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Unit not stated, but believed to be
106th Infantry Division

I was captured by the German Army, on either 16 or 19 December, 1944, now the village of either Auw, or Belasis, Germany. Records are conflicting on the date. I was leading a patrol near the villages mentioned. I was wounded at this time, a serious wound to my right hip. I got first aid from a man who was with me. (See statement from John Barbeau) there was no medical personnel held at that time, at least not with me.

After being captured, I among many men from my regiment were taken to a building, gutted by shelling and bombs. The first thing to happen was, we were searched and every thing of value was taken from us. Watches, money, rings, anything they wanted. Our first aid packs and cigarettes seemed to be valued very high. Our overshoes seemed next. Our overcoats and field Jackets were last.

During the late afternoon a German Officer and a German Soldier came into the building and walked around, seemed to be only looking us over. I recognized the soldier, who only a matter of a few hours ago had been my prisoner. John Barbeau was dressing the wound on my hip, as we had managed to keep some Sulfa Powder. The soldier pointed at me, talking to the officer. They came over to John and I, ordering us to follow them. We walked back down the road. I could see the whole area where I had been captured. The soldier was pointing at the house where I had captured him. The officer asked me, "Was this man your prisoner?" Like a stupid fool I said, "Yes." the officer told me I was a killer of civilians, he asked, "Is that the house he was in?" I admitted this, but denied killing any one. I got my first taste of what being a POW was going to be. He slapped me, hard across the month. He told me, "As you were firing your 50 Caliber Machine gun into that house you killed an old man and his wife. I tried to explain to him, "I had seen no one, other than a German soldier run into that house." The officer had been writing all the time. He told as I would be marked as a killer of civilians as long as I was a prisoner, that is it I were not shot for what I had done. i was really afraid now, the stories I had heard about the brutality of some Germans came back. I thought I had been afraid when captured, I was now petrified. I was trembling, and not from the cold. I was taken back to the building and shoved roughly inside.

THE MARCH:

I had spent the first night as a POW, scared, cold, bleeding and expecting our troops to show up at any time.

In the early morning hours the same German Officer came into the building. We were all awake, as no one had slept. My hip was hurting and still bleeding. The officer informed us that all the seriously wounded were to be sent to a hospital. I tried to get into that group, but the officer told me I would stay with the rest. Later in Life I was glad, as I found put most of these men were never beard from again. We were told we were going to be marched deeper into Germany. Any one trying to escape would be shot. Any one who did not keep up in the march would also be shot. We soon found out they had meant their statement. Men were shot in cold blood for their infractions and some for doing no more than talking back to a guard, getting caught picking up a frozen sugar beet or snow for thirst, some were only beaten for breaking these rules.

In charge of our march was a German Sergeant. We soon found out he was mean and a solid Nazi. Nothing ever seemed to be to his liking. Even the German guards under him did not like his. He made life miserable for every one.

As we were marched deeper into Germany, we naturally went through German towns. The people, as a whole, jeered us, stoned us, beat us with anything handy, such as sticks, brooms, and even fists. Not all were that way. In some you could see pity in their eyes. One old lady in Prum tried to give us bread, but our sergeant gave her a beating with his rifle butt for this.

Other than the weather and the brutal treatment of our guards, another foe, the drivers of those dreaded tanks. We marched in columns of four mostly. As we met these groups of tanks, we would break into columns of one on each side of the road. The drivers seemed to get great pleasure of twisting those monsters and heading for one column or the other of POW's. Many men were killed by these games. Our men could not move fast enough or there wasn't room in many cases to get out of their way.

The best I can remember, we were not fed on this march. Yet, in studying military documents and reading other peoples writings, we were fed once, When we could get away with it, some did manage to steal some potatoes and sugar beets from roadside earthen storage bins. For water, we scooped up snow, and there was plenty of that. Again, when we could get away with it.

