# Edward L Bohde

Company L, 422nd Infantry Regiment
106 Infantry Division
Stalag 8-A

The way it was

I was born in Ft. Wayne, Indiana on my Grandpa's farm, during a visit by my Mother and Father. My Father was my Grandpa's oldest Son out of seven children. My Father, at the age of approximately 21, left the farm to seek his own destiny and landed in Detroit, Michigan. There, he found work in an auto factory and both my Mom and Dad settled down eventually raising five children.

After several moves, we ended up in the City of Roseville, (then called a village) where I attended grade school and graduated from High School from the Eastland School, which had grades one through twelve in one building.

After graduation, I obtained work at the Carboloy Company, a subsidiary of General Electric Corporation, and performed tasks of forming a product named carboloy into drill bits and tools for grinding and cutting metal. The product was the next hardest metal to diamonds, and was used extensively in drill bits for drilling oil wells etc.

Both of my brothers, Earl and Canton (nicknamed Steve) worked there also and we had a great camaraderie doing so. I started there in 1941, the year of my graduation, and also, the year that the Second World War started. Remember, Pearl Harbor, Hawaii and the sneak attack by the Japanese on December 7, 1941?

Up until that time, I was the typical happy teenager, dreaming of becoming famous dating beautiful young teenage girls and all in all just having a good time.! I can remember, the thrill I had in dating. We went to dances, parties, hay rides, proms to the circus and so many other events. It was, indeed, a beautiful time of my life.

March 13,1943,1 was drafted into the Army. Two of my closest schoolmates were also drafted at the same time, Ray Bassett and Don Dumas, along with others from my class and school.

I was first sent to Fort Custer, Michigan, and then on to Camp Butner in North Carolina March 22, 1943 for basic training, where I spent some 8 weeks of training and Maneuvers. It was very strenuous training in that the terrain was very mountainous and during the Summer months it was extremely hot and muggy. I believe, though, that it was a good solid basis for discipline and would stand us in good stead for the future months spent in combat. I was in the 28th Infantry Division.

While at Camp Butner, I kept applying for a transfer to the Air Corps, for I wanted to fly and felt this would be a good opportunity, not only to learn to fly `but to get out of the infantry. By this time, I had eaten enough dirt and didn't like the taste of it nor the dirty muddy conditions we always seemed to be in. For some unknown reason, (at the time) I never heard anything about my attempts to transfer and related this to my Brother, Earl, who came to visit me early in 1944. Each morning upon reveille, each soldier had to arise, make his bed, and immediately mop the floor around the bedsite. The barracks were so cold that, the water froze immediately. Brother Earl, who spent the night with me

in the barracks, upon seeing this was quite upset and immediately berated me to get out of this godforsaken unit and get into the Air Corps, where one could live like a human being. I explained that I had many times put in for transfer but had not heard a word regarding my efforts. He snorted that l should get my butt in to town and file a request for transfer with the local induction center. I told him that since I was already in the Service, I didn't think this could be done, as the inductions centers were for civilians. He wouldn't take any of this until I promised to do as he advised, and upon my promise to do so, he left immediately to return to his unit in the Air Corps.

As it turned out he was correct. I went to town on my very next leave and did apply for transfer to the Air Corps at the closest induction Center. And, inside of three weeks, I received my orders to proceed to Miami Beach, Florida for basic training, on January 17, 1944. Needless to say, my Superior Officers were quite upset with my leaving, and left no doubt that they had not been forwarding my requests for transfer.

Upon arriving in Miami Beach, I was screened by my superior officers to best use whatever talents I brought with me and it was decided that I be placed as a P.1. instructor. (Physical Training). What a blast! Large platforms, 6 foot square and five feet high were placed on the beach—four of them in a now, about fifty feet apart. Each of us P.1. instructors had two classes a day for an hour's duration for approximately 30 recruits. We would stand on the platform, and advise what the exercise would be, demonstrate it, and then commence the exercise in masse. I had one class in the morning and one in the afternoon and the rest of the day l was free to do as l pleased. If one had to be in the Service, this was about the best way to spend one's time, and coming from the Infantry, I really enjoyed my stay in Miami Beach. A further pleasure of this task, was viewing the young girls in very brief swimsuits who would gather to watch and ogle all of the young recruits going through their exercises, one by one. I might add that I also received quite a bit of attention and had no problem dating several of these attractive girls. All in all my stay in Miami Beach was a memorable one, indeed!!

But like all good things, they have to end. February, 28, 1944, I was shipped off to Stuttgart Field in Arkansas to begin my basic flight training. We had ground school during the day interspersed with pre-flight training. It was very interesting, and my buddies and myself were just dreaming of the day we could fly. We preflighted the aircraft, seeing that it was ready to fly, and we could taxi the craft , all preparatory to actually begin flight training and ground school.

March 28,1944, , our Airbase received horrible news. It seems that the Infantry was short of Manpower and all the troops who transferred into the Air Corps from the Infantry, were to be returned to the Infantry. Since most of us were from the Infantry, thinking we had escaped this "face in the dirt" existence; bitterness reared it's ugly head, along with anger, despair and dejection. Morale went to ground zero. The very morning after this announcement, the First Sergeant came in after reveille telling everyone to jump out of the sack and get cracking and was met with cat-calls. One guy would shout out, "Go soak your head" and from somewhere else in the barracks, "Get Lost"! etc., etc., Everyone was so demoralized that they didn't care what would happen to them. Court Martial, jail time, dishonorable discharge. Who cares! We were all angry.

It was not long, however, that we, from the Infantry were returned thereto. I was sent to Camp Atterbury in Indiana, assigned to Co. L, 422nd Infantry Regiment, 106 Infantry Division

We went back into training, which was old-hat by now and were tremendously interested in the progress of the War, since we knew our turn would eventually turn up. And turn up it did. On October 20, 1944, we shipped out of N.Y. Harbor aboard the Acquitania (a British Ship) which landed in Grenock, Scotland on October 28.

This was a very large ship being 901 feet in length and 97 feet at the widest point. She had four funnels and was the last one of 13 others to be constructed. She consisted of 6 decks and had four large screws each weighing 17 1/2 tons. Her normal passenger load was 2,200 which now swelled to 13,200 G.I.'s. We were packed into bunks stacked 6 high. The voyage was rough, in that most of us got seasick. When we went to "mess" they had long narrow tables about waist high and you stood shoulder to shoulder with others, looking across the table at others, standing shoulder to shoulder also, with this narrow table/bench separating us. Each of us had a plate of food in front of us and as the ship rolled very slowly first to the right and then to the left one had to hold their plate or it would slide away. Then as a person would get that oozy feeling in the stomach and bolt from the room, his plate would slide the whole length of the table, in front of everyone left, and often with his disgorge covering the plate, along with it's vomitous odor. After one or two of these happenings, the room was soon emptied. I chose to stay away from the mess room, and lived on Hershey bars all the way across.

