D. "Dan" Weppner of Greeley, Colorado. He had been a member of a combat engineer platoon that operated sawmills in the Belgium villages of Born and Montenau. He told me his platoon leader was First Lieutenant Archibald Taylor, who was rather tall. His last contact with Taylor had been more than ten years earlier when Taylor was a postmaster some place in North Carolina.

The postmaster of Lawrence, Kansas, gave me addresses of seven postal service administrative offices in North Carolina. I wrote to all seven offices, but the five administrators who responded knew nothing about Taylor. However, one suggested that I write to the Office of the Postal Service Historian in Washington, D.C. Several days after I wrote to the Historian's Office, Mike Lilly called to tell me that Archibald Taylor had retired ten years earlier as postmaster in Oxford, North Carolina. Though his information was ten years old, Lilly gave me Taylor's address and telephone number at the time he retired.

I called the telephone number in Oxford, North Carolina, and visited with Elizabeth Taylor, Arch's wife. Because Arch, as he prefers to be called, has some hearing loss, he does not speak often on the telephone. Elizabeth said Arch had been a platoon leader in the 291st Engineer Combat Battalion in World War II, and, indeed, he and his men had operated the Theissen sawmill in Born in November of 1944. I had found the tall, blond, American officer who, by identifying Johanna and her brothers in 1944 and making certain they were sent to the Red Cross in Brussels, had saved their lives.

A short time after I located Arch and Elizabeth Taylor in Oxford, North Carolina, my wife and I had a rewarding visit with them in their home. Several

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years later when Elizabeth and Arch made a trip to Europe, they met Johanna in Brussels.

I felt great satisfaction in putting Johanna and Arch in contact with one another and knowing that a courageous lady gave heartfelt thanks to a true American hero for saving her life and her brothers' lives in that cold and bitter December of 1944.

Second Place Tie

2000, The Best of Presbyterian Manors

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Reminiscences Winners
FIRST PLACE, TIE
SILENT NIGHT, HOLY NIGHT

BY L MARTIN JONES
LAWRENCE PRESBYTERIAN MANOR
WRITTEN AT AGE 78

On the extremely cold night of December 15, 1944, I fell asleep in an unheated upstairs bedroom in the Johanna Theissen home in the village of Born, Belgium, several miles west of the German border and the front lines in World War II. In spite of the severe cold, I slept comfortably under a layer of blankets.

At five-thirty in the morning I was awakened by sounds of a heavy artillery barrage several miles to the east along the Belgium-German border. The Battle of the Bulge had begun when German tank columns supported by infantry troops invaded in the snowy, forested Ardennes area of Belgium. More than 320,000 German soldiers, 1,900 artillery guns and 970 tanks and assault vehicles attacked over the 70-mile Ardennes front, which was lightly defended by about 65,000 American infantrymen and artillerymen with little tank support.

I assembled the forty men of-my rifle platoon and we were transported by trucks to the German border in an attempt to stem the tide of German tanks and troops pouring into the Ardennes near the Losheim Gap in the low mountains. Two regiments of the 106th Infantry Division held their positions, as ordered, and were surrounded on the second day of the battle. German tank columns, bypassing the two regiments on the north and south, joined at Schonberg and raced west toward the important road junction at St. Vith.

The weather was so bad that allied airplanes were grounded in England for the first week of the battle. Consequently, the promised supplies by air of food, water, ammunition and medical supplies did not occur. Furthermore, an attempt to send an armored division to rescue the beleaguered regiments failed. After being surrounded for three days with nothing to eat and little to drink, running out of ammunition and suffering casualties from deadly intermit-tent artillery fire, the remaining men of the two regiments were ordered by the regimental commanders to surrender. Along with about 7,000 other American soldiers, I became a prisoner of war (POW) of the Third Reich late in the after-noon on December 19, 1944.

I was with a group of men who, immediately after being captured, walked five hours, under , in near zero temperature before stopping the night in a bombed-out stone barn. On December 20 we walked all day, arriving at Gerolstein, Germany, just before midnight. The next morning we were given four hard crackers and a piece of cheese before being packed into small railroad boxcars for the trip to prison camps in Germany. We remained locked in the boxcars for three days and two nights before arriving in the railroad yards at Diez, just west of Limburg-on-der-Zahn, about five o'clock in the afternoon of December 23. The stormy weather, which had kept Allied Air Forces grounded for a week, improved during the night of December 22-23. Saturday, December 23, dawned clear and cold, allowing U.S. and British air forces to resume bombing targets in Germany.