The roads were a mess. The movement of all the equipment the Germans had moved to the front and what was being moved daily had turned the roads into a mass of mud and water during the day and frozen ruts and mounds by night. By now, not one POW had overshoes. I had only underwear, socks, shirt and a torn and bloody pair of pants and my shoes. The right one now full of blood.

I do not know the exact number of days we were marched. Again the records are not the same. I would say the records of the Provost Marshal General are the closest, four days. This seemed to fit with my notes, made shortly after getting home. On this march, none of us with wounds received any kind of medical treatment, except what our buddies could give.

THE TRAIN:

We reached Gerolstein and our march ended. Here we were to get on a train and be sent deeper into Germany. First, we were to learn more of the brutality of our captives. We still had our sergeant, and he had already proven himself.

To really understand position and what we were about to be put through, one would have had to have been thee on that cold December day in 1944, or to have seen the size of the box cars we were to be put in. I would say no more than thirty, forty at the most could have been put in one with room to move. The amount by number seems to vary, from sixty to one hundred. I say again, the number from the Provost Marshall General is the best. They record the number as sixty.

The German guards started loading us into the boxcars, herding us like cattle. As our numbers became smaller, it was soon realized by our German sergeant that he was running out of boxcars. He came back to the first one loaded and made every one get out. He now took over the loading of each car personally. By push and crush, by hitting

the POWs, to make them get closer together, he now got his sixty or more men to a car.

The cars were filthy dirty, manure mixed with dirt and straw covered the floors. The men who were lucky enough to still have any outerwear were soon moved to the outer parts of the car. This helped us to add some warmth. We learned not to use the floor to relieve ourselves. The stench was bad enough from the previous tenants. We used helmets, cans or any kind of a container we had. We threw the contents out of a small window at each end of the car. We would remember what we had used these containers for, a little later.

We were locked in this train for at least five days, maybe longer. We were fed once. Now to be fed, you had to have something to hold your soup in. We had no other choice, the same containers we had relieved ourselves in. The German guards would not give us any water to wash them. We got no water that I can remember. We could not even get snow. It was hell.

There was a Chaplain in the car with us. He was given the job of trying to get some order among us. His first move was to get the men with serious wounds to one end of the car. I was among this group. My hip was still seeping blood and I was very weak. Most of the filthy straw was moved by feet, as on one could really move to one end of the car. There was almost a dozen men in this group of wounded. By lying down, one man at a time, putting your head and shoulders between the other mans legs we found all the wounded could lay down. The Chaplain had another idea and he tried something else. He started the men sitting down, again one at a time. By sitting between each other's legs there was room for every man to lay or sit down. It was so crowded this was done on a rotating basis.

We were bombed at least once while we were locked in these cars. We were strafed more than once. There were some me killed, some wounded. The cars were not marked so the pilots had no way of knowing the train was carrying POWs.

Our train ride ended at a beautiful village called Bad orb. We could see the sign, but not an of us has any idea where Bad Orb was, except it was in Germany. We had by now given up being liberated, at least for now.

STALAG IX-B, BAD ORB, GERMANY:

We were greeted at Bad Orb, first by the sullen looks from most of the people. Jeers from others as we were marched out and up a mountain. The children were on their way to school. They threw rocks or frozen clumps of mud at us.

We were marched right to the top of that mountain and there was Stalag IX-B. First impression were not too bad. The buildings looked sturdy. There was smoke coming from a few of the chimneys. I remember how pitiful the men who were already there looked. There were no Americans. We were the first.

We were lined up and introduced to the Camp Commandant. He did not beat around the bush. He told us what was expected of us and the laws of the camp. He told us what we could not do and what would happen if any man broke these rules. Men did die for breaking the rules.