After landing in Scotland, we were loaded into trains and after a rather short trip arrived in a small British town called "Stow on the Wold". Here, we continued our training while awaiting the inevitable trip to the East and the War. While here in this little town, we also had some fun. The townsfolk accepted us graciously. When we could get a pass, we visited a little pub in the Village which was very quaint and quite typically English. They had separate rooms for males and females, and each had a bar and dart boards (the favorite sport at bars). One of our group, an Irish guy, tough as nails and always in trouble( in fact, he spent the crossing in the ship's brig, for going AWOL in the N.Y. Port before we sailed--jumped ship to visit his wife in New Jersey) entertained everyone with his singing of Irish songs on the top of a table.

On or about November 7, 1944, we were loaded up and shipped to France. We arrived there with overcast skies and rain and were quickly informed that through some strange snafu, we had no rations as the supply company had failed to show up.

We were turned loose to forage for food after being instructed to visit French homes And ask for help. We did just that, and three of us came upon a French farmhouse, where we were welcomed warmly.

The farm was owned by a charming French couple, with two young daughters, and they Immediately set about to fix us breakfast We had fresh eggs, bacon, sausage, potatoes and toasted French bread with home made marmalade. I'll never forget that meal. To this day, that was my dream breakfast.

December 1, 1944 our outfit was finally committed to the front. Since we were an untested division, we were assigned to a relatively quiet sector of the front. Our division, as those on our flanks, were strung out on a line facing a similar line of Germans. We were housed in bunkers. These were shelters dug into the side of the mountain, shored up by timbers inside, with dirt floors and walls. We had a stove inside vented to the outside and could keep comfortably warm. Each bunker held approximately eight soldiers along with their equipment.

The 422nd, 423rd and 424th regiments were positioned on the Schnee Eifel, a large Ridge mass about 16 miles due east of St. Vith, Germany, which was a very important city for the Germans to take and control in their last great battle to turn the war in their favor.

Our time was spent on patrols when we were on duty. Daytime patrols which were sent out heavily armed to engage and, destroy the enemy.. And nighttime patrols, heavily camouflaged, and ordered not to engage the enemy, but to find and report his strength in troops, equipment, vehicles, etc.

The last patrol I controlled was a nighttime maneuver. Usually on our return to our quarters, after such a patrol and after reporting to the command post, as to what we encountered and/or learned, we were to stand down for a day or two, enjoying R & R and generally not receiving any orders. This last patrol, however, was far, far different Upon our return about dawn, we were greeted with a bustling Company, and the order to "fall out with full fighting gear on the double".

We learned quickly, that "the enemy had broken through our lines through one of the company's on our flank. We were ordered to march to the rear, engage and destroy or capture the enemy, thought to be a small patrol or company and then return to our original positions. Little did any of us know then that this would be later called the "Battle of the Bulge", Hitler's last stand at winning the war. The date was Decemberl6th, 1944.

We were located in the Ardennes forest which is heavily wooded and were in A holding line and spread so thinly that we were of 1/10th strength of a normal contingent for the length of the front we were protecting. No intelligence advised us of this eventuality. Evidently, no one knew and Hitler did pull off a total surprise in this last ditch offense. His regiments drove inapincers move directly into the 422nd and 423rd regiments of the 106th Division, surrounding them and cutting them off from friendly forces. However, as it came to pass, the furious defense that these regiments made upset his timetable, giving other allied forces time to reposition their counter-offensive and within weeks to blunt the force of the bulge. I was a staff sergeant in Company L, 422nd Regiment.

As we proceeded to the rear, in combat formation, e.g. spread out in several columns, we were joined by other soldiers from our rear echelon placements. Service people engaged as cooks, secretaries, special services etc. and all of whom never carried a rifle as we, the infantry did. We surmised then, as it later turned out to be true, that this was a very serious breakthrough and every person who could shoulder a weapon was called upon to help.

The weather was extremely poor, cloudy with poor visibility. It snowed occasionally and several feet of snow covered the ground. We had no artillery support and what was worse, no air support. Our supply lines for food and ammunition had been cut off.

In this particular area, we had left the forest and were in fairly open territory. The columns were halted momentarily for, we guessed, some obstruction at the head of the unit After some 15 minutes or so, we observed some thirty or forty large tanks coming directly at us. There was some conversation as to whose they were and then the calming understanding verbalized as "don't worry, their ours".

This had a comforting effect on everyone in my near vicinity, until several minutes later, these friendly denizens began firing upon us. Shrieks and cries of pain rang out

immediately as the shells burst spewing their shrapnel in every direction. Being in charge Of the Platoon as a non-commissioned officer, I immediately ordered them to commence firing. Along with the tanks were German infantry trying to use the tanks as protection from gunfire. We lay there, firing away as the tanks came closer and closer firing their 88's in our midst. Then, above the roar of gunfire and commotion, I heard our Company Commander shout, "Stop firing, Stop firing, and saw him or his aid stand up with a white cloth tied to the end of his rifle, raised high above his head. I, though, continued to fire at the enemy, either because I was in a state of disbelief or because this was the way l was trained. Kill the enemy!

A number of men around me continued to do the same until we heard another order, "Cease firing, Cease firing, You're getting innocent men killed. At this last order I did stop firing my rifle and saw all of my comrades standing up with their, hands held high above their heads.

I don't know what possessed me, except that I was damned sure I didn't want to be captured. I immediately turned around on my belly and started crawling to the rear, away from the advancing tanks and infantry. Remember, that I told those already standing with their hands up, not to stop or pay attention to me. I continued to crawl as fast as I could downhill, back to the protection of the woods. Lined up on my course were several fox-holes filed with ice water. I crawled into one side and out the other, much as a snake would, and continued not even feeling the chill of the water and soaked clothing.

Just as i was within thirty yards of the trees and protection, I stood up and made a mad dash for the woods. When I was about ten yards from safety, a shell burst just in front of me, sending me sprawling and clawing the rest of the way into the safety of the frees.

About fifty yards into the trees, I stopped to address my right leg which suddenly started to give me pain. Rolling up my ripped trouser leg, I discovered I was bleeding pretty badly, just below the knee. I withdrew the first aid packet from my belt, and applied the sulfa powder over the wound and then used the pad and bandage from the packet to cover and protect it Luckily no bones were broken, but it was a nasty wound.

After this, I stood up and proceeded into the woods, attempting to figure out what I would do to get out of my predicament. Before long, I saw movement ahead of me and hid behind trees figuring that I had encountered a new group of Germans. Luckily though, it did not take me long to learn that these were not Germans, but misplaced G.I.'s, as thoroughly mixed up as I was. I joined them and heard many of them tell how they were surprised and ordered to clean out a small pocket of enemy who had infiltrated our lines, only to be set upon with heavy German armor and decimated with heavy artillery and tank fire. They had been split from their units, were disoriented and totally ignorant of what to do. Some had opinions to do this and some to do that, and quite frankly, I did not want to be a part of any of their doubtful solutions.