Shortly after darkness fell on December 23 the British Royal Air Force (RAF) bombed the railroad yards at Diez. The RAF reported that fifty-two planes took part in the raid, during which twenty-five1nd one-half ton bombs, as well as other bombs, were dropped on the trains and railroad yards.

"Silent night, Holy night." In one of the box-cars a cold, dirty, hungry and discouraged soldier began to sing this familiar Christmas carol. Soon another soldier joined in the singing, then another and then others. The night was not silent, as the bombs exploded with ear-shattering blasts. Neither was the night holy, as human

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beings were killing other human beings. After all, this is what happens during wars.

"All is calm, All is bright." Many men in this boxcar were singing softly now. There was nothing calm at all, but there were bright flashes of light when the bombs exploded. Boxcars bounced up and down as the huge bombs shook the ground violently as they exploded. At least one boxcar received a direct hit, killing all of the sixty American POWs locked in the car. When the door of another boxcar was blown off, some men jumped out and started to run, trying to escape, only to be shot by German guards. The car I was in bounced off the tracks but remained upright. Guards and prisoners alike were shouting for help. POWs who were uninjured tried to help those who were. Confusion reigned.

"Sleep in heavenly peace, Sleep in heavenly peace." Soon after the bombing stopped, the singing came to a dose. Many POWs were injured and more than 125 were killed. I prayed, "May they rest in heavenly peace." None of the POW survivors, though weak and exhausted, slept at all that unforgettable winter night.

While locked in a boxcar during this bombing raid, I had the most helpless feeling I experienced during my four and one-half months as a POW. On Christmas Day German newspapers reported that 141 civilians were killed and 162 homes were destroyed or damaged in this raid.

I survived the December 23, 1944, raid and another horrible one on April 5 in Nuremburg, as well as starvation diets, extreme cold and hunger in two prisoner of war camps and a forced march of thirty-six days. However, I was one of the most fortunate POWs. I returned to the United States on June 4, 1945, to an exciting celebration, sailing past the Statue of Liberty to stirring band music played by military bands on board several fire ships which met us in New York harbor and sprayed water high in all directions.

I will always remember the night of December 23, 1944, as a night that was not silent, holy, calm or peaceful. As the bombs fell on the railroad yards and the boxcars crowded with American POWs, I am sure the POWs who sang "Silent night, Holy night; All is calm, All is bright" were thinking of their families at home and praying they could spend the next Christmas with them in a world at peace.

Snow on Roses
This morning
Nature's untimely miscue
Dumped its white
on American Beauties,
red, blossoming in their prime.

Click the shutter and recall the image of winter, 1944
American prisoners of war Massacred at Malmedy,

red, spilling
into white
covering America's
"Best of Show."

EDITOR'S NOTE: This poem was submitted by AXPOW L. Martin Jones of Lawrence, KS, who writes, "I enclose a poem written by my wife, Phyllis M. Jones, two weeks ago. The late October snowfall which we received in this area inspired her. You know the snow was unexpected, very wet, and measured 8-1/2 inches deep. the snow fell on our beautiful red roses which were still blooming profusely. The poem is very timely, because the Malmedy Massacre occurred on December 17, 1944, in the early hours of the Battle of the Bulge at the Baugnez cross-roads near the village of Malmedy.... Phyllis and I visited the site and the Malmedy Massacre memorial a few years ago, and it was a very moving experience."

Uniform fits fine 58 years later
WWII second lieutenant shows up in
military dress at Lied Center

By Dave Ranney and Scott Rothschild

Martin Jones said the last time he wore his Army uniform "seriously" was 58 years ago, when he was discharged. He wore it again Sunday.

"I was commissioned a second lieutenant in the (U.S. Army) infantry in June of 1944," Jones said Sunday, surrounded by admirers in the Lied Center lobby after he had joined a group of veterans seated on stage for the panel discussion, "KU Goes to War." "Officers, of course, buy their own uniforms. So I bought this 59 years ago last month," he said.

Asked how he'd manage to maintain a steady waistline all those years, Jones laughed and looked at his wife, Phyllis. "She feeds me well and wisely," he said.

Jones, 80, of Lawrence, was captured during the Battle of the Bulge and spent four-and-ahalf months in prisoner-of-war camps. "By the time I was captured, the Allies were at the German border and had complete control of the air," he said. "That meant there was almost nothing for us to eat. I lost 35 pounds in three months."

