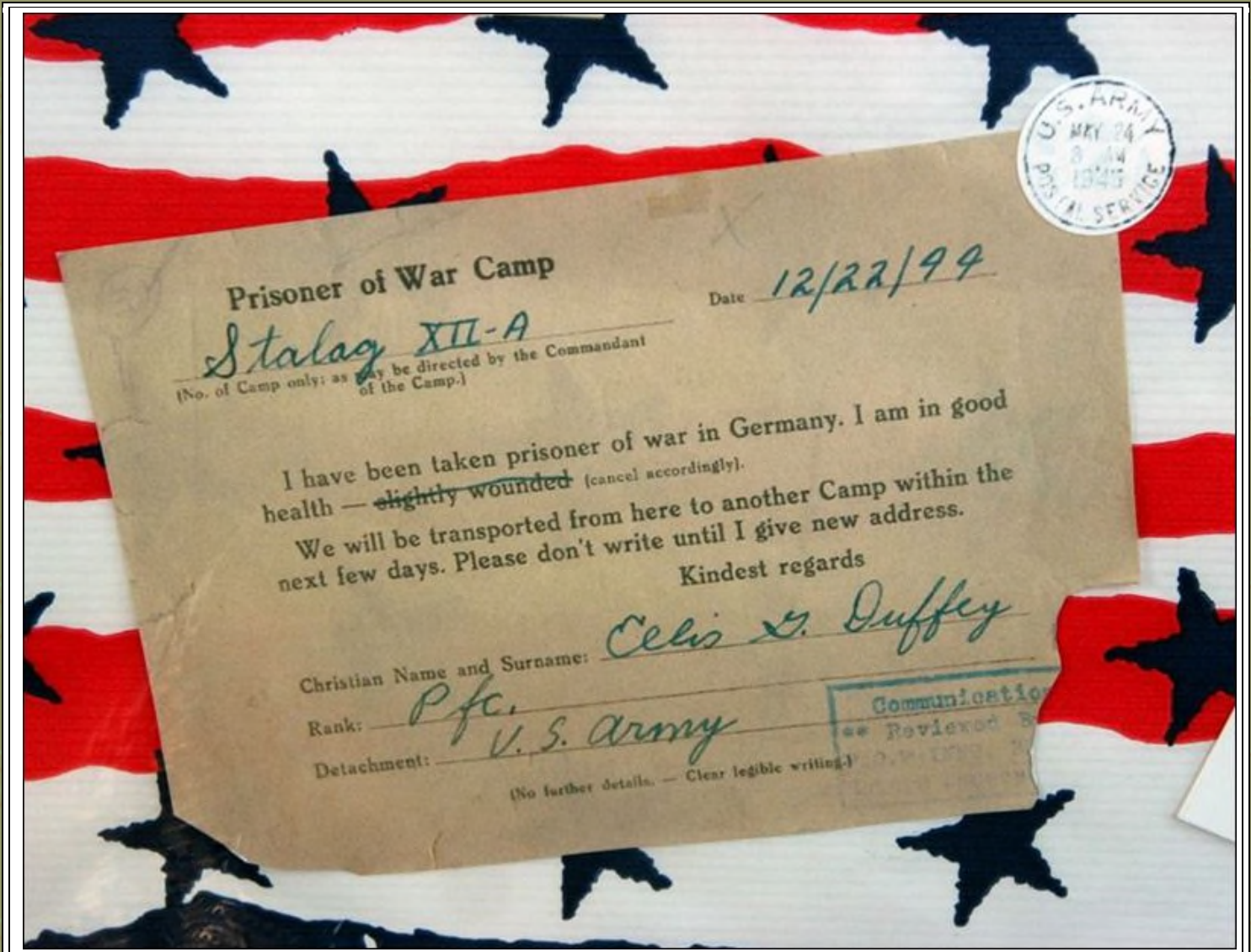


Pfc Ellis G. Duffey
3555110
12/16/1944 XII-A, III-A, KDO 499E



Margaret Welty holds the Western Union telegram that was sent to Private Duffey's family telling them their son was missing in action. Gene Carr, Mr. Duffey's nephew, looks on. SIMMONS / BLADE



Correspondence tells soldier's tale

BY MEREDITH HEAGNEY
BLADE STAFF WRITER

On display is a copy of a post card that Private Duffey sent to his family telling them he was alive in a German prison camp.