While we were thus engaged, the enemy must have known that we were congregated in this area, as shells began to fall amongst us. They were called "tree bursts". These are shells which would explode hitting the tops of the trees and spread shrapnel down below. Many of the men were hit and were screaming and I began running a zig-zag course out of there. After several hundred yards as I stopped for a rest, I noticed approximately fifteen G.I.'s had followed me. We gathered around and exchanged ideas for some plan to escape. Since I was the only Non-commissioned officer, they agreed that I should take charge and lead them to safety.

Believing it to be my duty, I accepted command and started leading them in a direction that would eventually lead us to Belgium and safety. After a day and night deftly proceeding through the woods, we could see that we were approaching an area wherein the woods seemed to thin out as we could see much more daylight ahead. We now approached this situation with extreme caution, crawling on our bellies. It soon was apparent that we had reached the end of the woods and, as fate would have it, the area was swarming with German troops. For several hours we attempted to shoot our way out, and continued to do so until we ran out of ammunition.

We withdrew some fifty yards, and discussed the situation. By now, we were quite weak from lack of food and water. Our chances of survival by retracing our steps were dismal to say the least and there was no other direction we could take and be on a course to safety. Our only hope was to surrender and hope we would be accepted.

I advised the group to break up their weapons and throw them into the woods, so that the enemy could not use them. When this was accomplished, I told them that I would affix a white hanky to the end of my rifle and encounter the enemy with the traditional posture of surrender. As I was about to proceed, one of the group, stated, "Hold on Sergeant, Let me go!" I explained that it was my place since I was the commanding officer and they should wait until I presented myself to the enemy and arranged for their surrender. This young soldier, though, was not to be denied and begged me that for his sake, let him do this thing. Since he was so insistent, and believing that he could surrender in safety, I gave in and let him proceed.

He stood up with raised rifle and white flag attached and proceeded to the edge of the woods. As he stepped from the trees onto the road below calling out "comrade" Surrender! Surrender!" He was blasted with machine gun fire and fell in a heap on the road. The rest of us, following closely behind, according to plan stepped down onto the road expecting the same result but were met with silence. I looked across the road and saw two German troops with heads extending up over their foxhole, behind their machine gun, grinning.

I shall never know, why they shot that first brave soldier who attempted surrender and why they did not execute the rest of us. Along with this, I have always wondered the "why" of this incident. But for his insistence, I would have been the one to have been cut down in his stead. This was the second time my life was spared. The date was December 19,1944.

The Germans immediately enlisted us to load the wounded. Firstly, the German Wounded and then the Americans. We loaded them on jeeps, trucks and about any other vehicle that currently operated. After about two hours of this labor, we were lined up and marched to a hastily installed compound. It was totally enclosed in an 8' high wire fence.

It was cold and nothing but slimy mud underfoot approximately 6 inches deep. We were all cold and tired, hungry and without the luxury of lying down. It was most depressing to say the least.

The next morning, we were mustered into columns of two and set off marching toward the East. We did so for four days, with very little rations. For food, one two pound loaf of bread was divided among each group of seven soldiers. All of us began the sufferings of dysentery.

On the fourth day, we arrived at a railroad siding wherein the Germans proceeded to load us onto boxcars. On the side of each boxcar, were the printed words, "40 Homme 8 Cheval stating the content of the boxcar to be 40 men and 8 horses.

We were so jammed into the boxcar that not everyone could lay down at the same time. So we devised a rule that one half of the car would stand while the other half sat down for some rest. We did this in shifts with certain persons to monitor the times and others to double check to see if the times were accurate. One corner of the boxcar was set aside for personal hygiene since our captors would not let us out to take care of the usual bodily functions of elimination. We were given no food, heat or light and were strafed by day by Yank planes and were bombed by night by the British. Neither force had any knowledge that they were firing on anything but German trains which augmented the German effort. Many G.I.'s were wounded or killed in these attacks and after 5 days of this, we detrained and began our march in the heart of Germany. We were marched approximately 100 miles and arrived at our first Prison Camp, listed as **Stalag IV B**, located near Muhlberg Germany.

Stalag IV-B was a permanent camp for the British taken prisoner several years prior.

The camp held some 7,000 P.O.Ws.

We only stayed one night at this Stalag and in the morning were loaded into box cars and proceeded East again to arrive at Stalag VIII-A, near the town of Gorlitz, which was about 80 miles from the Polish Border. Here were housed prisoners from many countries. i.e. Russians, Poles, Czechs, French, English and Americans.

Each P.O.W. was numbered, my number being **316005**, with a metal tag. I still have this tag among other souvenirs I brought back from Germany. We slept on wooden platforms with moveable slats. I estimated that I had lost approximately 30 pounds by this time since it was extremely difficult to lie down and be comfortable. It seemed that the flesh had melted away leaving very little except loose skin and bones.

The buildings were single floor wooden structures with windows down each side. There was very little heat causing us to keep warm by bunking together fully clothed and using each other's body heat.

About once a week we were given a small cup of dandelion soup and a slice of bread. Sometimes we were given about 5 small potatoes, however when we received these, We received no soup.

During this time, my knee was infected and I did my best to clean it with snow when we were allowed outside periodically. We were not supplied any water for bathing. Also, during this time, I developed a severe case of diarrhea along with hepatitis.

Most of us were pretty weak by now, mostly due to malnutrition, hunger, and a spirit that was dying. Most of the march took place through the hinterlands, broad expanses of farmland, used for growing crops. Farmers had piled sugar beets close to the road and covered them with a light covering of soil, which then became covered with snow. Every time we arrived at a pile of these beets, 4 or 5 prisoners would break column, dash to these piles and dig out beets to eat. The German shepherd guard dogs would immediately, with their masters, attack these poor emaciated beings, the dogs mauling

them, and the guards ending up shooting them. Every pile of sugar beets we encountered left 2 or 3 G.I.'s dead or near dead on the top of each pile.

It was incomprehensible, because every time the column passed one of these piles, the same thing occurred.

Before arriving in Gorlitz, **Stalag VIII-A**, I was fortunate to come by some extra clothing fortuitously, which, by the way stood me in good stead on the march, ahead. During the march, at the end of the day, we would usually be billeted in a barn or vacant school or apartment building, found usually at a site after we had [passed through a town. Passing through a town was always an eventful occasion. The townspeople would turn out en masse on both sides of the road and proceed to spit at us and mouth epithets at us with extreme hatred.

On this one occasion, we were billeted in what appeared to me to be an apartment building in the City of Koblenz. WE were placed in a small room on the third floor. There were 10 of us. The room had only one large window at it's end and the bottom of the window was about 4 feet above the floor. Directly below the window was a stack of single width mattresses piled one upon the other, bringing the top mattress even with the lower window sill. I happened to have selected this spot, (on top of the mattress pile) to bunk down for the night The room had other mattresses strewn on the floor. The U.S. Air Force put on great bombing exercises during the day selecting certain targets in Germany. During the march, we would hear the drone of many aircraft and looking up in the sky, we could see hundreds of our bombers flying, leaving vapor trails in the clear blue air headed for some target Then, they would release their radar defusing tactic, which appeared to be streams of tinfoil drifting down from the planes. After a short pause, the bombs would be dropped and then the deep sounds of explosions could be heard for miles.