I was shocked when my name was called out. I was told to stand alone. About 5 more names were called. The six of us were taken to a small building set aside from the rest of the camp. We were put in a very small room with about 8 bunks and a small stove. There were no windows and no water. We could not find a toilet. We were then given some charcoal and allowed to build a fire. The room soon became warm, in fact, it almost seemed hot. This was the first warmth we had felt for sometime. A guard then brought us one blanket each. We asked for food, but were ignored. The guard then told us the charcoal had to last till the following evening. A small bucket of water was given us. No food. There were no lights so while we could see, we moved the bunks in around the stove as close as we could. We were ready for our first night in Stalag IX-B.

During the night I had to go, and go bad. I tried the door, it was locked. I then yelled and got nothing for this effort, except stirring up the dogs. These dogs were put in the compound at night. I gave up, finally using a corner of the room.

The first full day at Stalag IX-B for me started early. I was taken to a building next to the one I had been locked in. I was put in a room with table and chairs. I was given hot coffee and asked if I smoked. I was given American cigarettes (probably my own). The other 5 men were brought in, one by one, why this way, no one knows. I was then taken to another room, again alone. I was asked the usual questions, name, rank and serial number. He then asked me what outfit I was in? I told him I did not have to answer his questions. It did not seem to upset him. In fact, he started talking about the states. He told me he had lived in Detroit. I was allowed to smoke during these interviews. The rest of the day was spent in general talking of my family.

This day started the same as the first. Hot coffee and cigarettes. We waited and soon the Germans started taking us, again one at a time, never together. I had the same officer. The questions were not all military at first. Then back about home. Where was I born? Where had I worked? School? How many years? How long had I been in the Army? These questions were not answered, but he still didn't seem to mind. This session lasted longer and there were long periods of silence. I was finally sent back, but this time straight to my compound. I seem to recall that there were at least 2 of the men ahead of me. The rest came in later.

The end of this day brought us food. It was some sort of soup. It smelled awful and tasted worse. The bread was almost as bad. We did eat it as we knew that would be all we got that day. The guard came and took one man to bring back charcoal and water. He made us move the bunks before leaving, but we moved the back, close to the stove as soon as he locked the door.

Most of the night was spent talking, comparing our interrogations. We were all getting the same treatment, but why? Not a one of us knew anything important. The fear that had been put aside with the nice treatment was returning.

The next morning was the same, only we did not know we would never see each other again. We were all taken to the same room, but there was no coffee, no smoking. The guard took me to the same room and the same officer was there. I could see a change, there was no exchange of greetings. I was told by the guard to remain standing. The officer turned, he bluntly told me the vacation was over. He stood up. I thought I had seen hatred on a person's face, but this man's face was like stone.

The German officer sat down and started reading from a folder. As he read he would glance up, looking at me with a sneer on his face, then he would nod his head. He finally put the folder down, sat for awhile in complete silence. When he did start to talk, it was like hearing a different person. His voice now had no softness to it, it was loud and harsh. He now made statements. He started by telling me that I was still listed as missing in action and would stay MIA until he saw fit to notify the Red Cross that I was a POW. He asked me if I knew what this meant? I nodded my head, Yes. He told me he could have me shot. No one would know how or where. He told me all he had to do was send my dogtags back and say I had died of wounds received in the battle when I was captured. He told me the German records showed that I had killed an old man and his wife. I tried to explain, if I had killed any one as he said, it was done in the line of duty. If there was anyone in that house other than the German soldier, I could not have known it. He asked me again if I was ready to answer his questions. I shook my head no. He went into a rage. He jumped up and came toward me. I thought I was through. He went to the door and called the guard.

I was taken back to the compound. This time to a different building. I was taken to a small room. It had one bunk and that was all. There was no stove, no water, no toilet, only that bunk. I was told to remove all my clothes, all of them. I was now becoming more fearful of what was going to happen to me. The guard told me to redress, shirt, pants and shoes. No underwear or socks. Leave my shirt unbuttoned and out of my pants, button the top of my pants, and not to lace my shoes. I was doing as he had told me, when he said to give him my underwear and socks. By now I was sweating - what was going to happen?