Ogden Lindsley, Lawrence, also wore his uniform to the Dole Institute of Politics dedication event. Lindsley, a former KU professor of special education, was shot down in the mountains of Albania in 1944 and spent the next 10 months in German captivity.

With Allied forces closing in, the Germans moved the POWs around. He escaped from a forced march and found a group of British tankers advancing on the Germans. They told him to stay on the road because the forest was "full of Germans." "I didn't do much in the war, but I'm proud of what I did," he said.

Jones, a retired KU professor of business, said he was grate-ful for the recognition being shown to World War II veter-ans. But it's unfortunate, he said, that veterans of subsequent wars weren't similarly feted. "Every time I come to one of these celebrations, I think, 'Surely, this is the last of it; it's time to move on,' and then another one comes along," he said. "I appreciate them, I think they're great, but I feel sorry for the Vietnam veterans who didn't get the reaction I got when I came home — and who don't get celebrations like-this one."

Lawrence Journal-World, Lawrence, KS
July 21, 2003

Martin Jones' Odyssey

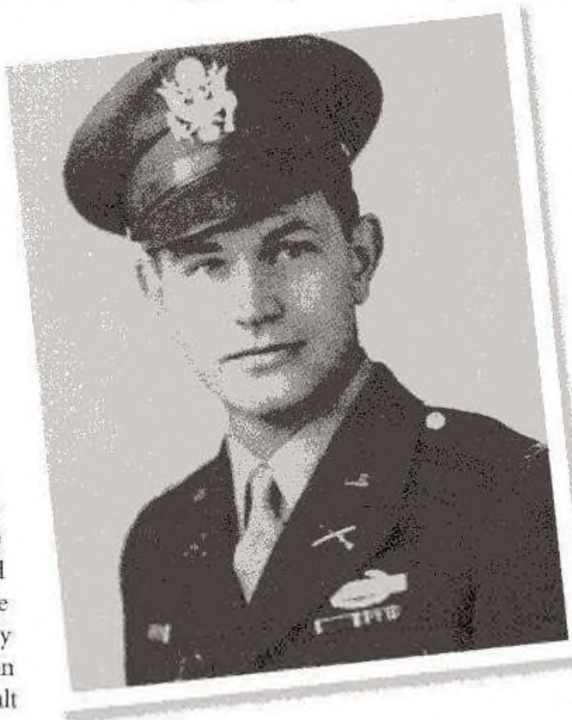
The story of the Hammelburg Raid, as told by a Soldier who was there!

This issue's *Interactive Combat Story* (see page 56) features the exciting conclusion to our Hammelburg Raid saga. Now, experience the actual life-and-death drama through excerpts from a Soldier's firsthand account of that historical event.

On the afternoon of March 27, 1945, Captain Abe Baum's M-4 Sherman tanks crashed through the barbed wire that surrounded the prisoner of war compound at Hammelburg, Germany. Although Baum's task force had expected to find 1,000 Americans held captive, it actually found approximately 1,400, including one by the name of Lieutenant L. Martin Jones. Initially elated at the arrival of the rescuers, Jones soon discovered that the ill-fated raid would result in his recapture just a few short hours later. The young infantryman's permanent liberation would not come until May 2, 1945.

ARDENNES NIGHTMARE

Before his capture, Martin Jones had been a platoon leader in Company G, 423d Infantry Regiment, in the brand-new 106th Infantry Division manning a thin defensive line in the Ardennes. When the Battle of the Bulge began in the early morning hours of December 16, 1944, the German vanguard quickly cut off and surrounded Jones' regiment. On the afternoon of December 19, with very little rations and almost no ammunition remaining, Jones' regimental commander agreed to surrender the unit. The captain who was Jones' company commander notified him of the decision, and then he added that since individual breakouts had been authorized, he was going to attempt one. The captain promptly abandoned his company to its fate and disappeared into the dense woods. The following day, as Jones trudged drearily along with the rest of the POWs, some of his



Lt. L. Martin Jones after his return to the U.S. in 1945. He survived the Battle of the Bulge, the Hammelburg Raid, and a 200-mile forced march before liberation.

DEADLY JOURNEY

Much of Jones' journey to the Hammelburg camp was by train. The prisoners were crowded into small boxcars with no food or water for days at a time. The most dangerous part of the trip, however, occurred during the night of December 22-23 in the railroad marshalling yards at Diez, Germany. While the POWs sat vulnerably in their boxcars, 52 RAF Lancaster bombers dropped tons of explosives on the "transportation grid" target. Later, Jones said, "The boxcar in which I was huddled with perhaps 50 cold, dirty, hungry and discouraged POWs bounced on the tracks but remained upright. The door was blown off, but no one was injured [in my group]."