As I was situate on this pile of mattresses, we began to hear the drone of just such a group of aircraft and knew instinctively that they were our bombers. Everyone in the room grew quiet straining to learn whether or not we were the target. We didn't have long to wait, and as usual just before bombs explode in your near vicinity, there seems to be a huge rush of air as in avoid, and then the loud explosion which shatters all thought This bomb probably exploded in the road in front of the building. I knew nothing about it since I was knocked unconscious, for minutes , I guess, and suddenly became aware that I was in a different place. Actually, the explosive force, picked up my body, propelled it through a door at the end of the room, across a short hallway, through another door leading to another room, and left me there. Upon regaining my senses, looking around me, I found the room was crammed with civilian clothing, personal belongings and several cans of food. I found three ladies sweaters, which I immediately put on under my G.I. jacket, and grabbing a can of beans and one of corn made my way back to the room from which 1 was catapulted. My other comrades immediately questioned me about my acquisitions and after hearing my answer bolted to the room to see what they could find. One of them soon came back with about 2 lbs of sugar and he would sit and wet his finger, press it into the sugar and then suck the sugar off.

Stalag VIII-A. must have been established early on in Hitler's campaign, since it was very well organized. Cigarettes were the medium of exchange and if you possessed any, you could exchange them for food, shoes, socks, or about any other thing you desired, if it was available. Our German captors were not above trading items for cigarettes, as they

preferred U.S. or French brands. The building in which I was housed, was divided up into separate rooms, with blankets used in doorways for privacy.

There were prisoners from several foreign countries, mostly French and British. A regular chain of command existed, and the highest ranking officers were our representatives and contact with the Germans. Special signals were used to warn everyone when Germans were approaching the building, one of which was a wire strung along the ceiling with a tin can attached. When the wire was snapped it rattled the can and everyone was alerted. Several of the prisoners who evidently had been there for several years, had parts of a radio, and everyday at the time of a BBC broadcast, they would get together, assemble the radio, and listen to the news, which was then passed on to the others verbally.

Some of the longer resident prisoners did receive packages from their homes, and in general, due to their seniority, made out pretty well. I had always heard that the British like their tea, but never knew how intense they were at having tea everyday and at a particular time. Since there was no way to heat water to make their tea, they made special firepots with a blower to heat water in a very short space of time. These were constructed from tin cans, in which they had received food. The contrivance had a piece of 1”x6”x12” long wood as a platform. On one end was a coffee can which was where one would build the fire. Connected to this was a tin can laid on it’s side, whose open end entered another round coffee can which housed a fan. The fan was connected to another round wheel with a handle. By operation, a fire would be started in the firepot with paper and small sticks of wood. When one turned the handle, this turned the fan which acted to send forceful air underneath the fire, causing intense heat. The English prisoners were so good at operating this heating device, that when a break was ordered when on the march, they could prepare a cup of tea within 5 minutes.

Our barracks were still suffering strafing and bombings from attacks on nearby targets, so that we were over joyed to learn that the Russians had begun their Westerly attack on Germany. Our joy later turned to apprehension when we considered that we might be caught between the Russians and Germans and end up in the center of the battleground.

We had little time to worry though, as the Germans ordered us back on the March.. This time we started marching the opposite way, to the West, back into Germany. The date was February 15th, 1945. It was a tough march. My boots had long ago become almost useless, with the soles flapping when I walked. I managed to tear a blanket into strips and wound these around each foot and tied them securely. This helped but my feet still got wet It was on this March that the past deprivations caught up to me. I began to feel lightheaded and dizzy and finally collapsed. It was sometime later that I regained consciousness and found myself along with three other G.I.s in a cart being drawn by two oxen. We bumped along for some five miles or so, when we turned into a farmyard. Our two German guards had some conversation with the lady who came out of the house and shortly thereafter we were ordered into the barn on top of the hay. We stayed at this farm for three or four days, and each day the lady would bring us some boiled potatoes to eat I do not know if she did this under orders, or through her kindness, but since this was our only food, it was greatly appreciated.

I later learned that on March 9th, 1945 1 was delivered to Stalag IX-C in a delirious state, mostly comatose, suffering from malnutrition, diarrhea and hepatitis and expected by all who saw me on the verge of passing into the next world. I do remember some days later of waking up and feeling like I had been asleep for a long time. Actually, I had been semi

conscious for five days. In the next week, I was tended to by a male person in a French uniform who seemed to be extremely interested and caring of my condition.

I was given some sort of warm broth by him, with him feeding me by spoon and supporting my head. He also periodically gave me medications and talked soothingly to me. I also later learned from him that I was in the Isolier, (spelling ?) which was a room set aside for those needing intensive care. I was there along with another G.I. and four other soldiers from foreign countries.

After about 10 days of this care I started feeling much better and had control of my mind again and learned that my caregiver was a French soldier by the name of Luc Monsaingeon, who was captured and presently served as a Prisoner of War.

We had a tough time at first, because he talked mainly in French and I in English, along with a lot of sign language and a sprinkling of German words which we both knew.

I found out that his father was a French Doctor and also that Luc was enrolled at the University of Paris and training for a medical career. Through things learned from his father and his medical teaching, he knew quite a bit about diseases, medicines, etc. His expertise in health care evidently impressed the Germans, since they allowed him free access to their tiny hospital in the Stalag, reserved for German soldiers.

The Stalag was located near the town of Bad Saiza, Germany, and sat on a high ridge which overlooked , the town. It was composed of no more than eight or ten buildings which housed the German troops, their mess building, and small infirmary. He told me all about my condition and his fear of losing me. With further probing, he stated that I reminded him of his younger brother who had perished in the war, a victim of Hitler and his obsessed army. He also told me that he was allowed access to the infirmary where he would visit and actually steal certain drugs and medications to help the P.O.W.'s in our compound. He was a great generous person and I have not met his equal since that fateful time. After returning home, I attempted many times to write him at the address he gave me, but my letters all were returned unopened. I have wondered many times whatever became of him. I have so much to thank him for.  We had such a good time, with me teaching him English and he teaching me French.

One other G.I. was in this special ward and in talking with him, I learned that he was from an adjoining town, the then City of East Detroit, later changed to Eastpoint. Although I have forgotten his name I remember how despondent he was. It seemed that he had given up hope of ever seeing home again. I remember Lucandl talking to him and trying to get him to raise his spirits and his hope of going home. Each day he appeared weaker and within a short time died. It has always bothered me that he didn't make it since I believe he just gave up on life.