The guard took me outside into the compound. I was told to stand at attention, not to move. As records show, the weather was extremely cold, there was snow on the ground, the wind seemed to blow constantly. What was going to happen now? That question kept running through my mind. It was very hard to stand there and not move. I tried, but it did not last long. I moved. I was given a good beating with a rubber hose and plenty of cursing from the guard. I had gotten to a point where I could barely stand. I was weak. It was getting dark before I was taken to my quarters. There had been a blanket thrown on the bunk. My underwear and socks were not there. The wound on my hip had started to bleed again. My body hurt all over.

I was given this treatment over and over. It had to be at least a week. I was not questioned at all during this time. I was then taken before the same SS officer. This time he was very rude, he only talked in German. I could not understand him and he knew it. He went back to English. What part of Germany did my ancestors come from? What was I doing to them, being in the American Army. I could only stand and listen, I had nothing to say.

The days seemed to all run into one. I had no idea what day it was. I did not know the date. I had looked my body over, it was a mass of dried blood, my feet were almost black and how they hurt. I could tell that I had lost weight and was running to the toilet as much as they would let me. The rest of the time in my pants. I made up my mind I would escape, one way or the other. I really did not care. I guess someone was watching out for me, about that time I got a new guard.

My new guard was an elderly man and I soon found out, not a Nazi. The first time I saw this man, I was lying on my bunk, trying to keep warm. He had brought me my evening

meal. I had trouble getting up. He came over and helped me. What a shock, a German helping me. I was in such a stupor that I had not buttoned my clothes when I laid down. He looked at me for a few minutes, not saying a word. Then he asked how long had I been getting those treatments. I was not sure myself, so I told him a couple of weeks, maybe longer. He told me to eat if I could. He told me he would be back later. When he returned he had an extra blanket and some kind of hardtack. He told me that was the best he could do at that time. He also told me to hide the extra blanket under my straw when I left the room.

Shortly after getting my new guard, I was taken to a new building, new to me, at least. It was equipped something like a doctor's office. I thought I was going to get medical treatment at last. My body was a mass of dried blood and infection. I would say from the beatings and the wound on my right hip. My feet were swollen and sores becoming a problem. I was told to wait. I could have waited all day, the room was warm. The warmth was making me sleepy, but this was cut short. A man had come into the room, dressed in a long white smock. I made another mistake, I thought he was a doctor and was going to help me. He was a doctor, but not there to help me.

That doctor told me to get up on the table and lay down. He started to hook some wires to some sort of cups, that's what they looked like to me, more like headphones. He started to put them on my head. That is when I started to resist. He called out and another man came into the room and held me down while the doctor strapped me down. When he had finished, he stepped back and said, "How long has it been since you had a bath?" They both laughed. Then he said, "Let's see his reaction to this."

All of a sudden I began to have a warm feeling, through my whole body, then it turned out to be pain. In my head, my eyes would not focus. Then bright lights seemed to flash, of brilliant colors like a rainbow. I had no idea what they were doing to me, only that I wanted to die. I finally passed out. When I came to, I was not strapped down. My head felt like it would burst. My friend the guard was there. He helped me down and steadied me until I got my bearings. He gave me a chocolate bar and left.

I believe I got these electronic treatments about three days. I did have a brief talk with the SS officer every day before the treatments. After the third treatment, my friend the guard told me, "Tell him anything, maybe that will stop them. Tell them what they want to hear. If you do not, they will kill you and there has been enough of that." I remembered his statement the next day.

This day I was taken to the compound, more for the cold treatment. I must have moved. I got hit in the mouth with a rifle butt. The blow knocked out some teeth, how many I do not know. I do know there was more than one lying there on the ground. This lasted the better part of the day. I was turned over to the friendly guard.