Margaret Welty holds the Western Union telegram that was sent to Private Duffey's family telling them their son was missing in action. Gene Carr, Mr. Duffey's nephew, looks on.

When Ellis Duffey sent a postcard home from a German prisoner of war camp during World War II, he wasn't thinking about helping later generations appreciate history.

The Army private first class simply wanted his parents to know that he was alive. They had received a telegram from the Army stating he was missing in action.

Margaret Welty, officer in charge at the Stony Ridge Post Office, made that postcard and telegram part of a display at the post office as a gesture of appreciation to veterans. The items were part of a box of war memorabilia that had belonged to Mr. Duffey, who died in 1991.

Mrs. Welty bought the box of items at an area barn sale in May. She thought the items would be a vivid way to bring World War II history to Stony Ridge.

"Whoever saved this accomplished something," Mrs. Welty said. "They drew attention to all the wonderful sacrifices these people made."

Before she bought the memorabilia, Mrs. Welty and co-worker Linda Tamasiunas had planned to honor local World War II veterans with a window display inspired by the May 29 issuance of the National World War II Memorial postage stamp.

When Mrs. Welty found Mr. Duffey's belongings, priced at \$25, she bought the collection, and soon became engrossed with its contents.

She began to piece together Mr. Duffey's war experience.

According to the papers in the box, Mr. Duffey went overseas in October, 1944. On December 16, 1944, he was wounded and taken prisoner during the Battle of the Bulge in the Ardennes Forest in Belgium.

On Jan. 16, 1945, his parents, Mabel and Harry Duffey of Pemberville, received a Western Union telegram: "The Secretary of War regrets to notify you ... that your son, Pfc. Ellis G. Duffey has been reported missing in action."

After nearly two months of undoubtedly fearing the worst, the Duffeys received a postcard in March from their son. He was in a POW camp in Luckenwalde, Germany, but reported that he was in good health.

Nothing in the collection of papers, however, indicated that Mr. Duffey ultimately survived the war. Mrs. Welty felt uncomfortable using the artifacts in the post office display if he didn't return home. Title paperwork in the box further concerned her because it showed the transfer of Mr. Duffey's car to his father's name.

"I was absolutely sure he didn't come home," Mrs. Welty said.

With little optimism she contacted Dale Bruning, a Pemberville-area historian who researches the history of houses and businesses there. Mr. Bruning found Harry Duffey's obituary from 1951, which listed son Ellis as a survivor. Mrs. Welty was happy to find out the soldier had returned home after all.

Mr. Bruning also found out that Mr. Duffey had a nephew still living in the area, Gene Carr. He was contacted and came to the post office recently to view the items on display.

"I felt really proud and elated," Mr. Carr said of his uncle, who was awarded a Purple Heart for his service. "It was really something for something like that to turn up after all these years."

How the collection ended up at a barn sale is still a mystery to both Mrs. Welty and Mr. Carr. Nor do either of them know who in the Duffey family diligently collected keepsakes of Mr. Duffey's military time.

Mrs. Welty said she planned to take the World War II display down by this weekend. With Mr. Carr's approval, she plans to donate Mr. Duffey's artifacts to the Pemberville-Freedom Area Historical Society. Mrs. Welty said the display has received a lot of attention from post office patrons.

"If we thank the World War II vets, maybe our current [soldiers] will know that 60 years from now they will still be remembered," Mrs. Welty said.

source: <http://www.toledoblade.com/frontpage/2004/07/04/Correspondence-tells-soldier-s-tale.html>









source: Personal effects sold on ebay 7/2012



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