Perhaps as many as several hundred Americans prisoners died in the air raid. In

emotions at the time, Jones said, "While locked in that boxcar and exposed to the falling bombs, I suffered the most helpless feeling I had experienced during my [entire] time as a POW."

STARVATION DIET AND TRIGGER-HAPPY GUARDS

After more than a week on the train, Jones arrived at Stalag IX-B at Bad Orb, a filthy, overcrowded transient POW camp. Less than two weeks later, however, he was part of a group of officer prisoners sent to Hammelburg – again via locked boxcars. They arrived on January 11, 1945, and while slightly better than Stalag IX-B, the conditions at Hammelburg (Offizierslager, Oflag XIII-B) were still very severe. Daily rations, according to Jones, "usually consisted of a slice of bread [made with 20 percent sawdust], about the size of two normal slices, and a small bowl of 'green hornet' soup that was [thin, wormy] and a dark green color, [which] raced through our digestive systems." The men also received a mug of "ersatz" coffee, which tasted so foul that most prisoners used it for shaving water. After several weeks of this starvation diet, Jones dropped from his normal weight of 150 pounds down to 120.

The living conditions at Hammelburg, like most POW camps, were appalling. "I was in a room with 50 men," Jones recalled. "We had double-deck wooden bunk beds with very thin straw mattresses and one-half of a blanket for each man. We had to walk about two blocks to our latrine. [Our barracks] had a small metal stove in the middle of the room. We received seven or eight charcoal briquettes each day to provide heat, [but] what little heat they generated was absorbed by the stove itself."

Slow death by starvation was not the only threat to the POWs – German guards were often extremely quick on the trigger. "Fear of being shot by guards was a constant worry,"

Corbis

December 17, 1944. A German tank passes columns of American prisoners of war taken captive during the Battle of the Bulge.

March 21, as Lieutenant Charles L. Weeks returned to our barracks from the latrine, I saw a guard shoot him in the back and kill him as he reached the barracks' door, apparently because Weeks was not moving fast enough. … I always made sure I *ran* back to my barracks whenever the air raid sounded."

SHORT-LIVED DELIVERANCE

Camp routine changed dramatically on the afternoon of March 27, 1945. As Jones recalled, "About 4:15 p.m., we heard small-arms fire and saw red tracer bullets streaming past our barracks' windows. [Task Force Baum] attacked Oflag XIII-B and drove off our German guards. When the Sherman tanks came crashing through the barbed-wire fences, we POWs shouted and jumped with joy because we were liberated! We did not know that our freedom would last only a few hours."

Captain Baum found hundreds more American prisoners at Hammelburg than he had expected. Only a few managed to cram into the trucks or climb onto the tanks. The rest, including Jones, staggered along in the wake of the task force as it attempted to return to U.S. lines. Jones had vivid memories of that day. "As the task force moved out … I was among some 900 POWs who followed the tankers for a short distance out of the camp. But the Germans had encircled the task force with tanks, anti-tank guns and infantry. Captain Baum stopped the procession and announced that we were almost 60 miles from the U.S. front lines and that only the few POWs who were riding could continue with his tankers as they tried to fight their way back. He said the rest of us were on our own."

Jones and a fellow prisoner tried to hide out, but the area was swarming with German soldiers. "About two or three o'clock the next morning, we were recaptured by German troops and forced to walk to the southeast, away from the camp. Soon, there were about 160 recaptured POWs in our group."

LONG MARCH TO FREEDOM

Although Jones remained a POW for another month, he never again set foot inside Hammelburg or any other German camp. Instead, the guards marched the prisoners for 200 exhausting miles. Walking all day and sleeping in fields or barns at night, they traveled near – but never through – the cities of Würzburg, Nuremberg and Munich. Bypassing the cities helped avoid the SS and the Allied bombing raids. However, on April 5, they passed a little too close to Nuremberg's suburbs; consequently, they found out that being bombed was perhaps their worst immediate threat. "We stopped to rest just as U.S. planes began bombing the city. [The bombs] started falling closer and closer to our group. Then we lay flat on the ground and the bombs fell among us. Approximately 25 POWs and a German guard were killed. Other prisoners were injured, some badly. Five POWs were assigned to bury the dead, and the remaining POWs continued walking for the rest of the day."