Back in my room, the guard left. He returned a few minutes later, telling me we could talk as there were no other guards in the building. He asked me, "If I were to escape, could I walk?" I was afraid, but I finally told him, "I had thought of escape and was sure I could walk, if I could get out." He told me there was an underground member in Bad Orb. He had talked to this man about me. As escape could be arranged with the help of the guard. They had made all the arrangements, all they needed was my word that I could make it on my own after the escape. No words were spoken about what would happen if any of us were captured in the planned escape.

The next day was rough, standing out in the cold and snow. The beatings and then another electronic treatment. I did not think I could make it, but the thought of escape and survival won out. I did not see any SS that day. For some reason the treatment did not last too long. As my guard took me back to my little room, he told me my escape had been arranged for that afternoon. I could not understand, in broad daylight. He told me the plan.

ESCAPE:

Late in the afternoon, I yelled that I had to go to the latrine. I got to the latrine and there was the cart. It was there every day to haul our bowel waste away. I went inside, then crawled down the hole. The stench was awful as I let myself down into that slime. It was not too deep as it had been cleaned that day. As I sneaked through the opening in the wire to let the cart in, the old man driving the cart was motioning for me to hurry. He helped me up and then down on the floor at his feet. He covered me with an old horse blanket. I hoped I was covered. We were never challenged. The ride was short and rough. I was told I could get out of the cart. I was in a barn. The old man was talking to an old lady. I was taken into a warm kitchen.

The old couple gave me a hot potato and some hot coffee. Another man came in and the three of them talked. The new man came over to me and told me my escape had been discovered so I would spend the night there. My hiding place would not be comfortable, but it would be warm and safe. I spent the night in their cellar.

The next morning I was given hot coffee and oatmeal, then a blanket. I was put in a cart and covered with the blanket. Then covered with straw and potatoes. We were stopped more than once, I guessed, by German soldiers. After quite a long time, I was told we had completed the first leg of my escape. Again in a barn. This time I was given instructions and shown maps. I was shown exactly where I was and the direction I was to walk. My route of walk was all along a railroad. I was shown how to identify underground stations, my hiding places of daylight. I had to try and remember all this as I would not have any maps. All of my walking would be after dark. The village where I started my walk was Wertheim.

I left the village at dark. I had only shoes, pants, shirt and a blanket. I did real well that first night under the circumstances. I found the railroad and knew I had turned in the right direction. I did have to rest quite often. As the sky began to brighten I started to look for my hiding place. I soon saw the building that had been shown to me on the map. It had the proper markings on it also.

RECAPTURED:

As I sneaked into this building I was greeted by a German patrol. They had used the building as cover for the night. I could do nothing. I put my hands on my head and did not move. I was quickly searched, and then taken back to the village of Wertheim. There I was turned over to a German officer, not SS. I was put in a car and returned to Stalag IX-B. I knew what waited for me and I was really worried.

I was taken to the Camp Commandant. He was in a rage. "You will be shot." He shook his fist at me. This did not seem to make him feel any better so he started beating me

with his fists. This outburst seemed to calm him down. He told the two guards to take me out. Before leaving, he talked to the guards in German. I had seen the guards before, but had never had them. As we walked, I asked questions. The only answer I got was to be pushed a little. They did not hit me at all. They took me to the same building I had been in before. As soon as we were inside, one guard ordered me to remove my shoes. I was thrown into a room. It was dark but I could see. The room was smaller than the last one I had been in. There was no window and no bunk, nothing. It was not even eight feet square. At least I was alive, but for how long? The penalty for escape was death and the Commandant had made sure I remembered this.

I was taken back to the Commandant's office as night fell and I was sure this was my last day alive. I was questioned through the whole night. Who had helped me? How did I get out? Where was I hidden? By whom? This was all conducted by the Commandant.