Shortly thereafter, I was able to walk around and gained some strength to a point that I was moved out into the common area with other prisoners. There were only three of us G.I.'s in the camp, with the rest, being British, Australian, and French soldiers. It was a small Stalag and consisted mainly of sick and others who physically or mentally could not continue on the march. We had no cots here. We slept on the cement floor which was roughly covered with straw, in fact everyone was in the prone position all of the time since they had no strength to move around. It was a daily occurrence that German soldiers would come in sometime during the day and drag out a dead prisoner who bad perished during the night They would move the corpse outside and usually dump it over

the porch into the snow. Later on in the day, a truck would come by and the corpse would be thrown into it and it would lumber off. Nobody knew where, but we were sure there was not a decent burial. During this time, Luc still found time to come into the common area and spend some time with me which I appreciated immensely.

One day, much to everyone's surprise, we received some Red Cross parcels which were shared two to a box. I remember how great it was to eat a real biscuit with butter on it and then be able to make a cup of instant coffee. It tasted like heaven. And the box also included some pieces of real chocolate, which we hadn't tasted in four months. Within several days of receiving the parcel we were visited by a Red Cross Representative, sent to see how we were being treated as German prisoners of war. After talking with him and his inspection of the premises and the prisoners, he was 'very upset and stated these conditions were deplorable and certainly not up to the standards that the Geneva Convention dictated. I believe that the only reason we received these parcels when we did was because the Germans knew the inspection by the Red Cross was imminent and they wanted to impress them. I came to learn that most of the Red Cross parcels were kept and used by the German Army, especially during the last months of the War.

Our building was perched on a large hill, about 300 feet above the small town which had railroad service. The train would visit the town several times a day, turn around and depart on the same tracks. Since we had nothing to do, it was interesting to be able to hear the train arriving, tooting vigorously, with black smoke streaming from it's engine and being able to watch it arrive and depart.

Around the first part of April, 1945, we were advised that we would be moving shortly to an unknown destination. It was later learned that we were to be taken to Buchenwald and destroyed in the ovens. It was rumored that Hitler wanted to destroy all the evidence of prisoners of war and the most convenient way was to use the ovens. Glad we didn't find this out before we were liberated as it would have just added another dimension of despair. It was also about this time that rumors were being passed that the Allies were getting closer and Germany was closer to defeat

We awoke one morning hearing aircraft engines and quickly rushed to the windows to see what was going on. The aircraft engine noise indicated aircraft were diving and within seconds a squadron of P-47's were diving over our building and firing at the railroad center and the small town below. It was the greatest air-show I have ever seen, especially when the planes were ours and they were pouring it onto the Germans.

Each plane would come over our barracks in a steep dive, fire rockets and gunfire and then pull up in a steep climb before circling and repeating the attack. The locomotive caught standing still blew up with parts scattering in all directions. Buildings were set on fire and the whole area was nothing but flames and smoke. As the planes dove in firing, the spent shells were falling on the metal roof of our building, making a terrifically loud noise as metal struck metal. It was then that we stopped cheering and started worrying about our safety as several bullets did manage to penetrate our building, however, none of us was injured by the attack.

April 10th,1945, the first American tank columns rolled through the town. It was 5:45 p.m. and I hurriedly started down the hill to greet them. I thought l was running, or at least I tried to and fell several times in the process, because my legs were not working properly although thy mind was. As I reached the main road that the tanks were using I stood there in awe watching each tank rumble by with their turrets open and G.I.'s sitting

there grinning. They all waved and yelled, "Hang in there soldier", and then they would through boxes of "C" rations, candy bars, gum and all sorts of things I hadn't seen in the last five months. I was overwhelmed and was so proud to be reunited with our troops. I was ready to rejoin them and continue in the attack. I thought my chest would explode I was so happy. I made it back up the hill to my barracks and as I entered I quickly noticed many of the prisoners at the windows with rifles pointing outward. Someone thrust a rifle in my hands and yelled," Quick, they are getting away"! With that I heard a deafening roar of gunfire and quickly summed up the situation. The Germans had given up and instead of presenting themselves in the Courtyard, they were running down the hill in an attempt to escape. I ran to a window and yelled, "Halt! Halt! and seeing that my command went unheeded proceeded along with the others to open fire on the fleeing Germans. I didn't count how many of them fell, but the action did quell any further attempts at this route for freedom.

By this time, most of our former captors were assembling in the courtyard in front of the buildings, lining up in formation as our Savior G.I.'s took charge preparing them for prisoner of war status. The shoe was now on the other foot. After viewing this for several minutes, I though it a good time to visit one of their barracks and set out for the nearest building which formerly housed German officers.

As I entered the building and advanced some twenty feet, I came across a German Officer packing a grip and looking very much like he was going to flee in a hurried manner. He saw the rifle l was aiming at him and quickly decided to be peaceful. I stripped him of a small German automatic pistol all officers carry in a concealed watch pocket and ordered him outside with his comrades. I then proceeded to look for souvenirs and packed some pistols and other items and headed back to my barracks. Most of these items I later sold on board ship mostly to sailors for a total sum of $1200.00 I retained two pistols which I still have as a reminder of that period.

Shortly after arriving at the barracks, an American Major entered with several other soldiers and asked for any yanks in the building. I and the two others stepped forward, and he reached for my hand and raised my sleeve, showing my thin bony arm. He immediately began swearing and cursing the Krauts and then said, "Don't worry Soldier, "We'll get you guys out of here in a hurry. Within an hour the three of us were loaded into an ambulance and were taken to a medical unit, approximately five miles distant As we arrived, I noticed a huge clearing filled with Army tents, with armed guards in jeeps around the perimeter, manning 50 caliber machine guns.

As soon as we arrived, we were taken to the mess tent and were given huge plates of roasted chicken, mashed potatoes with gravy, cooked peas and carrots and fresh bread with butter. We naturally attacked this food with gusto since we had been dreaming of just such a meal for months. It wasn't long, however, before we went running for the latrine, since everyone of us threw up everything we had ingested. The rich food was just too much for our shrunken stomachs.

The next morning we received another scare. About 10:00 a.m. automatic gunfire erupted somewhere in the midst of the tents and bullets were sent whining through the air. We all dived for the ground fearing that this was to be our last day of life, after having so briefly tasted freedom. As it turned out, there was a large haystack in a small clearing in close proximity to the tents, and the guards quickly determined that the automatic fire was coming from it The haystack became the target for those 50 caliber machine guns and after several long bursts of fire, the haystack was set on fire. Within

seconds peace had returned to the area, and a short time later, two dead German soldiers, burned b~yond belief were removed. Whatever their reason to begin shooting in such a situation, it was not a good decision.

April 12th, the three of us were moved by ambulance to the town of Goththa, Germany and on Sunday, April 15th, we were flown to Rheims, France by C-47 aircraft and there hospitalized. We had excellent care there. I had my leg wound properly treated and we were put on a light diet. Within two weeks l felt the strength returning to my body and my mind began returning to normal which I knew was the case as I began spending more time looking and appreciating the young and pretty French nurses. They were quite playful always attempting to snatch the towel away from me as I headed to the showers.

After two more weeks, I was released from the Hospital and returned to active duty.