Crossing the Danube River on a raft-ferry, the prisoners moved steadily southeast. Despite walking 10 kilometers or more each day, Jones' health actually improved during his odyssey; he was exercising and eating better than he had in the camps. "Most days we ate food we could 'liberate,' although on some days our guards provided one loaf of bread for every eight men. Because I spoke a little German, I [sometimes] begged for food from German farmwives. Infrequently, they gave me potatoes or bread."

Jones' POW nightmare ended on the banks of the Inn River, about 30 miles southeast of Munich. Retreating Germans had blown the only bridge for miles, thus stranding the prisoners in the town of Gars-am-Inn. When the rumbling of American artillery moved close to Gars, the German guards disappeared, leaving the POWs on their own. Jones recounted, "At dusk on May 2, we heard the wonderful sound of American tanks coming down the hill into Gars. Tanks of the 14th Armored Division moved in without firing a shot. We celebrated our second and final liberation!" Over a month after the Hammelburg Raid, Lieutenant L. Martin Jones was finally free.

Jones, now a retired professor of accounting and administrator at the University of Kansas, returned to Germany in 1989 to retrace his 200-mile walk. This time, however, he made the trip by automobile. ★

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December 12, 2004 - Legendary battle unites neighbors. WW II vets didn't realize just how much they shared

When the German Army launched its last major offensive of World War II, 60 years ago this month, top Allied commanders were stunned. "It was a big surprise to the generals, but it wasn't much of a surprise to us," Lawrence resident Martin Jones recalled in a recent interview.

In December 1944, at the start of what became known as the Battle of the Bulge, Jones was a young Army second lieutenant and platoon leader with the 423rd Regiment of the 106th Infantry Division.

"We'd had patrols up to the German lines and had reported tanks massing near our positions," said Jones, now 82. "But the generals back in Paris just couldn't believe they (Germans) could mount an attack like that." Jones wasn't on those patrols, but he said it was known by infantrymen near the front that the tanks had been seen.

On Dec. 16, the Germans launched a massive attack into the Ardennes Forest in the tri-border area of Belgium, Luxembourg and Germany. Three days later, Jones was taken prisoner by the Germans.

Farther south in eastern France, Al Sellen was a sergeant with the 26th Infantry Division. The division was placed into Gen. George Patton's Third Army and sent north to assist troops overwhelmed in the Ardennes. "The war was not yet over, but no one expected a big offensive like that," said Sellen, now 79 and living in Lawrence. On Jan. 3, 1945, during an artillery barrage, Sellen suffered a leg wound serious enough to keep him out of most of the rest of the war.

By the time the Germans were forced back to their original lines on Jan. 25, 1945, and the Battle of the Bulge was over, 19,000 Americans had been killed.

Historical ties

In May 2001, when Sellen moved next door to Jones at Lawrence Presbyterian Manor, the new neighbors had no idea about their wartime ties. Neither Sellen nor Jones grew up in Lawrence. They had met through Kansas University's Endacott Society, but neither knew much about the other's past. At some point, during a routine conversation, the two realized they both had played a role in one of the war's most historic battles.

"I was rather pleased to have a neighbor who had experienced some of the same things that I had," Jones said.

Though they acknowledge the 60th anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge, neither usually talks about the war. For 40 years Jones didn't talk about being a prisoner of war. For Sellen, it wasn't until the 1990s he finally talked to someone other than his wife about being wounded. "Some just wanted to forget it. We saw some terrible things," Jones said.

Martin Jones

When he arrived in Europe, Jones was leading inexperienced young men making their way to Belgium and the front lines. When the Ardennes offensive began, Jones and his men were about 8 miles behind the front lines. They were rushed forward to help stem the German onslaught. They quickly ran out of ammunition. American generals Dwight Eisenhower and Omar Bradley still didn't realize the seriousness of the German attack, Jones said. He still bristles at Bradley calling the first day of the battle "a skirmish."

On Dec. 17, 1944, German forces surrounded and trapped two regiments, including Jones.' Two days later he became a prisoner of war. "In our trainings we saw films on what to do if we were captured, but we never thought it would happen to us," Jones said. "I was surprised, in awe, and disgusted. It was really a helpless feeling."

For nine days, Jones and thousands of others walked and rode a train on their way to prison camp. Soldiers were locked in the boxcars for days without food or water. Jones arrived Dec. 28 at a prison camp in Bad Orb, Germany. There was poor housing and medical care. The daily food ration was a piece of bread and what the POWs called "green hornet soup," made from wormy dehydrated vegetables.