I expected the SS officer at any minute, or the treatment I had received before, or worse. At daybreak I was returned to my little room. I do not know the day or date. I would see no one, speak to no one, other than the guards until the day I was to be sent to Stalag IX-A, Ziegenhain. These days were spent in that cell, bread and water once a day, no shoes, no bunk, no blanket and had to use a corner of the room to relieve myself, then made to clean it up. My diarrhea was bad now, my body a mass of bloody scabs, infection was getting worse, my hip was raw, a running mess. I was very weak, my belly looked as if a baby was on the way.

The days started to become nights. Then I could not tell which it was. I knew I was losing my mind. I started talking to myself. I tried to remember songs, people, anything. The men in my outfit, what had happened to them? I felt it was my fault they had been captured. I had led them into that trap. Then I could not remember any of them, not even my daughter. Food took over my mind, enough that the pain and the cold was not there anymore.

TRANSFER:

I was brought out of my stupor by someone slapping me. Not hard or mean, just enough to wake me up. It was a German guard. There was an officer with him. I was told to get up as I was being moved out. I was so dazed I did not get what they were saying. I tried to get up but could not make it. The guard helped me. I knew they were going to kill me. I did not care. The officer asked the soldier about my shoes. He was told I had no shoes. He told the soldier to bring me a blanket. He then instructed the soldier to cut it into strips and wrap my feet and legs. They were not mean or rough, actually very gentle. I was not completely confused.

I was taken outside and down toward the main entrance to the camp. I could see hundreds of men lined up. As I got closer I could see they were Americans. As we got to the first men, the officer asked me if I recognized any of them. As I hobbled along this line I did recognize some men from Cannon Company. I was left in the care of these men. It was the first time I had seen them since my capture. The first Americans I had talked to since about the third day of being at IX-B.

The first thing they wanted to know was, "Where had I been?" How did I get in the shape I was in? I could not get over how thin and skinny they all were. Their eyes

sunken into their heads, with dark rings under them. Beards covering faces that I did not think were old enough to grow one. Dirty, and most in rags. They had the same impression of me. One man, Harold Schick, who I had known for more than three years did not even recognize me. This he told me in later years.

No one seemed to know what was happening, rumors were floating. The one rumor turned out to be true. We were being transferred to a stalag for NCO's. The men could see I was really in bad shape. I could barely walk, so they tried to help me as much as they could. They were in almost as bad a shape as I, but they still tried to carry me. I remember the walk down the mountain. If not for my buddies, I would never have made it. We were marched to the train station in Bad Orb.

My mind was playing tricks on me, sometimes a complete blank. My memory seems to stop just as we got to the station. I remember nothing of the train ride. I do not remember the Germans giving us any food, but I am told they did give us some bread and a small tin of cheese. I am also told the food was to last for two days.

STALAG IX-A, Ziegenhain:

I do not remember arriving at Ziegenhain. My first memory is of standing in a snow storm in a different stalag. The country looked different. I saw rolling farm land and a small village, not too far away. We were finally put in a large tent, to spend the night huddled together to try and stay warm. We were put in buildings the next morning. I remember very little from that time.

My memory of Stalag IX-A is broken up, in days and part days. Many days do not seem to exist. There are days that are very clear. The readings of letters and documents do not bring it all back, only some. I am told I was in very bad shape mentally, and I knew I was very sick.

I cannot remember what the buildings looked like inside. I do remember I had a bunk and a blanket. Here I also had to use an outside toilet. My diarrhea was worse. My wound and the sores had scabbed over, to a certain degree, but the infection was very bad. I seem to remember I did get some soup here at least once a day. The food was almost beyond eating, but when you are starving, you can and will eat anything.

I remember one thing more than anything else, except liberation. One of my good days. I was brought back to reality by one of my buddies. Standing there with him was the largest black man I had ever seen. The black man was holding a pair of shoes. He held them out to me. My buddy told me a soldier in another compound had died and he had asked the black man to get the shoes for me. He also told me the black man could not talk. His tongue had been cut out when he was a child. Some sort of a custom in his country. I do remember he only stood there and grinned. I found out later he went where he pleased as the Germans were very much afraid of him. The shoes were too large but who cared, they were shoes.