On or about May 15, 1945,1 was given command of some twenty P.O.W.'s and ordered to return them to Paris, France, from which they would be sent to their respective Commands. The group was composed of Indians, British ,Aussies and several other Yanks. We entrained for the trip which traveled through many small towns. At each stop, the soldiers under my command, along with other civilians, would detrain and visit some of the small shops before returning to the train with their purchases. I visited an excellent little French bakery, where I purchased some of the finest pastries I have ever tasted. As the trip proceeded, I began to take note that my little band of returnees was getting smaller. It seems that they would get off the train and then wander off to where, I do not know. I believe I arrived in Paris with about six or seven of the original group. The rest were promptly listed as A. W. O. L.

In Paris, I was billeted in a nice hotel, given back pay which was due along with food stamps and also issued cigarettes, the value of which was as good as currency. A black market flourished in Paris and one could get about anything one wanted, if he had cigarettes, especially American. Certain Frenchmen would hang around the hotels where G.I.'s were billeted, and could give any information on whatever item was wanted, would arrange a price and location, and the deal would be concluded usually in a bombed out shell of a building in the lower parts of the city. I enjoyed Paris and found time to visit many of the historic places there. I also found the people friendly and warm and enjoyed the many sidewalk cafe's.

Within a week after I arrived, the first of four coincidences occurred which, to my mind were amazing and borders on disbelief. I was crossing a street in Paris and noticed another G.I. approaching from the opposite direction. As we closed in the Center of the street, I recognized, unbelievingly a student from my High School, Eastland High, and shouted "Pete". He immediately recognized me and we both stood there stammering as to how we got there. His name was Pete Bylen and he and several other of his siblings had attended Eastland. He was two grades below me in school, but I knew him and his family very well. In fact, one of the first jobs I had upon arriving home in 1945, was as a sales clerk and assistant manager in his brother John's Sport Shop in Roseville.

We had a lot of ground to cover regarding each of our experiences and covered it well over the next four hours at a cafe' located nearby. This was the only meeting we had as he shipped out for home the following day. It gave me a terrific uplift to meet someone from home.

Approximately May 25th, the second serendipity occurred. I left Paris in an Army Truck loaded with about 20 other G.I. ex-POWs bound for the staging area wherein thousands of G.I.'s were gathered waiting orders to be shipped home. This was designated as Camp Lucky Strike, and located at Le Havre. The G.I.'s billeted there in tents were anxious to get home. As our truck arrived at the gate, we stopped to have the driver visit the small office building and report his cargo, I looked down and there sitting on the curb was another of my schoolmates, Donald Dumas. I told myself this cannot be happening, so I delayed any call, and continued to stare to make sure and not make a fool of myself. Sure enough, it was Don sitting on the curb, elbows on knees and hands supporting his head. It was then I yelled, "Don! Don! He looked up at the sound of his name and I will never forget the look on his face as he recognized me.

I jumped down off the truck and we grabbed each other both talking at the same time. After we exchanged basic information such as I was captured while in the infantry and he captured after bailing out of a burning bomber shot down over Germany, he stated that I have to come with him and stay in his tent. I was all for it but doubtful that we could accomplish it due to Army red tape, etc. He told me not to worry about it because he had been there a week and everything was all mixed up. He said he kept getting false information as to shipping schedules, promises that weren't being kept, etc. and in short, it seemed that things were generally out of control.

The reason for him being at the gate was to see if he had any mail from home and was waiting for information regarding that He evidently forgot about that because he said, "Let's Go"! We proceeded on a snakelike course threading our way around the tents and eventually arrived at his tent. He had been there for several weeks and certainly knew his way around. He showed
me to a bunk next to his and I dropped my barracks bag on it. I noticed several other bunks in the tent were empty. We started to talk of our experiences since we had last seen each other and I learned that he was a gunner on a B-17 flying fortress. On his last mission over Stuttgart the plane was hit by enemy fire and he parachuted out into the hands of the German Army and immediately sent to a Stalag as a P.O.W. He was in the Eighth Air Force, and was awaiting aircraft from his outfit, which was based in England, to arrive and airlift him and others back to the base in England.

We spent several days together and one of the evenings we attended one of the USO shows which were presented to the G.I.'s on a weekly basis. It was the first one I had ever seen and was very enjoyable. It was composed of a band and individual singers rendering all the songs of the era. I could see the reason these shows are so uplifting because in such a situation, thousands of miles from home, a soldiers thoughts are always of home and things that remind him of home. I remember of looking over the acres and acres of G.I.'s who gave thunderous applause after each performance, because it brought a little bit of home to each of them.

Then, our orders came down, or as they said in the Service the orders were cut. Ours were dated May 30th, 1945 and after listing the personnel by name who were affected stated among other things:

> "The above personnel will move on or about the date indicated from present overseas location to the Great Britain leave Center Etretat, France for shipment to the United Kingdom. Upon arrival in UK the above personnel are authorized a seven(7) day delay en-route. Upon completion of such delay en-route, the above named personnel will report to the commanding general UK Base, Grosvenor Sq.

London, England, for compliance with pertinent instructions for immediate return to the zone of interior by first available surface transportation".

This order meant that we were ordered to go forward on the next step of our journey toward home but each to take this step in the manner that their outfit deems proper. In other words, infantry and ground personnel would proceed by boat to England; Air Corps personnel would proceed by being flown to England etc.

Upon receiving these orders, Don said to me, "Hey, you can come with me", My outfit is to pick me up and you can come along". I said, "Hold it!, "I would like to fly over with you but I don't like the idea of being listed as AWOL. either. Remember, we are in different outfits. He looked at me and snorted, "Baloney".

The following morning, we arose as usual and proceeded to the chow line for breakfast. The G.I. kitchen was set up in a huge tent and all meals were served from there. The meals were usually served outside. Raised tables were used stretched in a straight line and the containers of food where placed on them. Each of us had to line up and proceed down the line holding up our "mess kit", and the servers would give each a dollop of whatever food he was serving into the aluminum container.

As Don and I approached the line, we were still talking about things in common, when I looked up toward those ahead of us and thought I recognized another classmate from my high school. I nudged Don and told him what I saw and told him to look and see if! was right He confirmed my impression, and we both left our place in line and moved up to confront another of our classmates, Ray Bassett.

At this time I must give you some background for my classmates and these serendipitous meetings. Don Dumas, Ray Bassett and myself were like the three musketeers in high school. We did everything together. We played the usual high school sports together, spent recess together and generally everything else together. In short, we were high school buddies. We looked out for one another and were very close. That is what made this meeting with Don and Ray so fantastic. We all went into the Service about the same time, lost track of one another, and then to have the three of us meet all within the space of one week was phenomenal, especially when we were from a very small village in one of the 48 states.

The three of us once again excitedly exchanged experiences and spent the best part of the day doing so. We talked of our plans and what was our next step in getting on with our lives. Ray told us he was heading home to wed a girl he had met in high school and couldn't wait to get this done. Don stated that he wanted to get back to England and look up his grandparents that he had never met, and I slated that I wanted to get home and get registered in College to find a profession that pleased me and begin my life anew.