"After the first day we said, 'Well, at least we're getting a little protein,'" Jones said. "It was a horrible place."

Jones was later transferred to another prison camp at Hammelburg where he continued to endure frostbitten feet and poor conditions. On March 27, Allied forces briefly liberated the prisoners, but German guards quickly seized control of the camp once again.

Jones and about 160 recaptured prisoners were forced to begin walking deeper into Germany. Jones walked from 3 a.m. to noon, rested for about two hours and walked until 6 p.m. "That night when I dropped down into the hay, I remember thinking, 'I may never be able to get up. It may end right here,'" Jones said.

The journey continued until May 2 when the Allies attacked Gars-am-Inn. By then, the German guards had left Jones and the others. The only thing left to do was wait. "The American tanks came down the hill and rolled into town without a shot being fired," Jones said.

Al Sellen

Unlike Jones, Sellen, had been in combat for more than two months in eastern France. "This sounds silly, but we were experienced 19-year-olds," he said. Sellen said many in his division already had been killed when the unit halted fighting in December for rest and reinforcement. "When the Bulge started, it meant that we were immediately available," he said.

On Dec. 20, Sellen's division traveled north in cloudy, frigid weather to push German forces to the north and east. The unit made its way through Luxembourg near the small town of Nothum, about 25 miles from the spot where Jones was captured a day earlier.

On Jan. 3, 1945, as Sellen and other soldiers crept through a forest, German shells began falling all around, blasting trees and soldiers with shrapnel. Sellen and the others scrambled for low ground. He burrowed into a foxhole with two other men. "I remember a lot of explosions," he said. "It must have been just a few minutes, but it felt a lot longer."

Sellen was on top of the others in the hole when the shrapnel hit. One piece tore through his left thigh and into the ankles of the sergeant under him. The sergeant eventually lost both feet. Sellen was transported to France, where doctors also removed a 2-inch piece of shrapnel from his calf muscle. He still keeps that piece of shrapnel, a grisly souvenir.

Sellen received his injury classification. Men with serious injuries were sent back to the United States. Those with minor injuries were sent to France to recuperate before rejoining combat. Sellen was classified for an intermediate group to be transported to Great Britain to recover. Sellen said the hospital staff assigned him his classification and wrote it on a clipboard at the foot of the bed, out of his reach.

"I had to wiggle around the bed and go down and find it," he said. "But it was worth it. That was one of my happiest moments." Sellen returned to his company just as the war was ending in May 1945. "About the only way to get out of there was by being killed, wounded or a prisoner of war," he said. "I had very lucky conditions."

After the War

After Jones and Sellen returned to the United States, they went back to their hometowns: Osage City and Topeka. "Like most veterans, we were behind the times -- getting married, an education and jobs," Jones said.

Jones married Phyllis Grigsby, a music teacher from Osage City, on Dec. 28, 1945. He was honorably discharged in January and returned to KU for the spring semester. "I had a degree to finish," he said. Jones earned undergraduate and master's degrees in business administration. He worked for 40 years at KU, teaching accounting and later becoming director of business and fiscal affairs for the Lawrence campus.

Sellen enrolled in January 1946 at Washburn University. He later earned a master's degree and a doctorate in history from the University of Chicago. Sellen married in 1947 and taught history 36 years at colleges in South Dakota and Iowa.

Life today

Now, 60 years after the Battle of the Bulge, Jones and Sellen said they didn't usually talk about their wartime experiences in Europe. "We talk about current things -- KU things and things that go on at the manor," Jones said. The two families eat together once a week and talk regularly. And when the snow and cold bother Jones' feet too much, Sellen offers to shovel his driveway. It is the little things that have helped cement the pair's friendship during their years of retirement, Sellen said.

Sellen said when they do talk about the war, talking to Jones is different than talking to an ordinary person. "He went through some very scary things, too," Sellen said. (By Jodie Krafft - Special to the Journal-World)

August 16, 2004 - A couple of weeks ago I received a Bronze Star Medal from Philadelphia. About a year ago I learned that I might be eligible for the Bronze Star. I applied in early December, 2003, and it came in the mail within the past two weeks.

Lloyd M. Jones (L. Martin Jones now), 2 Lt. Platoon Leader, Company G, 423rd Regiment, 106th Infantry Division, captured 12/19/1944