Another thing happened that is very clear in my mind. The weather was becoming warmer and the sky was clear. We heard the sound of airplane engines one morning. I was helped outside and we could see wave after wave of B-17's flying over. They were escorted by fighters. The fighters peeled off and buzzed the camp. Everyone was waving and yelling. They were so low we could make out the pilots. They banked and came

back, only this time they strafed us. Our MOC quickly had the men form a POW with their bodies. I am told there were some wounded, but none killed.

I remember bull sessions, games and anything to try and keep the men busy. Much of this was centered around the bunks of the men who were too sick to get up. Many of the men had given up. They just laid there, eyes staring out into space. I kept on fighting, I made myself walk whenever I could. Our one bull session that was the most popular was about food. The exchange of recipes. There were some good ones. This talk of food even overcame thoughts of our families. We dreamed of food.

Men were dying daily. All the men were slowly starving. It showed in the sunken eyes, the thin wrists, the bellies becoming larger and larger. Clothes that used to fit, now hanging on our bodies. Rib cages that could be counted like piano keys. Everyone was filthy dirty. Most of the men's shirts, what was left of them, were just rags. They had been torn and used as bandages for the wounded. Infection of wounds that had never received the proper care was a big problem. My own wound was nothing but a mass of pus and blood. The bites of lice, ticks, bedbugs and many more types of vermin was very plain on the bodies of the men. We knew that many more would die if we were not liberated in the near future. Begging for food and Red Cross packages fell on deaf ears. Medical supplies were non-existent. I know of one medic (ours) that was caught with some aspirin, (he worked in the dispensary). He was shot for trying to help the wounded.

There is much more that could be written about our life as Prisoners of War. I do not have the ability or knowledge to do so. It is hard to remember all that happened. Reading letters and military documents had brought back many unpleasant memories. It does not seem possible the human body could come through so much and still function. Many didn't.

LIBERATION:

This is the one day none of us at Stalag IX-A, Ziegenhain, Germany, will ever forget. It was 30 March, 1945, Good Friday. We had known for days it was getting close. The sound of artillery had been our first clue that the armies of our side were getting close. Then we could hear small arms fire. I am told preparations had been made for this day, but I do not remember them. I remember the night before liberation. We heard the sound of heavy equipment on the road outside of the stalag. We thought it was the Germans moving more guns to the front. We were wrong - they had been withdrawing.

One man crawled up into the rafters, acting as a lookout. At daybreak, he yelled, "The Germans are gone !!" "There are NO guards !!" Then a little later, he shouted, "There are tanks and they are ours !!"

We all got outside as quickly as possible, men that had not been out of their bunks for weeks, got up and got outside. There were the tanks, a white star that looked as large as a house painted on them. About noon they had secured Stalag IX-A. We were back with our won.

My original writing of this said the 57th Recon was the liberating unit. This has been proven in error. It was the 15th Task Force of the 6th Armored Division. The first

questions were, "Are there any Americans here ??" These men grabbed us and hugged us like we were their long lost brothers. They did not seem to mind the filthy, stinking, walking dead. They were as happy as we were. They were horrified at our condition. They quickly started taking everything they had on their person and giving it to us. Not what most of us expected. We all had some thoughts of how we would be treated when we were liberated, even guilt. We had laid the war out in safety (in a sense).

This was the advance party, so they had to move on. They had to keep pushing the Germans. They left some medics with us and they were a busy crew. They also left some infantry, as protection for us. We found out the protection was really for the Germans that would be coming back as prisoners. They were good to us. They told us the main body would be along, for us to stay put, no wandering around. This again was for our protection.

The main body of our liberators arrived. They had been alerted by the advance party of our being here and of our condition. They set up a tent first, a first aid station. Next they opened a kitchen. Started cooking, anything they had and started feeding us. They even tried to give us some choice as to what we would like to have. This may sound crazy, but I asked for cold pancakes and peanut butter with jelly. I got it !!