As I recall, the following morning after our historical meeting, we were aroused very early in the morning, on news that the Eighth Air Force was sending over planes to pick up members of their group, who were formerly P.O.W.'s. I remember Don telling me to hurry up and get everything packed in my duffle bag as we have to be at the airfield early to board the plane, and my remonstrations with him that they are not going to let me who is not an airman, and not from the Eighth Air Force, board any plane.

With the exigency of the situation, I grabbed my stuffed bag and the two of us went off running across the airfield toward a waiting line of C 4Ts lined up with engines running.

As we approached the line of aircraft, we saw that beside each was a line of servicemen waiting to board. We attached ourselves to one of these lines leading into one of these planes. There was an officer at the entrance door to each plane demanding I.D. from each entrant When I saw this, I knew I was doomed as I had no qualifying Air Corps I.D. and expected to be severed at the entrance door. Just as Don was cleared to enter, I heard someone shout, "Hurry Up. Get these men on board, We are taking off', wherein the checking officer, seeing me last in line, said, "Get your ass in there airman "and without asking for any I.D., shoved me through the door into the plane.

After a very short flight over the English channel we made our final approach and landed at Don's former airbase in England. I cannot remember the name of the base but remember it was a very large airfield. After deplaning, we followed the line of airmen leading up to a group of buildings comprised of the mess hail, barracks, PX, Base Theatre, Recreation Hall, etc.

As we approached the base theatre and were passing by , a serviceman leaned out of a small window on the second floor and yelled something to a friend of his down below causing both Don and I to look at the source of this sound. We both looked at each other in disbelief, because the person causing the commotion was another of our classmates from Eastland H.S, Kenneth Holderbaum. Don and I both yelled out his name and in seconds Ken had bounded down the stairs and was standing before us grinning from ear to ear.

We had a great time for the rest of the day and that evening exchanging news of each other. We all were also astonished at the fact that within the space of several weeks I had met my two close classmates plus another student all from the same small high school located in a very small village. And this taking place in a foreign country halfway around the world. Ken informed us that he was due to ship out for home any day and was quite anxious to get going. Don and I were sent to a staging area for ex-P.O.W.'s as the first step in arranging our departure for the United States.

On June 16, 1945, new orders came down ordering a group of us to proceed to report to The C.O. 14th Port located in Southampton, England. We were shipped by train and arrived there on June 18th, 1945.

The Camp was extremely large housing some 5,000 ex-prisoners of war and was loosely run. The freed G.I.'s came from many parts of the U.S. and were allowed to visit the City of Southampton daily so long as they were back at Camp by Curfew. The camp area was surrounded by a wire fence, which had many holes allowing one to get through without any problem. At the main gate was stationed several G.I.'s who also were exprisoners of war and were not too strict in enforcing the soldiers in coming or going. It was therefore quite common to having soldiers coming in after the proper time, some staying out all night as they pleased without any repercussions. Every other day a list would be posted showing which soldiers were due to ship out, naming the date and place of embarkation bound for the U.S.

Don and I assessed the situation early on and agreed that this would be a good time to visit his grandparents feeling the risk was minimal. The next morning, we headed out of camp, which was not a problem, and boarded a bus for their town which was located about an hour North of London.

With a lot of help from local townspeople we located the house of his grandparents and upon our knock on the door it opened suspiciously. A pleasant looking lady appeared and upon learning who Don was, she shouted for his Grandfather and immediately began making quite a fuss over Don. The Grandparents were really nice people offering us the use of the upstairs which contained a cute apartment. For the next several weeks we all had a good time. We gave them our food stamps allowing them to purchase meat, eggs, cheese and milk, all of which were in short supply and rationed. They were excited about this windfall, and Grandma cooked great dinners when we were in. We spent many evenings visiting the local pubs and theatre and enjoyed some female companionship beyond compare, as men were in short supply.

Upon our return to camp at Southampton, we learned that our names came up several times ordering us to sail on a certain ship for home but, we of course, were absent. Upon learning that we were in camp, the C.O. ordered us restricted to barracks and placed an armed guard at our building so that we would stray no more. Within a week we were on board a troopship headed for the U.S. Although it took only 5 days on the Acquitania to deliver us to England in 1944, it took us 14 days on the ocean for our return.

It was on board the return cruise one night when Don and 1 were on deck at the railing that 1 came up with what I thought was a good idea. I was feeling terribly lucky returning home in one piece after so many close calls and asked Don, "You know what we should do when we get home? I think, I continued, that we should go and see every girl we knew in High School, just to touch base with them, seeing how they are and letting them know that we are back. He though this was a great idea and we discussed the names of those we had known and would visit.

I said I would like to again meet a girl named Jackie Smith who was friendly with his next door neighbor, Shirley. I had dated Shirley before entering the service, and she was the girl that my friend, Ray Bassett returned to and married after the war. In fact, Jackie had double-dated with Shirley and I on one occasion and I had only met her on one other occasion, but I liked what I had seen. I insisted Jackie was a brunette but Don said I was wrong as she was blonde. (She actually was blonde). I had actually seen her in 1941 and this was 1944.

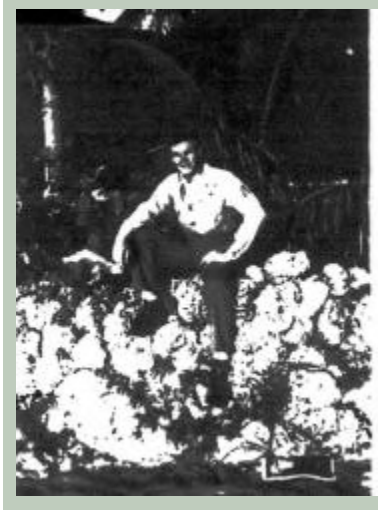
Upon our return to the States, we did set out to meet our former female acquaintances and had a great time for several months with being brought up to speed regarding their many experiences during our absence.

We visited Jackie Smith, who upon our arrival came out to the car and we exchanged pleasantries. I knew then that I wanted to see her again, but as this thought crossed my mind, from the house came a soldier in uniform wearing a purple heart medal, who then put his arm around Jackie's waist in a possessive manner. Upon leaving, I told Don," That's it, I'm not cutting any wounded soldier's time", and intended not seeing Jackie again.

After several weeks, I received a call from Jackie inviting Don and I to her birthday party which turned out to be Don and l and Jackie and a girlfriend of hers. We had a great evening and it was the beginning of a romance that is still present to this day between Jac and I. We were married on June 18, 1948.

Ed-Top Row, 2nd from Left
Co.L, 422nd, Inf Reg'
106th Inf. Division

Ed-Top Row, 2nd from Left
Stutgard Field, U.S. Air Force
Little Rock, Ark



Ed, Transfer from 78th Inf. Division to
U.S. Air Force, Miami, Florida

In September of 1945,! received the following Memo from our former Regimental Commander, Colonel George L. Descheneaux, Jr.