We were told they would move us out as soon as transportation could be arranged. We, the now Former Prisoners of War, did not really care. We were FREE !! We had food and were being given medical treatment. I do not remember again, all that happened while we waited, not how long.

During this period of waiting, I was examined by a Doctor. He wanted to know why I did not wear my shoes ? Shoes that fit ? Was it because of the condition of my feet ? I explained the reason, told him the whole story. He started a search and found me a new pair of shoes, some socks, and they fit. Did they ever feel good !!

We were finally loaded onto trucks and taken to an old German air base. I do not know how many days had passed since our liberation. We were put on C-47s and flown to Camp Lucky Strike, in France. I can remember a little of that flight. The country below was beginning to turn green and was real pretty. There were ambulances and trucks waiting for us. I was put in an ambulance. I wanted to stay with the men of my outfit, but made to go in the ambulance.

We were told that Camp Lucky Strike had been alerted to our arrival. They were not prepared for what they got. Men who could not walk, diarrhea, every illness in the book and then some. In my case, they treated me like a king. We were the first American POWs they had seen. I have been told that many men got to take walks into Le Havre while we were waiting for boats to take us back to the USA. I did not get to do this as I was watched closely. I would have liked to visit the city, as this is where we landed, what seemed like a century ago.

I do remember the day we were told there was a ship, just for us. I was put in an ambulance and driven to the port. The medics were going to carry me up that gangplank, no way. I was going to walk or crawl, but not to be carried. They let me have my way, with the help of the Navy men, I made it. Her name was the USS General William A. Richardsen.

I will end my story here, at Camp Lucky Strike, in France. The rest of my Army time is another story. I do want to add some quotes from some people that were in better position than I to say the things that need to be said.

Quotes by Howard Byrnes; War Correspondent:

"Most of the Americans had no cots and were forced to sleep on the floor of their extremely cold barracks with only a thin strip of blanket for cover. The prison diet was vile. The men were given coffee with sugar and nothing else for breakfast.

Lunch consisted of one liter of soup. At supper, each man received one-seventh of a loaf of black bread with a cup of tea. Occasionally treats were margarine and marmalade, and once in a great while, a piece of meat the size of a man's thumb. One hundred and forty men were crowded into barracks one hundred feet long and twenty feet wide. Barracks were infested with bedbugs and lice. With no soap, it was impossible to keep clean.

A Chicago soldier, nameless in our material, said, "They jammed us into boxcars, 87 to a car. There was thick layers of manure on the floor and a little straw. That was what we had to sleep on....without food or water."

The guards did not allow the prisoners to leave cars to relieve themselves, Byrne wrote, and they were forced to use helmets for this purpose, throwing the contents out of small windows at the top of the cars. When they were finally released and given food, no mess kits were provided. The men were forced to use the same helmets to eat from - and they were given no water to wash them.

After liberation of the men, Byrne went on, an American medical officer was asked whether deaths of POWs were due to natural causes? He replied, "Yes, but in my opinion, malnutrition and exposure were the contributing factors. These men were healthy when they came here. Now they are skin and bones."

Quotes by General Dwight D., Eisenhower, in his book, "Crusade in Europe". The General used these words in describing the liberated American POWs at Camp Lucky Strike:

"Every one of those present had undergone privations beyond the imagination of the normal human. It seemed futile to attempt, out of my experience, to say anything that could possibly appeal to such an enormous accumulation of knowledge of suffering."

"Truth or Fiction", by Colonel R. Ernest Dupuy, in his book, "St. Vith - Lion in the Way"; Their story is so fantastic that it might be classified as fiction if we did not know that through this war, as in past wars, not only is truth stranger than fiction, but also that men exist who refuse to accept the dictates of fate, and stop fighting only when the breath of life leaves their body."