Memo to: Former Members of the 422nd 1NF:

1. Purpose. This bulletin is an attempt to furnish you with the available information on casualties, awards, etc. pertaining to the 422nd ml. And to bring you a message from your former Regimental Commander, Colonel Descheneaux, who is hospitalized in Fitzsimmons General Hospital, Denver, Colorado, as a result of Tuberculosis, which he contracted while a POW. Please make this bulletin available to any former 422nd men who may be near you.

2.Summary of Combat Operations. The 422nd Inf went into combat in the Schnee-Eiffel area of Germany on 10th December 1944. On 16 December, the regiment was hit by the German Ardennes counter-offensive, and was quickly cut off. Several sectors of the regimental zone received heavy artillery fire and ground attacks, all of which were repulsed. Co "L" and CN Co counterattacked towards AUW on the afternoon of 16 December and prevented the Regimental CP, AT Co and Cn Co areas from being overrun. On the night of 17 December, the 2nd Bn was swung around facing North, to meet a threat from strong enemy forces which had outflanked us. On 18th December, orders by radio from Division Headquarters directed the 422nd ml, in conjunction with the 423rd Inf, to attack and destroy enemy forces at Schonberg, and continue along the Schonberg St Vith road and clear the enemy from that road, which was originally our principal supply route. Meanwhile, the 7th and 9th armored divisions were committed in the vicinity of St Vith where the 106th Div CP and other installations had been located, but they were unable to stop the German drive at that point. The 422nd Inf made an extremely well-executed cross-country withdrawal during the day and night of 18 December , to assembly position southeast of Schonberg, and attacked towards Schonberg, on the morning of 19th December. They quickly came under small arms and artillery fire from several directions, and the 1st Bn, on the right, was attacked by tanks and part of the Bn was cut off and captured. The 2nd and 3rd Bns continued the attack towards Schonberg and came under intense fire from several types of weapons of a large enemy antiaircraft unit, which inflicted heavy casualties and knocked out a number of our mortars and machine guns. The 423rd ml on our left had sustained heavy casualties, was badly disorganized, and later was almost entirely captured or surrendered. In the afternoon of 19 December ,having had no re-supply of food or ammunition, or evacuation of casualties for the past four days, Colonel Descheneaux decided to surrender that part of the regiment. Parts of the 1st Bn, Co "G", Co "H", and men from other units found their way to the Regimental Motor Park, and held out until 21 December. Co "L" escaped almost intact through the German encirclement, and moved West, but ran into enemy positions on the night of 20th December, and were captured after sustaining many casualties. The majority of the vehicles and personnel of Regt Hq Co, AT Co and Cn Co, which had remained in the assembly area, tried to force a way out to the West, but ran into mine fields and artillery fire and were captured or surrendered. All of the regiment was killed or captured except 9 officers and about 70 men. The regiment was re-constituted in France on 10 April 1945, and has since rejoined the 106th Division.

3. Events after Capture Most of the regiment was marched about 50 KM to Gerolstein and from there was marched or moved by box car further into Germany. A large part of the officers and men went to Bad Orb. Others were scattered throughout German POW Camps. A number of officers reached Poland, from which they made a winter march of several hundred kilometers, finally arriving at Hammelburg, where the officers from Bad Orb meanwhile had been moved. The Hammelburg Camp was liberated by a raiding force from the 4th armored Division on 27 March but most of those liberated were recaptured before they could reach the American lines, and were marched back into Germany, finally being liberated at Moosburg and other places in the Munich area about the last of April. Bad Orb and other camps were also liberated in April and returned via Camp Lucky Strike or through hospitals. A few officers and men were liberated in Eastern Germany by the Russians and evacuated via Russia. Many members were killed or died while Prisoners of War.

4. Message ~from Col. Descheneaux:

Members of the 422nd Inf Regt:

The war in which we took such a brief and tragic part is over. Most of us were fortunate enough to have returned to our families and friends. Time will dim but never entirely erase the memory of our trying experiences. I have found, through conversations with many former members of our regiment confined in this hospital, that information as to our mission and the circumstances leading to our capture are not fully known. Events happened so fast and under such difficult circumstances that it is understandable why such information did not reach everyone. I hope that this bulletin will serve to clarify that undesirable situation.

As to our part, after we were cut off we were ordered to leave our positions on Schnee-Eiffel and to attack and destroy a German Panzer Combat Team on the Schonberg St Vith Road, after which we were to proceed to St Vith and then West from there. We were almost entirely surrounded and in order to reach Schonberg we had to move across country. I was separated from you not long after capture, and with few exceptions, have seen none of you since. It was only after my arrival here, and through correspondence with officers and men of the various companies, that I have been able to get a fairly complete picture of many details of the attack. We ran into a trap near Schonberg and were subjected to heavy fire from nearly all directions by tanks and artillery. By the afternoon it became evident that the accomplishment of our mission was impossible. It became further evident that there was little we could do to help any operation. The paramount question became that of saving the lives of as many of you men as possible and every possible action to accomplish this was discussed. Our situation was rendered hopeless by our by our great distance behind our lines, the weather, our ammunition supply, and man other factors. And so, though my spirit revolted against such a decision, surrender seemed to be the only solution to avoid needless loss of life and further suffering. I am convinced that there was nothing else to do and I know that opinion is shared by most every one of you.

It is my sincere desire, and that of all our officers, to secure the recognition and awards which so many of you richly deserve for gallantry and meritorious service. This may be slow, due to administrative difficulties, but you may be sure that many deserving cases will be recommended for awards as soon as full information can be secured in proper form. The Combat Infantryman Badge was awarded to all Infantrymen of the Regiment and the Medical Badge to members of the Medical Detachment, and Regimental Colors of the 422nd ml recently were appropriately decorated as a Combat Regiment at a Division Review in the ETO.

I wish all of you the best of luck, and whatever course your lives may take in the future, I thank you all from the bottom of my heart for having made it possible for me to be as proud of his officers, men, and regiment as any commander ever could be.

Sincerely,
(signed) GEORGE L. DESCHENEAUX, JR.
Colonel, Inf

Beyond the medals awarded me and a few German souvenirs no other tangible evidence exists to offer up a trail of the circumstances encountered in my service related experiences. However, the memories of the latter are still there and intact. Some have dimmed, and I know of some others that I have blotted out of my mind and will never be

able to recall. There are still times, though, when my mind does return to those days and upon reflection, I still recall them in wonderment, not only for all the things that happened to me, but also for all the things that didn't happen to me. Pm well aware that all of the credit for my existence goes to God, who walked with and protected me every step of the way and,

That's the Way it Was.

God Bless!

Edward L. Bohde
36584522
Technical Sergeant
Co. DL", 422nd Reg't
106 Inf Div., U.S. Army

Edward L. Bohde
29600 Jefferson Avenue
St Clair Shores, Mi. 48082

Page last revised
James D. West
www.IndianaMilitary.org